

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES

DATE: 31 OCTOBER 2023



REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: DENISE TURNER-STEWART – CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES

LEAD OFFICER: MARIE SNELLING – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES

SUBJECT: YOUR FUND SURREY APPLICATION – The Horton Gardens Project

ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Purpose of the Report:

This report sets out the Your Fund Surrey application from **Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society - The Horton Gardens Project** for the consideration of the Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities.

The vision of YFS is to bring community-led and place-making projects to life, with a focus on wider community benefit that leaves a real legacy.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

1. Approves the full amount requested of £112,594, composed of:
 - £112,594 capital funding towards renovating the existing overgrown land around The Horton to be a landscaped green space open to all.
 - Including 5% to be held by SCC until final evidence of income and expenditure is provided.

Reason for Recommendations:

This application has been the subject of a rigorous assessment process by officers, as set out in the body of this report. Officers consider the project to meet the aims and published criteria of the fund and to satisfy the requirements to award funding.

The project is to transform the overgrown and neglected grounds of the recently renovated The Horton Arts Centre, Epsom into a sustainable, landscaped green space for the whole community to enjoy.

Executive Summary:

1. The Horton is a cultural venue in Epsom that opened in 2021 after a £3m project to renovate the former Horton Hospital Chapel. The project was funded primarily by the

National Lottery Heritage Fund and designated Section 106 contributions, ring-fenced from the former hospital cluster site. The Horton operates as a not-for-profit venue, managed by registered charity Horton Chapel Arts & Heritage Society. A variety of community arts, heritage and wellbeing activities take place at the venue.

2. The 10,000m² gardens are a natural local asset but the grounds are currently in a poor state with uneven land which is inaccessible to the community. A natural concept has been developed, based on feedback and consultations over the last four years, including new trees, planting, seating, and the creation of a looped path, so that The Horton's grounds can be accessed by all.
3. The YFS application is to support with the landscaping of the site to enable it to be used and enjoyed by the community.

Project Summary

4. The Horton is based in the electoral division of Epsom West. The location is two miles from Epsom town centre with both Epsom and Ewell West stations approximately two miles away. The site can be accessed by all modes of transport.

Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)	Epsom & Ewell 005A – new Horton Ward (previously Court Ward)
National Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	4
Surrey Index of Multiple Deprivation	1
Neighbouring LSOAs	Epsom & Ewell 007A -Court -7437 (IMD 3, Surrey 1) Epsom & Ewell 002C -Ruxley -0110 (IMD 4, Surrey1)

5. Horton Chapel Arts & Heritage Society was founded in 2016 to save and renovate the grade II listed building Horton Chapel for the benefit of the public and to run it as a not-for-profit venue for arts and culture – The Horton. After it's renovation in 2021, The Horton opened in April 2022 to the public. Since then, more than 20,000 people have visited and attended performances, workshops, events, used the café and viewed the free permanent exhibition about the history of Epsom Hospital Cluster. The extensive grounds of the site, however, have remained closed.
6. Their activities are designed to appeal to a range of age-groups. Day-time visitors tend to be older, retired, self-employed and people with long-term conditions. Evening events are more diverse attracting working-age adults with weekends attracting more families with younger children. Indoor activities support people with mental health and wellbeing, and they have worked with organisations such as Mary Frances Trust, End Stigma Surrey, Love Me Love My Mind and Horton Rehabilitation Centre.
7. The Horton location is in one of Surrey County Council's identified Key Neighbourhoods. Community engagement has been at the heart of the original Horton Chapel Project, with consultation and focus group research, information evenings and special events on-site. In addition to these consultations, they have also led workshops for the Garden Project with a diverse group of young people aged 10 to 15. These consultations have formed the basis for the landscape design.
8. Although The Horton is free to enter, many of the activities on offer require visitors to buy tickets. The charity wish to extend the community use of their facility beyond paying visitors

and offer free access to the grounds of the site to everyone in the community. Once the grounds are redeveloped, in addition to free daily public access to enjoy the gardens, there are plans in place to host outdoor cultural activities for all, including:

- Outdoor creative workshops
 - Nature play activities for children
 - Gardening groups
 - Outdoor family performances
 - Areas for volunteers to help to grow herbs, fruit and vegetables for the café
 - Outdoor storytelling
9. The Horton currently has 20 regular volunteers who support with events, research, workshops, administration and welcoming visitors. In order to maintain the Garden Project going forward, The Horton are hoping to double their number of volunteers and there is already a waiting list for the specific role of gardening volunteers.
10. The Horton has a 125-year lease from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council at a peppercorn rent. The site is managed by Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society and the project has full planning permission for the landscaping works. Restrictive covenants on the Grade II-listed building restrict its use to 'community' and 'health.'
11. The project aims to make the grounds safe and clean through filling in collapsed disused tunnels and removing debris that has accumulated over the last 40 years. The whole area will be made accessible to wheelchair users and they will specifically look to:
- Create an accessible path that meanders through the landscape setting
 - Build a natural terraced seating area to make the most of the change in levels and add bench seating in secluded glades
 - Rotavate and re-seed to develop the gardens, including grass lawn, wildflower and planted areas
 - Plant trees and perimeter hedging to increase biodiversity
 - Set out designated areas for creative learning and leisure where The Horton can deliver projects

Details

Description of project benefits

12. The benefits to the project include:
- Improve the local economy through increased skills and volunteering opportunities
 - Reduces isolation and provides a space for enhanced social cohesion for all ages
 - Meeting SCC ambition of 'No-one Left Behind' by providing community amenities and support in a Key Neighbourhood
 - Reducing vehicle movements by providing improved local facilities
 - Offering a new community space with opportunities to enhance social interaction and improve health and wellbeing
 - Supporting the Council's green objectives through increasing biodiversity
13. The project will develop a space that blends with the environment and enhances an existing wildlife corridor. Biodiversity will be boosted with new planting of native species and meadow flowers. The plans include composting, rainwater catching and adding recycling bins which should reduce litter and create a mini-eco-system on-site.

Project Timeframes

14. The project will take approximately 8 weeks to complete and will consist of:

- Site clearance and levelling
- Breaking up of concrete road and laying new paths
- Seeding and planting
- Installation of benches, bins and signage

Management of the project

15. The Horton Chapel Arts & Heritage Society board of trustees will oversee and be accountable for the project. The board has experience in overseeing the £3m renovation of the former chapel building over the last five years, working with National Heritage Lottery Fund. Individual trustees have experience from their professional lives of managing national visitor attractions including Stonehenge and portfolios of National Trust landscapes and properties. The venue Manager will be responsible for delivery of the project and reporting to the board. She previously led the £3m renovation of the building.

16. The Horton's Maintenance Co-ordinator will be responsible for day today maintenance.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

17. YFS funding is requested for the hard and soft landscaping of the gardens. The project has applied for £112,594 (£103,925 & £8,642 contingency) which equates to 64% of the overall project costs.

18. Table 1. Financial Summary details the £55,345 of other funding which has been secured against the total project cost of £167,939.

19. Table 2. Project Cost Breakdown and Grant Utilisation, itemises the allocation of YFS grant against specific works.

Table 1. Financial summary

Amount applied for:	£112,594
Total project cost:	£167,939
Percentage of cost against total:	64%
Have other funding sources been secured?	Yes
Other funding:	CIL - £49,995 Tesco via The Federation of Groundworks Trusts - £1,000 Private donations - £2,000 Co-op Members Cause Donations - £1,000 Viridor Credits - £1,350 Total £55,345
Volunteer contributions:	Garden maintenance - £2,080 Garden planting - £800
Non cash contributions:	Woodland Trust – Trees & Hedge planting - £1,500 Landscape architect (concept design) - £3,000 Film & photography - £500

Is there a commercial element to the project?	No
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Table 2. Project Cost breakdown and Grant Utilisation:

Activity	Total Cost (Including VAT)	YFS Contribution
Final drawings by landscape architect	£3,000	£0
Project Manager fees	£6,300	£6,300
Contractor costs – site clearance, levelling the ground, paths, seating, planting and seeding	£49,995	£0
	£77,362	£77,362
Evaluation	£2,700	£2,700
Gardening equipment	£1000	£0
Launch event	£300	£300
Shed	£350	£0
Bench seating	£1000	£0
Full cost recovering – Centre Manager, Finance Manager, Marketing Manager, Facilities Coordinator	£3,000	£3,000
Inflation allowance 9%	£14,290	£14,290
Sub total	£159,297	£104,684
Build & Equipment Contingency	£8,642	£8,642
Total	£167,939	£112,594

20. As with all applications, there is a risk that costs will increase between application and approval. This is mitigated by the contingency (which will only be released if there is demonstrated need). The applicant has secured quotes that support their costing, and will ultimately be funded based on evidenced, actual spend, up to the amount awarded.

Assessment of the application against the criteria for the fund:

Advisory Panel Comments

21. The Advisory Panel functions in an advisory capacity and its role is intended to assist the formal decision-making processes which sit outside the Panel.

22. The Advisory Panel met on 20th September 2023. A report detailing project CF279 was shared with panel members in advance and questions were invited ahead the meeting. There were no issues raised by panel and a unanimous decision was reached to recommend the project for the full amount requested.

Consultation

Summary of Support

23. Have your say, which has had The Horton Theatre featured on the Commonplace website, received 124 comments. There were two negative comments. One of these respondents was positive about the project but said that there are significant other issues in the area that need addressing such as crime, healthcare and safety. The other respondent said that there was plenty of beautiful green spaces in the surrounding area and the money should be invested in youth services.

24. Letters of support have been received from:

- Cllr Bernie Muir Surrey County Councillor - Epsom West Division & Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillor – Horton Ward
- 7 local residents
- Love Me Love My Mind

25. The Divisional Councillor Bernie Muir has commented as follows:

'I have been involved in this project from very early on and have seen the skill, expertise and professionalism that has characterised the development of this vital asset to the wider community and the very wide demographic that it services. I fully support.'

Section 151 Officer commentary:

26. Significant progress has been made in recent years to improve the Council's financial resilience and the financial management capabilities across the organisation. Whilst this has built a stronger financial base from which to deliver our services, the increased cost of living, global financial uncertainty, high inflation and government policy changes mean we continue to face challenges to our financial position. This requires an increased focus on financial management to protect service delivery, a continuation of the need to be forward looking in the medium term, as well as the delivery of the efficiencies to achieve a balanced budget position each year.

27. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2023/24 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority, in order to ensure the stable provision of services in the medium term.

28. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports this application. This is a low value and low risk project, providing landscape improvements to the finished large renovation project which will improve community access and engagement at the site. Given the work already delivered by the organisation to date, the scale of this addition should be easily achievable by the organisation. There is wider financial and non cash support.

29. The borrowing costs associated with the fund have been fully built into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The annual cost of borrowing for this specific project of £112,594 would be £14,581 (assuming a 10 year life).

Legal implications – Monitoring Officer:

30. The report sets out the information and steps for the consideration of the application further to the Council’s governance arrangements for Your Fund Surrey.
31. Further to those arrangements, if approved, the Council and the organisation will enter into a comprehensive funding agreement which will include the performance measures that will be put in place to ensure the funding is used as intended as well as clearly describing any support or additional conditions agreed as part of the funding award.

Equalities and Diversity:

32. Your Fund is designed to provide investment in schemes that encourage community participation, reduce isolation, and develop the potential for social wellbeing and economic prosperity. As such it is anticipated that it will have a positive impact on the local community and particularly those with protected characteristics that may be more likely to experience social and economic exclusion.
33. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been produced for YFS and was circulated as an Annex to the YFS Cabinet Report 26th January 2021.

Risk Management and Implications:

34. The applicant has provided an overview of risks against the project as outlined below. Officers consider there to be adequate control measures in place.

Table 3. Summary Table of Risks and Key Mitigations

Risk description	RAG	Mitigation action/strategy
Financial risks		The charity will undertake tight monitoring and rigorous checks against completed phased works. Designated contingency and inflationary costs have been included.
Health & safety or medical incident on-site		The charity will ensure that a full risk assessment is done in advance for all works. Safety will include secured fences to prevent members of the public straying into work areas, insurance cover is adequate, site manager/activity manager is aware of nearest first aid provision or medical support. Volunteers will have an induction, training and be aware of emergency procedure.
Delays		Ensure signing of contract is not delayed and includes penalties for delayed start. Review phasing of works according to actual start date.
Staff and volunteer capacity		The charity will activate volunteer recruitment and a training plan to bolster existing expressions of interest. They will engage other local organisations for partnership working.

Other Implications:

35. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Table 4: Implications for council priorities and policy areas

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No direct implications
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children & adults	No direct implication

Environmental sustainability	Strong links to environmental policies and net-zero targets
Public Health	Provides a green space for residents to utilise and benefit from, positively impacting on wider determinants of health

What Happens Next:

- Following Cabinet Member approval of the funding a notice of the records of decisions taken under delegated power, will be published within 3 days of the decision being made.
- Officers will prepare the relevant schedules and funding agreements to enable payment of funds and monitoring and evaluation of the project against its outcomes.
- The YFS Team officers will then issue a provisional offer of funding to the applicant, including a copy of the draft Funding Agreement.

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Consulted:

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Sources/background papers:

YFS Criteria

YFS Governance Document