



CABINET: 25 JANUARY 2022

Report of: Corporate Director of Place & Community

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Yvonne Gagan

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SUBJECT: BARNES ROAD ALLOTMENTS AND ASSOCIATED LAND (TRANSFER)

Wards affected: Skelmersdale South

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek authority for the transfer of land shown hatched on the attached plan to the Council at a nil premium.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 2.1 That authority is granted to the Corporate Director of Place and Community to take all necessary steps to acquire the land shown hatched on the attached plan.
- 2.2 That if further similar opportunities arise to increase the allotment provision within the Borough that the Corporate Director of Place and Community be given delegated powers to effect such transfers.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Lancashire County Council (LCC) owned land to the side and rear of the former Park School site on Barnes Road and sought planning advice from West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC) as the local planning authority about residential development on the site prior to a disposal of the land. They were advised that one of the planning conditions would be the construction of an allotment site, with an associated community building which could be used by the allotment holders for the storage of their equipment.
- 3.2 Discussions took place with the former Leisure Manager and the Estates and Valuation Manager, about the requirements for the allotment plots and

associated community building. These terms were agreed and formed part of the particulars when the whole site was offered for sale by LCC.

- 3.3 In addition, there was formerly a school dining hut on the site which was occupied by the Skelmersdale 1st (17th Ormskirk) Scout Group for which LCC served notice and demolished the property some time ago. It has been agreed that, should the Scouts secure the necessary funding within five years of the land transfer to WLBC, they will be granted a lease of part of the site and allowed to construct new premises.
- 3.4 The lease to the Scouts will be for 125 years with an initial rent of £350 pa with five yearly rent reviews on the basis of RPI.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 WLBC holds a waiting list for those wishing to take an allotment which now has 60 prospective plot holders listed, ten of which have expressed an interest in the Barnes Road site, which has a provision for 12 plots.
- 4.2 In 2010 a report was brought to Cabinet which granted authority to the Head of Leisure to grant leases of allotment sites to a governing committee of plot holders which decreased the financial input by the Council by reducing need for ongoing maintenance and reducing staff administrative time. Granting of leases also allowed the leaseholders to seek external funding streams which would not be available to the Council. This policy is proven to work well and it is proposed that the same arrangement would be put in place for the Barnes Road Allotment site.

5.0 ISSUES

- 5.1 The transfer of this land and its subsequent use as an allotment site will increase the provision of plots in this area and reduce the waiting list for such a facility.
- 5.2 The current waiting list for allotments has 73 people on it. Of these 10 have requested that they would like a plot at Barnes Road specifically. Of the remaining 63 only 6 have requested specific sites for plots.
- 5.3 The availability of allotments has not been widely promoted and it is expected that the remaining two plots will be let quickly.
- 5.4 However, there will be a requirement for WLBC to expend resources to affect the transfer of the site, to let the plots and to manage the establishment of an appropriate society which will take a lease of the site including the community building. The process is that the society is granted a lease of 12 months and, should they prove to be able to manage the site in an acceptable manner then a further seven-year lease is granted. The success will be evaluated by holding quarterly monitoring meetings with the society management team and will consider general running of the site, financial management, issue/conflict resolution and ability to reallocate vacant plots
- 5.5 In the unlikely event that a society is not established or does not prove to be satisfactory, the site, including the community building will have to be managed by the Leisure Services.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 There has been consultation with the public about this site and the associated allotment provision as part of the planning process.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are some financial/ resource implications arising from this report in respect of officer time in dealing with the conveyance of the land and its subsequent initial management, however these will be met using existing resources and should decline once the lease arrangement to the allotment society is in place and operating satisfactorily.
- 8.2 Charges for allotment plots on council run sites are currently under review, however at the existing rate of £30/year and assuming all plots were allocated, income generated would cover expected water bills. There are 12 plots, so income would be £360. This arrangement would be in place until a society is formed.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The actions referred to in this report are covered by the scheme of delegation to officers and any necessary changes have been made in the relevant risk registers.

10.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The proposal will have significant, positive, health and wellbeing implications for plot holders. The benefits of allotments include:
- Combatting social isolation
 - Improved physical activity/fitness
 - Improved diet and reduced food poverty
 - Prevention and alleviation of a range of mental health issues including:
 - Reduced Stress
 - Reduced depression
 - Reduced fatigue
 - Improved self esteem

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Appendices

1. Site Plan