


<b>Grants Sub Committee</b>  Wednesday 9 March 2022	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director, Place	<b>Classification:</b> [Unrestricted or Exempt]
<b>Aberfeldy Pocket Park - Grant offer to Poplar HARCA using Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF) to support the design and delivery of a pocket park, public realm improvements and engagement near Dee Street</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Asma Islam, Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Planning</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	David Tolley, Head of Environmental Health & Trading Standards
<b>Wards affected</b>	Lansbury ward
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	– see <a href="#">forthcoming decisions webpage</a> ]
<b>Exempt information</b>	N/A
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	<b>Priority 2: A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in/People live in a borough that is clean and green.</b>

## Executive Summary

The Environmental Health & Trading Standards service (EHTS) has secured £100,000 funding from the LIF, specifically allocated for green infrastructure projects in LIF Area 3 (Poplar and Limehouse), to design and deliver the Aberfeldy Pocket park – a green infrastructure and public realm improvement project in Lansbury ward.

This project would be delivered in partnership with Poplar HARCA, a local housing and community and regeneration association. Poplar HARCA is leading the regeneration of Aberfeldy estate, as part of the Aberfeldy LLP (a joint venture between Poplar HARCA and EcoWorld). The Council is currently working in partnership with Poplar HARCA on several air quality, climate change and active travel initiatives.

A concept proposal for the Aberfeldy Pocket park was presented to the Council's Environmental Health and Trading Standards Service by Poplar HARCA on behalf of Aberfeldy LLP. The proposal provided the background and rationale for green infrastructure and public realm interventions on an area of land owned by Transport for London between Dee Street, Culloden Primary School and an A12 pedestrian underpass linking the Aberfeldy and Brownfield estates. The proposal includes ideas for boxed trees and planters, seating, green walls and lighting improvements, with the aim of improving the experience of pedestrians and school pupils that use the area, whilst addressing high levels of air pollution, safety concerns relating to the pedestrian underpass and a poor quality public realm. The project aims to engage local stakeholders and school children in co-designing and delivering the pocket park.

### **Recommendations:**

The Sub – Committee is recommended to:

1. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to issue a formal offer of grant to Poplar HARCA up to £100,000 of LIF to, to take forward and directly deliver the Aberfeldy Parklet
2. Delegate the Corporate Director Place via the LIF Working Group the power to undertake appropriate actions in respect of all matters concerning the management and monitoring of the grant.
3. Delegate the Corporate Director Place the power to authorise the execution of any agreements necessary to give effect to recommendation 1 and 2.
4. To note the Equalities Impact Assessment / specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The LIF greening programme 2021-23 has a total budget of £400,000 for green infrastructure projects, of which £200,000 has been allocated to LIF Area 3.
- 1.2 The Aberfeldy pocket park proposal falls within LIF Area 3. Poplar HARCA has put forward a budget of £125,000 to design and deliver green infrastructure, public realm interventions and associated engagement activities. Poplar HARCA has secured £25,000 of cash and in-kind match funding through Aberfeldy LLP, including responsibility for the pocket park's future maintenance, therefore requiring £100,000 from the LIF fund. Although the LIF working group has approved £100,000 for this project, it is a scalable

project, and the full amount may not be required. Any remaining balance will be re allocated to other greening projects in LIF 3.

- 1.3 This part of the borough suffers from poor air quality, limited tree cover and few quality green spaces. The pocket park is a green infrastructure project which aims to reduce residents' and school children's exposure to air pollution through tree planting and green walls. It also seeks to turn an area of poor quality public realm, located between a pedestrian underpass, an entrance to Culloden Primary School and the A12, into a much improved space where pedestrians, school children and parents feel safer and more comfortable walking and cycling.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 **The Council directly delivers the Aberfeldy Pocket Park** - This is considered less practical and cost effective than the recommended option, for the following reasons:
- **Resource** – The project will be administered by the Pollution Team, which has limited capacity to directly deliver a small-scale capital project such as the parklet. However, the team is well placed to administer the LIF funds and ensure good project governance, having administered various air quality grant funding schemes with third party organisations in Tower Hamlets.
  - **Insurance and maintenance** – The pocket park will be located on TfL-owned land. The Council does not wish to retain liability for its long-term maintenance and upkeep. Aberfeldy LLP has agreed to this responsibility, but in doing so requires design and delivery oversight of the project, which can be achieved by Poplar HARCA taking the project lead.
- 2.2 **Do nothing** - £200,000 of LIF green infrastructure funding has been allocated for projects in LIF Area 3 following consultation with residents, which must be delivered by April 2023. The Aberfeldy pocket park meets three of the five infrastructure spending priorities for this area, namely: 'public safety measures'; 'measures to tackle pollution'; and 'parks & green spaces'. Not proceeding with the proposed project would represent a missed opportunity to deliver on these spending priorities in partnership with local stakeholders.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

### **Project Context**

- 3.1 The Aberfeldy estate is located within a triangular shaped urban island, severed by the River Lea to the east, the A13 to the south and the A12 to the west/north west. The area suffers from high levels of air pollution – levels of nitrogen dioxide have been recorded as 2.5 times higher than annual EU and UK Air Quality Strategy limit values. Despite Tower Hamlets having relatively

low levels of car ownership (the fourth lowest in London), it has one of the highest death rates attributable to poor air quality in both London and the country (6.4 people per 1000). Poor air quality is compounded by limited access to quality, green spaces. It has a high flood risk and heat island effect<sup>1</sup>.

- 3.2 The emerging Leaside Area Action Plan highlights major physical change taking place across the Lower Lea Valley. New homes are being built around major arterial routes such as the A12, with regeneration schemes across Poplar Riverside (which includes Lansbury ward) forecast to deliver over 15,000 homes in the coming decades. Aberfeldy has thousands of new homes currently under construction by a variety of different developers.
- 3.3 The Aberfeldy Pocket Park falls within a regeneration area being shaped by Aberfeldy LLP, a joint venture between Poplar HARCA and EcoWorld. 1,100 homes have almost been completed as part of the Aberfeldy Village development. A further 1,600 properties are proposed as part of the Aberfeldy West masterplan, alongside new retail, workspace and community facilities, improved parks and open spaces, and greener pedestrian and cycle connections which help to overcome the physical barriers which cut off Aberfeldy from Poplar, Blackwall and Canning Town (see Appendix 1).
- 3.4 The pocket park project responds to consultation and feedback from young people and residents from Aberfeldy about their hopes and expectations for an improved neighbourhood, particularly in terms of personal safety, quality of green spaces and air quality.<sup>2</sup> Children and young people, including pupils from Culloden Primary School, were engaged in developing ideas for the Aberfeldy West Masterplan, focussing on walking, cycling and open spaces. The report represents the first of three engagement exercises with young people planned in the next couple of years. The consultation was carried out on behalf of Poplar HARCA and Aberfeldy LLP.

### **The Aberfeldy Pocket Park**

- 3.5 The Aberfeldy pocket park concept has subsequently been developed as a small, but nonetheless significant, tangible intervention and response to the ambitions expressed in the consultation. It also presents an opportunity to involve local people in the co-design, installation and maintenance of the initiative.
- 3.6 The pocket park aims to:

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<sup>1</sup> London Climate Risk Map

<sup>2</sup> Full feedback can be found in the following report: 'Aberfeldy Village - children and youth engagement report' (ZCD Architects, 2020, Report 1).

- Provide a functional and safe public realm which will not only welcome users, encouraging them to activate this space, but also maximising the opportunity for social interactions.
- Enhance the safety of these spaces by encouraging more eyes on the street and passive surveillance.
- Improve the quality of spaces along the A12, creating a clearer, safer and legible entrance to the underpass which is visible on the approach along Dee Street.
- Lessen the impacts of air pollution with trees and planting, which also green these spaces and improve the general aesthetic.
- Improve the public realm surrounding Culloden Primary School, creating clear arrival and drop-off spaces and an improved journey to and from the school.
- Select planting and hard materials for robustness and ease of maintenance as well as long term effect and cost efficiency. Specific plants have been selected in order to mitigate air pollution from the A12 and 'green' the approach to the Balfron Tower/Dee Street underpass.
- Use colourful materials to celebrate the location and identity of the school.
- Consider sustainability and durability when choosing street furniture, using recycled materials where possible, and considering long-term portability and reuse if regeneration comes forward in the area.
- Be a participatory and inclusive project that local people and stakeholders can help design and deliver
- Subject to approval of the final design, the pocket park will consist of raised planters for plants and trees, seating, climbing planters, enhanced lighting and ancillary street furniture such as bins, cycle stands and wayfinding (where appropriate).

3.7 The pocket park proposal put forward by Poplar HARCA is set within the context of the emerging Aberfeldy West masterplan and other neighbouring regeneration schemes in Aberfeldy Ward. The masterplan (led by Aberfeldy LLP, a joint venture between Poplar HARCA and EcoWorld) puts forward a range of meanwhile and permanent commercial, play and open space uses that will come forward over the lifetime of the development, if planning is secured. As part of the masterplan's public engagement process, extensive consultation has been undertaken with residents about their hopes and expectations for improved green and public spaces across Aberfeldy estate. The pocket park, approximately 500sqm in size, would be a small, immediate and creative demonstration of this ambition, offering the opportunity for residents to help co-design and build a project that tackles a problematic gateway into Aberfeldy. The pocket park will also be designed to enable portability and reuse as potential regeneration in the area comes forward. However, the pocket park is not dependent on the Aberfeldy masterplan being

approved. It is designed as a standalone project, with the potential to link into any nearby public realm improvements.

- 3.8 The management, installation and completion of the pocket park by Poplar HARCA, via a direct grant, is considered the most practical arrangement for delivering the project for the following reasons:
- Poplar HARCA is an active local stakeholder in Aberfeldy as a social landlord and development partner within Aberfeldy LLP. It is well placed to engage key local stakeholders and residents in the development of the scheme's design and delivery
  - Poplar HARCA has prepared and funded the concept design work through Aberfeldy LLP and secured £25,000 cash and in-kind match funding to support the project, which includes the LLP taking responsibility for the parklet's upkeep and maintenance
  - The land is owned by TfL. Poplar HARCA has carried out initial consultation with TfL and Culloden Primary School and will undertake further engagement with both parties and other local stakeholders as part of the project's development
  - Poplar HARCA and the Council had a similar funding arrangement in place for the design and delivery of the A12 noise barrier located outside Bromley-by-Bow underground station, another 'A12 Green Mile' project which required close engagement with TfL
- 3.9 The Council will retain oversight and ensure good project governance through project working group, implementing a reporting hierarchy that monitors the project budget agreed deliverables and outputs.
- 3.10 LIF expenditure will be in the Council's control. Fund will be released to Poplar HARCA/Aberfeldy LLP in stages following receipt of an invoice following completion of key milestones.
- 3.11 As referenced earlier in this report, Aberfeldy LLP has confirmed that it will act as guarantor for the long-term upkeep of the pocket park. TfL has confirmed it will need to approve the final detailed design, a Scope of Works by the appointed contractor and a Service Level Agreement (or similar licence arrangement). Planning permission is not required for this project.
- 3.12 The project also supports the Council's Climate Action Partnership and will be part of the emerging Poplar Low Carbon Neighbourhood initiative being led by Poplar HARCA, with both partners actively engaged and coordinated across these two agendas. The pocket park also supports Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy and policy D.OWS3 of Tower Hamlets Local plan, which encourages development of pocket parks.

3.13 The Council has worked in close partnership with Poplar HARCA on a number of live and completed air quality and active travel projects, providing a strong foundation for this project. These include:

- A12 Acoustic Noise Barrier (2017-2021) – An innovative acoustic separation wall designed as an artistic installation by Bromley-by-Bow underground station, installed in 2021 with additional funding secured from TfL. Part of the ‘A12 Green Mile’ strategy, the wall uses an innovative noise absorbent, self-coloured metal ‘fabric’ not previously used in the UK for this purpose.
- DEFRA Air Quality Programme (2018-19) – Poplar HARCA helped the Council to secure £120,000 from central government for a package of air quality projects. This included additional funds for the Council’s ‘Breathe Clean’ advertising campaign, air quality monitoring equipment and sites analysis with University of East London, and awareness raising events such as St Paul’s Way Festival.
- Chrisp Street Delivers electric cargo bike delivery hub (2020-present) – Poplar HARCA supported the Council to secure £350k funding from the GLA’s ‘Business Low Emission Neighbourhood’ programme, and is providing in-kind management support for the trial of an electric cargo bike hub in Chrisp Street Market

## **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are not considered to be any negative or discriminatory equalities implications relating to the location of the proposed parklet, which is a level-access pedestrian thoroughfare on public land. This pocket park will be a free-to-access public space, offering an improved environmental, public realm and pedestrian experience for anyone walking or dwelling in the area.
- 4.2 This project will also seek to redress inequalities created by the existing space. For example, primary school children and adults with comorbidities that have a higher risk of asthma and respiratory diseases from exposure to air pollution; or individual female or teenage pedestrians with safety concerns and fear of crime about the location.
- 4.3 The engagement and participation opportunities proposed within the project delivery plan should be available and accessible to all. In particular, these activities will need to ensure how particular groups or communities, who might typically be excluded from or face barriers to an engagement process, are able to participate in the project. The project proposes working with local stakeholder organisations to promote such opportunities and maximise interest.

- 4.4 Residents and visitors to the area are likely to benefit from improved air quality and reduced exposure to air pollution due to dispersion and deposition of air pollutants by the green infrastructure<sup>3</sup> and incentivise active travel.

## **5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications- As Polar HARCA will directly manage the project delivery, there will be limited resource implications for the Council.
- Consultations- Residents were consulted as part of the local infrastructure fund consultation to find out what, residents, think the council should be spending LIF money on in each area.
- Environmental- The Aberfeldy pocket park will contribute towards improving air quality in the area and support the Council's Climate Action Partnership. It will also contribute in delivering action 54 of the current air quality action plan, namely, installing green infrastructure.
- Risk Management - There are risks associated with the delivery of this project, namely around securing the necessary permissions from TfL (see 3.11). Early consultation has already taken place and conditional approval has been given, so the risk is considered to be medium. Regular consultation and engagement with TfL will take place during the design process. A project risk register will be maintained by the Project Steering Group.
- Crime Reduction- The project aims to reduce both the perception of and potential for crime through physical improvements to the public realm, including better lighting. However, initial feedback from TfL has highlighted that the design and installation of new infrastructure, such as planters, must not unduly encourage the opportunity for criminal or anti-social behaviour.
- Safeguarding-No known safeguarding implications
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment- N/A

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<sup>3</sup> Using Green Infrastructure to Protection People from Air Pollution  
[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/green\\_infrastruture\\_air\\_pollution\\_may\\_19.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/green_infrastruture_air_pollution_may_19.pdf)



## **6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 This report seeks to issue a formal offer of grant to Poplar HARCA up to £100,000 of Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF) to, to take forward and directly deliver the Aberfeldy Parklet. LIF is a regulatory deduction from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is a fund set aside for the provision of local infrastructure facilities.
- 6.2 This project is part of the LIF Living Greening walls project which has a budget of £400,000 of which £200,000 has been allocated to LIF Area 3.
- 6.3 The project estimated to cost £100,000 will be delivered via a grant to Poplar Harca, a social housing provider and development partner within Aberfeldy Limited Liability Partnership (LLP). Aberfeldy LLP is a company set up by Poplar Harca to deliver the project and Poplar Harca through this company contributes £25,000 towards the future maintenance of the project.
- 6.4 The funding of this project and project costs must be contained within the £100,000 grant allocation.

## **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The Council has the legal power to make the grant described in this report.
- 7.2 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 provide that certain proportions of CIL collected by a charging authority may be spent to address “the demands that development places” on a local area. Regulation 59(1), Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 provides that: “A charging authority must apply CIL to funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area.” This definition allows the levy to be used to fund a very broad range of facilities such as play areas, parks and green spaces. This flexibility gives the Council the opportunity to choose what infrastructure is needed to deliver its local plan.
- 7.3 Therefore, the provision of this grant is an appropriate use of CIL as it reflects requirements laid out in the CIL Regulations. The Council will constantly monitor the grant to ensure that such provisions are always met, and funding distributed fairly.
- 7.4 The grant monitoring will be supported by appropriate agreement terms. The agreement will ensure that the funding is used in compliance with the objectives and the conditions highlighted in this report. This will assist the Council achieving Best Value in line with the law.

- 7.5 The Council is required when exercising its functions to comply with the duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, namely to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The grant monitoring process will assess any further equalities issues that may arise and ensure that these are dealt with appropriately.
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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- **Aberfeldy Parklet PID- LIF working group 3 November 2021**

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 - Site Location and Concept Designs

### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

NONE

### **Officer contact details for documents:**

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