

**Report of the Area Leader – South East Leeds**

**Report to the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) :**

**27<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

**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 did not want to take responsibility for the whole building. As a result Drighlington Meeting Hall was transferred to the Environment and Neighbours portfolio. It has now become part of 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 was undertaken. The notional 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 cost of £1,860 for a further year to the Service Charge. This proposal is supported by the Outer South Area Committee.
6. A Tenancy at Will is in place whilst negotiations are ongoing around a potential lease. A lease has been drawn up the friends of Drighlington community Library will shortly be in a position to sign a seven year lease for their part of the building.

### **Recommendations**

7. It is recommended that the Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) approves a grant to the Friends of Drighlington Community Library to the value of £1,860 and waive the notional £5,000 rental income. This grant is to cover the service charges for a further 12 month period. It is recommended that this grant should be approved on the condition that the Friends of Drighlington Library sign the lease that has been drawn up.
8. It is also recommended that this support be reviewed in 12 months to determine whether the arrangement should continue and to agree future conditions of use.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report outlines a request that the Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) waives the notional community rental agreement (CRA) cost of £5,000 for space within Drighlington Meeting Hall and agrees subsidised occupation to the value £1,860 to cover the service charges.

## **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<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October in preparation for the group taking over operations from November 2012.
- 2.4 Drighlington Meeting Hall is included in the Community Centre portfolio in the Citizens & Communities directorate, having been transferred from the Environment and Housing directorate in October 2013. The day to day management of the centre and the community lettings continues to be facilitated by Facilities Management who currently manage the Citizens and Communities 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 40 volunteers who operate the Library during opening hours which helps to keep the costs down. The "Friends" have a management committee of 9 Trustees who organise the rota, events and fundraising.
- 3.2 The Trustees feel that significant progress and success has been achieved during the last 12 months and hope to be able to sustain and build on this for the future.
- 3.3 The trustee's main focus is around generating funding for books and promoting the facility for use by local people.
- 3.4 The Trustees are planning various activities for the year, this includes a Knit and Knatter group where local residents can come and get help with their knitting. The group is also planning an auction and an exhibition to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War 1 to take place after the summer.

3.5 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
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 2 full days during the week, enabling those who work to use the facilities</li> <li>• There are two areas of comfortable seating for socializing, which is being used on a regular basis</li> </ul>
Encourage general reading throughout the year not just in term time to improve literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opened after school hours 2 days a week and Saturday mornings.</li> <li>• With the 2013 Summer Reading Challenge going so well, talks are in place to do another Summer Reading Challenge this year which will involve children up to the age of 11</li> </ul>
Strong links with the Drighlington Infants and Primary School.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a regular school reading group on Tuesday and Fridays where pupils in year 4 can visit the library and read at their leisure.</li> <li>• Talks are in place with the school to allow 1<sup>st</sup> year children to do the same as the 4<sup>th</sup> year pupils</li> </ul>
Provide a photocopier for business, club and individual use	Photocopier/printer is still been used well on a daily basis by local residents and businesses
Continue to encourage young children to participate in art and craft activities during school holiday periods	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	<p>Jigsaws have been provided for both children and adult members to use, along with a chess. set Local and National Newspapers are provided by the local news agencies on 3 days of the week</p> <p>A work club is also run with the support of Morley's Job Centre, to help local people find employment</p>
Start a Reading Group where adults can enjoy books together	This is still high on the agenda but unfortunately is on hold due to the cost of buying several copies of a book, which is essential for a reading group

Action	Progress to date
Develop Story Times for pre-school children	Story time takes place every Friday at 2.15pm
Continue to develop links with the Morley Literature Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2012 the group had a stall in Morley high street publicising the library during the Festival.</li> <li>• Friends of Drighlington Library are considering holding a stall in 2014.</li> </ul>
Encourage IT usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running on a Tuesday, evening from 6:00pm - 7:30pm, the library is running a computer and laptop club to help people become more familiar with IT and problems they may be having.</li> </ul>

3.6 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.

3.7 It is requested that the £5,000 notional rent is waived and a grant to the value of £1,860 be given to cover the service charge costs. 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 negotiations are ongoing about a potential lease. This is a temporary arrangement between the library providers and the council. The Tenancy at Will will terminate when a lease has been agreed and signed. This is to ensure the group is set up correctly so that all interests are protected if an asset transfer takes place in the future.

3.8 There have been delays in finalising the signing of the lease, mainly due to the status of the Friends of Drighlington Library and the unwillingness of the individual members to have financial or legal responsibility. The group have now applied to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which will enable them to finally sign the lease.

3.9 Negotiations around the lease have been ongoing since 2011. The lease will provide a legal status to the arrangements between the Friends of Drighlington Library and Leeds City Council in terms of the group's entitlement to use the agreed space. Break clauses will allow either party to end the arrangements, with notice, should the arrangement prove to be unsuitable in the future. Decisions around rental support are separate to the lease arrangements.

## 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 was transferred to the Community Centres portfolio in October 2012.
- 4.4.3 Although the proposal involves waiving the notional £5,000 rental income charge, this will not affect the income target for this building as no income has previously been generated through the hire of this space.
- 4.4.4 The library service operated by The Friends of Drighlington Library delivers good value for money and provides the local community with a library and a meeting 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 take place with the Friends of Drighlington Library during the 12 month period to monitor operational outputs. Finances relating to operational costs and income will be monitored during the year.

## **5 Conclusions**

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 notional rent of £5,000 be waived and a grant to the value of £1,860 be awarded to cover service charges.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) approves a grant to the Friends of Drighlington Community Library

to the value of £1,860 and waive the notional £5,000 rental income. This grant is to cover the service charges for a further 12 month period. It is recommended that this grant should be approved on the condition that the Friends of Drighlington Library sign the lease that has been drawn up.

6.2 It is also recommended that this be reviewed in 12 months to determine whether the arrangement should continue and to agree future conditions of use.

## **7.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 Equality Impact Assessment Screening document.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.