

12 November 2018

<b>Report of</b>	Assistant Director Policy and Corporate	<b>Author</b>	Sandra Scott ☎ 282975
<b>Title</b>	Market Field Care Farm		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Market Field School is a day special school for children and young people between the ages of 5 and 16 who experience moderate learning difficulties. They also have enhanced provision for pupils with Autism. The school is an Essex Local Authority School and is under local management.
- 1.2 The school has come together with The Ark Therapy Centre for Children with Autism and Market Field College, to form the Market Field Learning Community (MFLC). They have identified a need to get their young people specifically trained and ready for working life by creating a productive and thriving business and see a working farm as the first step. Market Field Farm is to be registered as a Community Interest Company.
- 1.3 MFLC now wish to identify potential sites in and around Colchester. They also want to open up a dialogue with the Council at an early stage as they believe their project supports the priorities outlined within the Local Plan.

## 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To receive a short presentation from Naomi Andrews, Project Manager and Gary Smith, Executive Head of Market Field School on the project and progress to date.

## 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 Raising awareness of the ambition to deliver a working farm provides a key link between community ambition, improving skills, the healthy lifestyles agenda and delivering the Local Plan and other Council objectives.

## 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not applicable

## 5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Market Field Farm is an initiative to get young people specifically trained and ready for working life. It is intended to not only support young adults with SEN but provide jobs and community interests in the area. They already have support from local employers, including the University of Essex, Beth Chatto Education Trust and others.

- 5.2 The intention is that the business will provide continued education, support and employment opportunities for young adults with SEN. It will also provide the local community with jobs (Market Field School is currently one of the largest employers in Tendring), community space, a cultural hub, access to fresh food, and the opportunity to grow their own vegetables and help with the conservation of wildlife. They would also encourage commerce in the area with a café, shop and garden centre.
- 5.3 The profit making part of Market Field Farm is likely to be registered as a CIC or limited company – this will include the restaurant, café, farm visits, garden centre, shop etc. The education and training aspect will be Ofsted registered, this enables more support from Essex County Council and will form part of their Local Offer for SEN. The profit making business will go to support the training and education as well as create long term employment opportunities at the farm.
- 5.4 The Market Field Learning Community has considered a way forward and is approaching funders and grant givers. They are confident that they will secure the funds needed for the capital costs. However, despite the current development and growth aspirations in the county and specifically around Colchester they are finding it almost impossible to identify a suitable site.
- 5.5 The Colchester Local Plan is at an advanced stage and Members will be aware it has already been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. It does not identify a suitable site specifically for a farm along the lines that MFLC have outlined. However, along with the more substantial vision and plan document, which is attached as Appendix 1, the Learning community have produced a light paper on how their plan and vision supports the guiding principles of Garden Communities. Certainly there is scope to identify a suitable site within a Garden Communities as the Development Plan Documents are progressed.
- 5.6 There are already 250 care farms in the UK which provide sessions for 8750 people a week. MFLC wants to take the best practice from these examples and aims to deliver the following;
- Create a person centred enterprise where young adults with special educational needs can grow and flourish when they finish school or college
  - Provide occupational therapy and productive activities for children and adults, their families and carers throughout their life.
  - To make sure young people with special educational needs gain real work skills and receive job specific training
  - Seek out and secure job opportunities for young people with special education needs outside Market Field Farm
  - Promote a happy, healthy and independent life through practical and rigorous skills training.
  - To provide a mix of residential accommodation on site; respite, short stay, transitional and long term homes for young adults with SEN.

- 5.7 The Market Field Farm Plan and Vision is attached as Appendix 1. This will be supplemented by a presentation on the evening.

**6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan, and is available to view by clicking on this link:- <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/12745/Policy-and-Corporate>

**7. Strategic Plan References**

- 7.1 The Market Field Farm could be a community benefit delivering employment and training for residents of the borough as well as open space, health and wellbeing and biodiversity. As such it contributes to a number of key themes and objectives in the Council's Strategic Plan 2018-21 including;
- *Growth* – ensuring residents benefit from Colchester's economic growth, skills and jobs
  - *Responsibility* - Promote responsible citizenship by encouraging residents to get involved in their communities and to identify solutions to local issues.
  - *Opportunity* - Promote initiatives to help residents lead healthier lifestyles; Help businesses to flourish.
  - *Wellbeing* - Encourage belonging, involvement and responsibility in all the boroughs communities.

**8. Consultation**

- 8.1 No Public Consultation is required for this initiative

**9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 There may be positive publicity as a result of this report as the Farm will deliver community benefits.

**10. Financial, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management implications**

- 10.1 There are no financial, community safety, health and safety or risk management implications for the Council

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 Market Field Farm Plan and Vision