

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting8th July 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Clarences Farm

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet was invited to consider proposals for the ownership and management of the Clarences Community Farm to be taken over by Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd in partnership with Billingham Partnership and the Billingham Environmental Link Programme (BELP) so as to use the facility as a community resource to lever in funding and investment with long term proposals to turn the site into training facility to deliver work based and vocational training.

It was noted that the facility had for many years been a major feature of the Clarences occupying a good location within easy access for residents with the potential to play a greater roll in providing training to the local and wider community. In recent years, it had however been subject to scrutiny due to foot and mouth and the threat of Ecoli had resulted in the temporary closure of the farm until a decision as to the future viability had been agreed. Visitor figures were low in comparison to other attractions within the borough and the farm was considered to be in need of significant capital investment, with internal and external facilities being old, worn and damaged as a result of vandalism.

Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd and BELP had agreed common business objectives for the development of the Clarences Farm and proposed a partnership arrangement for the future management of the facility, linking this with other community facilities in the area, such as the Clarences Allotments site. The proposals focussed upon the long term development of a Centre of Excellence, delivering work based and on site vocational training relative to the existing environmental, land based and recycling industries and emerging eco and energy enterprises. The farm and surrounding areas would be secured by Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd using staff funded through the Future Jobs Fund and through the appointment of a Project Manager. The first stages of the plans would be to utilise the farm facility to address some of the most pressing community issues in line with the BELP programme.

Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd had also developed a relationship with Saltholme Nature Reserve, Prior Pursglove College and Askham Bryan Agricultural college with the aim of establishing a programme of vocational training and related educational opportunities that play to the strengths of the partners in the area of environment, animal management, horticulture and equine studies. Saltholme had agreed to the extension of the grazing land/buffer zone as a means of addressing key issues such as, alleviating problems with horses and livestock on the allotments through the provision of good quality grazing land. This provided benefit to the community from the reserve, assisting in the development of the allotment site for horticulture and providing land and facilities required for the delivery of Environmental bases studies in line with the BELP programme. Resources had also been secured to employ 22 community caretakers, with 8 of these deployed to the Clarences to provide support in addressing issues, such as security, maintenance, fly tipping, allotment issues, management and community cohesion.

Council budget provision of £100,000 was currently in place for the facility and it was proposed that the 2010/2011 budget up to £100,000 be used to support the partnerships first year development and set up costs, and from year 2 onwards, a recurring EIT saving of £100,000 per annum for the Authority would be realized to offset any costs thereon. Terms for the disposal of the land to Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd had been negotiated in recognition of the benefit that Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd, together with BELP, could bring to the community and the Borough by retaining and enhancing the facility for community use.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet approve the transfer of the land at Clarences Community Farm to Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd in partnership with Billingham Partnerships Environmental Link Programme known as (BELP) at an undervalue and Heads of terms for the sale of the land with Know How North East be delegated to the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources and Director of Law and Democracy, such terms to ensure the provision of the services substantially in line with the submitted report and restrict the future sale of the land by Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd to ensure it remains of benefit to the community.
2. Cabinet agree the use of 2010/2011 budget up to £100,000 to assist Newtown Community Resource Centre Ltd with the establishment costs

of the project as a one-off sum.

3. Cabinet note the recurring £100,000 per annum saving to the Council of these proposals from 2011/12 onwards.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To ensure the future viability of the Clarences Community Farm site, as a community resource and visitor attraction.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight Friday 16th July 2010

Proper Officer
12 July 2010