

The Growth Team Project - Southcote Park

Summary

An opportunity to extend the Council's already successful partnership work with the 'Growth Team' has been identified. Forming part of Surrey Choices' Employability service, the Growth Team is a group of adults with disabilities, supported by two staff members who currently undertake paid conservation work on behalf of Surrey County Council and voluntary work on behalf of Surrey Heath Borough Council.

Portfolio and Date Signed Off: 14 May 2015 (the Leader on behalf of the Portfolio Holder)

Business – Cllr Craig Fennell

Wards Affected

All

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that the Council enters into an agreement with the Growth Team, granting permission for their use of the compound area at Southcote Park as a base from which to run their planting project, subject to the adoption of a usage agreement.

1. Resource Implications

- 1.1. The Growth Team will cover any costs associated with the preparation for, purchase, installation, usage and maintenance of the polytunnels which will be used as the basis of this project.
- 1.2. The Council will allow usage of the compound area at Southcote Park, free of charge. This will be linked to a usage agreement which will include conditions surrounding the operation of any business venture and the removal of any structure / equipment at the end of the project term, the costs of which are to be met by the Growth Team.
- 1.3. The Growth Teams medium term aim will be to sell produce grown to local farmers markets. The Council's longer term goal will be to source specific varieties of bedding plants from the Growth Team, providing the Council's Greenspace Team with significantly cheaper, locally sourced bedding plants. Any income generated will be fed directly back into the project to promote its sustainability.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council's Greenspace Team has worked in partnership with the Growth team for the past two years and have benefitted from their volunteering work.

2.2 A number of Growth Team participants are Borough residents, currently travelling to Woking for the bulk of their work. By having a project base in Surrey Heath, Surrey Choices Employability Service hopes to attract more Borough residents.

3. Options

3.1 The Executive can:

- i) Approve this proposal.
- ii) Decline to support this proposal.

4. Proposals

4.1 It is proposed that the Growth Team sets up a project growing and selling produce. They will source two polytunnels and these will be fixed to the existing hard standing within the compound area at Southcote Park. The cost of the polytunnels, their installation and all necessary equipment to begin propagating produce from seed to shop will be funded by the Growth Team. They are at present attempting to source funds from local organisations to facilitate this. The produce will be sold at local farmer's markets and connections will be made with local businesses.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 The 'Growth Team' is a group of adults with disabilities, supported by 2 staff members who currently maintain amongst other areas, nature reserves in Woking. The team is part of Surrey Choices' Employability service. Employability supports a diverse range of people across Surrey to find employment opportunities and the Growth team forms a part of this service. The Growth team travel all over North West Surrey, undertaking rights of way work for the countryside management department at Surrey County Council. For the past year they have undertaken one day's voluntary work per week at Lightwater Country Park in partnership with Surrey Heath's Green Space team. The work has been hugely beneficial, contributing to many of Lightwater Country Park's key conservation objectives.

5.2 Both the Council and the Growth Team have been exploring opportunities to extend this successful partnership and have identified the now disused compound at Southcote Park as an ideal location from which to start a new project.

5.3 The project will be extremely worthwhile, enabling its participants to use their horticultural skills whilst developing an appreciation for the challenges associated with operating a business.

6. Corporate Objectives and Key Priorities

6.1 It is considered that this proposal meets the following Corporate objectives:

Making Surrey Heath a Pleasant Place to live

- i) Improving standards of maintenance of parks, verges and open space.
- ii) Providing excellent recreation facilities

Promoting a Buoyant and sustainable local economy

- i) Sourcing locally
- iii) Encouraging people to stay and spend locally for their leisure activities

Encouraging supportive and caring communities

- i) Raising standards to promote parks as centres for community activity including family time, community events.

Delivering Services efficiently, effectively and economically

- i) Providing public facilities at no cost to the Council

7. Legal Issues

7.1 The Business Team has worked with Corporate Property to draw up a usage agreement which protects the Council's land usage and ownership during the project term.

8. Sustainability

8.1 Both parties will formally meet on an annual basis to review the success of the project.

9. Risk Management

9.1 It is considered that this project is low risk.

9.2 The Growth Team will be responsible for the production and execution of any Risk Assessments.

9.3 The Council's Greenspace team will undertake a weekly safety inspection of the compound and project processes.

9.4 In the event the project is unsuccessful, the Council will inherit all equipment, including Poly tunnel, left on site.

10. Community Safety

10.1 Well maintained parks and open spaces can have a positive effect on community safety by providing safe and welcoming spaces.

10.2 The team will be a welcome presence at Southcote Park, which since the removal of the horticultural nursery operation by the Council has suffered from incidents of vandalism.

11. PR and Marketing

11.1 This is a good example of positive partnership working, the outcomes of which will benefit both the Growth Team and the Council.

Annexes	Annex 1: Plan of Southcote Park
Background Papers	None
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Consultations, Implications and Issues Addressed

Resources	Required	Consulted
Revenue	✓	✓
Capital		
Human Resources		
Asset Management		
IT		

Other Issues	Required	Consulted
Corporate Objectives & Key Priorities		
Policy Framework		
Legal		
Governance		
Sustainability		
Risk Management		
Equalities Impact Assessment		
Community Safety		
Human Rights		

Other Issues	Required	Consulted
Consultation		
P R & Marketing		