

## Individual Executive Decision Notice

<b>Report title</b>	Celebrating our city's diversity: Commemorating Saragarhi	
<b>Decision designation</b>	GREEN	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Ian Brookfield Leader of the Council	
<b>Wards affected</b>	Wednesfield South;	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Ian Fegan, Director of Communications and External Relations and Director Ward Champion for Wednesfield South	
<b>Originating service</b>	Communications	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Ian Fegan	Director of Communications and External Relations
	Tel	01902 554286
	Email	ian.fegan@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Cabinet (Resources) Panel, 16 June 2021	

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### Summary

On 16 June 2021, Cabinet (Resources) Panel unanimously agreed that the Council provides up to £35,000 from the Recovery Reserve to fund the Battle of Saragarhi statue project in Wednesfield to celebrate the diversity of our city, recognise the contribution of our Sikh community to our country and increase visitor footfall to Wednesfield.

Cabinet (Resources) Panel resolved that an initial £25,000 grant from the Recovery Reserve would be paid to the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Wednesfield for landscaping work on council-owned land around the proposed monument.

Cabinet (Resources) Panel also resolved that *authority be delegated to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Communications and External Relations and the Director of Finance to approve a further grant up to £10,000 from the Recovery Reserve for any unforeseen issues.*

The landscaping works have made good progress and a tight delivery schedule is being adhered to in preparation for the 12<sup>th</sup> September unveiling of the iconic statue. However, during the works, a number of additional, unforeseen costs which are over and above the original

scope of the work have been identified and need to be addressed. These included/include: additional ground condition tests, additional footpath work, additional backfilling work, additional footings work and lightening conductivity work.

**Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

That the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Communications and External Relations and Director of Finance:

- 1. Approve a further grant of £10,000 from the Recovery Reserve for the additional, unforeseen landscaping costs detailed in this report.*

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Signature  
Name of Cabinet Member  
Councillor Stephen Simkins

Date: 24/8/21

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Signature  
Name of Director(s) Ian Fegan

Date: 24/08/21

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Signature  
Name of Director(s)  
Claire Nye  
Date: 24/08/21

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Battle of Saragarhi took place on 12 September 1897 and is considered by some military historians to be the greatest 'last stand' in British military history. Twenty-one brave Sikh soldiers, led by Havildar Ishar Singh, fought to the death against overwhelmingly superior numbers of Afghan tribesmen in their defence of the British outpost at Saragarhi.
- 1.2 The bravery and sacrifice of the 21 soldiers is celebrated every year on Saragarhi Day, 12th of September, by the Indian Army's 4th battalion of the Sikh regiment.
- 1.3 The City of Wolverhampton is an incredibly diverse city, proudly boasting one of the largest and most well-established Sikh communities in the UK. Celebrating this diversity, and recognising the incredible contribution of our communities, is a key part of our city's Vision 2030 and 'fairness and inclusivity' also underpins our 'Relighting our City' recovery plan.
- 1.4 The Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Wednesfield has been working for a number of years to bring a commemorative statue / monument to the city to celebrate the sacrifice of their Sikh servicemen in the service of the British Army.

## **2.0 Progress**

- 2.1 Since the original report was taken to Cabinet (Resources) Panel on 16 June 2021, the Council's support has enabled landscaping work to commence in preparation for the erecting of the statue in early September, ahead of the unveiling ceremony on the anniversary of the battle on 12 September 2021.
- 2.2 Swift progress has been made on the landscaping work and the project is on schedule. However, during the works, a number of additional, unforeseen costs which are over and above the original scope of the work were identified and needed to be addressed. These included/include: additional ground condition tests, additional footpath work, additional backfilling work, additional footings work and lightening conductivity work.

## **3.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 3.1 Please see section 4 of the initial report [Celebrating our city's diversity: Commemorating Saragarhi](#) : Cabinet (Resources) Panel, 16 June 2021 for the evaluation of alternative options.
- 3.2 Given the advanced stages of the work and the significant benefit the project will bring to the city and local community, the prudent option is to draw upon the contingency funds previously allocated.

## **4.0 Reasons for decision(s)**

- 4.1 The allocation of the contingency funding will allow the project to be completed to the quality standards expected for such a prestigious commemorative statue and to the tight

timescales required ahead of the unveiling on 12 September and the significant, high profile public event planned for the date.

- 4.2 The benefits of the project will be significant to the city and local community including celebrating our city's inclusivity and diversity; acknowledging and recognising the contribution made by our Sikh community to the British State and the potential benefits of this funding support in terms of footfall and income to the local economy are significant - it is anticipated, that on the day of the unveiling, as many as 3,000 people will visit the monument. Based on an average local economy spend per head of £18, this could generate – on the unveiling day alone - £50,000 for the local economy. The monument and event will also bring our city an international and national profile and publicity.

## **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 The Reserves, Provisions and Balances 2019-2020 report to Cabinet on 8 July 2020, approved the creation of a £3 million Recovery Reserve to support the Council's Covid19 Recovery Strategy and delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Director of Finance to allocate funds from this reserve.
- 5.2 The previous Cabinet (Resources) Panel report was approved on 16 June 2021 and a £25,000 grant was authorised and provided to the Gurdwara from the Recovery Reserve to contribute toward landscaping costs.
- 5.3 For purposes of prudential contingency planning and to ensure the success of this important city project, Cabinet (Resources) Panel also approved a further contingency budget of £10,000 from the Recovery Reserve with delegated authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Communications and Director of Finance, to allocate any further grants to the Gurdwara from this contingency budget if required.
- 5.4 The potential benefits of this funding support in terms of footfall and income to the local economy, international profile for our city and to our vision for a city that celebrates diversity are significant. It is anticipated, that on the day of the unveiling, as many as 3,000 people will visit the monument. Based on an average local economy spend per head of £18, this could generate – on the day alone - £50,000 for the local economy

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## **6.0 Legal implications**

- 6.1 The leasing of the council-owned land on which the statue will sit is set out in a detailed report to Cabinet (Resources) Panel on 20 November 2020: Leasing of Land at Well Lane - Memorial Statue.
- 6.2 The lease agreement stipulates that the landscaped area will be subsequently maintained by the Gurdwara for the duration of the lease which is currently subject to grounds maintenance as undertaken by the Council

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**7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 The Saragarhi monument is a symbol of the city's rich diversity and Sikh heritage. It contributes to the 'Relighting our City' priority of 'fairness and inclusivity' by acknowledging the service and contribution of Sikh warriors not only to the nation's military but to the British state as a whole.

**8.0 All other Implications**

8.1 N/A.

**9.0 Schedule of background papers**

9.1 Celebrating our city's diversity: Commemorating Saragarhi : Cabinet (Resources) Panel, 16 June 2021

**10. Appendices**

10.1 N/A