

Report to Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance

Subject: Community Asset Transfer of Wollaton Avenue Community Centre to Gedling Play Forum.

Date: 10th March 2023

Author: Community Partnerships Manager

Wards Affected: Phoenix Ward

Purpose:

To update the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance on progress on the assessment of the proposal for Gedling Play Forum to enter into Community Asset Transfer of Wollaton Avenue Community Centre.

Additionally to seek approval to extend the timeframe for a decision report to Cabinet on the proposal to Summer 2023, to enable delivery of an agreed transition plan needed to effect a successful Community Asset Transfer.

Key Decision: This is not a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1) The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance notes the update and approves the timeframe of a Community Asset Transfer transition plan to facilitate a decision report to Cabinet to Summer 2023, to enable a successful Community Asset Transfer in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

1 Background

- 1.1 Cabinet adopted a Community Asset Transfer Policy in October 2015. The aims of the policy are:

- To identify the process and tools that will enable the successful delivery of a future asset transfer programme.
- To recognise the capacity needs of local groups wishing to take on local authority assets.
- To ensure a thorough risk assessment of asset transfer is undertaken.
- To define the legal form a transfer agreement would take.

- 1.2 In accordance with the Asset Transfer Policy, organisations wishing to take on more responsibility for a community facility must engage in consultation with relevant stakeholders, ensure that the required statutory policies and public liability insurances are in place and demonstrate a robust business plan for ongoing management of the facility. These details need to be submitted to the Council by way of a formal submission.

A submission was received from the Gedling Play Forum on 29th March 2022. Following a period of abeyance due to consideration of the proposal's relationship to the pending Strategic Facilities Review, approval was sought and granted by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance in January 2023 publish a formal consultation on the proposal. The consultation was launched on 27th January 2023 and closed on 24th February, resulting in one response, which was in support of the proposal.

- 1.3 An assessment was undertaken during January and February by a cross departmental team including officers from GBC Finance, Legal, Property and Communities Teams. The assessment process included:

- **Consideration of the viability of the asset for transfer.** This was informed by a site visit by GBC Property Services and a subsequent compliance report, and legal traces to identify any covenants and conditions incumbent on the site. It was noted that a covenant exists to retain the asset as a facility for community use and benefit.
- **Assessment of the business case of the Gedling Play Forum.** This was informed by an extensive Site Survey and 6 year Planned Maintenance Report undertaken in 2016 as part of an externally funded Community Asset Transfer development initiative, and the formal GPF CAT submission, which included a business plan, current policies, insurances and annual accounts.
- An Equalities Impact Assessment was also undertaken, which noted positive Equalities Impacts of the proposal.

- 1.4 During the assessment of this proposal, officers noted the various challenges that had impacted both the Gedling Play Forum and the Council over the last two years, including Covid- 19, the Cost of Living

crisis and other external factors.

- 1.5 It was recognised that in the face of these challenges, The Gedling Play Forum has made an outstanding contribution to the recovery effort, undergone a significant and positive internal restructure and delivered play activity alongside the Council at a record number of Gedling events over the last two years.

Subsequently however, the Gedling Play Forum business plan and original survey recommendations/planned maintenance report are now out of timeframe, and do not provide a current basis for robust assessment and Cabinet recommendation at this stage.

- 1.6 It is therefore deemed advisable to undertake a proactive and collaborative transition approach to ensure that Gedling Play Forum is in the best position possible to undertake sustainable long term Asset Transfer of the site. To that end, it is proposed that a robust transition plan is agreed between the Council and Gedling Play Forum which should incorporate:

- Refreshment of the Gedling Play Forum Business Plan, including an updated financial outline detailing how the organisation intends to meet the anticipated priority maintenance costs of the asset post - transfer.
- Further examination by GBC of current market costs associated with priority maintenance projections.
- The provision of a ring fenced 'Strength In Community' grant of £5,000 to enable the Gedling Play Forum to undertake further internal development actions, obtain legal and financial advice and complete training and relevant certification associated with Asset Management, specifically, but not exclusively; Fire, Health and Safety, inc. Legionella and other checks; Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection and Event and Organisational appointed First Aid.

- 1.7 The GBC Community Asset Transfer assessment team will provide guidance and information as needed throughout, to support successful completion of the transition process.

The timeframe of this transition is proposed from 15th April 2023 until Summer 2023, with a firm date to be agreed and set within the Transition Plan, **Draft Operational Transition Plan attached: Appendix 1**

Subject to successful completion of the Transition Plan, a report and recommendation in respect of the Community Asset Transfer Proposal of Wollaton Avenue Community Centre to Gedling Play Forum will be submitted to Cabinet.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 That the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance notes the update regarding the Community Asset Transfer Assessment process and approves the timeframe of a transition plan for a Community Asset Transfer to facilitate a decision report to Cabinet to Summer 2023, to enable the delivery of an agreed transition plan to effect successful Community Asset Transfer, in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to extend the timeframe for a Cabinet decision on the proposal to Summer 2023.

In accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy, when a submission for Asset Transfer is assessed as being potentially viable, albeit requiring further development, a transition plan and reasonable timeframe for completion is advised to ensure sustainable Asset Transfer.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The provision of a £5,000 'Strength In Community' Grant is resourced from an external NCC Social Recovery Fund successfully sourced by the Council in March 2022. Gedling Play Forum is one of the Gedling based VCS organisations listed in the original grant submission as key beneficiaries of that initiative. This grant fund will be launched in April 2023.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 In the transition period, if the proposal meets the criteria for Community Asset Transfer as set out in the Council's Asset Transfer Policy, a process of lease negotiation and development is triggered, with a 99 year lease at peppercorn rent with full maintenance responsibility being the model set out in the Asset Transfer Policy. Other models may also be considered. In accordance with Section 23 of the Council's Constitution, a Cabinet decision to enter into that Transfer will be sought.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 This proposal offers an enabling approach to ensure continuity of a family scrap store and play provision in a location where need of that service has been identified, and which serves those identified as having protected characteristics as set out in the Equalities Act 2010.
- 6.2 The Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy was developed in consultation with representatives of diverse voluntary and community

groups and includes community friendly, accessible processes for entering into Community Asset Transfer.

- 6.3 A key criteria of the CAT assessment is an Equality Impact Assessment, and the requirement of the organisation to have consulted with existing and future user groups, local people and partners in setting out proposals for future services operating in the proposed CAT facility. The Equality Impact Assessment carried out reflected a positive impact in that regard.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no negative environmental impacts to this proposal.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Draft Operational Transition Plan

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 None

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 To update the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance on the assessment process and initiation of an agreed transition plan to support the Community Asset Transfer submission received from Gedling Play Forum in respect of Wollaton Avenue Community Centre.

To request approval for an extended timeline to Summer 2023 for the submission of a Report and Recommendation on the Community Asset Transfer proposal to Cabinet.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer