AGENDA ITEM No.3

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

2 March 2017

Report by Director of Environment

EASTWOOD NURSERY ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet that the boundary wall of the Eastwood Nursery Allotment Association is structurally safe and to seek approval for funding of £5000 to fund a number of measures to improve the appearance of the wall and the surrounding area.

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

(a) Note that the boundary wall of the Eastwood Nursery Allotment Association is considered structurally safe by independent consulting engineers; and

(b) Approve funding of £5000 to resource a number of measures to improve the appearance of the wall and the surrounding area.

BACKGROUND AND REPORT

3. At the meeting of the Cabinet on 29 September 2011 it was agreed to grant a lease to Eastwood Nursery Allotments Association (ENAA) for the former nursery site within Eastwood Park.

4. Under the terms of this lease, liability for maintenance for the site (including the boundary walls and fences) became the responsibility of ENAA. However, the entire allotment site including the boundary walls and fences remain in the ownership of the Council.

5. At the meeting of the Cabinet on 16 June 2016, consideration was given to a report which referred to the need in the past for the original boundary wall to be demolished and rebuilt. The report noted that the replacement boundary wall constructed was of a standard which some residents in the immediate area considered to be unsatisfactory because the height was 0.6 metres lower than the original brick wall and the timber infill did not screen the activities of the site as significantly as the previous wall had.

6. The report also noted that whilst the actual onsite construction of the replacement wall had been considered acceptable by both PATs and Building Standards following inspection at key stages, a structural engineer subsequently appointed by the Council had advised that when the wall is subject to wind loadings, the movement developed in the brick piers exceeds the design capacity of the wall.

7. The Cabinet, in appraising the options, agreed that the Council should fund and oversee the reinstatement of the boundary wall to a brick wall specification at a height of up to 2.4 metres or an appropriate height at an estimated cost of £60,000 subject to tender.

8. This decision was subsequently called in for further examination by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 4 August 2016. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee disagreed with the Cabinet's decision to build a replacement wall and further agreed that the Cabinet be advised that the Committee's recommendation was that the new wall as constructed should be allowed to remain.

9. A further report was submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet on 1 September 2016 reflecting the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's deliberations.

10. That subsequent report reflected the fact that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee had considered the question of whether or not the wall as constructed was safe. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee had noted that the construction had been considered acceptable by both Property and Technical Services and Building Standards. They also noted the comments made by the structural engineer regarding wind loadings and that, having been asked the specific question about the safety of the boundary wall, the structural engineer was not prepared to offer an opinion.

11. In the course of discussion at the meeting of the Cabinet on 1 September 2016, it was proposed that officers would meet the ENAA with a view to improving the appearance of the wall/fence. The Cabinet approved the recommendation by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee that the existing wall be allowed to remain.

12. Given all of this background and the absence of clear confirmation regarding the structural safety of the wall, a further independent structural inspection of the wall was commissioned by the Council using different consultant engineers. Consideration was also given to improving the appearance of the area including the wall/fence.

13. The consulting engineers most recently appointed by the Council have advised that in their view the brickwork elements of the wall are in a safe structural condition. However, they recommended that further investigation be carried out with regard to the design and installation of the timber infill panels to ensure that these can adequately sustain design wind loads. A copy of the consulting engineers report is attached as Appendix 1.

14. Property and Technical Services subsequently inspected the wall and examined the method of fixing the timber infills to the brick piers. These were found to be entirely adequate. A further physical inspection was then undertaken of each panel fixing which concluded that they were all secure.

15. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the wall currently in place at the allotment site is in a safe condition and as a consequence no further action is planned in relation to this issue.

16. With regard to the visual appearance of the wall and surrounding area, positive discussions have been held with the Allotment Association. Arising from those discussions, a number of improvement measures have been suggested:

- The majority of the containers will be removed along with some of the surplus soil around the area of the wall will be removed

- The remaining cabin on the site will be painted with resin paint in order to make it less visually intrusive

- The ENAA will dig planting holes at regular spacings along the length of the wall and then fill them with plants. The plants should link together once they have grown to form a continuous line (it will be necessary to use a JCB and lorry to dig the holes and remove the spoil. It will also be necessary to purchase soil as the wall area is currently back filled with rubble.)

- The fence panels will be painted.

17. The ENAA will carry out the work. It is proposed that the work will commence in March 2017 at an anticipated cost of £5000. The ENAA have agreed to provide East Renfrewshire Council with detail of all expenditure incurred through this process in order that the expenditure incurred is auditable.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

18. The £5000 cost of funding these proposals will be met from within existing Environment Department budgets.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP

19. Extensive discussions have taken place with the Eastwood Nursery Allotment Association around this issue.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

20. There are no staffing, I.T. equalities or other implications associated with this report.

CONCLUSIONS

21. Following the further inspections of the wall that have been undertaken it can be concluded that the wall does not pose a foreseeable risk in terms of safety. Regarding the visual aspects of the wall, a number of low cost solutions have been agreed with the ENAA to help address these issues.

RECOMMENDATION

22. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

(a) Note that the boundary wall of the Eastwood Nursery Allotment Association is considered structurally safe by independent consulting engineers; and

(b) Approve funding of £5000 to resource a number of measures to improve the appearance of the wall and the surrounding area.

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from

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8 February 2016

EASTWOOD PARK ALLOTMENT GARDENS

REPORT ON STRUCTURAL INSPECTION OF NORTH BOUNDARY WALL

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JJM.LN.8346 – October 2016

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1.0 Introduction and Brief

Acting on the instructions of Stuart Free of East Renfrewshire Council, Property and Technical Services our James McDaid visited Eastwood Park Allotment Gardens on 11th October 2016 to carry out a structural inspection on the north boundary wall. Our brief is to provide an opinion on the structural integrity of the boundary wall with specific statement on whether we consider the wall to be safe and, if not, what remediation measures would be appropriate.

We note that our inspection is of a visual, non-intrusive nature carried out from ground level. We are unable to report that any element that is covered, unexposed or inaccessible is free from defect.

We have included some photographs as Appendix A to illustrate our observations.

2.0 Description of Wall

We understand that the boundary wall is of fairly recent construction. The north wall extends for a distance of approximately 71m and returns along the east side of the allotments for a distance of approximately 10m to the entrance gates. The wall comprises brick piers, brick dado walls and timber infill panels fixed between piers above dado wall level.

Piers along the north wall are at approximate spacing of 2820mm and extend to a height in the range 1900mm – 2100mm. Piers are 440mm wide x 330mm deep. Piers are topped with a 600mm x 470mm concrete paving slab cope. Brick dado walls are 215mm thick with a height varying between 600mm and 750mm with a brick on edge capping. Brick elements are facing brick quality. There are movement joints between the brick dado and every second brick pier, such that the brickwork elements are effectively constructed as panels approximately 5640mm long.

The timber infill panels comprise 100mm x 15mm vertical boards, with 20mm – 25mm gaps between adjacent boards, fixed to 2 horizontal timber rails of 75mm x 50mm. The infill panels are approximately 2400mm wide x 1200mm high. They are held in place between piers through the ends of the horizontal rails being sandwiched between the outer boards and a vertical 75mm x 50mm timber member, to which the rails are presumably fixed, which has 2 fixings into the side of the brick piers.

The return wall along the east side of the allotment gardens is of similar construction but with the spacing between piers being slightly greater at up to 3.5m.

The ground level on the inside of the wall is slightly higher than the external ground level but not to an extent that represents a significant earth retention circumstance.

We have no knowledge of the wall foundation.

3.0 Observations on Condition of the Wall

The brickwork piers and dado walls appear to have been well constructed. We found the wall to be acceptably plumb and plane with no sign of any significant structural movement having occurred since the wall was built. There has been a slight opening up of a number of the brick movement joints. In some instances, the sealant material has become loose and is hanging out to expose the foam joint filler.

4.0 Discussion

Based on our visual observations and experienced judgement, we consider that the brick pier and dado wall structure is safe from a structural perspective. If a definitive statement is required in that regard, we would have to carry out appropriate calculations, albeit we feel that would be unnecessary in this instance. A review of the movement joints sealant material should be carried out to identify a suitable alternative that will be able to accommodate seasonal thermal movement without failure.

We do have some concerns regarding the overall structural integrity of the timber panel construction and its restraint back to the brick piers. We have some doubt that the two horizontal rails that support the timber boards may not have adequate strength under design wind loading. The vertical timber battens that provide a backing to support the horizontal rails appear to have only 2 fixings into the brickwork. Whilst these fixings appear to be generally appropriately located close to the positon of the end of the horizontal rails, we think it appropriate that further fixings should be introduced. Further, from a visual only inspection we cannot establish how these vertical battens are fixed to the horizontal rails. With regard to the nature and construction arrangement of the timber infill panels we would recommend that details of the fixing arrangements should be obtained and a design check carried out accordingly to establish whether any enhancement is appropriate and, if so to enable specification of appropriate measures.

5.0 Conclusion

Using engineering judgement based on our visual inspection, it is our considered opinion that the brick work elements of the north boundary wall and east return wall of Eastwood Park Allotments are in a safe structural condition. We recommend, however that further investigation is carried out with regard to the design and installation of the timber infill panels to ensure that these can adequately sustain design wind loads.

Charles Scott & Partners

Appendix A

Photographs

Appendix A

Photograph 1

View Looking East onto Wall

Photograph 2

View on Outside Face of Wall Showing Nature of Construction

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Photograph 3

View on Inside Face of Wall Showing Nature of Construction

Photograph 4

Typical Movement Joint. Slight Opening of Joint with Loose Sealant Evident

Charles Scott & Partners, Venlaw Building, 349 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4AA
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Photograph 5

Internal View of Typical Movement Joint

Photograph 6

Outside View of Timber Infill Panel

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