

**Subject:** Community Land Bank Feasibility Study  
**Date of Meeting:** 23 July 2010  
**Report of:** Director of Strategy & Governance  
**Contact Officer:** Name: Francesca Iliffe Tel: 29-0486  
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**Key Decision:** No  
**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens (FCFCG) is a national not for profit organisation who are undertaking a consultation and feasibility study into the creation of a Community Land Bank (CLB).
- 1.2 The study will explore the value in setting up a national body to support the development of new local community growing initiatives. Brighton & Hove City Council was one of three local authorities invited to be involved in this study. FCFCG may seek a pilot agreement between a landowner and a group following the study.
- 1.3 The leader of the council endorsed council involvement with FCFCG in the consultation in March 2010.
- 1.4 The first stage of this consultation took place with a roundtable held in Brighton, June 2010. This report introduces the Community Land Bank study and brings feedback of the roundtable.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the council's participation in the Community Land Bank initiative.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Federation approached Brighton & Hove City Council requesting involvement in the CLB study in early 2010. As forerunners in this area, the council was recognised as being in a position to offer experience and insight into the usefulness of a community land bank. Two other authorities are involved: Bristol and Nottingham.
- 3.3 The leader of the council, Cllr Mears, endorsed council involvement in March 2010 in the interest of pursuing innovative ways to facilitate community access to land for food growing. Proposed involvement was to include:

- interviews with key stakeholders;
  - round table discussions with various stakeholders, exploring the demand for land, how a land bank would work, what services it would offer, the collection of sample leases, ways of working, etc. that would all inform the development of a CLB;
  - exploring the drawing up of leases;
  - exploring risk assessments.
- 3.4 Brighton & Hove City Council is recognised as a forerunner in the area of Food Policy for its history of achievements. In the city there is a strong desire from residents to access land for food growing evidenced by an oversubscribed waiting list for allotments; frequent requests for parcels of land for community agriculture and food projects; and the presence of a thriving Food Partnership, Community Food Projects and Allotment groups.
- 3.5 The council's innovations in food work include: being instrumental in the creation of the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (2004); producing with the Food Partnership a pioneering food policy document: *From Spade to Spoon: a Food Strategy and Action Plan for Brighton & Hove* (2006); and supporting and becoming a partner in citywide project *Harvest* to increase food growing across the city (2009 onwards).
- 3.6 As a landowner the council is committed to extending the availability of land for food growing. Particularly through: improving and extending the allotments service; responding to requests from residents for land for new growing projects on housing land and from community groups for community supported agriculture on the agricultural estate; and supporting the development of innovative demonstration gardens (Preston Park). The city benefits from at least four long established community food groups all existing on land leased from the council. Despite headway made in the city, the council is seeking to go further in accommodating new growing projects.
- 3.7 A roundtable discussion was held in Brighton in June 2010 (see notes at appendix 1). Next steps for the feasibility study are for the federation to produce an interim report of findings. The results of the research may indicate that a Community Land Bank would prove beneficial in which case the federation will seek further funding for a pilot study possibly in Brighton & Hove.
- 3.7 This report covers: the Community Land Bank proposal; progress with the study; and background on the Federation.

### **Community Land Bank proposal and study**

- 3.8 The federation have been funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government to undertake a feasibility study on creating a national CLB. The study will cover market feasibility and investigation of legal and governance structures. Consultants and Federation staff will be carrying out the research.

- 3.9 The Bank would act as an independent, not-for-profit agency, supporting access to unused land for food growing on either a temporary or long term basis. More detailed information on the background to this study and proposals for a land bank can be seen on the federations website: [www.farmgarden.org.uk/news/474-community-land-bank-solution](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/news/474-community-land-bank-solution)
- 3.10 The draft services that a Community Land Bank could provide include:
- To promote wider and more flexible access to land on affordable terms for community farms and gardens;
  - To act as a trusted intermediary and brokerage for land provision between landholders and community groups;
  - To offer (for leased sites) security to landowners and tenants over length and terms of tenancies;
  - To seek to reduce tenure costs and savings on community time and effort;
  - To hold land in trust as appropriate; and
  - To develop best practice precedents as model forms of agreement for involving more landowners in provision to meet community needs.
- 3.11 If the study supports the establishment of a national Land Bank, the Federation aims to have a model structure in place by the end of the summer, after which funding will be sought for a pilot.
- 3.12 The Feasibility study has generated wide press interest. Media Coverage is noted in appendix 2.

### **Progress with the Feasibility Study**

- 3.13 Telephone interviews with a few officers have taken place and more are expected to happen. Key councillors and officers were sought for the roundtable which was held on 10 June 2010. Meeting notes are attached at **appendix 1**. Cllr Fallon-Khan attended with 8 officers. The number of officers attending from a variety of sections demonstrated council eagerness to be involved in innovation around food work, and also showed how many officers were already working on this agenda.
- 3.14 Key stakeholders were also invited to the roundtable discussion. These included representatives from community food projects including the Food Partnership.
- 3.15 As will be seen from the notes, there is interest in making further land available to the community but at the same time a need to overcome barriers.
- 3.16 The federation will be following up with further interviews and may seek a site within Brighton & Hove to pilot the operation of a community land bank role. This may not necessarily be on council land.

## **Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens**

- 3.17 The Federation is a registered charity that supports, represents and promotes community-managed farms, gardens, allotments and other green spaces. They represent around 120 city and school farms, nearly 1,000 community gardens, a growing number of community-managed allotments and over 200 city farms and community gardens in development. Further information on the federation can be found on the federation website: <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>

### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Federation has already conducted preliminary research into the Land Bank idea, in the form of a consultation. This demonstrated support for the idea from a broad range of stakeholders. It would also have a useful role in mediating between the suppliers and users of land, especially in negotiating quality leases and ensuring that management issues would be dealt with. This would create security and confidence in the lease process for all.
- 4.2 The research included interviews with a diverse range of organisations including land users and landowners, bodies supporting community gardening groups and those that might provide land on a temporary or longer-term basis. Strong interest in the CLB proposition was obtained from public and voluntary sector organisations but private sector organisations were reluctant to take part in the process. Research also showed that the source of the demand is diverse socially, economically, ethnically and demographically. Concern was expressed about the lack of security of tenure but, on the other hand, the potential innovation that a CLB could provide was appreciated.
- 4.3 The Community Land Bank Consultation: Executive Summary, Conclusion and Next Steps, is available on the FCFCG website <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/news/474-community-land-bank-solution>.

### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

#### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report. Staff time spent in attendance at meetings and participation in telephone interviews have been managed within existing workloads and resources. The feasibility study has been carried out by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), with no council officer time involved. The FCFCG has already received government grant for this discrete piece of work.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis*

*Date: 08/07/10*

#### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendation in this report.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Oliver Dixon*

*Date: 07/07/10*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 No equalities impact assessment has been carried out at this point. Any EqIA for the feasibility study would be undertaken by the federation. The intention behind the Community Land Bank proposal is to increase the access of the local community to land for growing food.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Increasing local food production is a key sustainability output intended from Community Land Bank proposals leading to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, greater resource efficiency, and lower climate change impacts.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 None identified

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Since the council is involved in a feasibility study only at this stage, there are no significant financial or other risks identified. There is a potential opportunity for positive publicity.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 In recognition of the health, environmental, social and economic benefits that can be gained from local food growing, the council has made commitments to increase city food growing through the Sustainable Community Strategy.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 No comparable alternative options were available.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 FCFCG has commissioned this research to examine whether a CLB could be established as a social enterprise to address the burgeoning demand for access to space for local food growing and for the development and furtherance of community gardening generally. The proposition is that a CLB would be situated in the “non-statutory” and community sector. This involves land not protected by the Allotment Acts and would involve gardening under a very different set of rules than those applying to local authority allotments.
- 7.2 The strategic objective for a CLB would be a net increase in the land available for gardening and a contribution to addressing increased demand. The assumption is that there is a potential supply in the form of land under the management of a variety of landowners (some of which may be awaiting development in some form) which could be made available for gardening until it is time for it to go forward for its designated use.
- 7.3 Community-managed gardens and farms make a major contribution to the quality of life locally in relation to a broad range of social and environmental objectives,

such as the provision of green space, bio-diversity, exercise, community cohesion, beneficial effects on mental health, environmental education, the welfare of older people and carbon reduction.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Notes from Roundtable meeting 10 June 2010
2. Media Coverage of Community Land Banks including Brighton & Hove Area

### **Documents In Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

1. *"From Spade to Spoon: A Food Strategy and Action Plan for Brighton & Hove"*.  
[http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/sustainability/food\\_strategy/SpadeToSpoon-WEB\\_FINAL\\_SEPT06.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/sustainability/food_strategy/SpadeToSpoon-WEB_FINAL_SEPT06.pdf)