

Committee: Cabinet

Agenda Item

Date: 18 October 2017

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Title: Saffron Walden Town Centre Culvert partnership

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Susan Barker Cabinet Member for Environmental Services

Key decision: **Yes**

Summary

The Slade culvert which runs under the town centre in Saffron Walden is in a poor state of repair. Capital funding for a full repair scheme is in the process of being secured from the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and Essex County Council. The Environment Agency, which has lead the project to date, has approached the council as a flood risk management authority to take on a continuing role after the full repair has been completed. This would involve establishing a partnership of all the riparian owners and building up a revenue fund with contributions from the owners to monitor the condition of the structure and to carry out any necessary future works to maintain the culvert in good condition. The proposed repairs are expected to extend the current asset life of the culvert for a further 25 years, with minimal maintenance. Thereafter further repairs are anticipated.

Recommendations

1. The Council explores the willingness of all the riparian owners to cooperate over jointly building up a revenue fund using owners' contributions to monitor the condition of the structure. Subject to the participation of the owners, the council would hold the revenue fund for periodic monitoring of the condition of the culvert and any necessary maintenance works over the 25 year period that the full repair scheme is expected to remain effective, and any necessary repairs at the end of the 25 year period.

Financial Implications

2. The principal financial burden of dealing with the defective state of the culvert which is between £1 million and £2 million is being met by external bodies. The riparian owners are not being asked to contribute to these capital costs, but they are being asked to cover the ongoing revenue costs of periodically monitoring the culvert's condition. They will coordinate any necessary work to ensure that the full repair continues to provide benefit for its intended 25 year design life and at the end of the 25 year period. The council is one of the riparian owners but is also being asked to form and sustain a partnership of the owners. There are officer resources associated with doing this: communications, administrative support and technical input. These can be built into annual work programmes, probably within existing levels of resources. If increased resources prove to be needed, the costs could be sought from the riparian owners.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	The Environment Agency has engaged with partner bodies and contacted the riparian owners.
Community Safety	The risk of the culvert collapsing is small but significant. The impact of such a collapse would be significant and affect both buildings over the culvert and other properties that would be flooded due to the watercourse becoming blocked. It is anticipated that a collapse would be triggered by a flood event. Modelling commissioned by the EA suggests that in total 48 residential properties and 72 other properties could be affected with an estimated £23 million of damage.
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	As for community safety above
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The council is a flood risk management authority with discretionary powers to address risk. The council is a riparian owner as it still holds the title to a residual area of forecourt in the vicinity of the Market Walk development on the site of the former Hill Street baths. The legal responsibility for maintaining the respective lengths of the culvert sits with the riparian owner.
Sustainability	The part of the town centre over the culvert is a conservation area and several of the buildings over the culvert are listed.
Ward-specific impacts	Principally Saffron Walden Audley
Workforce/Workplace	Officer resource would need to be reflected

	in service plans
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Situation

5. The capital costs of full repair of the culvert are being met by others but there is a potential role for the council in seeking to set up and enabling a partnership of the riparian owners. The EA has already raised awareness of the state of the culvert with owners. Under the proposed partnership the council would seek modest annual contributions from the owners towards the survey costs in monitoring the condition of the culvert post repair and any maintenance work that proved necessary.
6. Saffron Walden Town Council has committed to maintain the trash screen free of collected debris at the point the Slade enters the culvert at Common Hill. Investigations are currently ongoing to replace the current screen with a new screen that meets current guidance for such a location as part of the capital project. The Town Council will be meeting the revenue costs of maintaining and clearing the screen.
7. The capital works are expected to commence in 2018. The capital works are not conditional on the council being successful in forming a partnership of the riparian owners.

Risk Analysis

8.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Riparian owners are reluctant to participate in a local partnership	3 The partnership will require financial contributions from owners who have to date escaped such payments	3 There may be pressure on the council as the partnership lead to make up any shortfall in contributions or if the level of contribution proves inadequate to cover necessary costs.	Review the success of establishing the partnership and refresh as necessary.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.