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HAZLEHEAD GROVE NURSERY WORKING GROUP

ABERDEEN, 15 February 2016. Minute of Meeting of the HAZLEHEAD GROVE NURSERY WORKING GROUP. Present:- Councillor Jean Morrison, MBE, Convener; Councillors Corall and Thomson and Mr Steven Shaw.

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from Councillor Boulton and Councillor J Stewart.

MINUTE OF THE HAZLEHEAD GROVE NURSERY WORKING GROUP OF 9 DECEMBER 2015 - FOR APPROVAL

2. The Working Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 9 December 2015.

The Working Group resolved:-

To approve the minute.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN - HAZLEHEAD GROVE NURSERY (VERBAL UPDATE FROM STEVEN SHAW)

3. Steven Shaw reported that the Community Engagement Plan, to be considered by the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee on 15 March 2016, was currently at the draft stage, and offered the Working Group a verbal report outlining the current status of the nursery project. He circulated a document containing notes in support thereof.

The project continues to go from strength to strength and is changing people's lives, with many of the stakeholders now viewing it as a second home. The Foyer's 'Green Fingers' project has now won several awards, which enhances the status of the whole project. They are also setting up a group called 'Foyer Volunteers', who's remit will be to keep the site tidy.

Owing to the extensive facilities on offer at the site, strong ties have now been forged between Aberdeen City Council Country Rangers and their counterparts in Aberdeenshire Council, an excellent example of joint working which will deliver efficiencies and benefit everyone.

An area of the site has been earmarked for 'bug hotels', a concept which involves using recycled material to create a range of environments which appeal to different types of insects and other wildlife. Bug hotels present fantastic interactive opportunities for teachers and children to learn about the importance of bugs and take what they have learned back to the classroom.

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Following a booked-out season last year, Aberdeen Play Forum has requested to use the site again during 2016.

There was some limited damage caused during the recent storms, however this is mostly restricted to the older poly tunnels and is fully repairable.

The Countryside Rangers are going to be running trials with an electric van. An electric vehicle charging point which was previously installed at the Council's Tullos Depot will be relocated to the Hazlehead Grove Nursery site to facilitate this.

The site is to receive a visit from the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens on 22 March 2016. This will be the first time the Federation has been attracted north of the central belt and represents something of a coup for the Nursery.

The decline in butterfly, and particularly bee numbers is a serious concern for everyone in the UK and beyond. Hazlehead Grove Nursery will be at the forefront of the effort to boost the bee and butterfly populations, thanks to a flagship garden on the site, which is being created in partnership with bee keepers, as well as a wider city planting strategy. Some of the plants bees are highly attracted to might otherwise be regarded as weeds, however the issue of falling bee numbers is sufficiently serious that it will be necessary to incorporate some areas of less formal planting into local green spaces. This is something which, accompanied by appropriate education, the public will come to accept.

Following a recent Petitions Committee, we came into contact with local Butterfly Conservation Branch Youth Engagement Officer, Apithanny Bourne. This is proving to be a very useful and fruitful association. Through this and other partnerships, schools will be encouraged to become 'Bee and Butterfly Champions', so that future generations are educated on these important issues.

The site's flagship project is 'Growing and Sharing', which allows us to share not only the knowledge of growing produce, but also the produce itself. The ultimate aim is to provide participants with a qualification. Recruitment into the department has proved challenging recently owing to the lack of people with gardening qualifications, so this is a project designed to start tackling that trend.

It is hoped that in the not too distant future, the hanging baskets and plants which are on display throughout the city will all have been grown here by volunteers.

An open day is being planned for the early part of June, to which all will be welcome.

The Convener stated that there is still Aberdeen Green Space funding available, which must be spent by the end of December 2016, with requests for smaller amounts more likely to be awarded.

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Councillor Corall suggested that those taking part in the project will benefit from increased confidence and wellbeing.

The Convener stated that the Working Group had successfully reached the end of its remit and confirmed that this would be its last formal meeting. Moving forward, the Group will now amend its status to become an Advisory Group. The Hazlehead Grove Nursery Advisory Group will meet twice a year, at the beginning and end of the horticultural season, and will report to the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee as and when it is deemed necessary.

The Convener thanked the Members for their contributions throughout the entire process, with particular mention to Council Officers Mark Reilly and Claire Hunter for their commitment and drive in getting the project off the ground. Thanks also went to Steven Shaw for his continued hard work and commitment to the project.

The Working Group resolved:-

To note the update provided by Steven Shaw.

– COUNCILLOR JEAN MORRISON, MBE – Convener

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