

Kingswood Town Council

Meeting: Full Council

Date: 12th November 2024

Author: Town Clerk

Item for Consideration: The Community Growing space in Kingswood Park

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At the meeting in October 2024, the clerk presented a request as below:

For councilors to consider the release of £2,000 from the Floral Displays budget towards a poly tunnel, shed and tools for the establishment of a new Growing Club in Kingswood Park, with the Friends of Kingswood Park and SGC.

1.2 This was supported in principle but with a request that further information be obtained and for this to be reconsidered by the council as a subsequent meeting. This application is not being considered under the Community Grant Scheme, as that scheme does not award funding to projects that are considered the responsibility of South Gloucestershire Council.

2.0 Further information

2.1 Additional information is provided below for councillors to consider, in relation to the request to release £2,000 as a grant to the Friends of Kingswood Park and South Gloucestershire Council

Who will undertake the governance of the scheme?

2.2 Responsibility for overseeing the creation and delivery of the community growing activities and the garden will be undertaken by the Health & Wellbeing Officer for the park. The original plan was for a community allotment at Orchard Road, but we saw an opportunity to create something exciting in the park, which stood a greater chance of sustainability after the park regeneration project has finished.

2.3 It is of course a much more ambitious plan which requires a great deal more community consensus regarding its development, and also a substantial amount of additional funding. Therefore, the creation of this growing space will be developed over time and phased as funding is secured and as support grows. We are already investigating available grants particularly in respect of the cost for accessible paths.

What is the intended audience of the growing club and who will coordinate it and manage the volunteers?

2.4 The intended audience of the community garden in Kingswood Park would be as diverse and broad as possible, essentially, we are keen to create a therapeutic space which can be used as a community hub within the park for horticulture and nature appreciation; the polytunnel would also provide an indoor space which could be used for a variety of community activities and workshops. We would seek to offer:

- Daytime therapeutic nature activities for people recovering or living with mental health difficulties; long-term sick and unemployed; socially isolated; young parents; people in recovery from addiction; people with disabilities. These activities would include: horticulture skills, mindfulness, nature art, creative writing, craft.

- Workshops outside of usual working hours, which would therefore be available to working people who would benefit from opportunities for community connection, wellbeing

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and new learning about horticulture, the environment, biodiversity, environmental sustainability. It can be easy to overlook those that are in work, but they may need help to stay well and employed.

· A dog free space where young children and their families can picnic and, explore nature and plants. Family and school activities in the park will benefit from this facility.

2.5 We have funding within the Heritage National Lottery grant to fund a number of these activities, and during the course of this 3-year project, the project team will be on-hand to coordinate the garden and manage volunteers. As the project develops it is hoped that Friends of Kingswood Park will take on the running of this space, and potentially lease it from South Glos Council.

Which other organisations will you be collaborating with?

2.6 The Friends of Kingswood Park Group are already helping to raise money for this garden and are incredibly supportive of this development, we are working closely with them to design the space, and hope that once this garden is established it will not be too onerous for them to take on. The Friends of Group would also continue to have support from SGC Volunteer Officer. If, however, for some reason the Friends of Group do not want to take on responsibility for this space, we would look for another community or charitable organisation to take it on, and handover to them when the park project finishes. A major factor in creating this garden in the Park rather than the allotment site as originally planned, was to safeguard it's sustainability: a space in the park can be handed over as a community space more easily than an allotment plot tenancy. Inspired by the likes of Redcatch Community Garden in Knowle, we are looking to bring to Kingswood a community garden hub.

2.7 We will be seeking to collaborate with as many community organisations and public service providers as possible: we are already planning to dovetail with AWP activities, and offer their clients community inclusion activities and volunteering; Community Learning will be able to run a number of courses and activities when we have an indoor space, and they are waiting to hear if we'll have a polytunnel before laying plans for next year; we have close links to local social prescribing teams (Southern Brooks) and GP surgeries, and will work closely with them to ensure that their clients have a clear and accessible referral pathway; we are seeking to create connections with the local job centre and addiction recovery service (DHI) to offer a volunteer and training pathway which could support people to acquire vocational skills and community integration.

Will you be using this as part of a social prescribing solution (ie GP referrals)?

2.8 Yes, our Health and Wellbeing Officer, is experienced in delivering GSP interventions, and has delivered GSP activities over the last 3 years; we also have funding for SGC's Volunteer Support Officer to deliver session, and she is also trained in therapeutic horticulture.

What security measures will be in place to protect the poly tunnel and any tools that might be on site? Will the poly tunnel be visible from the main road? If it is vandalised, then what? Any examples of where there has not been any vandalism?

2.9 Tools will be kept in a lockable storage facility. The polytunnel itself will be situated by the maintenance team's hut, and they will be helping to maintain the garden and keep an eye on it; the hut will be visible from Hollow Road and it is hoped that this visibility and fostering a sense of community ownership in the space will help protect it; the door will be lockable; one advantage of having a polytunnel is that it is only the plastic cover which is

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vulnerable, rips can be repaired, and replacing the whole cover is not expensive. It is foreseeable that plants could be vandalised, but they can also be eaten by pests and slugs, and are not expensive to replace. There are recent examples where there hasn't been vandalism, though it was anticipated: the BS15 Trinity Garden has so far not been vandalised, and the post-box knitted toppers haven't been damaged either. We will look to court community support and goodwill, through thorough consultation and creating a space which is accessible, attractive and meets the community's needs.

What does success of the group look like? How will we know if the funds have made an impact?

2.10 Success of this garden and an indoor growing space would be achieved through:

- A delivery of a broad timetable of community activities which are well attended;
- Positive feedback and outcomes gathered which evidence that 80% of participants find the activities to be good for their wellbeing, and help them feel more closely connected to their community.
- Community involvement in taking responsibility for the site as the project finishes.

2.11 It is hard to detail all the positive possibilities for community connection and involvement which are made possible by the creation of a community hub garden. This is a space which will enable all kinds of wellbeing and learning activity to take place. We are also looking at ways to make this garden accessible to those with disabilities. The landscape architects are looking at ways to ensure that wheelchair accessible paths can be put in place once funding has been found, and the garden will be designed with the needs of people with disabilities in mind: the steering group for the park includes South Glos' Disability Action Group, South Glos' Disability Equalities Network and we are looking to link with Paul's Place - their advice will inform the design of the garden. The design has not yet been decided upon in full, but it will have accessible picnic tables, provide a dog free space, have raised beds with borders which can be sat on, be equipped with tools for the less mobile.

2.12 In addition to this, we realise that this is a formal park, and that it is important that the ascetics of this community garden is in keeping with the rest of the park. We will be seeking to make this garden an attractive addition: there will be high quality raised beds in a symmetrical formal layout, but with informal mixed planting of flowers, herbs and food; the dog-proof fencing will be used as an espalier for dwarf fruit trees and bushes; though the polytunnel may not be as attractive as a greenhouse, it will be tucked at the side in front of what is already an fairly unattractive utility hut for the maintenance team, and we will grow climbing flowers on a trellis as a screen; we will seek to make the maintenance hut more attractive by growing things up it and covering it in community art.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 For councillors to consider this report and agree, or not, to support this request for £2,000 and make the award to Sough Gloucestershire Council and the Friends of Kingswood Park.