

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

7 SEPTEMBER 2023

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor: Bob Buchan (In the Chair)

Councillors: Gary Allen, Rob Darby, Ged Hall, Sue Little, Carole Thompson and Mike Young.

Also present: Councillors Creevy and Feeney.
Frank Harrison and Evelyn Leck.

Officers: Jill Harrison, Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services
Leigh Keeble, Head of Community Hubs and Wellbeing
Ian Gardiner, Head of Leisure, Recreation and Participation
Sarah Scarr, Head of Service - Heritage and Open Spaces
Jennifer Gant, Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader
Nicole Whittle, Project Officer (Parks and Open Spaces)
Sonia Newhouse, Project Officer (Allotments)
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

10. Apologies for Absence

None.

11. Declarations of Interest

None.

12. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023

Received.

In relation to Minute No. 6 'Parks and Open Spaces: Place Based Plans' it was questioned as to how long it was until the consultation closed and if

further work could be undertaken for those that did not have access to the internet. The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services stated that there had been face to face teams consultations with park users during the summer and there had been consultation in the Community Hubs but that further work could be undertaken if some groups felt under represented. The consultation would run until 24 September.

13. Carlton Adventure – Future Operation (*Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

Key Decision (General Exemption Notice Applies).

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to provide the Adult and Community Based Services Committee with an update on the recent operational and financial performance of Carlton Adventure; to outline future lease options and the implications for the Council; and to seek a decision on whether to continue, modify or end the Council's interest in Carlton Adventure at the expiry of the current lease.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services presented a detailed report to the Committee outlining the background history to Carlton Adventure (formerly Carlton Camp) and its relationship with Hartlepool. The report highlighted the great value outdoor activity provided young people with and gave examples of feedback from past visitors. The report also set out the improvements to the site that had been carried out over recent years to improve the offer at Carlton with details of the numbers that had visited since 2019.

A series of confidential appendices to the report set out the financial performance of Carlton Adventure, material considerations and implications relating to the lease and the potential impacts upon staffing. Those appendices contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely: - para 3, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that in); and (para 4), Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

The Assistant Director presented three main options to Members, which were set out in detail in the report and appendices;

Option 1: Vacation of the premises at the lease contractual end date of 31 March 2024

Option 2: Hold-over under the existing lease to 31 March 2025

Option 3: Establish a new medium term lease.

Details of the financial and legal risks were also set out in detail in the report.

Several Members spoke of their own memories of attending Carlton and there was wide support for the adoption of Option 3. Carlton Trustees and representatives of the Friends of Carlton Camp were present at the meeting. A representative of the Friends Group addressed the Committee in support of the Council's continued operation of the site.

Members indicated that they wished to discuss some of the issues raised in the confidential appendices to the report and it was, therefore, agreed that the meeting move into closed session.

Decision

That the meeting move into closed session to discuss the details set out in the exempt appendices to the report.

14. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation Order) 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 15 – Carlton Adventure – Future Operation – This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely para 3, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that in); and (para 4), Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

15. Carlton Adventure – Future Operation (*Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*)

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely para 3 and 4.

Type of decision

Key Decision (General Exemption Notice Applies).

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to provide the Adult and Community Based Services Committee with an update on the recent operational and financial performance of Carlton Adventure; to outline future lease options and the implications for the Council; and to seek a decision on whether to continue, modify or end the Council's interest in Carlton Adventure at the expiry of the current lease.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members asked questions of the Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services on the matters set out in the exempt appendices to the report and discussed those issues.

Decision

That the meeting return to open session.

15. Carlton Adventure – Future Operation (*Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*)

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely (para??)

Type of decision

Key Decision (General Exemption Notice Applies).

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to provide the Adult and Community Based Services Committee with an update on the recent operational and financial performance of Carlton Adventure; to outline future lease options and the implications for the Council; and to seek a decision on whether to continue, modify or end the Council's interest in Carlton Adventure at the expiry of the current lease.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Chair moved that the recommendation in the report to support Option 3 be approved. This was supported unanimously by the Committee.

Decision

That Officers be authorised to progress Option 3, the establishment of a new medium term lease for the Carlton Adventure site with discussions around the long term position of the bungalow on the site being undertaken with the Trustees.

14. Allotment Strategy (*Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key Decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on the Allotment Strategy and the next steps that were proposed to be taken.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services reported that the development of an Allotment Strategy focussing on the needs of the current user group and wider community that the allotments serve was agreed by Committee in March 2021. A review of the service had been completed and consultation had included meetings with nine allotment associations, 17 drop in sessions at allotment sites, two drop in sessions at the Central Hub and questionnaires to all allotment tenants and those on the waiting list (both paper and online).

Preparation of the strategy had been hindered due to staffing issues but the service now had officers in place to progress the strategy and re-engage with allotment holders. The Assistant Director also highlighted the decision of Council to cancel the proposed rent rise to be introduced in April 2024 and the resolution to “Instigate a wholesale review covering all aspects of the allotment service, with allotment holders at the heart of this process”. This decision had the potential to impact on the continued delivery of the Strategy and future working arrangements as there would be a need to accommodate the reduced budget and understand further the longer term implications this would have for the service.

The draft strategy and action plan were submitted with the report. The Assistant Director stated that the timescale for implementation of the Strategy is from 2023 – 2026. This is a short delivery period however it

reflects the funding uncertainty around the service, and the request for further review, therefore acknowledges that these could have significant implications for the service in the future. The strategy would be shared with associations and allotment tenants following approval by Committee. Work to implement the strategy would be carried out alongside the wholesale review required by Council and this would involve work with other local authorities on benchmarking.

Members welcomed the strategy document and action plan. A Member noted that some vacant sites were not in a very good condition and rather than wait until the Council had cleared them, suggested they could be let on a reduced rent for a period of time to allow a new tenant to do the clearing work. The proposal was supported by other Members. The Assistant Director stated that Officers would look at the suggestion but did state that the legislation around allotment lettings would have to be reviewed first to see if this was possible.

Members welcomed the appointment of the new Allotment Officer and commented that she was building positive relationships with associations and allotment holders. Members suggested that some of the rules around sites should also be re-examined, such as burning permits and expressed concern that the work on clearing sites for letting was not progressing quickly enough.

There was also concern expressed at the time period for the implementation of the strategy. The Assistant Director stated that there was only one officer in place to implement the strategy and also undertake the review work as requested by Council. The Executive Director added that the time frame had been judged appropriate in light of the additional work load presented by the review and was a pragmatic assessment of the staffing resources available.

The Vice-Chair questioned how many plots were being refused by potential tenants because of their condition. The Head of Service - Heritage and Open Spaces stated that such information wasn't recorded. Officers were working with colleagues in the Probation Service on their potential involvement in clearing some sites in order to make plots more attractive to potential tenants.

The Committee had a lengthy discussion on the issues around letting of allotment sites, the conditions of some vacant plots and general issues around security, vandalism and anti-social behaviour with some allotment holders present speaking. The Assistant Director stated that the Project Officer (Allotments) would look to address those concerns where possible and would speak with the allotment holders after the meeting. There was a suggestion that a public meeting with allotment holders should be undertaken to get their views. The Executive Director restated that meetings had already been held with all allotment associations and that every allotment tenant and person on the waiting list had been sent the

questionnaire during the consultation process. It was considered that a full and detailed consultation had taken place to seek views.

The Chair moved the recommendations in the report. The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

1. That the Allotment Strategy and associated action plan, as submitted, be approved for implementation.
2. It was noted that work to deliver a 'wholesale review' of allotments as required by full Council had commenced.
3. That the proposed programme of capital works as reported, be approved.

15. Levelling Up Parks Fund Update *(Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide the Adult and Community Based Services Committee with updated information on the Levelling Up Parks Fund in line with the project proposal previously presented at committee in October 2022 for Burn Valley Gardens.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services reported on the background to the funding and the scheme approved by Committee on October 2022. The Assistant Director also outlined the work being undertaken to seek Green Flag status for the park. The Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader gave a presentation to the Committee detailing the works undertaken in Burn Valley Gardens highlighting the interactive trail, oak way marker posts, educational features, illustrated map, tree uplift work, sensory garden area and natural play area.

Members welcomed the report and presentation and congratulated all involved in the work. Members noted that anti-social behaviour was still an issue but hoped that through the extensive consultation work with the local community there would be a greater ownership of the park.

Decision

That the report and update be noted and that the Committee supports the pursuing of Green Flag status for Burn Valley Gardens.

16. Jobs and Skills in the Community Hubs *(Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to update the Committee on the progress made in embedding Jobs and Skills into the Community Hubs and Wellbeing Service.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services reported on the transferring of the Jobs and Skills service into the Community Hubs and Wellbeing Service following a departmental restructure in December 2021. The rebranded team, Jobs & Skills @ the Hub, has relocated from Church Street with the administration function based in the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) and the rest of the team having a community presence in Central Hub, Waverley Allotment Project and South Hub providing information and advice on the opportunities available including career advice, job search and support with enrolment.

The report to the Committee provided details of the following key issues: -

- Adult Education Budget
- Partnership working
- Enrolment numbers
- Ofsted inspection
- The Multiply Programme
- Youth Employment Initiative including the Tees Valley Pathways and Routeways Programmes
- The Department for Works and Pension (DWP) funded Youth Hub

A Member commented that the integration of the service into the Community Hubs had gone very well and the feedback from users of the services was very positive. All staff involved should be congratulated on their work.

Decision

That the report and the progress made be noted and that the proposed developments within the Jobs & Skills @ the Hubs service be supported.

17. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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