

**BRIERLEY HILL AREA COMMITTEE – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010**

**HAWBUSH COMMUNITY GARDEN**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT, COMMUNITY AND HOUSING SERVICES**

**Purpose**

1. To update the Committee on the development of the Hawbush Community Garden site as part of the Brierley Hill Area Community Renewal Plan.

**Background**

2. The land measuring approximately 10,000 square metres belongs to the Directorate of Children Services and is situated in Bull Street to the rear of Hawbush Primary School in an area of multiple deprivation.
3. Until March 2009, the land has been occupied under license by two external organisations:
  - Hawbush Urban Farm Association
  - Brierley Hill Community Forum
4. Following termination of the latest licence agreement by the Brierley Hill Community Forum, the land and associated building was returned to council in a derelict condition.
5. Following consultation with local residents, local voluntary and community groups and other public sector organisations, the Area Community Renewal Officer was granted council lead responsibility for fostering a community based partnership approach towards developing the site as a community garden.
6. Organisations actively supporting the project include:
  - West Midlands Groundwork;
  - Hawbush Project
  - Hawbush Tenants & Residents Association
  - Wells Road Tenant & Residents Association
  - Hawbush Primary School

- DMBC Youth Offending Service
  - DMBC Youth Services
  - Juniper Training
  - West Midlands Police
  - Primary Care Trust
  - DMBC Adult & Community Learning
7. The physical improvements being undertaken will provide high quality outdoor space, add to the overall attractiveness of the area and create opportunities for healthier living, learning, volunteering, employment and community cohesion.

### **Progress to date**

A successful partnership approach has so far led to the following achievements:

8. £10K Big Lottery Funding being obtained to consult with the local community to establish their aspirations for the site.
9. £25K funding being obtained from Marks and Spencer to undertake outdoor site improvements which included the installation of picnic tables: log seats designed by local children, a barbeque area, fire pit, areas to relax and socialize, raised garden beds and 2 polytunnels for growing vegetables and shrubs, 6 large planters containing birch trees, new pathways and a wildlife area.
10. Regular attendance by all partners to clear / cut back overgrown vegetation, undertake general tidy ups and routine outdoor maintenance work.
11. Engagement of local young offenders in undertaking repairs to the main building and outdoor improvements. This has provided them with opportunities to take part ownership of the site, learn new skills, forge positive relationships with residents and local community groups, help reduce the risk of re-offending and ensure the site is protected from acts of vandalism etc.
12. £10k funding obtained from Awards for All to install a fully fitted kitchen and WC area and purchase materials for partners to complete all other outstanding building repairs to include redecoration, replacement of guttering, perished brickwork, meter cupboards, and floor coverings.
13. £2.8K obtained from Safe & Sound Partnership to install 4 windows and security grills to the buildings front elevation.
14. £2.5k obtained to facilitate volunteer activity on the site.

15. £45k obtained from the Tudor Trust to further encourage local resident participation over the next 18 months. Activities will include food growing, healthy outdoor activities and intergenerational activity towards achieving healthier lifestyles and community cohesion. Sessions will also be held amongst pupils attending Hawbush Primary School to enhance school curriculum activities and learning.
16. £2k Transformation funding being obtained to deliver informal on site learning sessions amongst adults. This provided opportunity for participants to learn practical, basic construction skills which would provide them with the skills and confidence to pursue further training and to help them into employment.

### **Future Plans:**

17. Continuation of outdoor and building improvements to make them useful for local residents of all ages. This will include environmental / habitat creation to improve the biodiversity present, and greater facilities that will help promote and engage local residents in healthier living, education, training, volunteering and employment support.
18. A bid for £5k has been submitted in partnership with Kathleen House, a nearby respite home for carers and clients suffering from mental disorders and difficulties. The bid is to improve access to the site and to create a safe relaxing environment in which they can develop outdoor skills.
19. Establishment of a community based management committee to work alongside the Area Community Renewal Officer DMBC and other key service providers to oversee the continued use and ongoing development of the site.
20. Placement of 5 local unemployed 18- 24 year olds as part of the Future Jobs Programme. Successful applicants will be appointed for a period of 6 months as Environmental Assistants, during which they will receive training and support to enhance career and long term and sustainable employment opportunities.

### **Finance**

21. There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report. All site improvements that have been undertaken to date have been financed by external funding sources and in kind contributions from partner organisations.

### **Law**

22. The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to establish a Local Strategic Partnership to address collaborative

working and develop a community strategy and local neighbourhood renewal strategy- this is part of the Community Renewal approach.

23. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1980 enables the Council to do anything which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.

### **Equality Impact**

24. Residents of all ages together with local community and voluntary organisations have been directly consulted and involved in the community garden design as part of the Community Renewal strategy commitment to promote social inclusion and address inequality of social and economic outcomes between local communities.
25. Development of the site will create a wider range of opportunities for local people to participate and engage with services delivering activities that promote healthier living, volunteering, education, training and employment and engagement than is currently provided.

### **Recommendation**

26. That Committee members note the report and continue to support the development of the Hawbush Community Garden.



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**Linda Sanders**  
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