

# **Agenda Item 13**

**Arnotdale House, Dollar Park, Falkirk**

**Title: Arnotdale House, Dollar Park, Falkirk**

**Meeting: Executive**

**Date: 16 October 2018**

**Submitted By: Director of Development Services**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the project to refurbish Arnotdale House, Dollar Park, Falkirk being undertaken in partnership with Cyrenians and seeks approval for lease terms for the property.

## **2. Recommendation(s)**

### **2.1 It is recommended that Executive agrees to:**

- a) note the progress on the refurbishment works at Arnotdale House**
- b) to lease Arnotdale House to Cyrenians at a reduced rent on full repairing and insuring terms as detailed in paragraph 4.5 of this report**

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Arnotdale House is a property held on the Falkirk Common Good account and a grade B listed building prominently situated within Dollar Park, see Appendix 1 for site plan. The property has been vacant for some time and has been marketed on two occasions. The external fabric of the property was refurbished in 2014 and further funding of £1.125m following a successful application, with support from Cyrenians, was secured from the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund to complete phase 2 works.
- 3.2 Cyrenians is a well established registered charity with 50 years experience that supports people excluded from family, home, work or community. Cyrenians currently work with the Councils Criminal Justice services and have successfully restored the walled garden in Dollar Park and currently manage this garden on behalf of the Council.

## **4. Proposal**

- 4.1 Cyrenians (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) and registered charity SC011052) proposes to take a lease of Arnotdale House and transform it back into a centrepiece of the community, creating a café, events/meeting space and office accommodation, to generate income to provide sustainability while also delivering work experience and volunteering

opportunities. The building will provide expanded office space for the employability work and peer mentoring offered by Cyrenians for those that have been involved with the criminal justice system.

4.2 The renovation of Arnotdale House will provide members of the community with an appealing destination with the facilities required to make the most of their visit to Dollar Park. A café will provide the only place for refreshments within the park, and surrounding area. As part of the renovation, Falkirk Council completed the work on the fit out of the café at a cost of £52,600. This work is chargeable to the Cyrenians and consequently their annual rent agreement has been adjusted by £2000 a year towards these costs. Also included are toilet and baby changing facilities for those using the cafe and other parts of the park. The events/meeting space will be available for local companies, special events, conferences, weddings and funeral teas. Arnotdale will provide the accommodation required by Cyrenians to provide an enhanced and expanded range of training and employment opportunities.

4.4 The key outputs of the refurbishment project and subsequent lease to Cyrenians are as follows:

- to reconnect the community with Arnotdale House, the walled garden and Dollar Park ensuring Dollar Park is seen as a central focal point for the local community
- provide work experience and job opportunities for people from deprived communities and vulnerable groups
- Individuals on community payback or supervision orders will have access to learning new skills and development opportunities to help them back to work
- 4 new FTE jobs will be created
- Addresses worklessness through sustainable employability programme. 4 paid Community Job Scotland Placements benefitting 8 people each year and 50 volunteering and work experience opportunities will also be offered
- People will have access to quality public space and greenspace through the restoration of Arnotdale House and the adjacent walled garden
- Provision of interpretation materials on the history of Dollar Park and Robert Dollar

4.5 The proposed terms for the lease to Cyrenians are as follows:

- Rent - £10,000 a year
- Duration - 20 years with tenant break options every 2 years
- Rent free - 3 months from the date of entry
- Repairs - Full repairing and insuring
- Entry - Early November 2018
- Rates - Tenant's responsibility
- Use - Café, events space and office

## 5 Considerations

- 5.1 The annual rent proposed is below the market rent of £40,000. This reflects the charitable objectives of the Cyrenians venture at Arnotdale House. Accordingly, the transaction will fall within the scope of s11 of the local Government in Scotland Act 2003 which amends s74 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 allowing local authorities to dispose of land for less than best consideration in certain circumstances.
- 5.2 The Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010 (the 2010 regulations) sets out the procedure and circumstances in which a local authority may dispose of land for a consideration less than the best that can be reasonably obtained. It must be satisfied that, in making the decision, the disposal will contribute to the promotion or improvement of:
- a) economic development or regeneration;
  - b) health;
  - c) social well being;
  - d) environmental well being;
- 5.4 The goals and objectives of the project have been assessed and the findings are as follows:
- The proposal meets the Council's priorities to empower and enable people to be self reliant and promote stronger, more self-reliant communities.
  - It accords with SOLD outcomes to make our area a fairer and more equal place to live, with a healthier population where people will live full, independent and positive lives within supportive communities.
  - The concept assists in reducing social isolation and builds up social support activities within the community at a relatively low cost relative to the impacts.
  - There are significant benefits identified for public health, social well being and the reduction of inequalities as well as strong economic development and regeneration benefits.
  - The ability of the organisation to deliver is good
  - Cyrenians has good local and wider public support through strong community networks.
  - The reputation of Falkirk Council should not be harmed should the project fail. Falkirk Council can demonstrate that substantial assistance for the project to succeed has been given.
  - The project does not compete with services being provided by Falkirk Council.

- 5.5 Following the assessment the project demonstrates that it meets the criteria set out in the 2010 regulations and that the application should be approved.

## **6. Consultation**

Through regular meetings of the Dollar Park Working Group, local members, the Friends of Dollar Park and Falkirk Community Trust are all aware of and in favour of the proposal.

Local members have been advised of this report

## **7. Implications**

### **Financial**

- 7.1 Common Good Fund will benefit from a rent of £10,000 a year and will reduce its repair obligations on the property bringing a historic building back into active use.

### **Legal**

- 7.2 The proposals will be subject to the successful conclusion of all necessary lease arrangements

### **Resource**

- 7.3 No additional resources are required

### **Risk**

- 7.4 The venture may not prove to be ultimately successful and the consequences may involve the property being returned to Falkirk Council. However, securing RGCF funding has not only enabled the property to be greatly improved but has provide an asset capable of being let and used by the local community

### **Equalities**

- 7.5 Cyrenians provide support for families including conflict resolution, mediation, homelessness, skills and training to improve employability, education on benefits to health and the economy sustainable food supply.

### **Sustainability & Environmental Implications**

- 7.6 None

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The proposal accords with many of the Council's priorities and those of the Scottish Government. Cyrenians is properly constituted and appears to have the capacity to deliver its activities and benefits.
- 8.2 The assessment indicates that there are benefits in economic development, regeneration, health and social well-being. Therefore, in approving the terms at less than market value, the rent proposed complies with the land and property disposal regulations.

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pp Director of Development Services

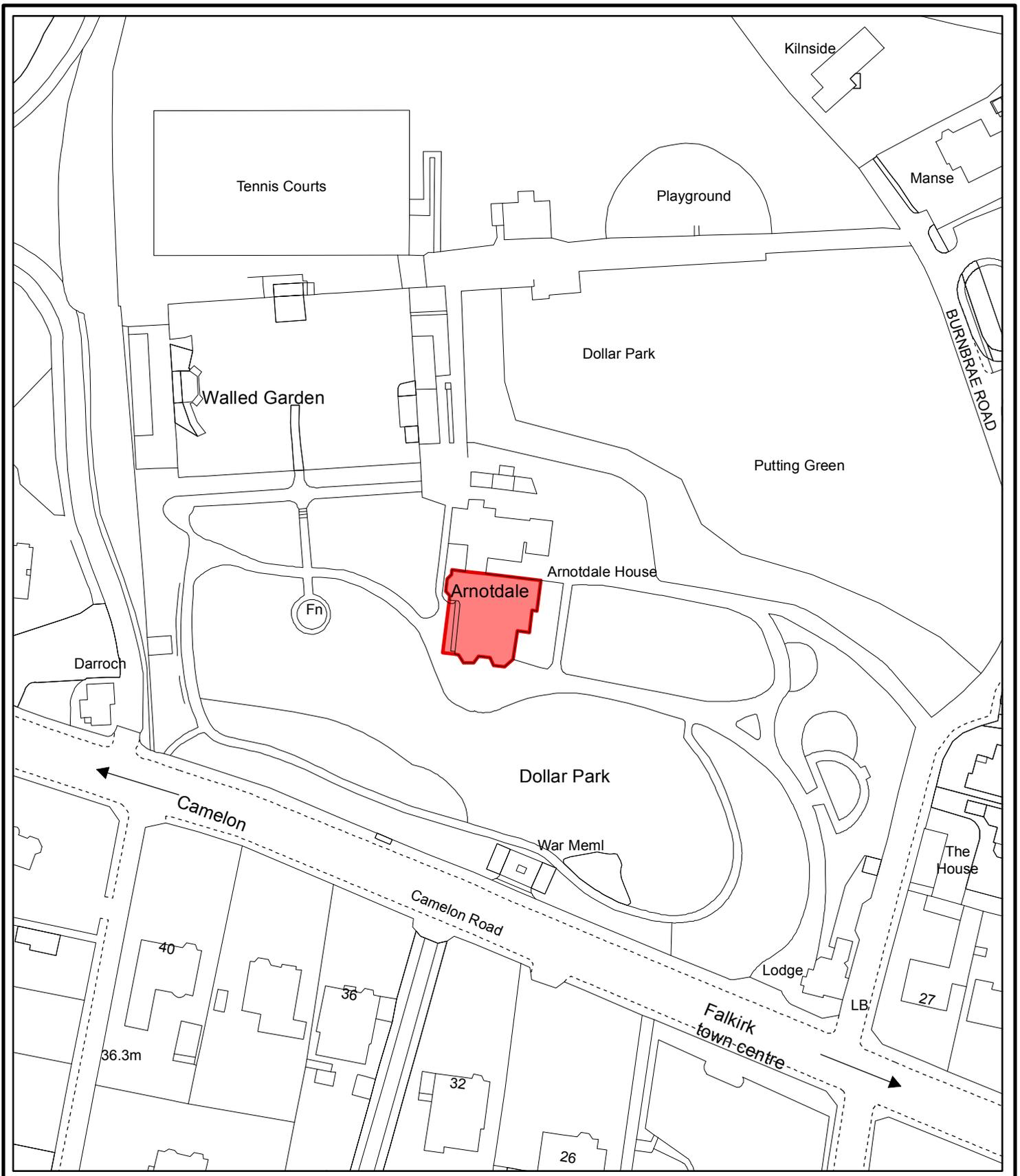
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Date: 02 October 2018

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Site Plan

## **List of Background Papers:**

Cyrenians Business Plan



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