

TITLE OF REPORT: **Community Asset Transfer of Springwell Community Garden, Blackhill Crescent, Springwell**

REPORT OF: **Colin Huntington, Strategic Director Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to the grant of a 35 year lease pursuant to the Community Asset Transfer policy.

Background

2. The land to the rear of Blackhill Crescent, Springwell, shown edged black on the attached plan was declared surplus to requirements by Cabinet at its meeting on 13 September 2016, so that a 35 year lease could be granted to Silverline Memories CIO (Min No C82).
3. Silverline, a charity which supports people with dementia through horticulture took over the former community garden and ran it for 3 years but surrendered their interest in the site when they were no longer able to continue with the project in 2019.
4. Springwell Community Hub, which runs the nearby Springwell Community Centre, has applied to take a lease of the land to re-establish it as a community garden to promote physical exercise, mental wellbeing and education through gardening, horticulture, conservation and land based studies.

Proposal

5. It is proposed that a 35 year lease be granted, to Springwell Community Hub pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet authorise the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance to grant a 35 year lease at a nil rent pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy.

For the following reason:

To manage resources and rationalise the Council's assets in line with the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan.

Policy Context

1. The proposed lease supports the overall vision for Making Gateshead a Place where everyone Thrives, in particular supporting communities to support themselves and each other, and will help deliver the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing strategy, in particular the policy objective to create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.
2. The proposed lease will also accord with the provisions of the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2015 – 2020. In particular, the rationalisation of the Councils estate.

Background

3. In 2016, Silverline Memories CIO, a charity which supports people with dementia through horticulture, were granted a 35 year lease of the former community garden that had been established on the land to the rear of Blackhill Crescent, Springwell, shown edged black on the attached plan.
4. In 2019, the lease to Silverline Memories was surrendered as their project was no longer considered viable. To prevent vandalism and slow the sites deterioration, a temporary agreement was entered into with Springwell Community Hub, which runs the nearby Springwell Community Centre.
5. Springwell Community Hub has now requested that the land be transferred to them pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy. They propose to re-establish a community garden to promote physical exercise, mental wellbeing and education through gardening, horticulture, conservation and land based studies. A business plan supporting the projects viability and sustainability has been provided.

Consultation

6. In preparing this report consultations have taken place with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Ward Councillors for High Fell.

Alternative Options

7. The option of not granting a lease has been discounted as there is no budgetary provision for the maintenance costs of the former community garden.

Implications of Recommended Option

8. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that there are no financial implications arising from this recommendation.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** - There are no direct staffing implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
 - c) **Property Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property will ensure the Council's operational costs are not increased.

9. **Risk Management Implication** - There are no risk management implications arising from this report.
10. **Equality and Diversity** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.
11. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property will reduce opportunities for crime and disorder, especially vandalism and theft.
12. **Health Implications** - The activities provided by the tenant provide both physical and mental health benefits to people who participate in the activities delivered.
13. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - The grant of a lease will ensure the future sustainability of the community garden.
14. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.
15. **Ward Implications** – High Fell.
16. **Background Information** – None.