

REPORT TITLE: ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE FOR REPAIRS TO THE BUTTERCROSS

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration – Councillor Martin Tod

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WARD(S): ST MICHAEL

PURPOSE

To seek Cabinet approval for a supplementary estimate due to forecast additional cost associated with urgent unforeseen conservation and structural stabilisation works to the Winchester Buttercross, a Scheduled Monument of national significance.

The original approved budget for restoration works to The Buttercross was £50k, but the discovery of significant structural failures identified during scaffold access and joint inspection with Historic England (HE) means works are more extensive than thought and this is no longer sufficient

The increased cost reflects the need for emergency works required to preserve the monument's historic fabric and ensure public safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Cabinet approve a supplementary estimate of £250,000 for works to the Buttercross funded from the Council's Property Reserve.
2. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Corporate Head of Asset Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place, to enter into revised contract arrangements with the appointed specialist contractor, Stonewest Ltd.
3. That Cabinet note the Scheduled Monument Emergency Works Notice issued by Historic England and the requirement to undertake the works without delay.

## IMPLICATIONS:

### 1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

#### 1.1 Greener Faster

Conservation of historic assets supports sustainable place-making and reduces the need for more carbon intensive reconstruction in future.

Use of traditional materials and low impact repair methods aligns with heritage-led environmental stewardship.

#### 1.2 Thriving Places

The Buttercross is a focal point of the city centre and a key heritage attraction. Its preservation supports tourism, local business vitality, and the overall quality of the public realm.

#### 1.3 Good Homes for All

Not applicable.

#### 1.4 Efficient and Effective

Responding promptly to the emergency notice demonstrates responsible asset management with early intervention preventing more costly deterioration and future liability.

#### 1.5 Listening and Learning

The project reflects collaborative working with Historic England, specialist contractors, and conservation experts with the revised scope incorporates lessons from previous interventions and current best practice in monument conservation.

### 2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 In order to complete the urgent conservation and stabilisation works to the Buttercross, the required budget will need to be increased beyond the original allocation of £50,000. The expanded scope of works has arisen following close access inspection and the identification of significant structural defects. Additional funding of £250,000 from the property reserve is now required to ensure the works can be completed safely and in accordance with Historic England's Scheduled Monument Emergency Works Notice.

2.2 The revised cost estimate reflects the need for structural stabilisation, stone replacement, removal of failed fixings, extended scaffold hire, additional preliminary costs and increased professional fees. These works are essential to address the structural failures identified in the upper stone dressings and flying buttresses. As the Buttercross is an existing asset, there are no direct

revenue consequences arising from the capital works. Ongoing maintenance requirements will continue to be met from existing budgets.

- 2.3 Approval is sought for the additional £250,000 to enable the full scope of emergency works to proceed. This includes contingency to address further defects that may emerge during the conservation process. The original allocation for the Buttercross will remain committed to the project, and the additional funding will ensure compliance with the Emergency Works Notice issued by Historic England.

### 3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Buttercross is a Scheduled Monument, and all works must comply with the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Following investigation Historic England has issued a Scheduled Monument – Emergency Works Notice, which legally obliges the Council to undertake urgent stabilisation.
- 3.2 Procurement and contract variations will follow the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contracts Regulations.

### 4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

### 5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Buttercross is a Council-owned heritage asset and a Scheduled Monument; the Council has a statutory responsibility to maintain it in a safe and stable condition.
- 5.2 The discovery of structural defects increases the Council's liability exposure if works are not undertaken promptly.
- 5.3 The additional funding will protect the long-term condition and value of the asset, reducing future maintenance costs.
- 5.4 Works will be carried out in accordance with conservation best practice to ensure the asset's historic significance is preserved.
- 5.5 The project supports the Council's wider asset management strategy by addressing high-risk heritage assets proactively.

### 6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 Works commenced in early March 2026 on the Buttercross. During scaffold installation and subsequent inspection, representatives from Historic England, PHA Consultants, Winchester City Council, and Stonewest Ltd identified serious structural defects not visible from ground level. These include:

- Live and de-bonded upper stone dressings, particularly around areas previously rebuilt in the early 1990s.
- Cracking and structural failure around the flying buttresses and their connections.
- Evidence of historical settlement, misalignment, and failed or exposed ferrous metal fixings.
- Fine fissures and instability caused by thermal expansion of shallow metal embedments within thin stone sections.
- Several stone components now reliant solely on slate dowel fixings, some of which have failed.

6.2 Historic England has issued a Scheduled Monument – Emergency Works Notice (Section 5 Exemption) requiring urgent intervention to prevent further deterioration and to protect public safety.

## 7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Works will use traditional lime mortars, natural stone, and conservation-grade materials with low embodied carbon. Contractor and site operations will follow best practice to minimise waste and environmental impact.

7.2 The project preserves an existing historic structure, avoiding the environmental cost of major reconstruction.

## 8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

8.1 The decision to approve additional funding for the conservation of the Buttercross has been assessed in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010).

8.2 The works relate to the preservation and structural safety of a Scheduled Monument in a public space.

8.3 The project does **not** introduce any changes that would negatively affect people with protected characteristics.

8.4 Temporary access arrangements during works will be managed to ensure the High Street remains accessible to all users, including disabled people and those with mobility impairments.

8.5 The project contributes positively to an inclusive public realm by ensuring a safe and well-maintained environment for residents and visitors of all ages.

**Overall, the equality impact is assessed as neutral with no adverse effects identified**

## 9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 Not applicable

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<p>Public safety – risk of masonry collapse if these urgent works are not completed</p> <p>Risk of masonry falling during works.</p>	<p>Strap stones and dismantle in stages as instructed by a Structural Engineer</p> <p>Scaffolding and removal of unstable masonry</p>	<p>A stabilised monument fully restored</p>
<p>Financial Exposure – risk of further escalation of works</p> <p>Risk of claims against the council if repair works are not completed and injury is sustained from historic monuments. Such claims may not be funded by the council's insurers as the council has chosen to run the risk by not repairing</p>	<p>Additional funding forecast is based on latest available information and includes an appropriate contingency The budget will be closely monitoring and staged approvals.</p>	
<p>Exposure to challenge from</p>	<p>Clear documentation of structural findings; reliance on expert advice from Historic England and PHA; compliance with Scheduled Monument Emergency Works Notice.</p>	<p>Transparent decision-making strengthens public trust; reinforces the Council's reputation for responsible heritage management.</p>
<p>Innovation</p>	<p>Use of proven conservation techniques and specialist contractors;</p>	<p>Opportunity to trial improved conservation methods; potential to</p>

	adherence to Historic England guidance.	develop best-practice case study for other authorities. In particular laser cleaning will be used.
Reputation	Prompt action on safety risks; visible commitment to preserving the monument; proactive communication with stakeholders.	Enhances the Council's standing as a guardian of heritage assets; positive media and tourism narrative.
Achievement of outcome	Robust project management; expert oversight, with specialist consultants; defined scope to address emerging defects.	Ensures long-term stability of the monument; delivers a high-quality conservation outcome.
Property	Emergency stabilisation prevents further deterioration; regular inspections during works.	Extends the lifespan of a key heritage asset; reduces future maintenance liabilities.
Community Support	Engagement with local businesses, BID, clear explanation of safety and preservation needs.	Strengthens community pride; potential for volunteer or educational involvement.
Timescales	Contractor already mobilised; emergency works exemption allows immediate action; programme reviewed to reflect expanded scope.	Opportunity to complete works ahead of the winter period; reduces prolonged scaffold presence if continued to proceed.
Project capacity	Dedicated project lead; use of specialist conservation contractor; collaboration with Historic England and WCC's Conservation Officer.	Builds internal expertise in managing complex heritage projects.
Local Government Reorganisation		
Other	Seasonal planning for lime and stonework; early procurement of specialist materials; contingency in programme.	Potential to strengthen supplier relationships.

## 11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

11.1 The Buttercross had previously undergone conservation interventions in the early 1990s. While these works stabilised the structure at the time, the recent scaffold access revealed that several of those historic repairs have now failed. From initial surveys the defects were not visible, and the full extent of deterioration could only be understood once close inspection was possible.

## 12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1 **Do Nothing / Defer the Works** The joint inspection identified significant structural instability, including de-bonded stonework, failed fixings, and cracks through key load-bearing elements. Historic England has issued a Scheduled Monument Emergency Works Notice, meaning the Council is legally required to act. Failure to proceed would:

- pose a public safety risk in a high-footfall area
- risk further deterioration of the monument
- expose the Council to regulatory challenge and reputational harm
- increase future repair costs significantly

This option is therefore not viable.

12.2 **Reduce the Scope of Works** The defects identified are structural and interrelated. Partial intervention would not stabilise the monument or satisfy the requirements of the Emergency Works Notice. Reducing scope would:

- leave unsafe or unstable elements in place
- risk further failure of adjacent stonework
- require repeated mobilisation, increasing total cost
- fail to meet conservation best practice

A reduced scope would not deliver a safe or sustainable outcome.

12.3 **Retender the Works Stonewest** Ltd is already appointed through a compliant procurement process and has specialist conservation expertise. Retendering would:

- delay urgent works by several months
- risk non-compliance with the Emergency Works Notice
- increase scaffold hire and project management costs
- potentially return higher prices due to market conditions and specialist scarcity

Given the emergency nature of the works, retendering is not appropriate.

12.4 **Seek Full External Funding Before Proceeding** While external heritage funding may be explored for future phases or interpretation, emergency stabilisation cannot be delayed. Waiting for external funding would:

- breach the Emergency Works Notice
- prolong scaffold occupation of the High Street
- risk further structural deterioration
- increase overall project cost

External funding is not a realistic option for immediate emergency works.

**12.5 Remove or Dismantle Unstable Elements** The Buttercross is a Scheduled Monument, and dismantling or removing historic fabric is only permissible in extreme circumstances and with explicit consent from Historic England. This option would:

- cause irreversible loss of historic fabric
- conflict with conservation principles
- require extensive archaeological oversight
- likely cost more than stabilisation

Historic England supports conservation in situ, making dismantling inappropriate.

**12.6 Proceed with Full Stabilisation and Conservation Works (Recommended Option)**

This is the only option that:

- complies with the Emergency Works Notice
- ensures public safety
- preserves the historic fabric
- aligns with conservation best practice
- protects the Council's asset and reputation
- avoids escalating long-term costs

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Cabinet/Committee Reports or Cabinet Member Decisions:-

Other Background Documents:-

Hampshire Chronicle reporting:

[Initial clean of Winchester's Buttercross is now complete | Hampshire Chronicle](#)

#### APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Stonewest photographic condition of findings