

## WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 4 August 2010

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**Subject: Proposed lease of land at Whiteford Avenue, Bellsmyre to the Bellsmyre Community Garden Association**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise Members of a proposal to establish a Community Allotment and Garden site at Whiteford Avenue, Bellsmyre and to seek Members approval for the associated lease of land.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** As part of the Community Planning Partnership Housing Thematic Group, funding of £100,000 was secured via the Fairer Scotland Fund to develop a 'Community Involvement in Neighbourhoods' project.
- 2.2** The objective of the initiative is to increase residents' perception of their neighbourhood by developing stronger communities through increased involvement in the management of their neighbourhood.
- 2.3** In practical terms, the project aims to assist and support residents deliver services which improve their local neighbourhood environment. More specifically, the project aims to provide residents with the confidence and support to take sustained and proactive actions. Public consultation is central to project delivery and support is based on the needs of the community.
- 2.4** The project aims to support the achievement of West Dunbartonshire's Community planning vision relevant to National Outcome 11 of the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).

*'We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own action and how they affect others.'*

The project also contributes to local outcomes within the SOA as follows;

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| Outcome 11.1 | - Improved residents' perception of their neighbourhood                              |
| Outcome 11.2 | - Increased community volunteering and involvement                                   |
| Outcome 11.3 | - Improved quality and access to green space   |
| Outcome 12.2 | - Improve the state of West Dunbartonshire's environment                             |
| Outcome 13.1 | - Improved image and reputation of West Dunbartonshire and the council               |
| Outcome 14.2 | - Percentage of primary and secondary schools achieving Eco-Schools Green flag award |

- 2.5** The key aims of the project focus around the following activities:
- Development of a framework to engage community volunteers
  - Enhancement of open spaces in housing estates through the creation of community gardens and allotments
  - Expansion of the work done as part of the Council's Litter Control Strategy
  - Increase residents' perception of their neighbourhood
- 2.6** The project commenced on the 01 April 2010 with the temporary appointment of two Community Involvement Officers to assist deliver project outcomes. These officers act as facilitators to promote self help in the community and they engage with partners and other interested groups to assist in building contacts and fund raising opportunities. The officers have been working with several community groups across the authority who are keen to develop community gardens within their neighbourhoods and have also assisted local Community Councils and other organisations in a number of successful litter clean-ups and campaigns.
- 2.7** A group of Bellsmyre residents have recently achieved formal constitution and have established the Bellsmyre Community Garden Association (BCGA) with the aim of creating a Community allotment and garden site within, and for, the Bellsmyre community.
- 2.8** The BCGA aims to create a community allotment and garden site within the Whiteford Avenue area of Bellsmyre where the residents of Bellsmyre can grow their own vegetables, fruits and plants.

The aims of the group are:

- (i) To manage and supervise the Association's allotments and gardens for the benefit of its members and the Bellsmyre community;
- (ii) To promote community participation in local environmental activities improving Bellsmyre's environment and bio diversity;
- (iii) To increase the number of Bellsmyre residents participating in community voluntary activities;
- (iv) To engage Bellsmyre residents of all ages and backgrounds to support the group's aims and objectives;
- (v) To foster good relations with residential neighbours, local statutory organisations and community partners in Bellsmyre.

The site itself will consist of a number of raised planter beds which will form the basis of a communal allotment facility. There will be a single container on site acting as a store for equipment and materials.

- 2.9** The community based voluntary activity will be complimented through the establishment of Growing space garden resources in a number of target schools. In addition to 'grow your own activities' the resource will support Curriculum for excellence requirements across specific learning outcomes. There will be specific focus on community based 'citizenship' activities. This will focus on pupils support to local environment improvement activities covering litter and green space improvements.
- 2.10** Significant community engagement has been undertaken. In most cases, a number of awareness sessions and presentations have taken place with the following community groups;
- Bellsmyre Housing Association
  - Bellsmyre Neighbourhood Forum
  - North Dunbarton Community Council
  - Bellsmyre Youth Action Group
  - Bellsmyre Community Youth Group
  - St Peters and Aikenbar Primary Schools
  - Bellsmyre Community Advice Centre
  - Bellsmyre Community Garden Association
  - Bellsmyre regeneration Master plan
  - Bellsmyre 'Awards for all' activity
- 2.11** Community engagement was further supplemented by a public consultation conducted over several days in May 2010 and a public meeting held on the 28 May 2010.
- 2.12** Significant engagement has been undertaken with a number of national and regional organisations by both the Officers and the BCGA. Notable organisations include, Green space Scotland, Society for Allotments and Gardens, Loch Lomond National Park.

The BCGA proposal has been selected by Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network as its Sow and Grow Everywhere (SAGE) demonstration project for West Dunbartonshire.

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** In order to progress with the above project, Bellsmyre Community Garden Association (BCGA) requires access to an area of ground.
- 3.2** A plot of amenity greenspace owned by West Dunbartonshire Council as identified on the Plan shown as Appendix A has been identified as suitable to lease to BCGA.
- 3.3** The results of the neighbourhood consultation showed that 91% of respondents were in favour of the use of the site as a Community Allotment and Garden resource for the community of Bellsmyre.

- 3.4 It is proposed that the area of land is leased to BCGA on a long-term lease of 30 years.
- 3.5 The market value for leasing the area of land is estimated at £240 per annum however Members are asked to consider leasing the land to the BCGA for the sum of £1 per annum to enable the group to invest any funds which they raise for the purchase of plants, seeds and equipment for the project.
- 3.6 The Council's Grounds Maintenance service would cease to maintain the area; this currently costing the Council approx. £580 per annum.

#### **4. People Implications**

- 4.1 None.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The market rental value of the land shown hatched in Appendix A is approx £240 per annum.
- 5.2 If Members agree to lease the land to BCGA for the sum of £1 per annum there will be a resultant notional loss of £239 per annum to the Council.
- 5.3 The annual saving to the Council's Grounds Maintenance service who would cease to maintain the land, amounts to approx. £580 per annum.
- 5.4 The value of the leasehold interest is less than the £10,000 minimum threshold and accordingly Scottish Government consent is no longer required under the new Regulations which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010. ( i.e. The Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010).

#### **6. Risk Analysis**

- 6.1 The agreement of a 30 year ground lease would result in the land in question being unavailable to the Council for that period, other than via any termination clause contained within the lease agreement.
- 6.2 There is a risk to the Council that the BCGA project is unsuccessful in achieving its objectives. There would be a clause within the lease agreement which would enable the Council to terminate the lease should the ground not be maintained to a condition satisfactory to the Council.

#### **7. Equalities Impact**

- 7.1 No significant issues have been identified in a screening for potential equality impact of the proposed lease of the land in question.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 8.1** The proposal to establish a Community Allotment and Garden site at Whiteford Avenue, Bellsmyre has the support and backing of the local community groups and schools.
- 8.2** The site identified lies between Whiteford Avenue and Whiteford Crescent in Bellsmyre and is a community greenspace area owned by the Council.
- 8.3** The market rental value for leasing the area of land is estimated at £240 per annum however availability of the land at a reduced annual fee would enable the group to invest any funds which they raise in the purchase of plants, seeds and equipment for the project.
- 8.4** It is therefore recommended that the Committee agree to the development of a 30 year lease agreement between Bellsmyre Community Gardens Association and West Dunbartonshire Council for the land shown hatched on Appendix A at the sum of £1 per annum.

**Elaine Melrose**

**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Date: 7 July 2010**

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<b>Person to Contact:</b>	Ronald M. Dinnie - Head of Land and Environment, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, telephone: 01389 737601 e-mail: <a href="mailto:ronald.dinnie@west-dunbarton.gov.uk">ronald.dinnie@west-dunbarton.gov.uk</a>  Lynda McLaughlin -Manager of Commercial Operations, Elm Road, Dumbarton, telephone: 01389 772097, e-mail: <a href="mailto:lynda.mclaughlin@west-dunbarton.gov.uk">lynda.mclaughlin@west-dunbarton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Appendix:</b>	A - Plan showing ground at Whiteford Avenue, Bellsmyre
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	2