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**REPORT TO: THE MORAY COUNCIL ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**SUBJECT: THE KEITH INSTITUTE**

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 This report seeks Council approval for funding in order to carry out works to the external fabric of the Keith Institute building.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section II (3) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the incurring of any revenue expenditure exceeding £50,000 not provided for in the estimates.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Council considers funding of £76,000 to carry out repairs to the external fabric of the Keith Institute, prompted by the availability of CARS funding of £90,000 up until 31 March 2016.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Keith Institute is a category B listed building constructed around 1886. It is prominently positioned in the centre of Keith's Mid Street shopping centre which is a Conservation Area and until 2012 the building was operated as a public access point.
- 3.2 The Institute is on the Keith Common Good Account. That Account has very limited funds and the balance at 31 March 2015 was £1,867. The amount available for distribution in the current year is £49.
- 3.3 The current Property condition survey report highlights the overall poor condition of the building, particularly the external elements.
- 3.4 The building is currently classified as 'potentially surplus' following the relocation of the access point to the Keith Resource Centre.
- 3.5 The Keith and Strathisla Regeneration Partnership (KSRP) commissioned a report by LDN Architects in January 2015 to consider ways the Institute building could be brought back into sustainable public use. There have been subsequent meetings of this project group attended by Local Members and

Council Officers to discuss shared community use options. There are no long term sustainable proposals currently identified by the group despite consultations with various community organisations including Keith Community Radio.

- 3.6 There has been no formal interest indicated from individuals or community groups and the building is currently empty.
- 3.7 The current condition survey has identified that £88k of stonework wall repairs and £60k of roof repairs are required in order to protect the structure from further decay, exclusive of professional fees. If they are not dealt with timeously, these fabric issues may lead to possible water ingress and a health and safety risk from falling masonry. No corporate repairs and maintenance funding has been allocated since 2012 other than periodic high level stonework and roof condition checks relating to health and safety concerns-

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 Following discussion with Keith Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) it has been confirmed that £90k of funding is available as a contribution towards the essential external fabric repairs to the Institute building to protect its historical significance in the town. However funding for CARS projects in the Keith area will expire at the end of March 2016.
- 4.2 The offer from CARS would cover a significant part of the estimated repairs cost, but an additional £76k funding would be required for the balance of the estimated cost and associated fees.
- 4.3 If this project is to proceed and allow the draw down of the CARS funding before the 31 March 2016 deadline, Committee are requested to consider the proposals and agree that the balance of funding be provided by the Council.
- 4.4 Timescales are very tight, however it is envisaged that it is possible for the works to be surveyed, specified and tendered to allow a site start at the beginning of 2016, with completion by 31 March 2016 should the project be given approval and the additional funding agreed at this time.
- 4.5 The completion of these essential repairs will protect the asset from potentially expensive internal damage from water ingress and would also eliminate any health and safety risk from the high level spalling stonework. If no repairs are carried out, there is the potential that the deterioration of the building fabric could escalate in future years, leading to significantly greater upgrade costs.
- 4.6 When complete, the significant external repairs should also encourage any potential interest for future development of the building which will benefit the community, with less upgrade funding required. Given that the building is listed by Historic Scotland it is unlikely that alterations to the existing façade will be permitted and any sustainable future will involve retention and

upgrading of the existing building fabric. The opportunity to access the CARS funding is one that may not be repeated in the future.

## 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future**

This proposal indirectly relates to: Moray 2023 Priority 8: Supporting Start up Businesses, as the completed repairs will provide greater encouragement for transfer of the building through the CAT process

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The policy objectives are set out within the relevant Asset Management Strategies.

### **(c) Financial Implications**

Repair and maintenance works estimated at £166,000 has been identified for the Keith Institute. If the council is prepared to contribute £76,000, the balance will be paid for by Keith CARS.

If additional funding is not agreed, the £90,000 CARS contribution provisionally allocated to the project will have to be returned to Scottish Government if there is insufficient time for this to be reallocated to another project before the 31 March 2016 expiry deadline.

### **(d) Risk Implications**

There is a risk that failure to deal with the current issues will mean that the structure would decay further and lead to Health & Safety implications for the general public.

The estimate for the works is based on dated condition survey information and this could vary up or down depending on local tenders received in a changing construction market.

### **(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no direct staffing implications.

### **(f) Property**

The implications are outlined within the report and will ensure that the structure is sustainable in the longer term both physically and environmentally.

### **(g) Equalities**

There are no equalities issues arising from this report.

### **(h) Consultations**

The Corporate Director (Corporate Services), Head of Housing and Property, Head of Financial Services, Design Manager, Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted

and their comments incorporated in this report. Local ward members have also been consulted and their views will be expressed at the meeting

**6. CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 Funding is currently available from the CARS scheme and whilst the future of the building is uncertain, undertaking essential repair works at this time is likely to reduce the ongoing burden of maintaining this building to ensure that it does not become unsafe.**

Author of Report: Eddie Milne, Property Resources Manager  
Background Papers: held by the report author  
Ref: AMWG Papers and Condition Report