

**Report of ENE Area Leader**

**Report to Inner North East Community Committee**

**Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

**Subject: Palace Community Centre Future**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Chapel Allerton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<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. This report asks Members to consider the future of Palace Community Centre and consider the option to declare the centre surplus to requirements for use as a delegated community centre.

**Recommendations**

2. That Members of the Inner North East Community Committee note the contents of the report and agree to Palace Community Centre being declared surplus to requirement for use as a delegated community centre; and for it to be returned to Leeds City Council's Asset Management section to consider future use of the building.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report is to provide Members with the up to date position on the usage of Palace Community Centre and requests that they consider the future of the centre with a view to declaring it surplus to requirement as a Community Committee Delegated Community Centre.

## **2 Main Issues**

- 2.1 Palace Community Centre is based in the heart of Chapeltown in a residential area (Shepherds Lane). It was transferred over to the Community Committee (formerly Area Committee) from Youth Services and has been historically used as a youth centre.
- 2.2 The community centre was formally two dwellings at the end of a row of terrace houses and the property is spread over three main floors and an unused basement. Although the ground floor has been modified to create larger rooms in which various activities have been delivered over the years, the first floor and second floors are relatively unaltered, and the bedroom and bathroom layout is almost intact. The layout and access to the first floor, via domestic stairways, is not suitable for community use.
- 2.2 The building has seen investment through Ward Members Ward Based Initiative funding as well as Well-Being Funding over the years to improve the heating and decorating, but the building is in need of significant investment in order to make it fit for purpose.
- 2.3 A desk top feasibility study was completed in 2011 which highlighted the potential refurbishment of the centre; at that time the cost to complete the scheme was approximately £350,000.
- 2.4 Historically anecdotal evidence suggests that the building was well used when it was used as 'Palace Youth Project', however, over recent years this usage has gradually dwindled and as a result provision and activities for young people in particular is now delivered from other locations, such as Mandela Centre and Prince Phillip Centre.
- 2.5 Since the centre was transferred to the Community Committee the Area Support Team have engaged various groups and users in an attempt to increase the usage and income for the centre to support its sustainability, but this has ultimately proven unsuccessful, this is in part due to the condition and layout of the building, which only really lends itself to activities being delivered from the ground floor. Groups have used the upper floors for sessional activities, but there are health and safety concerns due to the narrow and steep staircases in the building.
- 2.6 Due to reports of anti-social behaviour from community members in the vicinity of Palace following some sessions, some of the youth group meetings had to be relocated to other venues and this has further added to the dwindling usage.

- 2.7 The basement, whilst not in use has been highlighted as a concern in terms of fire safety due to compartmentalisation issues with the basement ceiling and the adjoining next door basement party wall.
- 2.8 The running costs for Palace Community Centre in 2012-13 were £11,834. The centre brought in an income of £2,218. Based on current usage this income figure is unlikely to increase in 2014/15, and due to increases in utilities the running costs are likely to increase.
- 2.9 As Palace Community centre is underused, in poor condition and, due to its layout can only accommodate a limited range of activities, Chapel Allerton Ward Members support its closure declaring the site surplus to requirements as a community centre. They would like to see the building returned to use as residential housing.

### **3.0 Corporate Considerations**

#### **3.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 3.1.1 The Chapel Allerton Ward Members have been consulted on the future of Palace during their monthly briefing meetings and are supportive of the centre being declared surplus to requirements. Users of the centre have also been consulted and alternative locations identified for them to relocate and maintain their services/activities.

#### **3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 3.2.1 There are no specific implications for equality and diversity. However, any potential impact will be mitigated through providing support to relocate all current user groups into local, appropriate premises.

#### **3.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 3.3.1 Leeds needs investment in new homes and the aim is to attract maximum investment from the private sector and government. Within the City Priorities Plan 'best city...to live' priority there is a specific aim to maximise regeneration investment to increase housing choice and affordability within sustainable neighbourhoods.
- 3.3.2 One of the main outcomes of The Best City plan is to achieve the savings and efficiencies required to continue to deliver frontline services through spending money wisely and considering where efficiencies may be made to support the delivery of this.

#### **3.4 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 3.4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.
- 3.4.2 There is no exempt or confidential information.

3.4.3 In line with the Council's Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rules, agreed at Full Council May 2013, all decisions taken by Area Committees are not eligible for Call In.

### **3.5 Risk Management**

3.5.1 There are no major risks associated with the content of this report.

### **4.0 Conclusions**

4.1 As Palace Community Centre is underused, in poor condition and, due to its layout can only accommodate a limited range of activities, the Chapel Allerton Ward Members support its closure and being declared surplus to requirement as a Community Centre. It is proposed it be returned to Leeds City Council's Asset Management section to consider its future usage. The Members preference is that the building be returned back into residential housing as this is a particular need in the area. This proposal will reduce the need to spend Council budget on an under-utilised building which is not fit for purpose.

### **5.0 Recommendations**

5.1 That Members of the Inner North East Community Committee note the contents of the report and

- Agree to Palace Community Centre being declared surplus to requirement for use as delegated community centre;
- And for it to be returned to Leeds City Council's Asset Management section to consider future use of the building with the preference being for it to be returned to family accommodation.

6.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>

6.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.