

Local councillor asks for budget provision for Gorgie Community Farm

Cllr Ross McKenzie, who represents the Sighthill/Gorgie ward, has asked for some of the council's resources in Thursday's budget to be set aside for Gorgie Farm.

Last month the council confirmed a new 25-year lease with Gorgie Community Farm Ltd, but stopped short of awarding the charity seed funding of £75,000. The company, which was formed to manage and run the site, promised to ensure the farm would remain "a functioning asset to which the community will enjoy access".

A feasibility study last year identified that capital funding was a "key element of the success of the farm" adding that approximate capital costs for the necessary works at the site would be as high as £5 million.

At the time the Finance Committee heard that any extra funding would be better considered as part of the council's budget decision. Cllr McKenzie told the Finance Committee that he supported the charity and a cash award.

The new charity has been commissioned to deliver a "community farm" which includes a mix of growing spaces and outdoor spaces, with a commitment to only ever have small animals on site. This also includes a series of spaces supporting community and social enterprises and volunteering.

Cllr McKenzie said: "I'm delighted that a new local charity has been awarded the lease for Gorgie Farm and I believe that they are well placed to secure significant external funding to deliver on their plan for the site. However, I know they need support from the Council to get started so I'm proposing a modest contribution from this year's budget. The farm has never survived long without Council subsidy – the Council owns the site and Administration councillors have repeatedly committed to bringing it back for the community, so now is the time to match those words with financial support.

"The money requested in the amendment can also be found in the SNP and Green budgets, and all 4 ward councillors are united in supporting this request. But we already know the SNP and Green budgets won't pass, so I'm hoping that Labour will accept my amendment – if they do that, then I will vote for their budget. I've discussed the amendment with the Council Leader and she seemed genuinely interested. Cllr Meagher has come into the job saying that she wants to find consensus and respect views from across the council chamber so hopefully that's what we'll see at Thursday's budget meeting."

Cllr McKenzie's amendment to the Administration motion reads:

"Sets aside £75,000 from the Loans Charge Contingency Fund for Gorgie Community Farm to employ a Development Manager for one year.

"Agrees that £75,000 from the Asset Management Works budget will be spent on capital improvements on the Gorgie Farm site."



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