

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

A PROPOSAL FOR THE FUTURE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT IN TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal for the future of Neighbourhood Management in Tranmere and Rock Ferry (which has been agreed by the Neighbourhood Management and Lairdside Communities Boards), by recommending the merging of the Neighbourhood Management Project (known as Tranmere Together) into the existing Lairdside Communities Trust (LCT) and then naming the new company Lairdside Communities Together.
- 1.2 There are various legal property and financial matters associated with this merger which are set out in this report and the Council has been invited to become a member of the new company and to nominate two representatives.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Lairdside Communities Trust (LCT) was set up as a company limited by guarantee as part of the Lairdside Regeneration Initiative in the mid 1990's and since that time it has managed two properties (Royal Standard House and 136-138 Bedford Road) in Tranmere and Rock Ferry and undertaken a range of community activities.
- 2.2 Tranmere Together, a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, funded by the Government was set up in 2005 with the objective of improving service delivery to residents in Tranmere and Rock Ferry. Wirral Council is the Accountable Body for the Initiative and Riverside Housing Association, one of the key partners, employs the Neighbourhood Management Team. Funding from Government, through Area Based Grant for the Initiative is available until 31 March 2011. Currently, there is no further funding after this date.
- 2.3 In 2007, Tranmere Together (TT) began to consider options for the continuation of Neighbourhood Management beyond March 2011. A number of options were explored, the one chosen by the Boards of Tranmere Together and LCT being a merger with LCT. The reasons for this were that:
- LCT was a locally focused organisation and the structure of a Development Trust would be advantageous to the future development of Neighbourhood Management
 - LCT was seeking to develop its activities for the benefit of the local community and they viewed Neighbourhood Management as a vehicle for doing this.
- 2.4 As Neighbourhood Management is bringing significant benefits to the communities of Tranmere and Rock Ferry (improvements to the environment, education and community safety) it is important that the work is continued in line with the approved Neighbourhood Plan until March 2011.

3.0 THE MERGER PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The two organisations propose, subject to the agreement of Cabinet, to merge on 2 November 2009.
- 3.2 On this date the Neighbourhood Management staff, currently employed by Riverside Housing Association will transfer to the renamed company Lairdside Communities Together.
- 3.3 On the same date the Council as Accountable Body for the Neighbourhood Management Initiative will have to agree that the Neighbourhood Management Funding (which is currently being paid to Riverside) can be paid to Lairdside Communities Together until 31 March 2011 to pay for the Neighbourhood Management Staff.
- 3.4 As the grant is specifically for the purpose of implementing Neighbourhood Management in Tranmere and Rock Ferry until 31 March 2011, the funding can be claimed by Lairdside Communities Together but it is recommended that it only be used to implement Neighbourhood Management and not be used for any other purposes. The principle of this has been agreed with both Neighbourhood Management and Lairdside Communities Trust Boards. The Council will remain the Accountable Body for the grant funding until it ceases in March 2011.
- 3.5 A Business Plan for the Lairdside Communities Together has been agreed by the Neighbourhood Management and Lairdside Communities Trust Boards. This sets out how the new company will develop its activities (based on a combination of managing current assets, implementing Neighbourhood Management, increasing income from selling services through consultancy and attracting income from contracts) and it needs by March 2011 to have generated sufficient income to replace the grant funding if it is to continue with Neighbourhood Management in its current form. It is too early to say whether the new organisation can achieve this objective, but the proposal is the only one that has a prospect of success, given that there is no further external funding available beyond March 2011.

4.0 PROPERTY AT 136-138 BEDFORD ROAD, ROCK FERRY

- 4.1 This property was acquired by the Council through the Lairdside Initiative some 12 years ago, and following refurbishment it was used for office accommodation by Lairdside Communities Trust. It is still used for office accommodation and meeting space to this day.
- 4.2 The property should have been transferred to the Trust following the refurbishment works and Council approval for this was granted. However, despite reaching the final stages of the legal process the transfer was never completed but it is unclear from the Asset Management files as to why this is the case. It is therefore recommended that the transfer of the property is now completed.

5.0 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP OF THE NEW COMPANY

- 5.1 The Council has been invited by the two merging organisations to become a member of the new company. Two places on the Board have been offered and the merging organisations have asked for elected members with knowledge of the local area.

5.2 It is for Cabinet to consider if it wishes the Council to become a member of the new company and if so, to nominate two Councillors as company members representing the Council.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Neighbourhood Management in Tranmere and Rock Ferry is funded by Area Based Grant until 31 March 2011. £350,000 is available in 2009/10 and 2010/11 totalling £700,000 over the two financial years.

6.2 Staff in the Regeneration Department pay and monitor this grant on a quarterly basis. The new organisation, Lairdside Communities Together, will need advance payments of grant to assist with cash flow and this can be done using payment arrangements which are already in place for Third Sector organisations where there is a demonstrated need for such payments.

7.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no staffing implications for the Council.

7.2 The staff currently employed in the Neighbourhood Management Team by Riverside Housing Association will transfer to the new Lairdside Communities Together. If the Business Plan is not achieved and Lairdside Communities Together need to end staff contracts then this will be their responsibility and their business plan will include financial resources to cover these costs.

8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

12.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 This report affects Tranmere and Rock Ferry Wards.

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 None were used in the preparation of this report.

16.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 It is recommended that:

- 1) the Area Based Grant approved to fund Neighbourhood Management in Rock Ferry and Tranmere until March 2011, which is currently paid to Riverside Housing Association, be paid to Lairdside Communities Together from 2 November 2009.
- 2) the Area Based Grant only be used by Lairdside Communities Together to fund activities which implement Neighbourhood Management in Tranmere and Rock Ferry.
- 3) advance payments of grant, using the Council's existing arrangements, be made as the new organisation has evidenced that this is required for cash flow purposes.
- 4) the property at 136-138 Bedford Road is formally transferred to Lairdside Communities Together
- 5) the Council considers if it wishes to become a member of the new company, and if so, nominates two Councillors.

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