

17.1 Community Garden at old Croquet Club site

In accordance with clause 23 of the *Town of Victoria Park Meeting Procedures Local Law 2019*, Mayor Karen Vernon has submitted the following notice of motion.

Motion

That Council requests the Chief Executive Officer to:

1. Investigate the feasibility of granting a temporary licence agreement to the Perth History Association Inc to use the former Victoria Park Croquet Club site at Rushton St, Burswood for a community productive garden and associated training program and activities;
2. provide a report to Council for consideration by August 2023.

Reason

The Perth History Association Inc (PHA) is a not for profit association registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. PHA has presented me with a proposal for a temporary License Agreement for use of the Town's Property previously occupied by the Victoria Park Croquet Club at Rushton St Burswood for the purpose of establishing a productive gardening training program.

PHA operates with 15 paid staff and the assistance of more than 100 community volunteers. They utilise funding from various sources, including Work for the Dole (WFTD) programs funded by the Federal Government which make payments to PHA for hosting training participants who undertake gardening and restoration works, significantly reducing the costs of the works.

With 20 participants undertaking restoration and maintenance internships, and 20 participants undertaking garden internships, PHA would generate around \$140,000 of training revenue to offset the operational costs of wages, materials, tools and equipment that would be utilised in the operations of the community garden, ensuring the projects will operate on a cost neutral or cash-flow positive basis.

PHA has significant expertise running training programs including research, heritage building restoration and maintenance, and the establishment and maintenance of productive and ornamental gardens. Current projects include:

1. Sloans Cottage in Leda - a former farmhouse which PHA is managing for the City of Kwinana as a productive vegetable garden and local history research hub;
2. Pensioner Guard Cottage and Residence, Bassendean - a historic property gifted to PHA by the Town of Bassendean for restoration and establishment of a museum and productive vegetable garden;
3. Wilkinson's Homestead in Gosnells - a large productive vegetable garden occupying the rear of the City of Gosnells' owned Wilkinson Homestead Museum;
4. Midland Worker's Cottages - a 3,300sqm property with two heritage worker's cottages PHA is managing for the City of Swan, restoring the houses and establishing productive gardens.

The aims of the PHA training program are:

- To create an abundant and productive organic garden space using low technology strategies.

- To provide a program that gives participants confidence and skills in growing, harvesting and processing their own organic food and bush tucker using permaculture and organic gardening principles. The focus will be on Regenerative agriculture systems. These are holistic farming systems that, among other benefits, improve water and air quality, enhance ecosystem biodiversity, produce nutrient-dense food, and store carbon to help mitigate the effects of climate change.
- To use gardening activities to provide meaningful engagement and build community for participants.

Their proposal to the Town involves:

1. The Association contributing the costs of renovating and maintaining the building, establishing, managing and maintaining the productive vegetable gardens and running the training program;
2. the Town contributing the land via a license agreement;
3. the opportunity for local community members to be involved in all aspects of the project.

The Town currently has no current plan for disposal of this site, although its strategic location for high density future residential development is noted in the Land Asset Optimisation Strategy.

Presently it is being maintained by the Town so it is a cash negative asset. It looks unkempt and unattractive as the building is boarded up to prevent vandalism. This project would, even if only temporarily, bring life to the site, create a great opportunity for local community members and groups to be involved, and the Town could even achieve other associated outcomes of our own in future collaborations on site with PHA and potentially other groups within the Town.

Strategic alignment

Insert strategic alignment provided by elected member.

Civic Leadership	
Community Priority	Intended public value outcome or impact
CL1 – Effectively managing resources and performance.	Activation of this Property through this project will reduce the maintenance costs to the Town.

Environment	
Community Priority	Intended public value outcome or impact
EN1 - Protecting and enhancing the natural environment.	Productive community gardens can enhance the natural environment.
EN2 - Facilitating the reduction of waste.	The project includes activities to teach permaculture and organic gardening techniques, waste reduction and mitigation of climate change.

Social	
Community Priority	Intended public value outcome or impact
S3 - Facilitating an inclusive community that celebrates diversity.	This community will be able to access various opportunities for inclusive activities.
S4 - Improving access to arts, history, culture and education.	Restorations of old historic buildings and heritage gardening techniques help our community to learn about and from history.

Officer response to notice of motion

Location	Burswood
Reporting officer	Manager Property Development and Leasing
Responsible officer	Chief Operations Officer
Voting requirement	Simple majority
Attachments	1. Extract LAOS - Council approved 13.12.2023 [17.1.1 - 5 pages]

Officer comment

1. A revised Land Asset Optimisation Strategy was adopted by Council on 13 December 2022 (the LAOS(2022)).
2. An assessment of the former Victoria Park Croquet Club site at 31 Rushton St, Burswood (the Property) is contained on pages 41- 45 of the LAOS (2022), the relevant extract of which is available in Attachment 1. This notes a wide range of factors, including that the Property is:
 - (a) A cleared site, with minor vegetation to south-eastern boundary. There is approx. 16.5% tree canopy (over 3m);
 - (b) Subject to a Town heritage listing (Identified on Local Heritage Survey place #076 (previously place #VP52) Victoria Park Croquet Club, Category 2, the significance of values (historical, social and associations) is 'Considerable');
 - (c) Perhaps best suited for mixed commercial and residential use due to its strategic location on a primary road, having good access and connectivity to recreational and commercial activities and other urban amenities. If the Property is developed for commercial uses, then no public open space is required. However, if the Property is developed for residential, then a contribution (cash-in-lieu) for open space may be preferable over an allocation of land for open space.
 - (d) Highly valuable to the Town as a freehold site with development potential;
3. The LAOS (2022) includes the following under recommendation/implementation:- *"That a Business Case is presented to Council to consider its options for this property"*
4. A proposed Business Case was presented to elected members at the Concept Forum held on 26 July 2022 (the Concept Forum).
5. The Business Case included options for the future of the Property with and without retention of the former Croquet Club building. It was evident that the Property is likely to attract a significantly higher financial return to the Town without the former Croquet Club building.
6. At the Concept Forum, elected members requested an estimate/feasibility of the relocation cost to the former Croquet Club building to an alternative location.
7. In summary, the former Croquet Club building is in poor condition, contains asbestos and is subject to a Town heritage listing. This is a sensitive building in many respects, and the requested estimate/feasibility of the cost of relocation is a complex, ambitious and somewhat exceptional project.
8. It has been established that the building can physically be dismantled, with asbestos removed and then physically relocated to a new location and physically reconstructed. A quotation in the region of \$300,000 was obtained for this portion of the works. Officers are now working on determining the

detailed feasibility or otherwise of such a project, including, for example, what works and approvals will be needed for a reconstruction of the relocated building to be (a) feasible and (b) to a compliant standard for occupancy by a new user.

9. The proposed temporary market garden is likely to have social benefit albeit as noted above, the Property is capable of development for commercial and residential use and if the Property is developed for residential then a contribution (cash-in-lieu) for open space may be preferable over an allocation of any of the Property for open space. It is noted that the proposed temporary market garden does entail appreciable investment through the proponent of volunteer time as well as financial commitment. It is unclear what is the proposed duration of the 'temporary' market garden sought by the proponent and in particular, the proponent has not clarified to the Town the maximum duration it is seeking for the proposed licence of this Property, which the LAOS (2022) assesses as being highly valuable to the Town as a freehold site with development potential.

Legal compliance

Not applicable.

Risk management consideration

Risk impact category	Risk event description	Consequence rating	Likelihood rating	Overall risk level score	Council's risk appetite	Risk treatment option and rationale for actions
Financial	Loss of the Town's ability to achieve significant revenue from this Property should the Town grant a licence to a third party, in particular where a third party has not confirmed a maximum end date satisfactory to the Town.	Severe	Likely	High	Low	TREAT risk by not encumbering the property with any lease, licence or other third party right.
Environmental	Not applicable				Medium	
Health and safety	Not applicable				Low	
Infrastructure/ ICT systems/ utilities	Not applicable				Medium	
Legislative compliance	Not applicable				Low	
Reputation	Both the current	Moderate	Possible	Medium	Low	TREAT risks by

	condition of the property and the risk of loss of future significant income present reputational risks to the Town.					finalising complex assessment of relocation feasibility of heritage building as a matter of urgency, to inform a decision to be made by Council on the future of the property and by not granting a licence or other occupancy right to any third party.
Service delivery	Loss of potential income from the property may reduce future returns to finance other Town projects.	Severe	Possible	High	Medium	TREAT risk by not encumbering the property with any lease, licence or other third party right.

Financial implications

Current budget impact	Sufficient funds exist within the annual budget to address this recommendation.
Future budget impact	If a licence or other arrangement is granted over the property, this will risk loss of significant income to the Town, with loss of significant funding for future budgets.

Relevant documents

Not applicable.