

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finances and Resources
DATE	21 June 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Aberdeen City Heritage Trust
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/133

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to obtain the Committee's agreement to make available supplementary funding from the City's Conservation Fund for the use of Aberdeen City Heritage Trust, of £20,000.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 £20,000 be made available to the Aberdeen City Heritage Trust from the Conservation Fund, to be drawn down as required by the expenditure of funds for grants in the period 1 April 2012 until 31 March 2015; and
- 2.2 the Aberdeen City Heritage Trust be permitted to use these funds with the agreement of Aberdeen City Council, for the provision of grant assistance for managing protected trees in private ownership and the repair or restoration of property in a conservation area, or a listed building.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding would be provided to the Trust only on actual expenditure of grants within the further three years of its life (2012/2013, 2013/14 and 2014/2015) in which the Trust's operation is covered by a grant from Scottish Ministers. This avoids the possibility of funding granted to the Trust being unspent by the end of March 2015, when the life of the Trust could end under current funding arrangements.

Funding has been provided to the Trust from the Conservation Fund in earlier years, and as the balance in the Conservation Fund as at 31 March 2012 amounts to £37,180, the commitment of £20,000 can be met without recourse to the Revenue or Capital Budgets.

Although there is an expectation that funding would continue to be provided by the Council, the provision of funding by the Scottish Ministers to the Trust, of £750,000 for the period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2015, would not be compromised whether the City Council resolves to provide or not to provide any new funding to the Trust.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Apart from the financial resources provided from the Conservation Fund, the only other resources occasionally required would be the time of officers in Planning and Sustainable Development and the City Chamberlain's Office, who would authorise and implement respectively, the transfer of funds to the Trust.

The main risk in not providing these funds is that the Trust would no longer be able to continue to make available tree management grants and be more limited in the areas, types and level of work where it can provide grant assistance.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

In 2003, the City Council, in partnership with Historic Scotland, set up the Aberdeen City Heritage Trust to promote and provide financial assistance for the conservation of the City's historic conservation areas and buildings. The Trust is a Limited Company and a Scottish Charity.

A predicted initial life of three years from 1 April 2004 until 31 March 2007, has been successively extended up until 31 March 2012 through the continued financial and "in kind" support of Historic Scotland and the Council.

Scottish Ministers have supported the operation and activities of Aberdeen City Heritage Trust through its agent Historic Scotland since 1 April 2004 by the award of a start up grant and in addition main grant awards equating to £250,000 per annum for the period up until 31 March 2012; in excess of £2,000,000 in total.

Historic Scotland's has now made an award to Aberdeen City Heritage Trust of £750,000 for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2015. This funding is intended to cover operational costs of the Trust, including salary costs of a project officer, whilst the remainder is to be disbursed in grant assistance for eligible projects.

A commitment implicit in the partnership between the City Council and Historic Scotland from the outset, was that the City Council would contribute financially and in kind to the activities of the Trust. Consequently, the Council has supported the Trust by making available accommodation, IT facilities and other administrative services and has made available the following funds since 2004:

City Improvement Fund	£100,000
Conservation Fund	£ 90,000
Decision of Council 29.06.05	<u>£ 50,000</u>
	£240,000

£100,000 was contributed from the City Improvement Fund and a total of £90,000 from the Conservation Fund, towards building repair grants. An additional £50,000 was awarded by the Council at its meeting of 29 June 2005 for the furtherance of Trust objectives. This funding has been used by the Trust since 2005 for contributing to, inter alia, the cost of consultancy work relating to the Stage 1 bid for the Green Townscape Heritage Initiative and other Trust activities, the offer of Tree Management Grants (formerly funded directly from the Conservation Fund) and other education, training and awareness raising initiatives such as Doors Open Day (Aberdeen); which the Trust has supported since 2005. The City Council's total financial contribution for the period up until 31 March 2012 amounted, therefore, to £240,000, all of which funds have been used.

Although it was a condition of the initial funding from Historic Scotland that the City Council (or other sources) also made a contribution to the Trust, no such condition applies to new funding made available by Historic Scotland from 1 April 2012 onwards. However, further funding would represent a practical demonstration of the City Council's continuing support for the activities of the Aberdeen City Heritage Trust, allow the Trust to continue to offer grants for the proper management of protected trees (formerly funded directly from the Conservation Fund) and afford the opportunity to support projects of value to Aberdeen, which fall outside the normal scope of current Historic Scotland funding.

6. IMPACT

Aberdeen City Heritage Trust grants contribute to the Community Plan vision that Aberdeen will be *a forward looking City which, inter alia, values its heritage.*

National Outcome 12 of the Single Status Agreement 2009-12 notes *We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations with a Local Outcome, Aberdeen's unique granite heritage is protected and promoted.* Grants made available by the Trust encourage property repair which can prevent buildings falling into states of decay which may lead to inclusion on the Buildings at Risk Register; the relevant indicator. Other activities of the Trust such as support of Doors Open Day help promote the architectural heritage of Aberdeen.

The Council's 2012/13 -2017/18 Business Plan's intention through a City Centre Framework is to *do all that we can to facilitate the redevelopment of Union Street and its immediate environs.* The service

overview continues, *We will protect and enhance our high quality...built environment through support of initiatives including...the city's granite heritage...*” Funds made available to the Trust will continue to encourage investment in property repair which is an important contributor to revitalisation of Union Street and surrounding streets. Trust grants are used to help right decayed property lessening the risk of property falling into advanced states of decay and thereby protecting this vital component of Aberdeen’s history and identity.

The report will be of interest to the public, local amenity societies and media who have been following the development of Aberdeen City Heritage Trust and its activities.

An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment is attached to this report. No groups have been identified as being likely to be affected, either positively or negatively, by these proposals.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to Resources Management Committee of 7 February 2007, regarding the carrying forward of funding made available to the Aberdeen City Heritage Trust, and an associated Business Case regarding the extension of the Projects Officer post.
- Business Case to Resources Management Committee of 10 March 2009 regarding the extension of the Projects Officer post.
- Provision of funding- report to Resources Management Committee of 16 June 2009.
- 2008-11 Community Plan Update and Single Status Agreement
- 2009-12 Single Status Agreement
- Aberdeen City Council Business Plan 2012/13-2017/18 “The Next Five Years”

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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