

# Report to Cabinet

19 June 2024

<b>Subject:</b>	Ideal for All – Asset Transfers of Malthouse Garden, Salop Drive Market Garden and Barlow Road Community Garden
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Infrastructure - Cllr Peter Hughes
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Adult Social Care Rashpal Bishop  Assistant Director (Regeneration and Growth) Assets and Land Luke Dove
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stefan Hemming Strategic Lead – Assets and Land (Commercial) <a href="mailto:Stefan_hemming@sandwell.gov.uk">Stefan_hemming@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Heather Chinner Strategic Policy Officer <a href="mailto:Heather_chinner@sandwell.gov.uk">Heather_chinner@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

That approval be given to the granting of a 25 year lease for 25 years at a rent of £2,000 pa to Ideal for All Ltd for the purpose running a community garden

**Site 1: Malthouse Garden**, 100 Oldbury Road, Smethwick, B66 1JE

That approval be given to the asset transfer of the following sites to Ideal for All Ltd on the basis of a lease for 99 years with a rental of £1 pa for the purpose of running 2 community gardens:



**Site 2: Salop Drive Market Garden**, Salop Drive, Oldbury, B68 9AG

**Site 3: Barlow Road Community Garden**, Barlow Road, Wednesbury, WS10 9QA

That authorisation is given to the Monitoring Officer, Assistant Director – Legal & Assurance to enter into or execute under seal if necessary, formal leases for each of the three sites.




## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 [Ideal for All](#) is a user-led charity and social enterprise that supports disabled, elderly and vulnerable people and their carers. They provide a number of services including: peer support groups, support with direct payments, employment support and the Growing Opportunities healthy lifestyle and wellbeing project. The Growing Opportunities project is delivered from 3 sites leased from the council: Malthouse Garden, Salop Drive Market Garden and Barlow Road Community Garden.
- 2.2 **Growing Opportunities:** Ideal for All provide the following from the 3 sites: therapeutic and active gardening, food growing, healthy cookery and lifestyle programmes and creative workshops, as well as a variety of opportunities to support children, young people, families and adults towards improving their futures via ‘hands on’ activities, vocational experiences/learning development and volunteering. Their [Community Business video](#) illustrates some of the work going on at the gardens.
- 2.3 Ideal for All have transformed these sites from derelict land to 3 thriving community gardens. They have secured over £5.5 million in funding in order to bring the sites into fully accessible horticultural sites that are used all year round. Ideal for All have requested asset transfer of the 3 sites in order to secure the long-term future of these gardens as community assets. Asset transfer will enable Ideal for All to develop longer term sustainability plans for the sites and secure further grants for maintenance, improvement and replacement.
- 2.4 Malthouse Garden is part of the Independent Living Centre site and is therefore not suitable for asset transfer. However, a long term lease of



25 years is appropriate, on the basis of the current rental, which contributes towards the overall cost of the centre.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</b>          Children and young people are supported to learn skills for life including supporting their wellbeing and resilience. Family learning and peer support contributes to continuous development and learning in the home/school environment even after the programme ends.          Ideal for All are an active member of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (Welly to Belly) and Creating a Playable Sandwell School's Takeover and have a strong relationship with a number of schools.</p>
	<p><b>People Live Well and Age Well</b>          750 Sandwell residents (low-income individuals/families; economically inactive/unemployed adults; older people) access Ideal for All's integrated services (peer support, condition management, health/wellbeing, healthy lifestyle &amp; employability programmes).          Of those accessing wellbeing support over 80% report improved health/wellbeing and over 90% demonstrate positive healthy lifestyle changes.</p>
	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b>          The community gardens bring people together in the areas they live and help to maximise use of local assets (healthy lifestyle centres, park and green spaces, prevention and community support services).</p>

## 4 Context and Key Issues

### 4.1 The Community Gardens

**Malthouse Gardens (B66 1JE)** third of an acre specialist therapeutic garden linked to Ideal for All's main office location (the Independent Living Centre). Fully accessible training kitchen, outdoor classroom/kederhouse, wildlife area, sensory garden and kitchen garden/accessible raised beds. Leased to Ideal for All for a period of 25



years from 17 March 2000 at a rental of £2,000 pa. The lease expires in March 2025. This site falls under the management of Adult Social Care.

**Salop Drive Market Garden**, near Bristnall Oldbury (**B68 9AG**), is a purpose-built Community Garden and is Ideal for All's flagship three acre working market garden and local food project. People of all ages and abilities can get involved and learn about where food comes from and experience a 'real-life' working site which supplies bags of freshly grown vegetables to local households. It has a greenhouse, polytunnels, outdoor growing beds, toilets and handwashing facilities, classroom, off road parking, allotment plots, healing and decorative gardens and wildlife area. Leased to Ideal for All for a period of 20 years from 31 March 2004 at a rental of £500 pa. The lease expires in March 2024. This land was acquired by the council in 1930/31 for development and the site is shown as an allotment on a map dated 1938. It falls under the management of Parks and Greenspace.

**Barlow Road Community Garden (WS10 9QA)** Adjacent to Junction 9 M6 motorway, Ideal for All is continuing to develop the nearly 3.5-acre community garden at Barlow Road from derelict land, developing their environmentally beneficial food production, and increasing meaningful health, wellbeing and employability activities. It has a greenhouse, polytunnels, outdoor growing beds, toilets and handwashing facilities, classroom, off road parking, allotment plots, healing and decorative gardens and wildlife area. Leased to Ideal for All for a period of 25 years from 5 April 2012 at a rental of £1,000 pa. The lease expires in April 2037. The lease expires in March 2024. This land was acquired by the council in February 1933 for housing development and the site was appropriated for allotments in June 1945. It falls under the management of Parks and Greenspace.

#### 4.2 Making the best use of the three sites as a single enterprise

Beginning from the garden nursery at **Malthouse**, sowing and propagating plant stock to be grown at other sites including annual bedding, perennial flowers and vegetables, herb cuttings and divisions, specialist vegetables and cultural or heritage crops which require more protection and nurturing – helping people improve their basic horticulture skills, be introduced to horticultural methods and build their confidence in



a smaller setting. This works to improve dexterity and manage disability in safe and accessible environment. Site also houses all 'kit' for outreach and learning programmes in schools, community groups etc

This plant stock then progresses to **Salop Drive** and grown on. Plants are hardened off in our nursery polytunnel and large commercial size greenhouse and participants are introduced to the site and use their skills to sow and grow at scale – building confidence and 'stretching' their goals. This therapeutic 'green care' programmes is proven to deliver tangible outcomes around health, wellbeing and employment. This stock is then utilised for the productive horticulture and 'bag your share' enterprise across the 3 sites.

Meanwhile, for those living in the north or the borough or keen to travel as part of their learning experiences, the **Barlow Road site** (the amenity/ training division of Growing Opportunities) Ideal for All focus on delivering independence, skills for life and work and progression of garden maintenance techniques and movement into training and accredited courses locally. Interventions are delivered in harmony with the environmental / wildlife development onsite by working together with their neighbours (Woodgreen) and their approach to allotment gardening. At Barlow Road Ideal for All's skilled team introduce allotment gardening and have supported people to progress towards taking on their own plot 'next door' or on other sites managed by the council.

### **Ideal for All's approach - outcome focussed and building capacity**

Their Employment Support Programme provides non-traditional gardening and short activities/workshops to engage individuals furthest away from the labour market; focusing on activities to show positive change to both physical/mental health and well-being - key component to be addressed as part of an individual's journey, providing a 'hook' to engage beneficiaries in wider support.

Their well-being services empower and enable people to 'help themselves' and learn new skills/gain confidence in order to support positive health and wellbeing and contribute to positive outcomes by focusing on their strengths. They build on the 5 ways to wellbeing whilst recognising the need to lever support from other people in their lives such as families, support-networks, neighbourhoods, communities/peers to create opportunities for long-term and sustained healthy lifestyle and wellbeing.



### Quality services:

Ideal for All is ISO and Matrix accredited and is an award winning provider of person-centred services. They won the prestigious West Midlands Combined Authority [Community Learning Provider of the Year 2023](#). They are a [Disability Confident](#) employer and Fellow of the School of Social Entrepreneurs and Institute of Employment Professionals IEP and they won the prestigious ERSA award for Disability and Health provider of the year in 2020.

They have also been the subject of and contributed to a range of national case studies, reports and toolkits including the Growing for Health [case study](#), Tackling Obesity, physical activity, mental wellbeing, community resilience

Ideal for All's application has been shared with the Assistant Chief Executive who has lead responsibility for VCS issues and is appended for information.

## 5 Alternative Options

### Salop Drive Market Garden and Barlow Road Community Garden sites:

**Renew the current leases for a further period of 25 years.** This would inhibit Ideal for All's ability to lever in external resources to continue to run and develop the sites. Furthermore, 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

<b>Resources:</b>	Ideal for All have a robust business plan (2021/24) and have developed a range of income streams in order to ensure that they are a financially healthy and resilient organisation. They have secured over £5.5 million to transform the sites from derelict land to well managed community gardens from which a range of
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social enterprising activities are delivered with local people.

Most recent investment (2021/22) includes:

- investment in place to replace community building at Salop Drive circa £82,000
- toilets installed at Barlow Road £18,000

Free reserves at the start of 2021-22 exceeded the range set by trustees. Over the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial year's income reduced while expenditure increased resulting in Ideal for All using their free reserves to support on-going activities. This still left free reserves within the upper end of the range set by the trustees. In 2023-24 Ideal for All have provided a forecast income and expenditure which shows that free reserves will still be at an acceptable level.

They pay the following rent under the current leases:

Malthouse Garden £2,000 pa (adult social care)

Salop Drive Market Garden £500 pa (parks and greenspace)

Barlow Road Community Garden £1,000 pa (parks and greenspace)

Ideal for All have requested asset transfer on the basis of a full rent subsidy (£1 pa) and parks and greenspace are happy to forego the rent because Ideal for All will have long term responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of both sites.

Adult social care need the income from the rent Malthouse Garden as a contribution towards the cost of running the Independent Living Centre. They value the work being by Ideal for All and in recognition of this are not asking for a rent increase.

**Rateable value:**

Malthouse Gardens – no rateable value as it is rated as part of the Independent Living Centre

Salop Drive Market Garden has a rateable value of £2,025 and is designated as a community garden/allotment



	Barlow Road Community Garden is not listed as a rateable asset and is designated as a community garden / allotment.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	Section 5 of the council's policy on Land and Premises for the Voluntary and Community Sector (2012) sets out the council's approach to asset transfer will usually be through a 99 year lease at a reduced rental.
<b>Risk:</b>	<p><b>Risks to Ideal for All:</b>  Ideal for All has been developing, managing and delivering holistic services from these sites for over 20 years, taking them from derelict land to the vibrant spaces/assets they are today.  They have detailed the risks in their business plan/SWOT analysis and our risk register. A key risk in relation to these sites is the ability to be able continue to secure income/external funding to both develop the sites and deliver provision which meets the needs of residents.  They have mitigated this risk successfully, particularly over the last 6 years through a strong focus on business planning, robust income generation strategy and income diversification. Ideal for All have reached a point where further investment and development funding cannot be accessed without securing these assets for the long term, through asset transfer.</p> <p><b>Risks to the council:</b>  Any risks associated with asset transfer are minimal and mitigated through the terms of the lease. Ideal for All have demonstrated that they are a trusted partner able to secure the funding to continue to run and improve the sites for the benefit of Sandwell residents.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	Ideal for All is a locally rooted user-led charity/community business run by and for disabled people and those in need of support. Members/service users include vulnerable people with mental health needs, learning disabilities, physical/sensory disabilities and long-term health conditions, and includes carers. Their integrated team of health, wellbeing, engagement, and employment specialists have a wealth of 'lived experience',





	communicate in a range of community languages including BSL.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	Community gardening has a positive impact on the urban form, on individual and community health and wellbeing, improves local people's lives and enhances access to biodiverse, beneficial green space. Ideal for All's inclusive projects provide person-centred information, advice and guidance and practical support to contribute to positive healthy lifestyle, mental wellbeing and employment opportunities to enable people to thrive and not just survive.
<b>Social Value:</b>	Ideal for All is a locally rooted organisation, with a long term commitment to Sandwell and it's residents. Their market gardens distribute over <b>2 tonnes</b> of produce annually to the community in Sandwell and delivers <b>2000+</b> volunteer hours from a core group of <b>50</b> active volunteers from a bank of 250, who are supported by our and <b>13</b> trustees and wider <b>3000</b> members.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	<b>Creation of greenspace</b> – Ideal for All are supporting healthier communities and access to valuable managed greenspace where people choose to live and work, fostering community 'ownership' to help look after these spaces for future generations
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	Ideal for All's employment support project provides support to young people leaving the care system.

## 7. Appendices

Ideal for All application

## 8. Background Papers

Ideal for All's Asset Transfer Application, Business Plan 2021/24 and Impact Report 2020/21

