

Agenda item 5

For decision – Financing for refurbishment of Victoria Park toilets

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Summary

The following report provides an update on the tender process for the refurbishment work of the Victoria Park toilets and funding required. It is recommended to finance the project through a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) application.

Introduction

The toilet block at Victoria Park has long been in need of refurbishment and has been subject to increasing vandalism for many years. Council reports of [September 2020 can be viewed on the website here](#) and [July 2022, on the website here](#), provide background to the development of this project.

The proposal is to refurbish the toilets so that they are in line with best practice in terms of public toilet design and functionality, are more welcoming and accessible, and reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The proposed refurbishment would also include a Changing Places unit. [Click here for more detail on these.](#)



Current toilet block

Tender Process

FTC put out to tender for the refurbishment work through the My Tenders web platform on 10 August 2022. The deadline for submissions was 13 September 2022 and three tenders were received.

Funding

We need now for Cllrs to approve the funding for this project to enable us to agree a contract.

Given the cost of living crisis and the general uncertain economic climate, it is proposed to return the VP toilets EMR to the General Reserve to be used for other expenditure to be identified in the coming months.

Instead, it is proposed that FTC makes a Public Works Loan Board PLWB application for £152,000 repayable over 25 years. The annual loan repayments will come to around £11,091 pa. At the time of writing the PWLB interest rate was 5.41%. The previous week it was 4.54%. With interest rates rising, now is likely to be a better time than in the next few years to be taking them out.

The loan repayments can be borne from the existing maintenance budget for the toilets as annual maintenance and cleaning are expected to reduce by at least 70% (approximately £10,000 pa) following the refurbishment. There will be no increase to the precept arising from these PWLB loan repayments.

The amount of PWLB requiring approval will cover:

1. the cost of the toilets' refurbishment
2. a contingency sum
3. an additional sum for minor refurbishment of the existing building containing the Victoria Park café (the café will be taken over by new operators from next year and there will be a joint effort to improve the café facilities prior to opening in Spring 2023).

Recommendation

To approve the Business Manager on behalf of Frome Town Council seeking the approval of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a PWLB loan of £152,000 over the borrowing term of 25 years for the refurbishment of Victoria Park, Frome toilets and café building. The annual loan repayments will come to £11,091 pa (5.41% interest rate at 27/09/22).

There will be no increase in the precept for the purpose of these loan repayments.