

# Cabinet (Resources) Panel

16 June 2021

<b>Report title</b>	Celebrating our city's diversity: Commemorating Saragarhi	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Ian Brookfield Leader of the Council	
<b>Key decision</b>	No	
<b>In forward plan</b>	No	
<b>Wards affected</b>	Wednesfield South	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Ian Fegan, Director of Communications and External Relations	
<b>Originating service</b>	Corporate Communications	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Ian Fegan	Director of Communications and External Relations
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	N/A	

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## Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. Approve a £25,000 grant from the Recovery Reserve to the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Wednesfield for landscaping work on council-owned land around the proposed monument to the Battle of Saragarhi in Wednesfield which celebrates the city's Sikh community heritage, recognises its contribution to our country and will also help 'Relight our City' and town-centre vibrancy.
2. Approve the delegation of authority 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.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend 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.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 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 defense of the British outpost at Saragarhi.
- 2.2 The bravery and sacrifice of the 21 soldiers is celebrated every year on Saragarhi Day, 12th of September, by the Indian Army's 4<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Sikh regiment.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

## 3.0 Overview

- 3.1 To date, significant progress has been made on the project: nationally-acclaimed, local artist, Luke Perry, was commissioned to produce the sculpture and has created a stunning piece of artwork in the form of a statue depicting a Saragarhi warrior; funding for the statue and the marble plinth have been secured through the extensive community and business fundraising efforts of the Gurdwara; the Gurdwara has obtained a land lease from the Council for the site of the statue – adjacent to the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara and next to the Wednesfield Community Hub (Cabinet (Resources) Panel, 20 November 2020: [Leasing of Land at Well Lane - Memorial Statue](#)); there is cross-party support, backed by ward-funds from across the council.
- 3.2 The statue will be unveiled on 12 September this year at an event attended by local, regional, national and international dignitaries and will bring the city significant publicity, profile and positive media attention.
- 3.3 As the only monument of its kind in the UK celebrating this famous battle, the statue is likely to bring in many thousands of visitors a year to Wednesfield, with the increase in footfall contributing to the local economy and the vibrancy of the nearby high street. 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 visitor 'head' of £18, this could generate – on the day alone - £50,000 for the local economy. Throughout the year, the statue is likely to draw in many thousands more visitors.

- 3.4 The statue will also be a powerful symbol of the contribution made by the Sikh community to the British state and military and build upon the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. It also supports our plans, currently being developed for submission, to be the city that hosts the National Armed Forces Day in June 2023.
- 3.5 As the statue is due to be erected on council-owned land, leased by the Gurdwara, and will generate the benefits detailed above 3.3, it is recommended that the City of Wolverhampton Council allocates funding from the Recovery Reserve up to £35,000 to contribute to landscaping work around the statue and the materials required to do this. It is recommended that a grant of £25,000 is paid to the Gurdwara, with £10,000 being held as contingency for any unforeseen issues. This report asks for delegated authority to the Lead of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Communications and Director of Finance to provide further grants to the Gurdwara from this contingency fund if required.
- 3.6 As part of the conditions for the grant, it is a requirement that the Council is acknowledged as a core supporter in any future communications and engagement activity and that the Gurdwara supports local education programmes in city schools to build even stronger community relations and cohesion in our city and to contribute to pupils learning goals and wider social understanding.

#### **4.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 4.1 The Trust Board of the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara has worked hard over the last 12 months to raise the necessary funds for this important local project.
- 4.2 Over £100,000 has been raised from donations from thousands of local community members, backed up with a limited amount of business community funding support.
- 4.3 It is clear that the fundraising efforts of the Gurdwara have been severely impacted by the global pandemic, with many potential fund-raisers understandably diverting potential funding to the pandemic response.
- 4.4 Rather than delay the development, and delay the opportunity to bring increased footfall to the local area from the launch event planned in September and opportunities thereafter, the Council sees the project as a worthy recipient of Recovery Reserve funding to support post-covid 'Relighting our City' plans.
- 4.5 Option one would be to provide no funding to the existing project but without additional funding to secure the project this would mean it is possibly delayed or the project would not be completed. This would result in no potential benefits in terms of footfall and income to the local economy, no international profile for our city and to our vision for a city that celebrates diversity.
- 4.6 Option two would be to partially fund the project. However as above it is possible the shortfall may not be met from fundraising resulting in the project not being completed.

4.7 Option three, the recommended option, is 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.

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

5.1 Option three is recommended because of the wider benefits set out in this report and reinforced in 4.7 above.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

6.1 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 Covid-19 Recovery Strategy and delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Director of Finance to allocate funds from this reserve.

6.2 This report seeks approve to allocate a grant to the Gurdwara of £25,000 from the Recovery Reserve to contribute toward the landscaping costs.

6.3 The total for this element of the project is £40,000 and includes £33,000 for the landscaping work (the Gurdwara have commissioned a West Midlands company directly to undertake the work) and £7,000 for landscaping materials such as paving and kerbstones.

6.4 Contributions to this total of £15,000 have already been secured from ward funds and the business community.

6.5 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.

6.6 For purposes of prudential contingency planning, it is also recommended that a further contingency budget of £10,000 is allocated from the Recovery Reserve. This report seeks 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.

[AS/11062021/Y]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

7.1 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](#).

7.2 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.  
[DP/11062021/A]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 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.

## **9.0 All Other Implications**

- 9.1 Members of the corporate landlord team have been fully engaged in the project and the council's agreement to lease the land for the statue to the Gurdwara.

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 10.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel, 20 November 2020: [Leasing of Land at Well Lane - Memorial Statue](#)