

Report of the Area Leader – South East Leeds

Report to the Director of Environments & Housing

Date: Thursday 24th October 2013

Subject: Friends of Drighlington Community Library request for Community Subsidised Accommodation

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes Morley North	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. In May 2011 Executive Board approved a major review of Leeds Library and Information Service called a New Chapter for Libraries. As part of this review it was agreed that Drighlington Library could remain open for 12 months in order to explore the potential for a community run library.
2. Drighlington Library is based in one room in Drighlington Meeting Hall building, the remainder of the property provides community meeting space. Friends of Drighlington Community Library do not want to take responsibility for the whole building. As a result Drighlington Meeting Hall has been transferred to the Citizens and Communities portfolio and delegated to Outer South Area Committee.
3. The sole management and running of Drighlington's library service was handed over to the Friends of Drighlington Community Library in November 2012 and Leeds Library and Information Service ended their interest in Drighlington Meeting Hall.
4. Friends of Drighlington Community Library are a group of local volunteers and do not have a budget to cover rental costs. A Rental Assessment for the library space in Drighlington Meeting Hall has been undertaken. The rent is calculated at £5,000 per annum and Service Charge is £1,860 per annum.

5. The friends of Drighlington Library received subsidised accommodation in the first year of operation. This report requests a continuation of the subsidised rental for the accommodation calculated at £6,860 for a further year to cover rent and services cost. This proposal is supported by the Outer South Area Committee.
6. A Tenancy at Will is in place with a review mechanism to take effect in 12 months which would give time for future arrangements to be considered.

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that the Director of Environments and Housing continues the rent subsidy by providing a grant as per 2012/13 and approves a grant to the Friends of Drighlington Community Library to the value of £6,860. This grant will cover rent and service charges for a further 12 month period. The funding to be made by way of an internal recharge against the Drighlington Meeting Hall and Library cost centre, within the community centres budget.
8. It is also recommended that this arrangement be reviewed in 12 months to determine whether the arrangement should continue and to agree future conditions of use, with a view to reducing the level of subsidy on a sliding scale.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report outlines a request that the Director of Environments and Housing waives the standard community rental agreement (CRA) cost for space within Drighlington Meeting Hall and agrees subsidised occupation to the value of £6,860 for the rent and service charges to the Friends of Drighlington Library.

2 Background information

- 2.1 In May 2011 the Executive Board approved a major review of Leeds Library and Information Service. The recommendations included the proposal to delay for a year, the closure of a number of libraries of which Drighlington Library was one, to investigate other options.
- 2.2 The Library is based in one room in the Drighlington Meeting Hall; the remainder of the property provides community meeting space. Friends of Drighlington Community Library do not want to take responsibility for the whole building. It was agreed that the building would remain under the control of the council but that the library space would transfer to the 'friends of' group.
- 2.3 Leeds Library and Information Service terminated their service in Drighlington on 27 October 2012. A handover audit took place with the Friends of group on 29 / 30 October in preparation for the group taking over operations from November 2012.
- 2.4 Morley North Ward members were consulted and supported the centre being transferred to Environment and Neighbourhoods and to their portfolio of community. The day to day management of the centre and the community lettings continues to be managed by Facilities Management, who currently manage the Environment and Neighbourhoods centres that are delegated to area committees.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Friends of Drighlington Community Library are a local group of volunteers working to keep the Library open. They have over 70 volunteers who operate the Library on Tuesdays between 9 am and 7 pm. The "Friends" have a management committee of 9 Trustees who organise the rota, events and fundraising.

3.2 The table below highlights progress made since the group took over operations of the library. The Friends of Drighlington Library's mission statement is to serve the local community, develop sound literary, cultural and social skills by means of the following:

Action	Progress to date
<p>Arrange access to a range of books for all ages and subjects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • received a donation from the Parish Council which has enabled the group to increase the selection of children's books • increased the Crime section – it now fills three bookcases instead of two • expanded non fiction and biographies
<p>Provide a meeting place for elderly or disabled members of the community and mothers with young children who cannot easily access other libraries i.e. Gildersome or Morley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased the opening hours so that the library is open at least 4 hours a day for 5 days of the week. It is open for a full day on 2 days a week, enabling those who work to use the facilities • there are two areas of comfortable seating for socializing
<p>Encourage general reading throughout the year not just in term time to improve literacy and participate in the summer reading challenge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opened after school hours 2 days a week and Saturday mornings. • Thirty six children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge which involved children up to the age of 11 being challenged to read 6 books over the summer holidays
<p>Drighlington Infants and Primary School asked the group to support their curriculum with appropriate books and displays and to start a supported homework club including computer access especially for those children with limited access to computers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Friends have met the Head Teacher and the School Council and are awaiting feedback in relation to after school use • A new volunteer has been recruited who has links to the school and is promoting engagement with the school. At present one class comes across on Tuesday and Friday afternoons so that the children can borrow books from the library in the name of their teacher
<p>Provide a photocopier for business, club and individual use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopier/printer has been well used

Action	Progress to date
Continue to encourage young children to participate in art and craft activities during school holiday periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • craft events held for children during school holidays which have been very popular and well attended with parents requesting more
Encourage more people to use the library by providing jigsaws, board games and daily newspapers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • jigsaw library for both children and adult members and a chess set for use • Both local and national papers provided on 3 days of the week as well as current magazines.
Start a Reading Group where adults can enjoy books together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on hold due to the cost of buying several copies of one book, which is essential for a reading group
Develop Story Times for pre-school children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story time takes place every Friday at 2.15pm
Continue to develop links with the Morley Literature Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2012 the group had a stall in Morley high street publicising the library during the Festival.

- 3.3 A building survey was carried out on the 14th August 2012; a rental assessment was undertaken and costs given (£5,000 per annum for premises + £1,860 for services charges).
- 3.4 Friends of Drighlington Community Library was to take occupation of the space on the understanding that there would be a CRA (Community Rental Assessment) undertaken.
- 3.5 It is requested that the group is allowed subsidised occupation to the value of £6,860 to reflect rent and service charges. This proposal is supported by Morley North ward members and the Outer South Area Committee. The group is currently on a Tenancy at Will while the lease is being developed. This is a temporary arrangement between the library providers and the council. The Tenancy at Will will terminate when the lease has been agreed and signed. This is to ensure they are set up correctly to ensure that all interests are protected if an asset transfer takes place in the future.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Rental charges are a matter between the user and the Council and are not therefore subject to wider consultation (the current Community Centre review will

be considering community centre charging policies and there will be consultation on this with all interested parties in due course).

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Drighlington Meeting Hall is open to all groups to use. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been undertaken to establish whether or not a full EIA should be completed at this time and it has been concluded that a full EIA is not required as the decision would have no negative effect on any particular equality characteristics, indeed the location of the service within the community has positive benefits, and the terms of the occupation are such that the position in relation to access to the facilities by the community can be reviewed within the 12 month period of occupation. The current Community Centre Review is also looking at availability and use of community facilities over the longer-term and EIAs relating to this work will be undertaken as the review progresses.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The proposal to support the transfer of the library service to the community to run supports the ambition of the council to empower local people.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.2 The budget from Leeds Library and Information Service to run Drighlington Meeting Hall has been transferred to Environment and Neighbourhoods and any future income would go to Environment and Neighbourhoods.

4.4.3 Although the proposal involves waiving £6,860 of the full rental income and service charge, this will not affect the income target as no income has previously been generated through the hire of this space.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The building is in a reasonable state of repair and the last known conditions survey August 2006 did not identify any major work needed.

4.6.2 Further meetings will be held for smooth transition of building to include operational, financial, service charges and income and arrangements will include a review within the 12 month period to take account of any changing circumstances.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The Friends of Drighlington Community Library took up occupation of the Library space from October 2012 and have operated the library since. As a group of volunteers, they do not have a budget to cover rental costs and service charges. Therefore, it is requested that the group be allowed subsidised occupation to the value of £6,860 to reflect the rent and service charges.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Director of Environments and Housing continues the rent subsidy by providing a grant as per 2012/13 and approves a grant to the Friends of Drighlington Community Library to the value of £6,860. This grant will cover rent and service charges for a further 12 month period. The funding to be made by way of an internal recharge against the Drighlington Meeting Hall and Library cost centre, within the community centres budget.
- 6.2 It is also recommended that this arrangement be reviewed in 12 months to determine whether the arrangement should continue and to agree future conditions of use, with a view to reducing the level of subsidy on a sliding scale.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 EIA screening document

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.