

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	15 March 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Hazlehead Grove Nursery
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/020
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Committee of the progress of the Hazlehead Grove Nursery project which in partnership with local social enterprise groups, schools and community organisations, will look to develop and implement a plan for transforming the existing unused Hazlehead Grove Nursery site into a working nursery and a facility for 'growing' people.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i) Notes the contents of the report and acknowledges the success of the Hazlehead Grove Nursery project to date.
- (ii) Agrees that, with the project now up and running, its future governance, under the continued guidance of the Environmental Manager, should pass to the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee.
- (iii) Agrees that the Working Group status be amended to that of an Advisory Group and meet every six months, reporting to the Committee as necessary.
- (iv) Approves to the implementation of the suggested Development Plan for the continued development of the nursery.
- (v) Requests that Environmental Services apply the lessons learned and positives from the Nursery project to other service led, partnership and community initiatives across the city.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no current service revenue budget available to develop the site / projects.

Common Good funding of £100K was allocated to the project in 2015/16 and this budget is currently being spent on the sites infrastructure ie drainage, poly tunnels, paths and fencing.

In late February 2016 Aberdeen Greenspace awarded a grant of £50,000 to the project. This funding is to be used to create, manage and maintain a demonstration community plot which would be accessible to all, where people can attend to learn to 'grow your own' – (vegetables, herbs, flowers, shrubs, trees) what to plant, where to plant, when to plant and when to harvest and the potential to share the produce with the community. To educate and run courses to develop gardening/outdoors skills and offer opportunities to gain qualifications in a variety of horticultural topics, which could lead to employment. This will include for a base as an indoor classroom that can also be used as a shelter in inclement weather and a place where users can stop for refreshments and rest.

A community growing space / nursery project led by the local community and partners has the potential to attract further grant funding and this will be explored fully in 2016.

Environmental Services Officers will be available to assist and support any community group with grant funding applications and submissions.

There are no further financial implications as a result of this report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Communities Housing and Infrastructure staff will undertake implementation of all works associated with the Nursery and agreed Development Plan.

Officers from Asset Management and Legal Services are in the process of developing a site agreement which parties will sign up to covering site safety and use.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Hazlehead Nursery – 'Growing Our Own'

The original Hazlehead Grove Nursery site was used by Aberdeen City Council to grow and cultivate trees, plants and flowers for use in its park and gardens. The nursery was closed in 2009. Part of the site continued to be used as a depot and store by Environmental Services.

On 6th March 2013 the following: motion by Councillors Boulton and Thomson was passed by Council:

“That this Council asks for a report looking at ways to deliver social enterprises on the remaining part of the site of Grove Nursery specialising in horticulture/allotments and other appropriate activities, and the opportunity of including the wider community. This is an essential part of the Administration’s desire to create a climate change park involving the wider policies.”

Subsequently, the Housing and Environment Committee agreed to establish a working group to explore ways of using the Hazlehead Grove Nursery to site to deliver initiatives involving social enterprises, local schools and the wider community; whilst continuing with the current horticultural operational services.

The vision for the Hazlehead Nursery is of a smart green place to grow people and communities.

The headline proposals for use of the site are to include:

1. A social enterprise project involving a number of social enterprises that would provide an opportunity to develop life skills and learning opportunities for people. This would be through various activities including plant cultivation and other horticultural related activities for the benefit of the City’s parks and open spaces.
2. An outdoor educational space through the development of an outdoor classroom focusing on the green environment and natural habitat. This facility would be available to all the city schools.
3. Local and city-wide community and partnering initiatives which would utilise green and open spaces.
4. Improvement of the council’s horticultural services facilities currently operating from the site. This to include for a permanent base for the team.

The service has already in place successful links with social enterprise and local community groups and these links will be developed in a way that will see the nursery site used successfully once again to grow the city’s plants as well as use the site for other green / in bloom initiatives.

This is a unique space, large enough to accommodate various numbers of groups and projects, offering an opportunity for the City to develop people, improve life skills and improve community cohesion.

The official launch of the project took place in June 2015 and was a huge success with more than 100 people present. All groups already present at the nursery took part in the event and enjoyed showing their projects and initiatives to all visitors, and meeting the Lord Provost and Councillors.

The next step in the project is to develop the fantastic ideas in place and make them a reality and allow for the space to become an active and productive nursery, growing our own plants for use across the city, but also for growing people – training, educating and inspiring people to develop their skills and passion for gardening.

Hazlehead Nursery has the potential to be a unique, award winning project and one that everyone involved in it will become very proud of.

The nursery will make a real difference to people's lives.

5.2 Summary of Developments 2015/16

It's been exciting year of development at the Hazlehead Grove Nursery. A number of groups have made very good use of the space and many have had a successful growing season with flowers and vegetables in abundance.

The project has been very fortunate with the granting of £100K of Common Good money in 2015/16. This funding has allowed the project to really get going and is being spent on upgrades to the basic infrastructure and welfare of the site. Paths, access, storage, toilets, security and buildings will be revamped and improved to ensure the site is safe and comfortable for the nursery family to thrive.

A key element to the success of the nursery will be operational greenhouses and poly tunnels. This will allow for the partnerships with social enterprise to blossom and see plant and flower growing a reality. With this in place for the Spring of 2016 locally grown plants being used by the service across the city could be a reality, with the additional social benefits of helping to develop and 'grow' both our own and social enterprise staff.

Money will also be spent to allow the site to be cleared and levelled to create areas of growing space. These spaces will become a 'blank canvas' for the many community partners we envisage being part of the project. These spaces will take time to grow but they will become inspirational, exciting gardens and class rooms.

5.3 Project successes 2015/16 –

- Foyer Works continue to build bays for composting and are rebuilding cold frames for use as raised beds. The team are working with Environmental Services to help develop the Friendly Benches project through the design and making of children's 'Buddy' benches.
- Aberdeen Play Forum has had a very successful year working with groups of children in the woodland area. Aberdeen Play Forum sees the site as a potential area for natural play. Much of the

woodland part of the site would need very little done to it to create a fantastic, natural and educational play area. Aberdeen Play Forum includes NHS and Outdoor Learning officers.

- Drugs Action Group had a very successful year growing plants and produce indoor and outdoor and are looking forward to developing their project further in 2016.
- Aberdeen City Council's Healthy Minds has launched their project and will be looking to develop projects at the nursery.
- Foyer Impact Group had a very successful year and their Green Fingers project recently won an Aberdeen City Council Eco Award.
- The WEA Reach Out Project has confirmed that they will be joining the nursery adventure and will begin their project in early 2016.
- Aberdeen City Council Countryside Rangers and Woodland Rangers have made very good use of the site and worked with a variety of groups.
- The nursery has 20 bee hives permanently located on site. The bee keepers are very much key partners of the nursery. 2016 saw the first pots of Hazlehead honey.
- The site was used to store and mulch the service's green waste and this was successfully completed in 2015 saving the council significant costs.

Throughout all of this work the Environment Team continue to develop the ethos of the site based around growing plants and growing people. This includes planning for training and developing our own staff to address anticipated shortages with gardeners in the future.

5.4 Next steps

2016 is a very important year for the nursery. The project has now successfully established itself as a place for growing plants and growing people, it is award winning. The nursery now has to take the next positive steps to becoming the social enterprise 'growing and sharing' project that has always been the ambition.

There are a number of steps and tasks to be progressed to allow the nursery to develop -

- Officers from Asset Management and Legal Services are in the process of developing a site agreement which parties will sign up to covering site safety and use. A requirement has been set by the Environment Team that this should be a simple and short document to encourage parties to get involved rather than put them off.

- An article is to be drafted for inclusion in ACVO's newsletter. The article will promote the success of the nursery so far and also seek other interested organisations to make contact to discuss potential growing projects. This will also allow for the opening of discussion around the commercial growing aspect of the nursery.
- The Procurement team has been involved in discussion as to how the growing, selling and buying of plants might work involving the groups at the nursery. A way forward has been agreed and the next step will look to galvanise interest from social enterprise groups who want to be part of this.
- Plans are underway for a 'Growing and Sharing' initiative, whereby people will have access to tuition in growing produce and the harvest will be shared with local communities, possibly via food banks. With the relevant infrastructure in place, it is anticipated that participants will also have the opportunity to work towards a Vocational Qualification in gardening for city council staff, groups already based at the nursery and also the public.
- It is hoped that this project, along with the other existing and planned initiatives will pique the interest of the Royal Horticultural Society, whose endorsement would undoubtedly raise the profile of the Nursery and enhance its sustainability.
- A business case is currently being drafted seeking to improve the facilities at the nursery that will see an office for Environmental Services staff, a base for the Countryside Rangers, a community hub / training facility and a small depot for operational staff. The first stage of the business case has been approved and the more detailed next stage will be presented to the Asset Management Group for consideration in early 2016.

Discussion has already taken place with the Energy Management Team to advise on the most effective heating system for the greenhouses etc. The new facility would be designed to be efficient and 'green'.

- The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens are involved possible links and way of working together.
- An outdoor educational space / outdoor classroom will be developed and available to all the city schools. Aberdeen Play Forum has successfully utilised the space for play and learning sessions so the project has a template to further develop.
- Transition Extreme has been to the site for a tour and to discuss the possibility of the nursery being used by them for project work with young people. There is real potential here and further discussion is due to take place in 2016.

- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is interested in the potential for a nature zone at the site.
- Aberdeen Green Space continues to be interested in developing ideas and projects for the site.
- A meeting has also taken place with Wee Green Spaces and the potential to incorporate outdoor learning and development in to the project. This will be further developed early in the year.
- The project will be included in some form in the route for the 'Britain in Bloom' and 'Beautiful Scotland' judges in 2016.
- Butterflies, Bees and Trees. The nursery will be used to grow the plants for the 2016 campaign. A flagship insect friendly garden will also be started at the nursery.
- The local Hazlehead Café is interested in taking over part of a greenhouse to grow produce for the café menu.

The next steps will be regularly reviewed and due to the organisations involved will almost certainly change as the project develops.

Full details of the next steps are included in Hazlehead Grove Nursery Development Plan, see Appendix A.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

Hazlehead Grove Nursery provides opportunity for a number of social enterprise and community focused groups. The site allows for the development of partnerships and collaboration that will change many people's lives for the better.

The site allows for Aberdeen City Council to create something new and inspiring that has never been done in the city before.

Improving Staff Experience –

This project contributes to staff development and knowledge regarding social enterprise, partnership working and community engagement at a local and national level. It will increase collaborative working with other council services and external organisations and encourage information and knowledge sharing to contribute to the success of this and similar city wide projects and initiatives.

The project also increases the capacity of staff to learn basic horticulture skills and potentially gain an appropriate qualification.

Improving our use of Resources –

Hazlehead Grove Nursery, when fully operational, will contribute to Aberdeen's plants and flower supply. This will ensure that a locally grown product will remain in the city. This will add value to both the project and organisations involved.

The growing and sharing aspect of the project will ensure that surplus produce is shared between groups who are in a position to make good use of it.

Corporate

Contributes to the following sections of Aberdeen: The Smarter City –

- We will embrace the distinctive pride the people of Aberdeen take in their city and work with them to enhance the sense of well-being here, building strong communities which look out for, and look after one another.
- We will challenge inequalities wherever they exist and bring our communities closer together.
- We will promote Aberdeen as a great place to live, bring up a family, do business and visit.
- “Promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's citizens to lead more active, healthier lives.”
- “Provide a clean, safe and attractive streetscape and promote biodiversity and nature conservation. We will encourage wider access to green space in our streets, parks and countryside.
- Assist the Council in delivering the Single Outcome Agreement's National Outcome 12 “We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations” and will contribute to several other outcomes including No.6 “We live longer, healthier lives”, No. 7 “Tackling inequalities” and No. 10 “We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need”.
- The report contribute towards the delivery of the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy 2011-2016 particularly in delivering objective 2 and action 2.4 of the Strategy action plan.

Other corporate and service initiatives that the project will contribute to will include:

- The achievement of creating Scotland's first climate change park at Hazlehead.
- Britain in Bloom 2016

Public

This project is all inclusive to all members of society and it is thought that an “Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment” is not required. The project is likely to be of interest to the public due to historic community sensitivity surrounding the site. There will be other public interests as the potential uses for the site are identified and initiatives developed which will involve social enterprises, the local community and other local organisations.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

This report is seen as a benefit to all, the assessment of risk associated with this report is very low.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Hazlehead Grove Nursery Committee bulletin reports 2014/2015.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Appendix A - Hazlehead Grove Nursery Development Plan

	Challenge	Action	Lead	Start
1.	Social Enterprise Growing	An article is to be drafted for inclusion in ACVO's newsletter. The article will promote the success of the nursery so far and also seek other interested organisations to make contact to discuss potential growing projects.	ACC/ ACVO	March 2016
		Meet with ACVO to assess what groups are interested in the site and how this will be progressed. This will also allow for the opening of discussion around the commercial growing aspect of the nursery.	ACC/ ACVO	April 2016
		Social Enterprise groups selected.	ACC/ ACVO	May 2016

		Contract in place through Procurement.	ACC	Summer 2016
		The Environmental Services team will agree a programme for growing for winter which will be formalised for working through in 2016.	ACC	Summer 2016
		First supply of plants produced for Winter 2016.	ACC	Oct 2016
		Set challenging growing programme for 2017 and beyond.	ACC	Aug 2016
2.	Growing and Sharing	Create indoor and outdoor 'Growing and Sharing' space, whereby people will have access to tuition in growing produce and the harvest will be shared with local communities, possibly via food banks.	ACC	March/April 2016
		Work towards developing a Vocational Qualification in gardening for city council staff, groups already based at the nursery and also the public.	ACC/ Other	2016/2017
		Hold a variety of evening classes/workshops ie hanging baskets.	ACC	June 2016
		An outdoor educational space / outdoor classroom will be developed and available to all the city schools. This initiative to tap in to 'Growing and Sharing'.	ACC	2016
3.	Community Partnerships	Formalise licencing process with Legal for all current and future groups.	ACC	April 2016
		Discuss group's ideas and ambitions for 2016. Look to include ACC campaigns and themes within all groups/projects.	ACC	March 2016
		Progress development opportunities with other interested organisations such as Aberdeen University, Transition Extreme and WEA Reach Out Project.	ACC	March 2015
		Develop links further with other organisations such as The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. Learn from them and visit similar projects in Scotland.	ACC / Other	2016
		Butterflies, Bees and Trees. The nursery groups will help to grow the plants for the 2016 campaign. A flagship insect friendly garden will also be started at the nursery.	ACC / Other	April 2016
4.	Horticultural Services	Common Good funding to continue to be spent to improve	ACC	2016

		infrastructure and for the purchasing of basic materials for growing		
		Complete business case seeking to improve the facilities at the nursery that will see an office for Environmental Services staff, a base for the Countryside Rangers, a community hub / training facility and a small depot for operational staff.	ACC	April 2016
		Establish 'home grown' programmes and identify skill gaps etc within existing team.	ACC	2016
5.	Promotion of Hazlehead Grove Nursery	Create Communications Plan	ACC	2016
		Organise public open day for nursery.	ACC	June 2016
		The project will be included in some form in the route for the 'Britain in Bloom' and 'Beautiful Scotland' judges in 2016.	ACC	Aug 2016
		Open discussions with the Beachgrove Garden regarding their possible involvement in the Nursery.	ACC	2016