

Committees:	Date
Policy and Resources Court of Common Council	24 September 2020 8 October 2020
Subject Bridge House Estates Strategy: <i>Bridging London, 2020 – 2045</i>	Public
Report of David Farnsworth, Chief Grants Officer and Director of City Bridge Trust	For decision
Report Author Amelia Ehren, BHE Project Manager	

Summary

This report presents the proposed final version of the Bridge House Estates (BHE) Strategy: *Bridging London, 2020 – 2045*. The proposed final strategy has been developed in consultation with officers and Members, which included a briefing session with the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Committees that have responsibility for the discharge of BHE functions, and presentation of a draft strategy to the City Bridge Trust Committee and the Planning & Transportation Committee for their input.

The strategy represents an exciting moment in BHE's long history, providing a framework for all of the charity's activities and outlining the collective impact it wishes to have through its primary and ancillary objects. It also sets out a new vision for the charity where '*every person in London becomes truly connected*', and outlines three new aims to be: *catalytic, sustainable and impact driven*. This report also presents a high-level implementation plan for the strategy which provides an overview of the plans being developed to successfully implement *Bridging London*. This report seeks Members' approval of the strategy, for onward decision by the Court of Common Council for the City Corporation as the sole corporate Trustee of the charity. It also seeks feedback on the high-level implementation plan.

Recommendations

Members are asked, acting collectively in BHE's (charity no. 1035628) best interests, to:

- i. Endorse the proposed final version of the charity's overarching Strategy: *Bridging London, 2020-2045*, for onward approval by the Court of Common Council for the City of London Corporation as Trustee of the charity; and
- ii. Consider the high-level implementation plan for the Strategy: *Bridging London, 2020-2045* and provide any feedback on the plan.

Main report

1. BHE is currently the 7th largest charity in the UK in terms of asset valuation. The City of London Corporation (City Corporation), acting by the Court of Common Council, is the charity's Trustee, with the administration of BHE being undertaken

in accordance with the charity's various governing documents, and the City Corporation's usual procedures and governance framework.

2. The "primary object" of BHE is to maintain and support five bridges crossing the River Thames – London Bridge, Blackfriars Bridge, Southwark Bridge, Tower Bridge and Millennium Bridge. A cy-près scheme of 1995 permits income surplus to that required for the five bridges to be used for the provision of transport and access to it for elderly or disabled people in the Greater London area, and for more general, charitable purposes for the benefit of the inhabitants of Greater London ("the ancillary object"). Any available income surplus is distributed through a policy approved by the Court of Common Council and notified to the Charity Commission, following considerable consultation with external and internal stakeholders. The current such policy is '*Bridging Divides*', delivered by City Bridge Trust (CBT), the charity's "funding arm".
3. As part of the BHE Strategic Governance Review, which was initiated to assess how the governance and management of BHE could be enhanced, it was identified that there was a need to develop a new overarching strategy for BHE, with the purpose of providing a framework for the effective advancement of both the charity's primary and ancillary objects, the primary object always taking precedence.

Current position

4. In late 2019, work began on the development of a BHE overarching strategy which has been led by the BHE Project Manager, in conjunction with the Chief Grants Officer & Director of CBT. The thinking and ambition of the scope, purpose and measures of success of the proposed strategy have also been developed in consultation with the BHE officer Task & Finish Group, other key officers within the City Corporation, and with the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Committees that have responsibility for the discharge of BHE functions. In July 2020, a draft strategy was also presented to the CBT Committee and the Planning & Transportation Committee for comment. The feedback received has been incorporated into the proposed final version of the strategy at **Appendix 1**.
5. The vision, aims and length of the proposed strategy articulate a high level of ambition for the charity, which is built upon all that BHE has learned and achieved over its more than 900-year history and through its relationship with the City Corporation as its Trustee. The benefits of BHE having the City Corporation as its sole Trustee have been recognised in the development of the strategy and will be central to its implementation.
6. A charity of the size of BHE would be expected to have in place an overarching strategic plan for the charity's administration and vision. This proposed strategy, which is before Members for approval, therefore achieves one of the objectives of the BHE Strategic Governance Review, namely, to enhance the governance of the charity to align it with best practice in the sector.
7. To support the delivery of the strategy, a high-level implementation plan has been developed, at **Appendix 2**, which provides an overview of the developing plans to

implement the strategy. The high-level implementation plans provides a summary of the vision and aims of the strategy, alignment with other existing BHE strategies/plans, the proposed personnel and financial resources required to implement the strategy, proposed 'beacon projects' for Year 1 of the strategy, the performance framework, review cycles and possible barriers to success.

Next steps

8. Members are asked to endorse the proposed final version of the BHE Strategy: *Bridging London* at **Appendix 1**, and consider the high-level implementation plan and to provide any comments for incorporation) at **Appendix 2**. The strategy will then be presented to the Court of Common Council in October 2020 for final approval for the City Corporation as Trustee of the charity.
9. If the strategy is approved, further time and resource will be dedicated to developing a more detailed Year 1 action plan which will set out all the activities that will be delivered in the first year in support of achieving the aims and vision set out in the strategy. An updated action plan will then be produced on a yearly basis. Work will also take place to further develop the performance framework highlighted in the high-level implementation plan.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

10. *Bridging London* sets out a framework for all of BHE's activities and is supported at an operational level by several of the charity's other existing strategies and plans, which provide further detail of the delivery of the primary and ancillary objects, including the: Bridge Replacement Strategy, 50-year Bridge Maintenance Plan, charitable funding strategy '*Bridging Divides*', Philanthropy Strategy and the developing BHE Investment Strategy.
11. Strategic implications: the strategy is also supportive of, and supported by, the vision set out within the City Corporation's Corporate Plan (CP) for 2018-23 and reinforces the CP outcomes 3, 4, 5, 9, 11 and 12. These outcomes are considered by officers to be aligned with outcomes which are in the best interest of the charity to support. Similarly, the BHE strategy is also supportive of, and supported by, a number of the City Corporation's strategies including the Responsible Strategy 2018-23 and the Climate Action Strategy.
12. To note, in the proposed final version of the strategy at **Appendix 1**, there is reference to a target of the charity working towards being net zero by 2040. This has been aligned with the proposed target for the City Corporation set out in the Climate Action Strategy which is on your agenda today for decision. If a different target is agreed by Members for the Climate Action Strategy, the commitment in the BHE strategy could be amended to align with the agreed corporate target, if deemed to be in the charity's best interests.
13. Any learning and/or synergy between the City Corporation's own strategies, and those of BHE, will continue to be explored as relevant to the charity's own objects and activities, and always having regard to what is in the charity's best interests.

14. Security implications: there are no direct security implications for this overarching strategy.
15. Financial implications: funding for the development of the strategy is within already allocated resources. Financial resources may be required to implement certain actions outlined in the strategy. Where appropriate, it is proposed that funding for key activities in the first year of implementation are met by the BHE Strategic Review Fund (further details of this can be found at **Appendix 2**). As further progress is made on implementation, and as the charity's longer-term resource needs are identified and settled, it is intended that these will be considered and agreed as part of the regular business and budgetary planning cycle.
16. Equalities and resources implications: A test of relevance was conducted and indicated that a full EQIA was not needed.

Conclusion

17. Members are asked to endorse the proposed BHE Strategy: *Bridging London* at Appendix 1, for onward approval by the Court of Common Council for the City Corporation acting in its capacity as Trustee of the charity; and consider the high-level implementation plan at Appendix 2. The strategy is a key outcome for the BHE Strategic Governance Review, and will support the charity in enhancing and demonstrating its impact and reach across London, by working towards its vision of a future where '*every person in London becomes truly connected*'.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – BHE Strategy, *Bridging London* 2020 – 2045.
- Appendix 2 – BHE Strategy, *Bridging London*: High-level implementation plan

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