BASINGSTOKE CANAL IMPROVEMENTS

Executive Summary

This report seeks authority to progress Planning Applications in respect of a series of potential improvements to the Woking Pound of the Basingstoke Canal in the Town Centre.

The Strategic Partnership for Woking, a body established jointly by Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council, has supported the ambition to make joint improvements to the Canal through Woking. Accordingly discussions have been held between representatives of the two Council's and the Basingstoke Canal Society. The discussions have resulted in a series of proposals which are considered to offer a significant improvement to the Canal through the Town Centre.

The proposals are set out in this report and include:-

1. A hard edge to the canal and mooring points on the north side of the canal next to the WWF headquarters (Appendix 1).

2. A Canal Barge at the edge of the Lightbox garden which can be used as an additional gallery for the Lightbox and can include permanent exhibitions, temporary exhibitions and educational events related to the history of the canal (Appendix 2).

3. An extension to the towpath at Chobham Road which will enable continuous passage along the canal towpath without crossing the road by raising the towpath on the north side of the canal, bridging the canal west of Chobham Road, and coming back down on the South side of the canal and under Chobham Road road bridge to re-join the southern towpath east of Chobham Road (Appendix 3).

4. Create a Boat Basin at Brook House Common to accommodate leisure related canal boats, rowing boats, and canoes with one residential canal boat to provide supervision, management and security (Appendix 4).

5. Create a Winding at a convenient location as close as possible to the St John's Locks to enable canal barges to turn thereby more effectively enabling short trips in the Woking Pound.

The current estimate of the total cost of these works is some £4.3m. The Executive is not being asked to approve that level of expenditure at this stage, it is only being asked to support the submission of a planning application(s) and the obtaining of all other necessary consents; this is estimated to cost some £130,000 which can be financed from revenue from the Council's additional savings and unspent contingency for 2013/14 with the necessary funds being set aside to meet the costs when they arise during 2014.

The implementation of the works, if the necessary consents are obtained, will be the subject of future report(s) to the Executive. It is anticipated that some works can be undertaken by the Canal Authority at its expense, some could be secured through the successor to the Cycle Woking and the Local Sustainable Transport Funds and some through S.106 contributions from developers. Other funding sources include the Heritage Lottery and other grant giving bodies; all these avenues will be pursued before reporting back to the Executive.
If funds can be secured in respect of any one element that will be reported back alone for approval as it is likely that elements can be funded separately.

Accordingly the Executive is requested to authorise Officers to seek Planning and all other consents that are necessary to secure the proposals outlined in this report.

**Reasons for Decision**

To enable the submission of a Planning Application(s) and the obtaining of all other necessary consents to secure improvements to the Basingstoke Canal through Woking Town Centre.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is requested to:

**RESOLVE That**

(i) Officers be authorised to submit Planning Application(s) for proposals to secure improvements to the Basingstoke Canal through Woking Town Centre;

(ii) if Planning approval is obtained Officers be authorised to seek all necessary consents to enable the improvements to be implemented; and

(iii) a further report be submitted to the Executive, when all necessary consents are obtained and prior to the undertaking of any work, to enable it to consider the financing of the authorised improvements, either individually or together.

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

**Background Papers:**

None.

Sustainability Impact Assessment
Equalities Impact Assessment

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Basingstoke Canal is a positive feature of the Borough and the Woking Pound, which goes through Woking Town Centre, is a long stretch of the canal without any locks, and is ideal for recreational use by a range of boats from a short canal barge trip, to rowing boats and canoes. The advantage of the Woking Pound is that it can be used without needing to navigate a lock, hence the need for a Winding near the St. John's locks so as to optimise the length of use by canal boats; rowing boats and canoes are not restrained as they can turn anywhere along the Woking Pound.

1.2 The Strategic Partnership for Woking, a joint body established by Woking Borough and Surrey County Councils to explore opportunities for service development or activities of mutual benefit to their selective Councils and local taxpayers, has considered and supported these proposals.

2.0 Proposed Improvements to the Basingstoke Canal

2.1 The proposals are intended to bring the canal to life through Woking Town Centre, add to the vitality and setting of both the Lightbox and WWF Headquarters, provide temporary moorings at both the WWF Headquarter site and Brookhouse Common, and provide permanent moorings for leisure boats in close proximity to the Town Centre. The proposal may be outlined as follows:

1. A hard edge to the canal and mooring points on the north side of the canal next to the WWF headquarters (Appendix 1);

2. A Canal Barge at the edge of the Lightbox garden which can be used as an additional gallery for the Lightbox and can include permanent exhibitions, temporary exhibitions and educational events related to the history of the canal (Appendix 2);

3. An extension to the towpath at Chobham Road which will enable continuous passage along the canal towpath without crossing the road by raising the towpath on the north side of the canal, bridging the canal west of Chobham Road, and coming back down on the South side of the canal and under Chobham Road road bridge to re-join the southern towpath east of Chobham Road (Appendix 3);

4. Create a Boat Basin at Brook House Common to accommodate leisure related canal boats, rowing boats, and canoes with one residential canal boat to provide supervision, management and security (Appendix 4); and

5. Create a Winding at a convenient location as close as possible to the St John's Locks to enable canal barges to turn thereby more effectively enabling short trips in the Woking Pound.

2.2 An estimate has been prepared setting out the costs associated with submitting Planning and other consents as set out at Appendix 6 which has been distributed as a Part 2 as it contains references to names of companies. It is estimated that a budget of £130,000, is required for that purpose. It is proposed that this be financed from revenue and that the Council seeks potential partnership funding contributions from Surrey County Council and/or the Basingstoke Canal Authority if either is able to do so. However it is requested that the Executive approve a budget up to the full amount and allow Officers, with Member support, to seek voluntary contributions rather than hold up the process of submitting the applications as this would reflect the spirit of partnership that has brought this proposal to this stage.
2.3 The proposals also incorporate part of the land owned by Horsell Common Preservation Society (HCPS). The Council will need to undertake formal consultations with HCPS about the use of its land and it is hoped that it will share the Council's ambition for the significant improvement in access to and the amenity value of our respective Common Land holdings. At the time of producing this report no formal discussions have been held with HCPS but it has been forwarded a copy of this report with the request for formal discussion if the Executive approves the proposal to seek necessary consents.

2.4 It is considered that this proposal offers an opportunity to "bring the canal alive" in the Town, a long held Council objective that has yet not been fully achieved although the Lightbox and the WWF Living Planet Centre have made positive contributions to the setting of the canal.

2.5 Executive authority for the implementation of the project or the level of funding provisionally shown in the Approved Investment Programme is not being sought at this stage. Neither is it anticipated, at this stage, that the project could be funded from borrowing alone as there is no direct revenue generation associated with this proposal, it is all related to improving the overall ambience and amenity of the Borough and specifically the Town Centre. Accordingly, for the avoidance of doubt approving the budget of £130,000 to enable the submission of the Planning Application(s) and the seeking of other necessary consents does not authorise the project in the Investment Programme.

2.6 Subject to the executive approving this report and the necessary consents being obtained a further, or further reports, will be the subject of further reports to the Executive. It is anticipated that some works can be undertaken by the Canal Authority at its expense, some could be secured through the successor to the Cycle Woking and the Local Sustainable Transport Funds and some through S.106 contributions from developers. Other funding sources include the Heritage Lottery and other grant giving bodies; all these avenues will be pursued before reporting back to the Executive. If funds can be secured in respect of any one element that will be reported back alone for approval as it is likely that elements can be funded separately.

2.7 Accordingly the Executive is recommended to support the proposal as set out below:

1. Officers be authorised to submit Planning Application(s) for proposals to secure improvements to the Basingstoke Canal through Woking Town Centre;
2. If Planning approval is obtained Officers be authorised to seek all necessary consents to enable the improvements to be implemented; and
3. A further report be submitted to the Executive, when all necessary consents are obtained and prior to the undertaking of any work, to enable it to consider the financing of the authorised improvements, either individually or together.

3.0 Implications

Financial

3.1 The provisional cost estimate for these works is some £4.3m, as set out at Appendix 5, but it is too early to conclude that this will be the actual cost as much work needs to be done to secure Planning and other consents and then to formulate detailed budgets for each element. Accordingly the Executive is not being requested to approve the project budget at this stage.
3.2 An estimate has been prepared setting out the costs associated with submitting Planning and other consents; it is estimated that a budget of £130,000 is required for that purpose. The Executive is being requested to approve the budget for the purpose of seeking the necessary consents.

3.3 It is proposed that the £130,000 be financed from Revenue and that a proportion of the unspent contingency for 2013/14 and the in year savings be set aside as a specific reserve for the purpose of meeting these costs in 2014/15. Partner contributions will be sought but a full provision for the anticipated costs is proposed.

3.4 The project is included in the Approved Investment Programme but is subject to consideration by the Executive. The Executive has the necessary authority to approve the budget of £130,000, to be financed from Revenue, for the purpose of seeking the necessary consents. In approving the initial budget of £130,000 does not commit the Council, in full or in part, to the project. It is not proposed at this stage to consider borrowing for this project.

3.5 Without the work envisaged by this report the Council would not be able to secure funding sources to undertake the elements set out in the wider project ambition.

**Human Resource/Training and Development**

3.6 There are no human resource or training and development issue for the Council arising from this report.

**Community Safety**

3.7 There are no community safety issues arising directly from this report, however in the development of the proposals all community safety issues will be addressed. It is considered that avoiding canal towpath users from having to cross Chobham Road will be a significant improvement in amenity and in community safety.

**Risk Management**

3.8 There are no risk management issues arising directly from this report, however in the development of the proposals all risk management issues will be addressed.

**Sustainability**

3.9 The proposals outlined in this report will add to the sustainability and vitality of the Town Centre and the amenity for people living and working therein.

**Equalities**

3.10 There are no equality impacts directly arising from this report but the implementation of proposals will significantly improve movement for mobility impaired people using the canal towpath.

**4.0 Consultations**

4.1 The Strategic Partnership for Woking and the Basingstoke Canal Society, and indirectly through Surrey County Council, the Basingstoke Canal Authority has been consulted in the preparation of this report.
Basingstoke Canal Improvements

APPENDICES
Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to improve the work of the Council by making sure that it does not discriminate against any individual or group and that, where possible, it promotes equality. The Council has a legal duty to comply with equalities legislation and this template enables you to consider the impact (positive or negative) a strategy, policy, project or service may have upon the protected groups.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive impact?</th>
<th>Negative impact?</th>
<th>No specific impact</th>
<th>What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)</th>
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<td>Advance equality</td>
<td>Good relations</td>
<td>THIS SECTION NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED AS EVIDENCE OF WHAT THE POSITIVE IMPACT IS OR WHAT ACTIONS ARE BEING TAKEN TO MITIGATE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS</td>
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**Gender**
- Men
- Women

**Gender Reassignment**

**Race**
- White
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- Asian/Asian British
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Gypsies / travellers
- Other ethnic group
The purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment is to improve the work of the Council by making sure it does not discriminate against any individual or group and that, where possible, it promotes equality. The assessment is quick and straightforward to undertake but it is an important step to make sure that individuals and teams think carefully about the likely impact of their work on people in Woking and take action to improve strategies, policies, services and projects, where appropriate. Further details and guidance on completing the form are [available](#).

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<th>Positive impact?</th>
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Sustainability Impact Assessment

Officers preparing a committee report are required to complete a Sustainability Impact Assessment. Sustainability is one of the Council’s ‘cross-cutting themes’ and the Council has made a corporate commitment to address the social, economic and environmental effects of activities across Business Units. The purpose of this Impact Assessment is to record any positive or negative impacts this decision, project or programme is likely to have on each of the Council’s Sustainability Themes. For assistance with completing the Impact Assessment, please refer to the instructions below. Further details and guidance on completing the form are available.

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<thead>
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<th>Theme (Potential impacts of the project)</th>
<th>Positive Impact</th>
<th>Negative Impact</th>
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<th>What will the impact be? If the impact is negative, how can it be mitigated? (action)</th>
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<td>Contribute to Woking’s pride of place</td>
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