

Holme Farm Grant Funding Request (Community Services, Darren Williams)

Synopsis of report:

To summarise the Holme Farm project, its progress to date and aspirations for the future, and seek approval for a one off sum of £25,000 from the Council, to be used as part of the funding to initiate the project.

Recommendation(s) that:

Approval is given for a one-off funding amount of £25,000 to Holme Farm towards the overall cost of project initiation, utilising underspends in the current Community Services budget.

1. Context of report

- 1.1 The Holme Farm Community Project is a concept originally developed by two residents of the Borough, who have been its driving force.
- 1.2 The project aims to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of people in Runnymede by developing a number of outside projects, including community allotments, sensory garden, apiary, as well as biodiversity and wildlife projects.
- 1.3 As the concept has developed and edged closer to being realised, a management committee has been formed, of local residents, Councillors and others, many of whom have a wealth of experience and expertise in aspects of the project.
- 1.4 This report summarises the activity of the organisation to date and its aspiration for the future, with funding sought from Runnymede Borough Council, to support the initial phases of the project, totalling £25,000.

2. Report

- 2.1 In November 2021, representatives of the Holme Farm Community Project (HFCP) made a presentation to this Committee, outlining their ambition for the future in delivering a locally based project that would provide a range of health and wellbeing benefits to residents of the borough (and potentially beyond), as well as opportunities to learn and apply new skills.
- 2.2 The HFCP focusses on the potential delivery of a range of services and activities on the land owned by DEFRA, situated at Holme Farm, which has been unused for a considerable period of time. The potential to realise such an offer locally within Runnymede was boosted significantly when Rebecca Pow MP wrote to Dr Ben Spencer MP, to confirm that DEFRA are now willing to grant a lease to the HFCP.
- 2.3 Securing this lease, will enable to HFCP to continue with their ambitions for the site, to deliver a number of services and projects that will contribute to an improvement in the mental and physical wellbeing of residents of the borough. Proposed activity for the site, led by HFCP include but is not limited to:
 - Wood Workshop

- Community Orchard
- Allotments/Food growing
- Family/Sensory Garden area
- Community Apiary
- Re-wilding & Biodiversity projects
- Wildlife tree planting
- Nature trails, flora & fauna
- Furniture restoration and up-cycling
- Art classes
- Wellbeing therapies and disciplines

- 2.4 Development of the DEFRA site is intended to be achieved in an environmentally focussed, and friendly way, using zero-carbon building models to minimise future energy requirements, using technology including air/ground source heat pumps, solar panels and through using grey water for the toilet flushing system. This intention highlights the project's commitment to environmental sustainability.
- 2.5 The HFCP sees itself as a key community asset as part of a "Green Social Prescribing" approach. Green Social Prescribing promotes the improvement of individual wellbeing through the introduction of nature and the environment into individuals' lives. NHS England recognises the importance of being outdoors, the positive impact it has in improving mental health, reducing health inequalities and the demand on the health and social care system.
- 2.6 This is evidenced by the fact that in July 2020, £5.77 million of funding was awarded to seven Integrated Care Systems to become test and learn sites for Green Social Prescribing, one of which is Surrey Heartlands ICS.
- 2.7 With negotiations to secure the land with DEFRA now at an advanced stage, HFCP are looking to secure funding to initiate the project in early 2022. This includes a request to the Council for funding of £25,000 that will be used for set up and mobilisation costs.

3. **Resourcing and Financing Implications**

- 3.1 In September, an application was made to the Community First fund. Unfortunately, the application did not meet the necessary criteria for funding. However, Officers and Members are keen to support this project and the ambition of those involved. A copy of the application submitted can be found in Exempt Appendix A and the business case graphs are in Appendix A.
- 3.2 There is also a keenness for HFCP and the Council to continue to work in partnership as the project progresses. Therefore, Members of Community Services Committee are asked to consider the funding request.
- 3.3 Members are advised that should approval of the grant request be given, the funding will be realised through the virement of budget underspends from across Community Services, as opposed to the requirement for a supplementary budget request. This is a one-off grant; any future funding requests will need to follow the Council's existing grant aid application processes.

4. **Legal Considerations**

- 4.1 Community Workshops and Gardens @ Holme Farm is constituted with a board of ten trustees and a management committee. An application for

registered charitable status was submitted to the Charity Commission in October/November 2021. This was accepted and the charity became registered on 4 January 2022. It now has the status of foundation Charitable Incorporate Organisation (CIO) and can, for instance, enter into agreements or leases as a separate entity in the charity's own name. It has to comply with the Commission's ongoing requirements including maintaining a register of trustees and filing its accounts and annual return each year.

5. Equality implications

- 5.1 The HFCP contains elements which are relevant to people with the protected characteristics of age and disability. For example, the Young persons day camping and youth club facilities on site. The project seeks to work with 'young and old alike', thus all aspects of age are engaged positively.
- 5.2 The HFCP has also forged links with local organisations such as the Runnymede Dementia Action Alliance and Woking MIND.
- 5.3 The statement available on the Charity Commission's website states that one of its three charitable objects is 'to promote for the benefit of the inhabitants of North West Surrey...of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement...'
- 5.4 Supporting this project makes a positive contribution to Equalities and complements the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty as defined in the Equality Act.

6. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 6.1 The project promotes environmental sustainability and biodiversity at the heart of the project and therefore is intended to make a significant, positive environmental impact locally.
- 6.2 Grant funding being awarded to the project will not only demonstrate the support of the Council to the ambition of HFCP, but also to supporting an organisation that intends to contribute positively to the environment locally.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The Holme Farm Community Project is an ambitious project, which fuelled by the drive and determination of local volunteers and residents, together with the support of the local Member of Parliament and locally elected Councillors, has the potential to deliver a range of new services locally which have the intended outcome of improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 7.2 The project is one which the Council is keen to work in partnership with as it develops and therefore financial support of a grant of £25,000 is not only a grant to a voluntary sector project, but a commitment to positive future partnership working and is therefore something which Officers recommend for approval by Members.

(To resolve)

Background papers

Holme Farm Presentation and Brochure presented at Community Services, November 2021.

Charity Commission extract of charity details for 'Community Workshops & Gardens @Holme Farm' Charity Number 1197321