

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 16 AUGUST 2016

GARAGE SITES AT LOCHSIDE ROAD, FORFAR

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING AND PLACE

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the proposed transfer of ground at Lochside Road, Garage Sites, Forfar, to the Forfar and District Men's Shed.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee

- (i) approves the lease of garage sites at Lochside Road to Forfar Men's Shed on the basis of a 5 year lease for £1 per annum.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit
- Our communities are safe, secure and vibrant
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services
- We have improved the health and wellbeing of our people and inequalities are reduced
- Our built and natural environment is protected and enjoyed

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1** Men's sheds are a recognised international movement that originated in Australia, to advise and improve the overall health of older males. They have expanded their remit latterly to anyone regardless of age or gender. Research shows that social isolation, loneliness and stressful social ties are common amongst older men, and are associated with poor physical and mental health, higher risk of disability, poor recovery from illness and death. Older men use fewer community based health services and are less likely to participate in preventative health activities. They also find it harder to make friends in later life and are less likely to join community based social groups. Evidence shows that participation in a Men's shed is linked to older men's desire to engage with their peers in a work-like activity. The benefits range from learning new skills, sharing knowledge, personal achievement, community engagements and the opportunity to interact with others. The Forfar and District Men's Shed is a community based, non-commercial organisation which is open to all members of the community above the age of 18.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1** Forfar and District Men's Shed is made up of local volunteers. They wish to lease the ground at Lochside Road Garage Sites, Forfar for a term of 5 years, for a nominal fee. The group would like the option to further lease for another 5 years or longer in the future. The proposal is for the group to provide a safe, friendly and inclusive environment where the members are able to gather and/or work on meaningful projects, at their own pace, on their own or in the company of other members, where the primary objective is to advance the health and wellbeing of the participating members.
- 4.2** The acquisition of a permanent location for the Forfar and District Men's Shed would be a major step in progressing toward providing a better and more comprehensive service to the members and the wider community. It would provide a large purpose built, dry, warm and secure premise for organisational meetings, project work and provide secure storage for equipment and project material. The group currently use Council offices for scheduled meetings and have a temporary facility which is small and has no heating for project work and equipment storage. Permanent premises would also provide the ability to expand awareness of the Forfar Men's Shed Group and would have a greater physical presence in the community which would enable them to attract new members.
- 4.3** The Forfar and District Men's shed is a unique project in the area providing opportunities for men and other people from all backgrounds to meet and share skills. The group has been active in their community since its inception and have worked in partnership with other community groups, such as providing garden planters for the Pitstop Youth café, Brechin Caledonian Railway and a local resident action group. They have also provided fencing and disabled access steps. They have supported community groups with demolition and removal of concrete rubble for a community garden and have supported various local fund raising activities with stalls including the Beautiful Angus Competition.
- 4.4** In assessing this initial proposal and its positive contribution towards local outcomes the CTAG is of the opinion that it will bring benefits to the local community and wishes to be supportive of this proposition. Arrangements have been made with an existing tenant of the garage sites on Lochside Road so that a reasonable area of ground can be made available to the group. As the ground in question is currently on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and is therefore subject to the statutory HRA guidance published by Scottish Government in 2014, the proposal has been discussed with members of the Angus Tenant Steering Group who have expressed their support. Local officers have worked with the group to explore the options for ownership of land and, in order to develop the group's aspirations at a pace that is both realistic and sustainable; an initial 5 year lease is being sought. This will enable the group to develop a long term vision and business plan, apply for external funding and build up a body of evidence of both individual and community benefit that can inform their future activity.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The garage sites are held on the Housing Revenue Account. Garage site rental would generate in the region of £500 per annum, however there is low demand and the garage sites at Lochside Road are under-occupied. This land is not currently prioritised for any other purpose in the Housing Division's asset management strategy.

6. RISKS

In relation to recommendation (i) - The group is not sustainable and ceases to exist.

7. EQUALITIES

The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An equalities impact assessment is required.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Report 622/12 - Community Asset Transfer Policy
- Report 525/13 - Update Community Asset Transfer Policy
- Report 210/15 - Community Asset transfer update.

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