

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of
Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services
to

Cabinet

on
8th January 2013

Agenda
Item No.

Report prepared by: Paul Jenkinson
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Proposed Trust Links Project at Elm Road Allotment Site
Community Services & Culture Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor: Councillor Derek Jarvis
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To seek Members' views on leasing Elm Road allotment site to Trust Links to create a community garden based on the Growing Together template (Appendix 3).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Approval in principle the lease of the Elm Road Allotment site to Trust Links for the creation of a project based on the Growing Together model for a period of 25 years.
- 2.2 That members agree to authorise the Corporate Director of Adult & Community Services to agree the terms of the lease in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture & Tourism based on advice and assistance from Asset Management.

3. Background

- 3.1 Elm Road is a statutory allotment site situated in Shoeburyness (Appendix 1 - Location Plan).
- 3.2 During the late 1990s the allotment site was mothballed due to vandalism and fly tipping at the site following a decline in plot holders.
- 3.3 Trust Links, a local charity has approach Southend-on-Sea Borough to take over the site and bring it back in to cultivation based on its Growing Together template.

- 3.4 Trust Links aims to support people with mental health problems and learning disabilities in their wellbeing and recovery, carers of people with mental health needs and also aims to provide environmental education and awareness. Trust Links was founded in 2000 to address the mental health needs of local people in Southend-on-Sea and South Essex and in 2002 was registered as a charity and company limited by guarantee.
- 3.5 Trust Links main project, Growing Together, is aimed at the recovery, well-being and onward development of service users with mental health problems and learning disabilities. This is provided through therapeutic horticulture and positive activities, including training and real life work experience.
- 3.6 The community garden on a former allotment site off Fairfax Drive provides a beautiful relaxing space both for service users and members of the public. The social and therapeutic gardening project is set in a one acre community garden, which was developed from an overgrown disused allotment site. Trust Links also provides a programme that supports children with behavioural and educational issues through an alternative education programme including gardening, cooking and creative projects in the garden such as building dens.
- 3.7 The project provides vocational training in partnership with Southend Adult Community College, which includes Level 1 and 2 Diploma in Horticulture and accredited qualifications in manual handling, health & safety, food hygiene and first aid.
- 3.8 Growing Together responds to the health, wellbeing and employment needs of service users in a holistic way. They have recently adopted the Recovery Star model, which enables them to assess the needs of individuals and measure the change in their wellbeing through regular reviews. This model is delivering real benefits for local residents and is making an increasingly important contribution to supporting individuals receiving service and support from the council's Adult Social Services.
- 3.9 Trust Links has been awarded £300,000 (Appendix 4) from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund to develop a new Growing Together project in Shoeburyness. The project will develop a new community garden (outline design Appendix 2 and project outline Appendix 5), aiming to improve health and wellbeing and support the recovery of vulnerable and disadvantaged adults experiencing mental health problems through social and therapeutic gardening, positive activities, peer support, work experience and holistic support, in collaboration with the local community.

- 3.10 Adults with mental health problems will attend the community garden one to two days per week and participate in structured activities to develop and maintain the garden, whilst learning horticultural skills and receiving support from staff, volunteers and their peers. The project will also provide targeted support for teenagers in the area through gardening and other positive activities during designated sessions each week.
- 3.11 Local research by Trust Links in the form of a survey outside Asda and with local community groups has identified that there is no similar or equivalent service in Shoeburyness and that there is a significant need relating to mental health in the area – some of which is supported by statutory services, but largely the need is unmet and hidden.
- 3.12 In year one, Trust Links will aim to engage 110 adults with mental health problems and vulnerable young people in Growing Together Shoeburyness on a regular basis. 75 of these will participate in relevant training and learning opportunities to enhance their employability. During the 5 years of the Big Lottery funding, Trust Links will aim to support 500 people to improve their physical and mental health through their involvement in the project.
- 3.13 Trust Links will look to develop the project so that community allotment gardening can be reintroduced to the site.
- 3.14 Trust Links will set up a Steering Group for the project, which will involve local people from the community and professionals and will help design the site and the services that are offered.
- 3.15 To enable Trust Links to meet the requirements of its lottery funding it will require secure lease for a minimum of 25 years.
- 3.16 Proposals

Members agree to support the creation of a community garden to support those with mental health needs and lease the Elm Road Allotment site to Trust Links for a period of 25 years for the creation of a project based on the Growing Together template.

Members authorise the Corporate Director of Adult & Community Services to agree the terms of the lease in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture based on advice and assistance from Asset Management.

4. Other Options

No other options are presented.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 Leasing the Elm Road allotment site to Trust Links will enable a local charity to deliver new services to the residents of the town especially those in the Shoeburyness area.
- 5.2 Trust Links has a proven track record of delivering projects that supports people and builds communities.
- 5.3 Trust Links currently run three main projects, Growing Together Westcliff, Breakthrough and The only Way Is Green (TWIG) and support over 250 people a year and work with local schools.

The leasing of the site will reduce the Council's potential maintenance liability for the site.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities
 - 6.1.1 **Healthier Southend:** Providing well managed facility within one of the town's green spaces helps to encourage participation in healthy outdoor activity.
 - 6.1.2 The work of Trust Links benefits people with mental health issues and other sectors of the community.
 - 6.1.3 **Safe Southend:** Bring the allotment site back into cultivation will increase people using and visiting the area and provide increased natural surveillance.
 - 6.1.4 **Clean Southend:** The facility will be managed to ensure a clean environment. Bring the site back in to use having staff onsite and involving the local community will reduce fly-tying on the site.
 - 6.1.5 **Prosperous Southend:** The project will see an investment of £300,000 in the area and ongoing support for people with specific needs looking for employment.
 - 6.1.6 **Excellent:** Trust Links provide a high quality service at its existing site at Growing Together. The creation of a new site in the east of the town will create new high quality services.
 - 6.1.7 **Minimising our environmental impact:** The use of the site as a community garden will enhance the local environment. The work of Trust Links will train people in environmental skills such as gardening.
- 6.2 Financial Implications
 - 6.2.1 The Council will need to cover its legal costs. Trust Links have agreed to cover their legal costs.

6.2.2 Leasing the site to a charity will reduce the Council's financial liability with regard to the ongoing operation and maintenance costs.

6.2.3 The lease arrangement will need to be prepared and agreed by the Council in a way that protects both the Council's financial and future interest with this asset.

6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 The site would be leased to Trust Links on terms to be agreed in detail. Legal advice will be sought as required during the project and in the drafting and completion of the legal documentation.

6.3.2 The Elm Road allotments are a statutory allotment site. Legal advice will be sought to ensure that the proposed use of the area by Trust Links meets our obligations.

6.3.3 Any disposal of public open space (including a leasehold disposal) must be advertised and any comments considered before the final consideration can be made. The Council must demonstrate it has secured the best consideration reasonably possible and good value for money in accordance with s.123 Local Government Act 1972. The Asset Management team will be involved in the negotiation of the lease terms and the transaction will need to be certified for best consideration before the lease can be entered into.

6.4 People Implications

Officers will work on the project and liaise with Trust Links.

6.5 Property Implications

The Asset Management Team in consultation with the Parks Technical Team will work to agree detailed lease terms with appropriate break clauses. They will also ensure that the Council's position is suitably protected, best consideration and value for money are addressed and the legal implications addressed relating to the disposal of public open space.

6.6 Consultation

Trust Links will continue to undertake consultation on its proposals. Shoeburyness Ward Members have been consulted on the proposals. This report was presented to CSCSC on 27th November 2012 and the Committee fully supported the proposal.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

This will be addressed through the design process to ensure that all groups will have equal access to the site.

6.8 Risk Assessment

A risk register will be established with Trust Links. The risks to the council associated with leasing the allotment site at Elm Road to Trust Links are minimal. The risks identified at this time are:

Risk	Mitigation
Objections by local residents to the use of the area for a horticultural project	Trust Links have consulted with the local community and will continue to involve them as the project develops.
Objections by allotment societies over the use of the site for a horticultural project	The Trust Links project includes allotment areas.
Protected wildlife on the site preventing the area being brought back in to cultivation.	Initial environmental surveys have been undertaken and further surveys will be undertaken if required
Unable to agree heads of terms for the lease	Officers will work with the Chief Executive of Trust Links to agree terms

In addition to the risks to the council identified, Trust Links have been asked to produce a risk log for their project and share this with the Council.

6.9 Value for Money

6.9.1 The Council will not need to contribute financially to the development or delivery of the project, other than the authority's legal costs.

6.9.2 Trust Links have secured £300,000 to deliver the project.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

The Council's obligation under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 has been taken in to account.

6.11 Environmental Impact

The design, build and operation of the site will be informed by the concept of sustainability, using techniques that minimise impact on the environment.

7. Background Papers

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 Location plan

Appendix 2 Concept design for garden

Appendix 3 The Growing Together Template

Appendix 4 Year 1 to 5 Project costs from Trust Links

Appendix 5 Project Outline for Growing Together Shoeburyness