

Appendix 4 – Briefing Note to Executive Member for Development & the Economy

Briefing Note for Executive member for City Development

Closure of West Park Centre

2/11/12

Background

In September 2009 a condition survey was undertaken on the West Park Centre. This recommended £2.2m be spent on backlog maintenance, including £711k for electrical works, £192k of which was Priority 1. At the time it was recommended that a full electrical inspection and test was carried out. This test was not undertaken. The report also recommended that some of the wiring was replaced. It is understood that this work did not take place either.

Main Issues

Weekend of 2nd/3rd November

As part of the options appraisal looking at alternative options for the site, an electrical engineer from NPS Leeds visited the site. He undertook a rudimentary inspection of the electrical installation and described it as “looking dangerous”. After further discussion it was decided that CPM should undertake a more detailed investigation. This report is attached in full, but the most worrying part is *“Some electrical installation work has been carried out in the past but there are significant areas of the building which haven’t seen any maintenance or repairs done in years, the main switchgear could actually be described as dangerous and a major health and safety risk. If an incident did occur i.e. electrocution, I think the council would be heavily criticised by the HSE (more than likely prosecuted) for permitting staff and members of the public into a building that we knowingly had unacceptable risks attached to it.”*

Over the coming weekend there are three major activities scheduled:

Russian School Baltika have arranged a public event on Saturday which will have dancing demonstrations, food sampling and dance workshops. Attendee numbers are unknown. We are trying to relocate this event to Lawnswood School, but ultimately may need to turn them away. It is understood this event includes a delegation from Lithuania and/or Russia.

Leeds Youth Orchestra have rehearsals booked for Saturday. They expect approximately 100 children to attend.

Leeds Reformed Baptist Church use the centre for worship every Sunday. Approximately 200 worshippers attend.

There are further activities planned for the coming week. It is recommended that all of these activities are cancelled, or where possible relocated.

Office Space for staff

Artforms have approximately 30 staff based in the building, with a further 8 based in the Gypsy Roma Traveller Unit. It is proposed to move these staff to vacant space in Merrion House in the interim if other out of city centre office space can't be secured.

Instrument Storage

Artforms have a significant number of instruments and other items stored on site. In the interim it is proposed to move these items to vacant space within the Small Industrial Unit portfolio. There are a number of vacant units at Domestic Street Estate that can be used.

Gordon Parry Centre

The Gordon Parry Centre provides services to children and adults with learning and physical disabilities. Any disruption to service provision will have a more profound impact on these service users. Due to the half term holidays it has been impossible to speak to anybody from this part of the service so their exact needs are not known, but finding an alternative site or way of delivering the service will be treated as a priority.

Local Community Use

There are some local community bookings for this week. Users will be contacted to book alternative provision. The nearby Beckett Park Community Centre is under-utilised. The lettings team in CPM will be contacted to try and help secure alternative provision with the Council's portfolio.

Musical Groups

Musical Groups such as Leeds Symphony Orchestra and West Riding Opera use the centre every week for rehearsals. Colleagues in Childrens Services will be contacting schools to try and establish alternative venues during the closure. The same will apply for Artforms service delivery.

Longer Term

Asset Management Board considered a report on 1st November and supported the co-location of Artforms, Artemis and the Schools Library Service at East Leeds Leisure Centre. This co-location will be a matter for Executive Board. The report will consider re-investing in West Park Centre, but this will not be the recommended course of action. If the move to East Leeds is approved the necessary refurbishment works should take 3-4 months.

Communication

The closure is an emergency, temporary measure until Executive Board makes a decision on the future of the centre. No long term decision has yet been taken. This will be communicated to all users.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the West Park Centre closes with immediate effect and that staff are relocated to Merrion House.

Report from CPM

Anne Chambers has asked me to provide you with information which relates to CPM's health and safety concerns and the future operation of the West Park Centre. Basically I have previously outlined a number of concerns since we took over the maintenance responsibility for this site a couple of months ago, the following is a brief summary of the issues:

Electrical Installation: The vast majority of the electrical installation is in a very poor state, it has not been subject to an NICEIC electrical test for some considerable time, the previous testing dates are not known and previous testing records were not available, there are numerous parts of the installation which give serious cause for concern. Some electrical installation work has been carried out in the past but there are significant areas of the building which haven't seen any maintenance or repairs done in years, the main switchgear could actually be described as dangerous and a major health and safety risk. If an incident did occur i.e. electrocution, I think the council would be heavily criticised by the HSE (more than likely prosecuted) for permitting staff and members of the public into a building that we knowingly had unacceptable risks attached to it.

Emergency Lighting: The emergency lighting system is virtually non-existent and this represents a serious hazard to building occupiers i.e. escape routes have no back-up lighting, in the event of a power failure and the need to evacuate the building, this could result in significant delays and unnecessary risk to the building users/occupiers.

Fire Alarm: The fire alarm system is seriously deficient, i.e. it is mains operated has no automatic detection, large areas of the building have no cover and has no power supply back-up i.e. in the event of a power failure the system would not operate. The installation does not meet or comply with current fire or building regulations and should be replaced immediately if the building is to continue in operation, basically lives would be put at unnecessary risk in the event of a fire.

Heating System: Large areas of the building have little or no heating control, some areas of the building have no heat at all, the system has leaks and the potential to cause injury both to users and maintenance staff.

Building Fabric: The external fabric of the building is generally in a very poor condition, the vast majority of the roofs are flat and have been patch repaired over the years, consequently there are a number of leaks evident, during heavy rain buckets and other measures are used to collect water inside the building, in some areas water is collecting on the floor and represents a slip hazard to building users.

Asbestos: The building does not have an up-to-date asbestos survey or re-inspection report, this information is a legal requirement for building users and contractors working on the site.

Fire Risk Assessment: When the building was transferred to CPM we were not provided with a copy of a fire risk assessment, we are not aware of one existing, this is a legal requirement.

Legionella Risk Assessment and Monitoring: When the building was transferred to CPM we were not provided with a copy of a legionella risk assessment, we are not aware of one existing, we have not been provided with any evidence that a legionella monitoring regime is in place, again this is a legal requirement.