

Report to Cabinet

7 December 2022

Subject:	Asset transfer of Greets Green Resource Centre and adjoining land to the Confederation of Bangladeshi Organisations (CBO) Ltd
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, Cllr Peter Hughes
Director:	Director of Regeneration and Growth Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officers:	Stefan Hemming Strategic Lead – Assets and Land (Commercial) Stefan_hemming@sandwell.gov.uk Heather Chinner Strategic Policy Officer Heather_chinner@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the asset transfer of the Greets Green Resource Centre, including the surrounding land, to the Confederation of Bangladeshi Organisations (CBO) Ltd on the basis of a full repairing lease for 99 years with a rental of £1 pa for the purpose of running a community centre.
- 1.2 Authorise the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into or execute under seal if necessary, a formal lease for the Greets Green Resource Centre, West Bromwich and adjacent land relating thereto.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 CBO have taken on a former housing office on a full repairing lease and transformed it into a multi-use community facility nursery, with an outside play area. More recently they have secured funding to build a nursery on site, meeting a local need and developing an additional income stream. CBO are a trusted partner, working hard to help us to communicate with and support hard to reach communities. They continued to deliver advice throughout the pandemic, hosted pop up vaccine clinics and helped spread positive messages about covid safe behaviour. They provide joined up support including: immigration advice, ESOL, employment support, help to get on-line.
- 2.2 CBO currently lease the premises on a full repairing, rent free basis and the lease expires in 2041. They also hold a coterminous lease of the adjacent land which also expires in 2041. CBO have submitted an application for a single asset transfer of both sites, on the basis of a 99 year full repairing rent free lease.
- 2.3 CBO deliver excellent value for money. For example, in 2021/22 CBO supported 872 residents with generalist advice, securing £1,256,056 confirmed benefit gains and £7,130 one off charitable payments/ household goods. For every £1 of advice funding CBO have delivered £19 into the pockets of residents.





In 2022/23 the council provides the following grants:

- Advice grant: £65,898 per year
- Public Health SHIP: £14,564 per year
- Total £80,462 per year

The grants listed are unrelated to the management of the building. CBO will continue to use the rent saving to deliver services and will also continue to seek external grants to improve the facilities and develop new initiatives to meet local need and diversify their income.



- 2.4 CBO have a long term commitment to Greets Green and the wider area of West Bromwich. Asset transfer is the natural next step for CBO and the council. It will signal our confidence in CBO and our support for their aims and ambitions for the centre, local residents and the wider area.
- 2.5 The application has been considered by the council’s Investing in the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategic Group. The group considered a detailed report about CBO and agreed to support CBO’s application for asset transfer of the premises. A copy of the report is appended for information.
- 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people CBO run an on site nursery for 2-5 year olds with a focus on ensuring children are “school ready”.</p>
	<p>People live well and age well CBO are funded by public health to deliver the Sandwell Health Improvement Programme. Their advice work (budgeting, benefits, debt) and their employment support helps to tackle poverty and supports improved mental health. They were a very active partner during covid, hosting pop up vaccine clinics and helping us to work with harder to reach communities.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities Attracting external funding to support community development activities, e.g. Big Lottery Fund funded programme aimed at improving language skills, community cohesion, health and wellbeing and skills development through volunteering.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy Attracting other external funding to support community development activities, e.g. Big Lottery Fund funded programme aimed at improving language skills, community cohesion, health and wellbeing and skills development through volunteering. Track record of securing funding for capital projects aligned to local needs, e.g. MUGA and modular nursery building.</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Over 6,000 people use the Greets Green Resource Centre each year, benefiting from a wide range of activities including advice.

Current project and programmes include;

- Information, Advice & Guidance
- Welfare Rights & Debt – regulated by Financial Conduct Authority (705620)
- Immigration & Nationality – regulated by OISC
- ESOL
- Skills and Employment
- Education & Training
- Services targeting women
- Youth activities
- Health and Wellbeing
- Volunteering
- Community services and development initiatives.
- Nursery provisions – Ofsted registration – 2561533
- Outdoor MUGA – Gym – Play area – Community Garden area

4.2 The proposed asset transfer is supported by the Investing in the Voluntary Sector Strategic Group.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Do nothing – CBO have a 25 year, rent free, full repairing voluntary body lease, expiring in 2041. This would not signal to the wider voluntary and community sector that we value their contribution as partners and want to use asset transfer as a positive tool for enabling the development of enterprising and sustainable organisations with a long term stake in the area.



6 Implications

Resources:	The current market rental is £19,500pa. CBO have occupied the premises since 2011 on a rent free basis because of the work that they do. The building was a former housing office and CBO have secured external funding of £400,000 to improve the centre and its surrounding area.
Legal and Governance:	Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits a principal Council to dispose of land in any way it wishes, except that it shall not (without the Secretary of State's consent) dispose of land for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained. The Secretary of State has issued a General Disposal Consent in 2003 (Circular 06/03) which states that specific consent is not required for the disposal of any interest in land which the authority considers will help it to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. Where applicable, authorities should also have regard to their community strategy. Any disposal must not have an undervalue of more than £2M. Section 5 of the council's policy on Land and Premises for the Voluntary and Community Sector (2012) sets out the council's approach which will usually be through a 99 year lease at a reduced rental.
Risk:	CBO have a strong track record in managing and improving the centre. They have been managing the premises on a full repairing lease since 2011. They have a wide range of experienced people involved on their management board to overcome any risk factors. They have successfully completed a number of capital projects over the years.
Equality:	CBO specialise in supporting BME communities in particular Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian, including new migrants
Health and Wellbeing:	Over 6,000 people use the Greets Green Resource Centre each year, benefiting from a wide range of activities.



Social Value	CBO is a voluntary organisation run by and for local people.
---------------------	--

7. Appendices

- CBO's application form for an asset transfer lease 17th December 2021;
- Investing in the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategic Group report; and
- Location plan.

