

Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Permission to enter into a partnership agreement with the London Borough of Redbridge and to accept funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (the Nature Towns and Cities grant) to produce a River Rom Strategy
Decision Maker:	Helen Oakerbee, Director of Planning and Public Protection
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Graham Williamson, Development and Regeneration
ELT Lead:	Helen Oakerbee, Director of Planning and Public Protection
Report Author and contact details:	Sophie El Nimr Sophie.elnimr@havering.gov.uk 01708 433 882
Policy context:	<p>National Planning Policy Framework (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change (refer to paras 152-154 &159-169) and Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (refer to paras 174-188))</p> <p>London Plan Policy SI 12 Flood Risk Management; Policy SI 14 Waterways – Strategic</p>

Non-key Executive Decision

	<p>Role; Policy SI 17 Protecting and enhancing London's waterways</p> <p>Havering Local Plan 2016-2031</p> <p>Policy 1 Romford Strategic Development Area</p> <p>Policy 29 Green Infrastructure</p> <p>Policy 31 Rivers and River Corridors</p> <p>Policy 32 Flood Management</p> <p>Romford Town Centre Masterplan SPD</p> <p>4.3.1 Space and Landscape: SL7, SL9</p> <p>4.3.3 Sustainability: S6</p> <p>5.2.2.1 Green Strategy: 3 Rom Corridor</p> <p>5.4.2.1 Environmental Resilience: Opening up the River Rom</p>
Financial summary:	<p>This report requests permission to accept a total of £135,000 in grant funding from the London Borough of Redbridge (grant holder) if awarded the Nature Towns and Cities grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to deliver a River Rom strategy project.</p>
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee:	<p>Place</p>
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	<p>The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision</p>

Non-key Executive Decision

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy [X]

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is recommended that the Director of Planning and Public Protection:

1. Accepts funding of £135,000 from the London Borough of Redbridge via the Nature Towns and Cities grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
2. Subject to 1 above agree to the Council entering into the relevant partnership agreement with the London Borough of Redbridge if successfully awarded the grant funding.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3.3.3 of the Council's constitution 'Powers Delegated to Staff' sets out the following in relation to accepting grant funding: Scheme 3.3.3 – 'Powers common to all Strategic Directors'

Section 5 – 'Grants' 5.1 To apply for, accept and thereafter spend / allocate any grant funding connected with their directorate provided that any match funding or residual liabilities can be met from the existing budget of the directorate. For the avoidance of doubt this delegation shall allow the acceptance of any grant offered / allocated to the Council without any application.

Scheme 3.3.1 General Provisions

5. Sub-delegations 5.1 The Chief Officers may delegate any of the powers listed in this part to another Officer, in so far as is legally permissible.

Notice of delegation of responsibility for functions dated 3 April 2024

Neil Stubbings, Strategic Director of Place delegated functions at Part 3.3.3 to Helen Oakerbee, Director of Planning and Public Protection.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Purpose of Report

This report seeks authority to enter into a partnership agreement with the London Borough of Redbridge to receive a total of £135,000 funding via the Nature Towns and Cities grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to produce a River Rom Strategy. If successfully awarded the funding, the partnership agreement would run for the duration of the Nature Towns and Cities grant, commencing July 2025 and ending July 2028. The application is due on the 14th April and requires a partnership agreement set up which will only be implemented once this grant is offered and accepted, subject to each partner completing all the necessary governance steps.

Development Context

The opportunity to secure improvements to the River Rom has arisen through the multiple large-scale development applications currently coming forward in Romford Town Centre. The

Non-key Executive Decision

planning team are working to secure developer contributions to deliver improvements to the River Rom on key sites, however the planning team currently don't have sufficient information on the River Rom to guide delivery methods or understand the potential cumulative impacts of multiple proposals. This project will provide sufficient information for the Council to secure appropriate River Rom improvements at the planning stages.

Introduction

The London Borough of Havering are jointly preparing an application for the Nature Towns and Cities grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This is supported by the Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne catchment plan, hosted by Thames21 alongside other local authorities and environmental NGOs (eNGOs) within the catchment partnership, having collaboratively worked together over the last 5+ years.

The Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne (RBI) Catchment Partnership made up of government and local organisations and community groups across these three river catchments to achieve river improvements set out in the catchment plan. The RBI Catchment Partnership is co-hosted by Thames21 and Thames Chase Trust. The partnership was formed in 2012 as part of the UK Government's Catchment Based Approach (CABA) initiative to help meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the measures set out in the Thames River Basin Management Plan.

The project title for the application is called the East London Green Alliance (ELGA) and comprises of the London boroughs of Redbridge, Havering and Barking and Dagenham, Thames21, CBRE London and London National Park City.

The ELGA is formed to deliver a series of projects funded by a Nature Towns and Cities grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the partnership agreement will only be implemented once this grant is offered. The partnership will be led by LB Redbridge, who will be responsible to the National Lottery Nature Towns and Cities Fund.

Background of National Lottery Heritage Fund: Nature Towns and Cities Initiative

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) announced the Nature Towns and Cities Initiative in October 2024, set up by the NLHF, the National Trust and Natural England, in close collaboration with other partners. The Nature Towns and Cities Initiative proposes to contribute £15 million in funding across the UK. This initiative will not fund capital works.

The Nature Towns and Cities (NTC) Initiative stated aims are to:

1. Support organisations across sectors to lead for change
2. Support local authorities, community organisations, partners and funders to improve and grow networks of green space throughout their towns and cities (the publication also suggests support for improvements to "blue space")
3. Attract further investment and support for greener, fairer, and more climate-resilient urban neighbourhoods and communities to improve people's health and well-being
4. Help local authorities develop and implement Local Nature Recovery Strategies, identifying opportunities for nature recovery in urban areas
5. Enable at least 100 towns and cities across the UK to become better places to live and work, by putting nature and green spaces at the heart of their plans and priorities.

Project Application Details

The East London Green Alliance (ELGA) is an innovative, cross-sector partnership of 3 neighbouring East London local authorities (the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham & Havering) with three eNGOs that specialise in putting communities at the heart of improvements to blue/green spaces (Thames21, London National Park City and CPRE London).

Non-key Executive Decision

ELGA will use NTC funding to collaborate on a series test-and-learn projects: exploring sustainable new approaches to restoring rivers and lakes; increasing the diversity of communities accessing rivers; cross-borough collaboration on two landscape-scale restoration projects; making the most of private land from gardens to greenfield sites; creating a volunteer ranger network. ELGA will commission the evaluation of these interventions and the creation of a new cross-borough strategy for nature recovery, climate resilience and community wellbeing. The NTC project develops for the first time a coordinated approach to green and blue spaces across outer east London.

The application fund is for a total of £793,200 with LB Havering allocated £135,000. This portion of allocated funding will allow the London Borough of Havering to commission the River Rom strategy project.

This funding opportunity will allow Havering to develop a dedicated River Rom Strategy by commissioning an external expert consultant to produce a nature-based toolkit to guide developers on the design and delivery of river improvements.

The River Rom Strategy Project

The river corridor of the River Rom will be subject to a number of challenges and opportunities over next decade, both due to climate change and strategic development. There is an opportunity to identify these and guide the changes to deliver high quality River Rom improvements more efficiently.

The NTC funding application proposes a dedicated River Rom strategy with a budget of £135,000. The project is to be developed with the intent to support river re-naturalisation proposals along the River Rom as set out in the Havering Local Plan, the Romford Town Centre Masterplan SPD, the Havering Climate Change Action Plan and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan led by LB Havering's Urban Design Team. The delivery and oversight related to this project will fall within existing arrangements and current staff capacity.

The River Rom strategy project would comprise of developing outline designs for river and floodplain enhancement with detailed design proposals for river channel works and floodplain landscaping in the form of a toolkit. There is also potential to expand this strategy to other rivers in the Borough such as the Roding, Beam & Ingrebourne etc.

Benefits & Opportunities

Havering's planning team are working to secure developer contributions to deliver improvements to the River Rom on key sites, however there is insufficient information on the River Rom to guide delivery methods or understand the potential cumulative impacts of multiple proposals. This project will provide sufficient information for the Council to secure appropriate River Rom improvements at the planning stages. The key aspirations for the River Rom Strategy project are set out below:

- Improvement of the riverside for ecological benefits, public and visual amenity, to support active travel, facilitate leisure activities, play and enjoyment of and access to the waterfront.
- Improved riparian urban form and riparian urbanity.
- Increased resilience to the risks of flooding and climate change.
- Better utilised investment from private developers to improve the riverside for ecological benefits, public amenity and flood protection.
- Raised awareness amongst riparian landowners and riverside users, enabling community engagement and support for future changes to the public realm to and along the river.

Non-key Executive Decision

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Do not join as a partner in the application to the Nature Towns and Cities grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund:-

This option was rejected as it would be considered a missed opportunity to not be involved in the grant funding application. The Heritage Lottery Nature Towns and Cities fund offers an opportunity to knit together and supercharge existing work streams across the three neighbouring borough councils and regional charities into a new green-blue strategy that sets out innovative solutions and novel funding sources to shared challenges.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

No formal consultation is required to accept the funds via this programme

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Sophie El Nimr

Designation: Urban Design Officer

Signature:



Date: 10.04.2025

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This report seeks authority to accept external NTC grant funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund via the London Borough of Redbridge and to enter into a partnership agreement with the members of the East London Green Alliance (ELGA).

The Council has a “general power of competence” under Part 1 Chapter 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which gives it the same power to act as that of an individual, subject to other statutory provisions limiting or restricting its use. The recommendations in this report are compatible with the above statutory power.

The Council must ensure that it complies with all its obligations under the Partnership Agreement and the ELGA application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the NTC grant funding. This shall include keeping accurate records, accounts and invoices showing income and expenditure in relation to the Project as well as details of how the agreed deliverables, as stated in the project plan, are completed.

The Council will not incur any financial liabilities in respect to this project that are not agreed to as part of the Project Plan. However, in the event any party does, it shall not be entitled to any indemnity or reimbursement of such financial liability from any other party to the Partnership Agreement. Furthermore, upon termination of the Partnership Agreement for any reason, the Council must repay to Redbridge any unused grant funding.

The Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) state:

25.1 Where the Council receives Grant Funding and is named as the accountable body for the expenditure of monies, and where the terms of the grant permits the council to directly carry out Works, or buy Services or Supplies, any procurement will be conducted in line with CPR.

25.4 Where the funding is for use by a third party, the obligation to account for the funding contained in the grant terms will be included in the agreement with the third party. Furthermore, the terms of making the grant shall include a clause to competitively tender for Services, Supplies or Works and reflect the Council's strategies, policies and objectives in so much as they apply to, or are compatible with, the funding objectives as set out in the grant terms imposed on the Council and CPR.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This proposal is seeking to enter into a Partnership Agreement and subsequently a Grant Agreement with the partners set out within this report. An overall grant bid by the lead partner (LB Redbridge) for £793,200 is proposed, with £135,000 earmarked for LB Havering. The grant terms have not been finalised at this stage, but it is confirmed this is purely revenue in nature. There is no match funding requirement.

The opportunity to secure improvements to the River Rom has arisen through the multiple large-scale development applications coming forward in Romford Town Centre.

£100,000 will be for the River Rom Strategy which will mostly fund an external consultant to develop a nature-based toolkit guide for the developers to use as an aid around making appropriate improvements to the River Rom and surrounding area during planning decisions. This is most notably around expanding/improving green spaces as this is key to the grant

Non-key Executive Decision

funding criteria. The remaining £35,000 is to support existing staff costs within LB Havering in working as part of the Partnership over the three years this is expected to run.

As the Lead Borough, LB Redbridge will control all claims to the HLF, and distribution of funding. LB Havering will submit grant claims to LB Redbridge quarterly in arrears, with the grant administrator having one month to pay the claim to the LB Havering after receipt of the claim from the grant provider.

In the unlikely event that HLF discontinue funding, Havering's planning team will endeavour to seek funding from elsewhere, and as a last resort, suspend work until such funding can be obtained.

Throughout the project Havering will adhere to the grant conditions as set out by the HLF; the partnership agreement attached in appendix A.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The recommendations made in this report do not appear to give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no identified equalities or social inclusion risks associated with this decision, and the decision aligns with the Council's commitment to equality.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no environmental and climate change implications and risks from this decision. The recommendations in this report do not appear to conflict the with the Council's policy on Environment and Climate implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	<i>ELGA Partnership Agreement</i>	<i>Open</i>
Appendix B	<i>ELGA Partnership Structure</i>	<i>Open</i>

Non-key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed 

Name: Helen Oakerbee, Director of Planning and Public Protection

Date: 16 April 2025

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____