

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:
11 January 2012

Subject: Proposed establishment of a Community Allotment and Garden site at Abbeylands Road Faifley

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 Abbeylands Road, Faifley 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 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;
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 Over the last 18 months a group of Faifley residents have pursued their aims of creating a Community allotment and garden site within the Faifley community. The group are formally constituted and have established the Faifley Community Allotment Society (FCAS). The FCAS aims to create a community allotment and garden site within the old tennis courts, situated beside the Faifley Bowling Green on the Abbeylands Road area of Faifley. This proposed site will provide a location where the residents of Faifley can grow their own vegetables, fruits and plants. The aims of the group as follows;

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

Public consultation

2.7 During March 2011 residents within the vicinity of the proposed site at Abbeyland Road were asked to take part in a survey regarding the proposed use of the existing amenity grass site as a Community Allotment and Garden. 46 residents participated providing a sample rate of 31%.

- 2.8** A Community open day held on the 5 of March 2011 and attended by 72 residents including representatives from local primary schools, nurseries and community groups and national organisations. A public meeting was held on Wednesday 13 April 2011 to review the proposal with the community. No objections to the proposal were raised during the consultation process.
- 2.9** The Project along with group members of FCAS carry out various forms community engagement by way of posters, leaflet drops and press releases to encourage volunteers on site and to provide opportunities for individual to use and learn new skills.
- 2.10** Three garden activity work days were carried out on the existing site at Skypoint on 28 August, 9 October and 30 October 2011 by community members, the other community allotment groups, streetlinks, members from alternatives and one of the local councillors coming along and working in partnership to develop the garden.
- 2.11** A second public meeting was held on 9 October 2011 in line with the garden activity and to further review the proposal with the community. No objections to the proposal were raised from those who attended during the consultation process.

This note summarises the key findings of the survey.

- 98% of respondents are in favour of the use of the existing site as a Community Allotment and Garden resource for the community of Faifley;
- 67% of respondents would use proposed Community allotment and garden site.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** In order to progress with the above project, Faifley Community Allotment Society (FCAS) requires access to an area of ground.
- 3.2** A plot of amenity open space (redundant blaes tennis courts) at Abbeylands Road, owned by West Dunbartonshire Council as identified on the Plan shown as Appendix A has been identified as suitable to lease to FCAS.
- 3.3** The results of the neighbourhood consultation showed that 98% of respondents were in favour of the use of the site as a Community Allotment and Garden resource for the community of Faifley.
- 3.4** It is proposed that the area of land be leased to FCAS on a long-term lease of 30 years.

3.5 The market value for leasing the area of land is estimated at £360 per annum however Members are asked to consider leasing the land to the FCAS 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.

4. People Implications

4.1 No personnel issues

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The market rental value of the land shown hatched in Appendix A is approx. £360 per annum.

5.2 If Members agree to lease the land to FCAS for the sum of £1 per annum there will be a resultant notional loss of £359 per annum to the Council.

5.3 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 1st 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 FCAS 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 Assessment (EIA)

7.1 The programme is fully inclusive. Specific disadvantaged groups have been targeted namely,
Lone parents
Long term unemployed
Not in Education, Employment, Training
Elderly and disabled
18-25 Youth unemployed,
Mental Health awareness
Youth Groups.

- 7.2** Specific groups will be targeted directly via participation within new voluntary organisations and partnering with existing programs.

In pursuit of these objectives, the Association shall be non-political, non-sectarian and non-racial. The proposed project has the potential for a strong social enterprise activity within the West Dunbartonshire and West of Scotland areas. This can provide employability skills development for members and residents of Faifley.

8. Strategic Assessment

Social and Economic Regeneration

- 8.1** The establishment of a Community Allotment and Garden site at Abbeylands Road will contribute to the social regeneration of Faifley and add to the sense of pride.

Financial Strategy

- 8.2** This project could attract external funding to the value of £200,000.

Asset Management Strategy

- 8.3** The Council's Open Space Asset Management Plan identifies an under provision of allotment sites throughout West Dunbartonshire. This project will contribute to meeting actions set out in the strategy.

Fit for Purpose Services

- 8.4** The development of this site will improve the grounds maintenance services already provided in the Faifley area.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** The proposal to establish a Community Allotment and Garden site at Abbeylands Road, Faifley has the support and backing of the local community groups and schools.

- 9.2** The site identified lies just off Abbeylands Road in Faifley and is a community greenspace area owned by the Council.

- 9.3** The market rental value for leasing the area of land is estimated at £360 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.

9.4 It is therefore recommended that the Committee agree to:

- (i) the development of a 30 year lease agreement between Faifley Community Allotment Society and West Dunbartonshire Council for the land shown hatched on Appendix A at the sum of £1 per annum; and
- (ii) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development and the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services to conclude lease arrangements with the Faifley Community Allotment Society.

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Date: 12 December 2011

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Appendix: Appendix A - Plan showing ground at Abbeylands Road, Faifley

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: 4