

TITLE OF REPORT: **Community Asset Transfer – Former Bowls Pavilion,
Chopwell Welfare Park, Chopwell**

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

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to the Community Asset Transfer by the grant of a 25 year lease in relation to the Former Bowls pavilion, Chopwell Welfare Park, Chopwell.

Background

2. The property, which is shown edged black on the plan provided, is held by the Council as trustee. Although the property is no longer required by the Council for service delivery, for the reasons set out in the appendix, the Council has to act in the best interest of the Trust and its beneficiaries and identify alternative uses for the property.
3. As the property is held in trust the consent of the Charity Commission and the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) is also required.
4. Approval to the letting has been sought from the CISWO, which has indicated that subject to sight of the lease, it will be willing to give its consent, but only to a lease for a term of 25 years. The consent of the Charity Commission will be sought once the Council as Trustee has the formal approval of CISWO.

Proposal

5. It is proposed that a 25-year lease be granted to Bibliotheca Magica Community Interest Company (CIC), in line with the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy, which is considered to be in the best interests of the Trust.

Recommendations

6. Cabinet, in its capacity as Trustee, is asked to approve, subject to the necessary consents being obtained, the grant of a 25 year lease to Bibliotheca Magica CIC in line with the Councils Community Asset Transfer Policy.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To manage the Trust's assets in line with the objects of the Trust and in line with the Councils Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan.
- (ii) To realise savings for the Trust

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Policy Context

1. The proposal supports the overall objects of the Trust and helps the community to support itself. The proposal also helps to deliver the Council's Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy, in particular the policy objective to create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities..

Background

2. The property, known as Former Bowls Pavilion, Chopwell Welfare Park, shown edged black on the plan provided, is held by the Council as trustee. As the property is held in trust by the Council, there is an obligation for it to act in the best interests of the Trust.
3. At its meeting on 19 September 2017 Cabinet decided to rationalise the Council's maintained stock of bowling greens and pavilions as recommended within the Playing Pitch Strategy (Minute No. C62). The Bowls pavilion in Chopwell has not been used in connection with bowling for a number of years, but was until about two years ago, being used informally by a community group, but this group is no longer active and is in the process of being dissolved.
4. The Council has, however, been approached by another local group, Bibliotheca Magica CIC to determine whether it could take on responsibility for the former Bowls pavilion in the Park. The group who provide a variety of gaming activities and a safe, nurturing, encouraging space to support the local community currently rent a shop unit in the village but as it has no water or toilet facilities, they are looking for accommodation where they can develop their proposals further. Bibliotheca Magica CIC has worked on its business plan to use the pavilion and is now in a position to proceed with a community asset transfer of the property.
5. The grant of a 25 year lease at nil consideration to Bibliotheca Magica CIC is considered to be in the best interests of the Trust as it provides a sustainable model for the former Bowls pavilion. The lease will require that Bibliotheca Magica CIC act in accordance with the objects of the Trust, in order to ensure the Council, as Trustee complies with its obligations under the Trust Deed.
6. The letting is subject to the consent of the Charity Commission and the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) as the building is held in trust. Approval to the letting has been sought from the CISWO which has indicated that subject to sight of the lease it will be willing to give its consent but only to a lease for a term of 25 years. The consent of the Charity Commission will be sought once the Council as Trustee has the formal approval of CISWO.

Consultation

7. In preparing this report consultations have taken place with the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holders and Ward Councillors for Chopwell and Rowlands Gill.

Alternative Options

8. The option of retaining the property has been discounted as there are currently no alternative viable options for the use of the property.

Implications of Recommended Option

9. Resources:

a) Financial Implications - The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there are no financial implications arising from this report.

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 held in Trust will result in a reduction in the Council's operational property portfolio and reduce operational costs.

10. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no risk management implications arising from this recommendation.

11. **Equality and Diversity** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

12. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property held in Trust will reduce opportunities for crime and disorder, especially vandalism and theft.

13. **Health Implications** – There are health implications arising from this report, as the activities provided by the tenant will provide mental health benefits to people who participate in the activities delivered.

14. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - The grant of a lease of this property held in Trust will reduce the level of the Council's operational maintenance, which will subsequently result in a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

15. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

16. **Ward Implications** – Chopwell and Rowlands Gill.

17. **Background Information** – Minute No. C62(2017)