

Monthly Meeting – 21st August 2017

Agenda Item 9

Bandstand – To consider future options, including proposal from Friends of Swanage Bandstand

Background

In February of this year the Town Council set a 6-month deadline for interested parties to come forward with proposals for the future of the bandstand. The roof of the bandstand, erected in 1923, was found to be structurally unsound when refurbishment works were commenced back in 2012 to address serious storm damage. It had been hoped to have the bandstand restored prior to the London Olympics torch relay that summer, but sadly the structure had deteriorated beyond repair.

In order to inform the discussion on future options the following table sets out an initial estimate of costs to replace the bandstand like-for-like and to carry out much-needed improvements to the surrounding amphitheatre. It should be borne in mind that these figures are only indicative, and have not been prepared by a Quantity Surveyor. The requirement for safety railings may be reviewed in light of a recent risk assessment which suggests that they are not essential, provided that appropriate lighting and other measures are in place.

Replacement cast iron bandstand	£ 80,000
Surface repairs	£ 8,500
Safety railings	£ 11,500
DDA compliance works	£ 8,000
New seating	£ 10,000
New dwarf wall	£ 5,000
Electrical work incl. lighting	£ 6,000
Drainage works	£ 1,500
Contingency 10%	£ 13,000
Professional fees	£ 16,500
Total	£160,000

Friends of Swanage Bandstand

The Town Council held a public meeting in May this year, which was attended by approximately 200 local residents, who supported the restoration of the bandstand by an overwhelming majority. A presentation by bandstand enthusiast, Mr Paul Rabbitts, gave many examples of bandstand restoration projects from around the country.

That meeting was attended by Mr Alan Houghton, who has spearheaded a campaign to secure pledges from the public to raise funds towards its restoration. The sum now pledged stands in excess of £30,000, and a folder of 63 letters of support for the restoration project has been submitted to the Town Council.

Mr Houghton and others have formed a group, the Friends of Swanage Bandstand (FoSB), to take the restoration project forward, and the Council's working party met with their committee members in July, together with a representative from the Town Band. At that

meeting councillors were impressed by the commitment of that group, one member of which has some experience in securing external grant funding. The FoSB were invited to put forward their proposals, which are set out in a letter dated 7th August 2017 which has been circulated to Members for detailed consideration.

Concerns have been raised that the bandstand was little used prior to the removal of its roof, and that in order to support the project the Town Council, and any external funding bodies, would need to see strong evidence that a newly refurbished bandstand would be well used. The FoSB have committed to acting 'as a catalyst to encourage greater use of the bandstand' and have submitted letters from 14 bands and other performance-related groups expressing interest in utilising this space in the future. This list includes Wareham Whalers, the Dorset Buttons morris dancers, Millpond Theatre group and the Swanage School.

Alternative Future Options

Whilst strong support has been voiced for the restoration of the bandstand, other views have been put forward. During the initial discussion by the Town Council consideration was given to the possibility of focussing any Council funding towards improvements to Prince Albert Gardens. This area has been increasingly well used over recent years by the town's event organisers and is considered to have considerable untapped potential. It is thought unlikely that either the Town Council or external funding bodies would have funds available to support improvements to two outdoor performance venues in the town.

An alternative suggestion made by a school pupil attending a Council meeting was that the amphitheatre feature should be converted to a water/splash park play area. Whilst problems are often experienced in the operation of such facilities, this demonstrates that alternative proposals could be forthcoming for the bandstand site.

Council needs to bear in mind that the non-replacement of the bandstand is not a cost-free option. The remaining structure would need to be removed and the site improved and made safe at a cost in the region of £40-50,000. Alternatively, the site could be filled in and grassed over. This is likely to cost upwards of £40,000 and considerably more if all of the stonework and concrete were removed before that took place.

Decision required

Either:

To authorise Council officers to support the Friends of Swanage Bandstand in further exploring the feasibility of a restoration project, including developing a specification for the works to be carried out to the amphitheatre structure and ascertaining the likely availability of external funding; or

To support the removal of the remaining bandstand structure and authorise the working up of proposals to either repair the amphitheatre feature or fill it in.

Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

August 2017