



**Report of**     **Acting Director of City Development**

**Report to**     **City Development Scrutiny Board**

**Date:**         **17 May 2011**

**Subject:**     **Response to Report of Working Group on Home Farm, Temple Newsam**

**Report author:** **Richard Mond**

**Contact telephone number:** **0113 247 8395**

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**Does the report contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?**

**No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.**

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**Is the decision eligible for call-in?**     **Not applicable**

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### **Summary of main issues and corporate governance considerations**

The report responds to the report of the Working Group on Temple Newsam Home Farm.

### **Recommendations**

That Scrutiny Board considers this response alongside the report of the Working Group.

#### **1 Purpose of this report**

1.1 To provide a response to the Working Group's report for consideration by the Board.

#### **2 Background information**

2.1 This report is drafted to be read in conjunction with the Working Group's report and does not seek to present new background information.

2.2 The following text responds one by one to the recommendations of the Working Group report. Responses are generally limited to agreement (or otherwise) with the text of the recommendation, and any necessary clarification on the implications of this. Lack of comment on the text leading up to the recommendation does not mean full agreement with it; see comment at 3.9 (conclusions).

#### **3 Main issues**

3.1 **Recommendation 1:** That the Acting Director of City Development ensure that the accounts for Home Farm are simplified to show more readily income and expenditure for the farm and which excludes all other operations.

3.1.1 **Response:** agreed.

3.2 **Recommendation 2:** That the Acting Director of City Development considers engaging a consultant to look specifically at:

- (i) how the farm could operate on a commercial basis but integrated as a whole visitor experience rather than seeing the current visitor attraction in isolation from the farming operation.

**Response:** Agreed, but not if the implication is that no action should be taken now to staunch unnecessary losses being incurred.

- (ii) maximising all grants and subsidies that are available for Home Farm.

**Response:** Agreed; advice is already being taken.

3.3 **Recommendation 3:** That the Acting Director of City Development identifies the Farm Manager's key role as the commercial success of Home Farm and its integration as a total visitor experience and that a business plan and timetable be developed to achieve this.

3.3.1 **Response:** Agreed that there should be a single Farm Manager (as proposed in paragraph 24 of the report), subject to further staff consultation, and that there should be a business plan. The rest of the recommendation needs to take account of capacity and skills, and also of the need to develop coherent management of the visitor experience and business of all aspects of the estate.

3.4 **Recommendation 4:** That the Acting Director of City Development

- (i) undertakes a review of the staffing levels and job descriptions at Home Farm to incorporate the visitor attraction

- (ii) considers how to attract volunteers to work at Home Farm and where they could best be used to reduce operating costs.

3.4.1 **Response:** Agreed (with qualification on ii). The Parks Service intends greatly to increase the opportunities and level of volunteering across parks, though not always or primarily as a cost saving, but because of the inherent benefits of greater community involvement and participation, and the enjoyment and learning that the volunteers benefit from. Temple Newsam already has a very successful volunteer programme, though not currently on the farm. Agriculture with heavy machinery and livestock is a notoriously risky area for amateurs and it is likely that most volunteer support would be at the visitor attraction and in environmental improvements around the farmland.

3.5 **Recommendation 5:** That the Acting Director of City Development, in conjunction with the Farm Manager and RBST, determines the land management, livestock numbers and mix of breeds for Home Farm and the visitor and rare breed centres which ensures the continued viability of Home Farm.

3.5.1 **Response:** agreed subject to clarifying that [a] "conjunction" does not transfer responsibility or final authority to these consultees, or any others) [b] the mix and numbers of livestock and the land management regime are important but are not the only issues affecting Home Farm's viability, which is currently hampered by financial losses due mainly to excessive staff costs.

3.6 **Recommendation 6:** That the Director of Resources ring fences the profits from Temple Newsam Café for use by Home Farm, Temple Newsam.

3.6.1 **Response:** not agreed. This recommendation is incompatible with Recommendation 1. Moreover other activities in the estate also generate turnover in the café, and no doubt a review of these could come up with equivalent recommendations for each of them.

3.7 **Recommendation 7:** That the Acting Director of City Development undertakes a review of the visitors' entrance to the farm to identify a more cost effective and appropriate way for visitors to gain admission to the farm and which improves their overall visitor experience.

3.7.1 **Response:** agreed. This is a helpful suggestion, which we will pursue.

3.8 **Recommendation 8:** That the Acting Director of City Development

(i) considers how Home Farm and the visitor and rare breed centres can be better promoted to increase visitor numbers and income.

(ii) develops a long term strategy that would improve the educational experience of the centres and would encourage schools to participate and pay a fee for the experience.

3.8.1 **Response:** agreed.

### 3.9 **Conclusion to Working Group report**

3.9.1 Officers have much common ground with the Working Group and agree with most recommendations. The consultation document set out modest first steps to improve the financial performance of the farm, and its description in paragraph 40 of the report as "slash and burn" is wrong. Officers agree that the longer term, bigger picture must be the priority, but do not agree that the £100k saving this year required by the council's budget should be shelved.

## 4 **Corporate governance considerations**

4.1.1 N/A as no specific proposals

### 4.2 **Consultation**

4.2.1 N/A

## 5 **Recommendations**

5.1 City Development Scrutiny Board is asked to consider this response alongside the report of the Working Group.

## 6 **Background documents**

6.1 Report of the Working Group.