

**Report to Cabinet, 28 January 2019**

**PART A**

## **Northern Roots Project**

**Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Sean Fielding, Cabinet member for Economy and Enterprise

**Officer Contact:** Rebekah Sutcliffe, Strategic Director of Reform

**Report Author:** Jackie Wilson, Head of Strategy, Policy and Partnerships.

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### **Reason for Decision**

To seek approval to take forward the development the Northern Roots project, the proposed Alexandra Park Eco-Centre being the first phase. Under this project there will be consideration of opportunities to work with local communities to investigate ways that we can celebrate, protect and enhance our green spaces for the benefit of local people, the local economy and the planet.

Northern Roots will initially focus on the 160 acre Snipe Clough site adjacent to Alexandra Park investigating ways to enhance the sustainability and biodiversity of the site, to offer even greater opportunities for recreation and leisure for local people, and to promote growing and green enterprise projects.

### **Executive Summary**

The Northern Roots Project is an exciting opportunity for both Oldham and Greater Manchester and has become possible due to the work and achievements of the last six years of the co-operative agenda, working with communities and both celebrating and harnessing all the Borough has to offer as a green and growing town.

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It will help make real and tangible the ambitions of the Oldham Plan for an inclusive economy, thriving communities and co-operative services; helping create great opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors.

**Background:**

Over the past six years, and as a tangible part of the co-operative borough ambition, community growing, horticulture skills and training, renewable energy and the local food economy have been developing. This is through a series of linked initiatives including Get Oldham Working, Get Oldham Growing, Growing Oldham, Feeding Ambition, Oldham Community Power and more recently the work on Thriving Communities.

When combined with proposals for the Alex Park Eco-centre, Northern Roots presents a significant opportunity to work with local communities to investigate ways that we can celebrate, protect and enhance our green spaces for the benefit of local people, the local economy and the planet.

This can be a positive new vehicle for change in Oldham and has the potential to be a powerful brand, pulling together existing and developing new initiatives around food, growing, sustainability and wellbeing in the borough, as well enabling community engagement on opportunities and sites across the Borough.

**For decision:** Cabinet is requested to:

- (i) Agree that a Northern Roots project should be developed to support and complement the Eco-Centre on the Depot site at Alexandra Park which will be Phase 1.
- (ii) Approve further work on delivering and further developing and communicating the Northern Roots project, including early phase projects, community engagement, stakeholder/investor engagement and developing options for opportunities/potential sites identified and within the scope of the project.
- (iii) Delegate approvals for initial development of the Northern Roots project to the Leader and Strategic Director of Reform, with reports for decisions coming forward for approval as required.

**The Northern Roots opportunity**

**1. Alex Park Depot - Oldham's Eco-Centre (Northern Roots Phase 1)**

As referenced in a report elsewhere on the agenda, Alexandra Park is one of Oldham's greatest assets for residents and also provides a Depot facility which is in urgent need of replacement and directly adjacent to Snipe Clough. Already operating from the site and park are a depot facility, at scale growing, community growing, training, bio-mass; the proposed replacement facility will build on these activities.

This would be a facility in its own right but also has the opportunity to provide a place for a wide range of activities, enterprises and community engagement.

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## **5. The potential of Northern Roots**

Oldham's successful track-record around food and community growing, energy, low-carbon, parks and green spaces provides a strong platform on which to build the Northern Roots project. There is the ambition for Oldham to become known as a green and growing town and for that to deliver real benefits for local people, the local economy and the planet.

More work is needed to further develop ideas and interest in the project, as well as identifying other sites and opportunities for events, investment and activities. Getting communities involved is key to the success of this project as well as seeking engagement and interest from other organisations, investors and experts.

To enable development work to be taken forward, the Council has identified revenue funding for two years (included under Part B on this Cabinet agenda by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A)

## **6. Financial Implications**

The financial implications in relation to the Northern Roots Project have been provided in Part B of this report  
(Sam Smith)

## **7. Legal implications**

The legal implications in relation to the Northern Roots Project have been provided in Part B of this report.

(Elizabeth Cunningham-Doyle)

## **8. HR / People implications**

N/A

## **9. Links to Co-operative Values**

The project is rooted in social value and making tangible the co-operative values. This is reflected throughout the project with a strong emphasis on community engagement, tangible opportunities benefits to residents and seeking to establish and support local businesses and enterprises.

## **10. Strategic Links**

The plans for an Eco-Centre and Northern Roots project are aligned with the ambitions set out in the Oldham Plan and fully support delivery of the Oldham Model.

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There are strong interdependencies with plans for the town centre regeneration and the opportunity to build and scale activities already underway around the food economy, growing, low carbon and renewable energy, sustainable transport etc.

## **11. Communications**

Northern Roots has the potential to further establish Oldham as a green and growing city. Known for its environment, leading on sustainability, food economy and natural capital it will support the delivery of the Oldham Model supporting an inclusive economy, thriving communities and co-operative workforce.

Development of the project will need to work with and complement the work of the Council, and other partners, in terms of developing visitor, retail and enterprise offers across Oldham.

## **12 Key Decision**

Yes

## **13 Key Decision Reference**

ECEN-20-18

## **14 Background Papers**

None

## **15 Appendices**

None