

Title of meeting: Culture and City Development Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 31 January 2020

Subject: Waterfront Garden Centre

Report by: Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member of the developments to date of the Waterfront Garden Centre in Avenue de Caen and to see approval to continue to seek cross authority working for referrals to the service.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To update Members on the detailed working of the Waterfront Garden Centre and to seek approval to continue to request referrals to the service from other services within the Council.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Early in 2017 the Shaw Trust closed the only therapeutic and horticultural project for adults with learning disabilities in the city, which had been based in the grounds of St James Hospital. It was felt that the provision of an alternative facility was important to the welfare of this group and following discussions between Parks Service and Adult Social Care, the decision was taken to develop a new growing and retail project on part of the Seafront compound in Avenue de Caen. The garden centre is also part of the Waterfront brand.
- 3.2 A co-ordinator, who is a qualified Social and Therapeutic Horticulturalist with considerable hands on experience of horticulture and of working with adults with learning disabilities, was appointed. She undertook the development of the site from scratch into the sales and display area and the growing area, including a poly tunnel, and small shop. A part-time assistant was appointed when the project opened to the public. Current opening hours to the public are Thursdays to Sundays.
- 3.3 Adults with learning disabilities who are interested in horticulture are referred to the project by Adult Social Care. Their placements attract a daily fee and they receive a

wide range of support and training to promote their skills, self-confidence and independence. Each individual has an agreed action plan with their own targets, which is reviewed regularly, and is signposted to help with identified personal issues such as health, independent travel and finances. The aim is, wherever possible, to encourage people into employment, voluntary work or involvement in community projects and individuals are helped with CV writing, interview skills practice and references. A number of people have also attended an employment skills course run by an external agency and free on-site IT training is provided by an external trainer.

- 3.4 A significant source of income derives from the sale of plants, some of which are bought in but the majority of which - 75% - are now raised on site from seed or by division - including donations from the public.
- 3.5 The project has a strong emphasis on recycling: 100% of the pots used at the centre are recycled - including from the council's bedding plants, distributing the surplus to community groups; creating decorations for sale from dried flower heads, pine cones and other 'found' items and offering a shredding service for Christmas trees, to be used as mulch and for making decorative items. In January 2020 over 200 Christmas trees were recycled from around the city.
- 3.6 Links have been created with a number of charitable and community organisations (see list at Appendix 1) who provide plants and garden items for sale alongside an appropriate range of Waterfront gifts.
- 3.7 In order to broaden the range of experience available and to encourage more social contact, the project was extended by an additional day, to be spent outside the garden centre at various community gardens and projects. These include caring for the terrace garden on the fifth floor of the civic offices, helping with the Rock Gardens volunteer group and weeding the rose beds in Avenue de Caen.
- 3.8 The Centre has seen a number of successes and has delivered significant social value. It has supported 12 adults with additional support needs, predominantly Learning Disabilities, known as Growers.
- 3.9 The project also recruits volunteer helpers and these include people who are in employment, students, retirees and those seeking to gain experience to get back into work. The ages of the volunteers at the Garden Centre range from 18 to retired and 39 people have been involved to date.
- 3.10 The Centre has added an attraction and a retail offer to the seafront and is particularly popular with students and visitors to the city as well as with residents.
- 3.11 On 1st August 2019 an SLA was put in place between Parks Service and Adult Social Care (ASC). This provides significant funding to the project in return for the provision of 32 places for ASC referees. Regular reviews will take place during the term of the SLA as we work with ASC to devise and agree a sustainable future funding model.

- 3.12 Included in the SLA is the care of the garden at the Henderson Road Day Centre for adults with severe learning disabilities and use of the large greenhouse on site. The latter will make possible the cultivation of a wider range of plants, including house plants, and better over wintering of cuttings and young plants. It is hoped to involve at least some of the centre users in the care of their garden.
- 3.13 The additional funding has made it possible to increase the assistant role to full-time, thereby increasing the number of potential placements (staff work to a 4 to 1 ratio) and enabling staff to develop more theory based training programmes as a foundation for NVQs in horticulture.
- 3.14 The medium term aim is to ensure the project is self-funding by the end of the current SLA funding and to achieve this the income from both placement fees and sales need to be increased. Currently discussions are underway on better promoting the project to ASC clients including expanding referrals to include other ASC client groups, in particular those with mental ill health. Possible GP referrals are also being explored.
- 3.15 The project is promoted through leaflets and posters and has a busy face book page. A major focus over the next few months will be the development of a more effective marketing strategy, in conjunction with Corporate Communications with the aim of attracting in more referrals as well as promoting the wider garden and plant offer to the public.
- 3.16 Staff, volunteers and growers attend a variety of events to showcase the project, having engaged with some 25 community groups to date, and also provide talks on gardening, including to residential homes and a public event in Canoe Lake Park. The project also provided a quiet, sensory safe space for festival goers during the Victorious Festival and this will be repeated this year.
- 3.17 In 2019 the garden centre hosted a Wilder Portsmouth Day in conjunction with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust; a similar but larger event is planned for April 2020 which will involve a wide range of green and wildlife organisations, thus tapping into their publicity networks.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 This is a unique service and the opportunities it provides to adults with learning disabilities is exceedingly well supported and nurturing. The skills and abilities of the staff enable the Growers to be encouraged to participate and maximise the opportunities which are available on an appropriate level however the overall scheme lacks visibility and, whilst currently thriving, always has room to grow and develop.
- 4.2 The recommendation is specifically seeking support to further encourage other services to refer their clients to the Waterfront Garden Centre to work towards the medium term aim of maintaining a sustainable offer.

5. Integrated impact assessment

5.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is attached.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this Report.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 The Waterfront Garden Centre is currently financially self-sufficient. Income received from Social Care for the provision of 32 client placements supports the management and operation of the Centre

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Signed by:

Stephen Baily

Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Voluntary and Charitable organisations from which some plants and garden items are sourced

Appendix 2: Two brief Individual Case Studies of Growers at the Waterfront Garden Centre

Appendix 3: Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development

Appendix 1 - Voluntary and Charitable organisations from which some plants and garden items are sourced

Minstead Trust

MAKE at Aldingbourne Enterprises

Right to Work CIC

Mayfield Nurseries (Solent Mind)

Creative Advances

Copnor Men's Shed

Buckland Play Park Association

Appendix 2 - Two brief Individual Case Studies

Please note that these accounts are presented in a form designed to maintain the anonymity of the individuals described

Individual A was referred to us due to social isolation, a pending severe bereavement and a lack of participation in activities or engagement with services. With potential mental health concerns as well as learning disabilities, their family and professionals were worried about their independence and insisted they took a taxi to the garden centre as they felt their road awareness was minimal.

Joining the garden centre, the individual partook in our local area introductions' where we visit local facilities as a group including shops, bus stops and food establishments to ascertain each team members capabilities and support needs and thus identify areas for development. They now travel independently and even on a weekend will pop in and say hello to us and the staff at the Waterfront Tea Room and they have made numerous friends.

They underwent our programme of safety training, including bespoke manual handling training delivered in partnership with one of the PCC health and safety officers. They are now the go-to team member for health and safety, who often encourages and reminds peers to be mindful of their PPE and safe behaviour onsite.

Whilst with us they had been attending another placement which they had decided they were not as comfortable with. After a period of difficulty, through our close links with that service we enabled the individual to continue a relationship with them as a friend rather than a client, which has been noted and applauded.

Individual A who was initially quite shy and reserved, has become a confident and popular team member with colleagues at the garden centre and our neighbours in local PCC businesses and Victorious festival team members.

Individual B had been referred to us as their previous placement had broken down irretrievably. They were struggling to engage with and access services and to interact with others in a positive manner.

Since starting at the Waterfront Garden Centre they have had over two years of regular attendance and has recently taken to also helping at our Henderson Road site in their stride. They access other services now too which they enjoy and which has brought them a better quality of life. They have gone from being at risk of losing their home placement due to difficult behaviour to being settled into a routine and actively maintaining the garden environment there.

Initially they had difficulties with independent travel and mobility but, in liaison with their home, we have supported them and they now walk to and from the site to the bus stop and travels by bus to home in the north of the city. Individual B is very confident with assisting customers, and has settled into the garden centre as part of a team working well with staff, other growers, and volunteers. They are very keen and helpful in assisting new team members or even customers with plant care advice.