

TITLE OF REPORT: Surplus Declaration and Grant of Lease - Land to the rear of Blackhill Crescent, Springwell

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to (i) the land to the rear of Blackhill Crescent being declared surplus to the Council's requirements and (ii) the future proposal for the land after being declared surplus.

Background

2. The land to the rear of Blackhill Crescent, Springwell, which is shown edged black on the attached plan (the Land), is no longer required for service delivery by the Council and consideration has been given to its future use as detailed in the appendix.

Proposal

3. It is proposed that the Land be declared surplus to the Council's requirements and a 35 year lease be granted to Silverline Memories Charitable Incorporate Organisation (CIO) pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) Declares the Land surplus to the Council's requirements.
 - (ii) Authorises the Service Director, Legal, Democratic and Property Services to proceed with a 35 year lease of the land to Silverline Memories CIO 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.

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APPENDIX: Land to the rear of Blackhill Crescent, Springwell.

Policy Context

1. The proposed surplus declaration supports the overall vision for Gateshead as set out in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan in particular, creating capacity for volunteering and community cohesion.
2. The proposed declaration will also accord with the provisions of the update of the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2015 – 2020. In particular, the rationalisation of the estate through the disposal of an uneconomic asset.

Background

3. The Land to the rear of Blackhill Crescent which is shown edged black on the attached plan is currently held by the Council for housing purposes. The Land was formerly used as a community garden by a local residents group, which has subsequently disbanded and the land was left unused and in need of regular maintenance.
4. The Land is not required for service delivery and no alternative use has been identified.
5. The Trustees of Silverline Memories Charitable Incorporate Organisation (CIO) is an incorporated charity which supports people with dementia through horticulture. The Council has been working with the Group to identify suitable space for them to develop their activities with their user groups and the wider community and the Land is considered suitable for their purposes to be reinstated as a community garden.
6. Ordinarily the consent of the Secretary of State would be required, to dispose of land held for housing purposes, however, as it has never been used for the provision of dwelling houses it is deemed to be vacant and as such the Council can rely on the General Consent A.3.2 of the General Consent for the Disposal of Land held for the purpose of Part II of the Housing Act 1983 – 2013, which gives consent to a local authority to dispose of vacant land.

Consultation

7. In preparing this report consultations have taken place with Leader, Deputy Leader and Ward Councillors for High Fell who have raised no objections to the proposal.

Alternative Options

8. The option of retaining the land has been discounted as it is vacant land with no value which the Council has an obligation to maintain.

Implications of Recommended Option

9. **Resources:**

a) Financial Implications - The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that the grant of a lease will result in revenue savings for the Council.

- b) Human Resources Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.
- c) Property Implications** - The future disposal of this land will result in a reduction in the Council's overall property portfolio thus reducing operational costs.
10. **Risk Management Implications** - The future disposal of this land will remove opportunities for anti-social behaviour on vacant land.
11. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The proposals supports the Council's commitment to fostering good relations between groups in Gateshead and that no-one should be treated less favourably on the grounds of their protected characteristic.
12. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - The future disposal of this land will remove opportunities for crime and disorder.
13. **Health Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.
14. **Sustainability Implications** - The future disposal of this land will reduce the level of the Council's operational costs and will bring vacant land back into use.
15. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.
16. **Area and Ward Implications** – High Fell in the South area.
17. **Background Information** - None