



**Haringey** Council

**[No.]**

Agenda item:

**CABINET on 24 February 2009**

Report Title: Wolves Lane /Faith Plant Centre – Future Operation

Report of : **Mun Thong Phung, Director of Adult, Culture & Community Services.**

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Officer : John Morris, Assistant Director (Recreation Services)  
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Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Key Decision**

### **1. Purpose of the report**

1.1 To seek approval to the proposed course of action, to develop and sustain a more viable operation of the facilities and services at the Wolves Lane/ Faith Plant Centre.

### **2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)**

2.1 Wolves Lane is a valued public asset, providing a range of accessible opportunities, particularly for supported adults and young people. The site also has the potential to provide a focus for developing and supporting the growing community interest in sustainable food production.

2.2 The current and future menu of service provision on the site will support our work around transforming social care, tackling long term unemployment, supporting volunteering and improving learning/ training.

2.3 I believe that the proposed blueprint set out in this report will provide a firm foundation upon which we can build viable and sustainable service provision at Wolves Lane.

### **3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and /or other Strategies:**

3.1 This project could make a significant contribution, to both the Council's and the Haringey Strategic Partnership's priorities.

3.2 It will promote and support Wellbeing with clear links and benefits for health and nutrition, supporting vulnerable people, education and learning, and volunteering.

3.3 It could become a flagship project within the Greenest Borough programme, particularly within the 'Managing Environmental Resources' theme. It could act as a catalyst for and harness the strong community interest in sustainable food production.

3.4 The project is clearly customer focused, as it both responds to explicit resident interest, and seeks active community involvement in its development, implementation

and delivery.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 That the Council directly manages the site, and moves to a partnership arrangement with a new local 'not for profit' organisation within 3 years.
- 4.2 That the in house operation is managed and developed as a single function/ unit, with all staff transferred to and managed through a preferred Business Unit.
- 4.3 Maintain and build upon the existing training, volunteering, education and retail activity, and develop new provision around the theme of sustainable food production.
- 4.4 That Council Services – Adults, Haringey Adult Learning Service, Children's Service and Economic Regeneration - redirect existing commissioning subsidy/ funding to purchase relevant delivery from Wolves Lane.
- 4.5 That the Council supports the development of a new local 'not for profit' community organisation and related partnership agreement(s).
- 4.6 The net subsidy for the site is met through the investment growth bid in the current budget proposals, and either reduced and/or supports future prudential borrowing capital investment.
- 4.7 That early consideration is given to renaming the site, and approval delegated to the Cabinet Member.
- 4.8 That a more detailed operational improvement plan is developed before the end of 2008/9, and is approved/ monitored through the 2009/10 – 2011/12 Business Plan, and the Better Haringey Programme Board.
- 4.9 The Council and partners actively pursue external revenue and capital investment funding support.

#### **5. Reason for recommendation(s)**

- 5.1 There is significant scope to expand the programme within existing capacity.
- 5.2 The existing and new adult social care, training/ employment and education service specifications and standards need to be more clearly defined, costed and quality assured, before being market tested, and to satisfy Council clients' requirements.
- 5.3 Viability of the site will require ongoing public sector purchasing of services, regardless of the management arrangements.
- 5.4 Whilst there is significant community interest, particularly around local sustainable food production, there isn't an existing appropriate not for profit partner
- 5.5 To maintain and build upon the existing activity and user base, the bulk of which is currently unsupported.
- 5.6 Provides the most effective response to meeting the demanding range of objectives for the site, as set out in 7.2.2 below.
- 5.7 Will provide a firm foundation to engage community/ stakeholder interest, develop new working arrangements, and effectively engage external funding opportunities.

#### **6. Other options considered**

- 6.1 The review has considered alternative management arrangements, particularly with regard to contracting with an existing 'not for profit' provider and commercial operation. These are considered in the Shaw Trust Report and summarised at paragraph 7.2.5 below.

## 7. Summary

### 7.1 Background

- 7.1.1 The Council owns the freehold of the site and had, until recently, let the site to 'Livability' (formerly John Grooms and The Shaftesbury Society) delivering:
- Supported adults horticultural and catering training and volunteering programmes.
  - Education and Schools programme.
  - Public access and small retail outlet.
  - Production and supply of the Council's bedding plants.
- 7.1.2 Following Livability's decision to withdraw from the site, Members reviewed immediate options (close /mothball, horticultural operation and public access, and full operation) and decided to maintain the full range of existing services and operation of the site, up to the end of 2008/9, pending consideration of longer term options.
- 7.1.3 Subsequently direct management of the site and services, including the TUPE transfer of 6 staff, was picked up by the Council from 1 October 2008. The site is currently managed through the Parks Division of Recreation Services, whilst the supported adults and education programmes are led by Adults and Children's Services respectively.
- 7.1.4 The employment costs associated with the latter have been contained by the services, whilst the net operating cost of £125k for the remainder of 2008/9 has been met corporately.

### 7.2 Longer Term Options Review

- 7.2.1 The review needed to consider the following issues:
- Identify new revenue sources to fund the existing supported adults programme.
  - Intensify and diversify use of the site to cover the largely fixed overhead cost.
  - The asset condition and related capital investment need and funding opportunities.
  - Existing supported employment provision and possible TUPE transfer of staff.
  - The revision and/or introduction of new charging policy.
  - Alternative supported adults programme opportunities and providers, and the related revenue cost implications.
  - Acceptable commercial activity and income generation.
- 7.2.2 The Council is seeking to secure the following outcomes:
- A viable and sustainable operation at no net direct subsidy cost to the rate payer, although this may take time.
  - Maintain and develop the training, volunteering and education programme, particularly for disabled adults.
  - Maintain public access to the Palm House and ancillary facilities, and a base for Parks area operational staff (relocated from Woodside).
  - Support local community organisation to develop sustainable food and gardening projects.

- Maintain the employment of existing employees including Supported Staff (x3).
  - Capital investment to upgrade and develop the assets on site.
  - Real and tangible 'buy in' from a range of Council services and partner agencies.
- 7.2.3 The Shaw Trust was engaged to undertake a high level options appraisal, which was completed in December 2008. The review work included:
- Consultation with providers, service users and community organisations.
  - Advantages and disadvantages of 5 options.
  - Financial appraisal and market assessment.
  - Outline implementation programme.
- 7.2.4 The key findings from the review and consultation include:
- An overview of the current range and volume of activity and use.
  - The lack of a structured and planned approach to the volunteering programme.
  - Limited attraction/ use of external funding/ purchasing.
  - The limited scale of retail activity.
  - Opportunities and scope to develop – supported social care, vocational training, employment support, curriculum/ extra curricular provision, and retail/ café/ commercial growing business – around the horticultural, catering and retail activity.
  - The need and focus for asset modernisation.
  - Potential new use and users of the site, with particular interest from a range of local and regional groups.
  - Potential external capital and revenue funding sources.
- 7.2.5 The 5 options considered can be summarised as follows:
- i. **Council Managed** : providing full control over the site, but reliant on all relevant departments using the site and contributing to the full cost recovery of services they access.
  - ii. **New Voluntary Organisation** : relieving the Council of responsibility but would need supporting financially and management time to establish and ensure sustainability.
  - iii. **An existing 'Not for Profit' organisation** : provides a contracted out option for service delivery, but would require secure contacts of 3-5 years duration to make the venture attractive.
  - iv. **Council and 'Not for Profit' Partnership** : combines Council control of operation with the creativity and funding potential of a voluntary sector organisation. This would require ongoing management and take time to develop structured involvement of various organisations.
  - v. **Commercial Operation** : limited opportunity to gain commercial rent from the site, and would lose local involvement and activities for volunteers.

### 7.3 Conclusion and Implementation

- 7.3.1 It is recommended that the Council directly manages the site, and moves to a partnership arrangement with a new 'not for profit' organisation within 3 years. This should be supported by the following key actions:

- The management, service delivery and development is brought together under one Business Unit, to champion and deliver the change project (see appendix 1).
- The Council works with the Sustainable Haringey Network to engage relevant /interested voluntary sector stakeholders to establish a new 'not for profit' vehicle. This might be achieved through the establishment of a new 'Community Interest Company'.
- The Council works with Groundwork, through the existing partnership agreement, to identify and engage external funding opportunities e.g. The Community Spaces Programme, Access to Nature, Ecominds (MIND) Futurebuilders, Local Food.
- A more detailed 'operational implementation plan' is developed, including the completion of a condition survey, asset development plan and associated detailed 2-3 year Business Plan.

## **8. Chief Financial Officer Comments**

- 8.1 The draft revenue budget (appendix 2) shows a net budget requirement of £150k. This is in line with the revenue growth item agreed at Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2009.
- 8.2 Learning Disabilities are currently contributing £78k to the running of the Green Pepper Café and this funding will continue.
- 8.3 A further £75k can be diverted from Learning Disabilities external care purchasing budgets for day care. The current projection (P10) of £1.18m provides 5,450 weeks of day care. On the assumption that service users currently attend day care services for an average of 2.5 days per week at a weekly cost of £216, an equivalent of 868 days per annum would need to be redirected from external provision to Wolves Lane. Detailed plans and reviews of existing service users must begin as soon as this proposal is agreed in order for the full amount of redirected funding to be realised for 2009/10.

## **9. Head of Legal Services Comments**

- 9.1 The Director of Adult, Culture and Community Services is seeking Cabinet approval to develop and sustain a more viable operation of the facilities and services at the Wolves Lane/ Faith Plant Centre.
- 9.2 It is recommended that the Council directly manages the site, and moves to a partnership arrangement with a new local 'not for profit' organisation within 3 years. Legal Services should be consulted if further advice is required.
- 9.4 It is noted in the recommendation that early consideration is given to renaming the site and approval delegated to the Cabinet Member.
- 9.5 It is noted from the report under the longer options review, that there exists supported employment provision and a possible TUPE transfer of staff. Legal Services should be consulted on any legal issues arising from any TUPE transfer.
- 9.6 There are planning aspects to the retail and café activities mentioned on page 7 of the Options Review. A Nursery has the right to sell produce grown on the land as part of the horticultural use, and this includes goods which are brought in as stock (seedlings for example which are then grown for added value ). However, the

sale of bought in items is a retail use which requires planning permission if the activity is more than ancillary to the nursery use. Similarly, the café, if it does not have planning permission should be limited to ancillary use. A “garden centre” is not the same as a nursery. The latter is primarily horticultural and a garden centre can combine a number of non-horticultural uses that attract customers on a commercial basis. The Planning Service should advise on the need for permission if the proposals are to expand or lead to the expansion of the commercial elements. Issues such as Customer cars and trading hours may need to be limited if expansion of retailing of café uses is proposed.

- 9.7 The Head of Legal Services confirms that there are no legal reasons preventing Members from approving the recommendations at paragraph 4 of this report.

## **10. Head of Procurement Comments**

- 10.1 Not applicable at this stage.

## **11. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments**

- 11.1 Clearly some of the existing and new provision offers support to vulnerable adults, which the Council wishes to maintain and develop within a wider transforming social care programme. Similarly the education programme provides local children and young people accessible opportunities to discover, understand and respect their local environment.
- 11.2 The potential to develop sustainable food production project on and from the site should include explicit links to supporting residents on low income. Similarly potential supported employment and skills training should be linked to our work around tackling long term unemployment.
- 11.3 The managing Service should seek, at an early stage, to put arrangements in place to establish and monitor the equalities profile of site usage.
- 11.4 The development of a new voluntary sector body that engages a range of local organisations and borough wide networks provides a real opportunity to strengthen community cohesion.

## **12. Consultation**

- 12.1 The options review included focus group discussion with both existing site users and interested local voluntary sector organisations, and the feedback is reflected in the report. The key messages to emerge were:
- Strong desire to see services maintained for existing users, particularly adults with learning disabilities.
  - A range of ideas as to how the site and services could be developed and improved, particularly around sustainable food production.
  - A real interest and willingness to be involved in the future management and operation of the site.
- 12.2 A series of interviews were also carried out with Council Services and partner agencies to explore both the interest/ support for the site and scope to redirect subsidy/ purchase services from the site. The key conclusions from this work included:
- Strong interest from Children’s Services and HTPCT to engage and expand activity particularly in relation to food /nutrition and tackling obesity.
  - Support for the development of supported adults opportunities, vocational training and supported employment programmes, although this would require further development and negotiation.

- Explore the scope to accommodate wider use and recycling facilities on the site.
- 12.3 Officers have had preliminary discussions with the Sustainable Haringey Network to explore how we might develop new voluntary sector involvement on the site.

### **13. Service Financial Comments**

- 13.1 The recommended option proposes a net operating cost/ subsidy of £150k, which would be met through the current PBPR Revenue Investment bid. (see appendix 3).
- 13.2 The income projections are reliant upon Council services redirecting subsidy /purchasing to the value of £185k. They also assume the maintenance of existing revenue support of £78k from Adult Services (Learning Disabilities – Green Pepper Café), and £82k from Recreation Services (Parks Supported Staff salaries and Bedding). The remaining income stream projections are largely based upon existing performance.
- 13.3 The expenditure budget provision is based upon the existing establishment, with the addition of a manager post at £50k. The utilities provision of £111k reflects current prices, and thus greater than previous spend (as reflected in the Shaw Trust report).

### **14. Comments from the Director of Urban Environment**

- 14.1 Urban Environment supports the proposed option for Wolves Lane nursery based on securing clear supported employment and training outputs and outcomes for workless residents with disabilities.  
Economic Regeneration is willing to make a contribution of £50,000 from their Employment and training budget allocations towards this scheme as part of the wider Welfare to Work for Disabled People Strategy and Action Plan in the borough.

### **15. Comments from the Head of Children and Young People's Service**

- 15.1 Children's Services are committed to supporting and funding this initiative, and will undertake further work to identify the appropriate activities, specific funding stream(s) and lead role.

### **16. Use of appendices /Tables and photographs**

- 16.1 Appendix 1. Establishment
- 16.2 Appendix 2. Draft Revenue Budget

### **17. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

- 17.1 Shaw Trust Options Review – December 2008.