


<p align="center">Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee report</p> <p align="center">12 September 2017</p>	
<p>Report of: Ann Sutcliffe, Interim Corporate Director of Place</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Formal offer of Historic Buildings Grant to St. Mary and Holy Trinity Church, Bow</p>	

Lead Member	Councillor Rachel Blake, Cabinet Member for Strategic Development & Waste
Originating Officer(s)	Michael Ritchie – Place Shaping Team Leader
Wards affected	Bow East
Key Decision?	Yes
Community Plan Theme	A Great Place to Live

Executive Summary

This report relates to the awarding of a London Borough of Tower Hamlets Historic Buildings Grant of £20,000 to St. Mary and Holy Trinity Church (also known as Bow Church), 230 Bow Road, London E3 3AH for vital repair works to the exterior of the church tower. The building is currently on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register.

In December 2016, the Commissioners agreed that a letter should be sent to the Rector of St Mary's stating the Council's intention to offer a grant of up to £20,000 towards works to the exterior of the church on receipt of necessary additional information including three tender documents, as required by the conditions of the grant. The necessary additional information as required by the conditions of the grant has been received and therefore the Council is now at a stage to be able to make a formal offer of grant to St. Mary and Holy Trinity Church. The start date of the works is imminent, making the consideration of the formal offer of a grant important at this point in time.

Recommendations

The Mayor is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the recommendation to issue a formal offer of grant to St. Mary and Holy Trinity, Bow.
2. Approve the grant funding of £20,000 to the church as a contribution to vital repair works to the exterior of the tower.
3. Approve the issue of a formal offer of grant to the church

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 St Mary and Holy Trinity Church (also known as Bow Church) is a prominent Grade II* Listed Building located in the Fairfield Road Conservation Area. The church is also an important community asset, which is currently used for religious services and volunteer activity. The building suffers from extensive dampness, stone decay and leaking roofs and, as a result is on the Historic England Register of Heritage at Risk. The building has been given a condition rating of 'very bad' (the worst of four categories).
- 1.2 The award of a Historic Building Grant of £20,000 will make an important contribution toward the overall cost of remedial and restoration works to the church. Other funding will be provided by Heritage Lottery Fund, the Grocers' Company, the National Churches Fund, the Heritage of London Trust and from the churches own reserves and fund raising activities.
- 1.3 The restoration project meets the Council's Historic Buildings Grant criteria. All the necessary information required by the conditions of the Historic Buildings Grant, including three tender documents, have been provided by the church and have found to be in order. The project offers significant benefits for the Borough as a whole when complete.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The LBTH grant forms an essential contribution towards the overall cost of the works and allows for the release of grants from other funders, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. Without the LBTH grant the church would have a shortfall in funding for the project which would therefore be at risk of not going ahead. Without repair works the external appearance of the Grade II* church would continue to deteriorate with the loss of important historic features, in a prominent location within the Borough. Historic England would continue to retain the church on its Heritage at Risk register.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The Council has in operation a Historic Buildings Grant Scheme to assist owners and occupiers of listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas, in meeting their responsibilities for the care and maintenance of the irreplaceable cultural asset, which these buildings represent. The provision of this type of grant is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3.2 With over 50 conservation areas and approximately 2000 listed buildings, demand in the Borough for grant-aided assistance in meeting the costs of buildings repair is high.
- 3.3 St Mary and Holy Trinity Church (also known as Bow Church) is a prominent Grade II* Listed Building located in the Fairfield Road Conservation Area. The church is also an important community asset, which is currently used for religious services and volunteer activity. The building suffers from extensive dampness, stone decay and leaking roofs and, as a result is on the Historic England Register of Heritage at Risk (Appendix 1). The building has been given a condition rating of 'very bad' (the worst of four categories).



Location of St Mary and Holy Trinity Church

- 3.4 A Historic Buildings Grant application (Appendix 2) to fund restoration works the church was made to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets on 22 June 2016.
- 3.5 The Place Shaping Team Leader and Borough Conservation Officer presented a report to the Commissioners on 20 December 2016, which sought permission to send a letter to the Rector of St. Mary and Holy Trinity Church stating the Council's intentions to offer a grant in principle, with conditions, towards the cost of repair works to the exterior of the church tower. At the meeting the Commissioners agreed that:
- A letter would be sent the Rector of St Mary's stating the Council's intention to offer a grant of up to £20,000 towards works to the exterior of the church on receipt of necessary additional information including three tender documents, as required by the conditions of the grant.
 - A further report would be brought to a public Grants Decision Making Meeting to authorise the awarding of the grant, following the receipt of the necessary information.
- 3.6 A letter (Appendix 3) was sent to Rev. Deborah Frazer at Bow Rectory on 21 December 2016 stating the Council's agreement in principle to the making of an offer of a grant of £20,000 towards the vital repair works to the exterior of the tower.
- 3.7 All necessary additional information as required by the conditions of the grant, including three tender documents, was received from the church by 14 June 2017. They were subsequently checked by the Heritage at Risk Project Officer and found to be in order.
- 3.8 This report to the Grants Sub-Committee has been prepared in order to obtain the permission to issue a formal offer of grant to St. Mary and Holy Trinity. It does not seek permission for the payment of the grant at this stage.
- 3.9 Once works are complete and assessed to be carried out to a satisfactory standard, the Heritage at Risk Project Officer will prepare a further report to the Grants Sub-Committee for permission to release the allocated funds.
- 3.10 This report recommends external repair works to St. Mary and Holy Trinity Church (also known as Bow Church) for grant assistance. The project meets the criteria laid down by the Council for assistance, and offers significant benefits for the Borough as a whole when complete.
- 3.11 The grant allocated will contribute to the cost of remedial and restoration works to the west end tower, which includes:

- Repairs to deteriorating bell-tower cupola and renewal of weather coatings
 - Repairs and renewals of gutters and rainwater goods
 - Renewal of stone weathering details which will throw rainwater off the surface of the historic stonework
 - Removal of Ordinary Portland Cement from Kentish rag-stone work and repointing in lime mortar to allow the wall to breathe and prevent further deterioration of historic stonework
- 3.12 The grant of £20,000 will contribute to an overall cost of £272,232 (excluding VAT). Remaining funding is from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Grocers' Company, the National Churches Fund, the Heritage of London Trust and a small amount from the church's own reserves and fundraising. The grant is a flat rate grant contribution to the overall cost of the works.
- 3.13 The applicant has made a concerted effort to fund the project from a variety of sources. The LBTH grant makes up a shortfall in funding for the project, the majority of which will be made up by the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme' (£184,300 towards the works).
- 3.14 St. Mary and Holy Trinity Church is a landmark building in a highly visible location on the Bow Road on the eastern edge of the borough. There has been a place of worship in this location since the fourteenth century, when Bow was a hamlet outside London, and is one of the last remaining medieval buildings in the Borough. The church in this location has survived in spite of the development and modernisation around it and therefore contributes to a sense of place and continuity. The church is a demonstration of change over time with additions, alterations and rebuilding over 700 years. Its persistent survival over this length of time, even following bomb damage during the Second World War, is remarkable.
- 3.15 The LBTH grant will contribute towards the cost of alleviating problems relating mainly to water ingress and damp, resulting in deteriorating external appearance and the risk of loss of important historical features, some of which date back to over 500 years ago. The grant will also contribute towards the cost of works required to remove St Mary's from the Heritage at Risk register. However, there is still further work required to remove the church from the register.
- 3.16 The proposed works to the external appearance of the church is an opportunity for an enhancement of Fairfield Road Conservation Area.

- 3.17 The grant will be conditional on the building participating in London Open House for 5 years to ensure the best possible value for the Council.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 In December 2016, the Commissioners provisionally approved the allocation of funding of £20,000, payable as a Historic Buildings Grant, to St Mary and Holy Trinity Church as a contribution towards the cost of restoration works to the church tower, pending the receipt of various items of supporting information. The required evidence has now been received and reviewed and this further report seeks the approval of the Grants Determination Sub-Committee to now formally approve the grant allocation.
- 4.2 The total works costs are £272,232 (excluding VAT). As set out in paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13, in addition to the Council's fixed contribution, additional funding has been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Grocers' Company, the National Churches Fund, the Heritage of London Trust with the residual element being financed from the church's own reserves and fundraising activities.
- 4.3 The proposed grant allocation will utilise £20,000 of the uncommitted resources of £51,250 that have been earmarked to finance Historic Buildings Grants. No funding should be released until all necessary grant conditions have been met.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Council has power to make the grants under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which gives the Council the general power of competence. This means that the Council has the power to do anything which an ordinary human being could do, unless statute specifically restricts the Council from acting in the way it wishes. It appears that there is no specific legislation prohibiting the making of the grant itself.
- 5.2 The Council has a duty to achieve Best Value in respect of its expenditures. This is by virtue of Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. The Council must satisfy itself that the giving of any grant represents Best Value. This means that it will have to ensure that any grant is made under terms that enable the proper monitoring of outcomes to demonstrate that the money achieves the intended results.
- 5.3 To this end the Council should also ensure that it has proper resourcing in place to ensure that the progress of the works is also satisfactory. It is to be presumed that the works themselves will be monitored under the Church's contract with the building contractor. However, the Council should ensure that it has access to such reports as it needs to satisfy itself that the terms of the grant are being followed.

- 5.4 Also, it is intended that the grant is only paid following proper completion of the works. The Council should note that:
- 5.4.1 it should have a mechanism in place to ensure that the works comply with the building contract made between the Church and the building contractor. However, the Council is not a party to this contract so it should be understood by the Building Contractor that part of the payment relies on the satisfaction of the Council and
 - 5.4.2 it is likely that stage payments and payment at practical completion may be subject to a retention percentage payable up to one year after completion of the works. Therefore, the grant should reflect these payment terms.
- 5.5 It is noted that the Council has gone to some extent to review the tenders / design of the works. It should be made clear in the terms of the grant offer that the Council is not in any way representing to the Church that the tenders received are appropriate for the intended works; that the Council's review is only for the purposes of satisfying itself that Best Value may be achieved in the expenditure of the grant.
- 5.6 The payment of this grant will not constitute state aid either because of the application of the de minimis block exemption (which provides that state aid is not applicable where Bow Church has not received more than 200,000 Euros in grant funding over a continuous 3 year period) or because Bow Church is not an operator in the economic market place and no cross border interest is generated.
- 5.7 The Council must also ensure that it fully understands the impact on persons with a protected characteristic for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. It may therefore need to undertake a desktop evaluation to determine whether there is any impact on persons with a protected characteristic although it is suggested that this will be unlikely.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The proposed works would contribute to the preservation of a very significant Grade II* listed cultural asset and the preservation and enhancement of the Fairfield Road Conservation Area.
- 6.2 The church is currently used for religious services and volunteer activity. Through the project, the intention is to extend local community engagement and to use the building for community purposes. This will see the church once again become a local focal point for residents.

- 6.3 The project thus contributes to the theme 'A Great Place to Live' in the Community Plan to build One Tower Hamlets.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The delivery of this project ensures the Council meets its commitment set out in the Council's Conservation Strategy.
- 7.2 The partial match funding would contribute to securing a Heritage Lottery Fund grant.
- 7.3 The restoration of this listed cultural asset part funded through the grant will benefit the whole community and is considered to offer considered excellent value for money.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 In line with other beneficiaries of grants from the Council, St Mary and Holy Trinity Church will be encouraged to consider taking appropriate steps to minimise negative impact on the environment when taking up the opportunities offered within the programme and on an ongoing basis.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 If a formal grant offer is made, it will be ensured that no funds will be released until the repair works have been completed and inspections have verified that they have been carried out to an appropriate standard.
- 9.2 There is a risk that, if a formal offer of grant funding is not made, the repair work may be proceed and the benefits described in this report would not be delivered.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Beyond the essential repairs to the church west end tower, the church will run an activity plan as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund Project which will encourage visitors to the church promoting positive neighbourhood engagement.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no safeguarding implications.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

None

Appendices

Appendix 1: Extract from the Heritage at Risk Register

Appendix 2: Historic Buildings Grant application form

Appendix 3: Informal grant offer letter

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

None

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A