



Report of the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods Directorate

Inner South Area Committee

Date: Thursday 13th December 2007

Subject: South Leeds Community Centres Lettings & Pricing Policy

Electoral Wards Affected:

Beeston & Holbeck
City & Hunslet
Middleton Park

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call In Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

This report seeks the Area Committees endorsement to the implementation of a revised Lettings & Pricing Policy. A draft version of this policy has been presented to Committee in June 2007 and a three month consultation exercise undertaken.

Processes and procedures which need to be undertaken with the Lettings Unit to ensure a smooth transition from the old policy to the revised one are also detailed in this report.

This report does not cover the future of any community facilities in the area, any efficiency savings measures that may need to be put in place or the transfer of further facilities to the Area Committee community centre portfolio.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report outlines a revised Lettings & Pricing Policy which South Area Management Team proposes that the Area Committee considers implementing across its area. The report details discounts which will be applied for various types of community organisations booking community centres already or soon to be managed by Inner and Outer South Leeds Area Committees and the standard charges which are proposed to be implemented for various venues in the area.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 In July 2006, as part of the annual Area Function Schedule, the Area Committees became responsible for a portfolio of community buildings across their area. There were a number of responsibilities that also transferred for the Area Management Team to carry out on behalf of the Area Committee, these responsibilities were:-
- Liaising with users, user groups, local members and management committees on issues related to centres in their area
 - Developing proposals for re-shaping the portfolio in the area
 - Developing capital schemes and funding packages
 - Monitoring the service level agreement with City Services for centres in their area and monitoring capital and revenue budgets
 - Ensuring that leases and licences are in place and reviewed periodically
 - Developing, implementing and overseeing the administration of a new schedule of pricing and discounts for centre usage
- 2.2 An initial delegation of nine community centres was given to the South Area Committees – Four in Inner South and five in Outer. Of these facilities only two are directly managed, six are leased* to community associations / used as operational bases for other Council Departments and one is currently managed on a key holding basis*. The portfolio is shortly due to increase when an additional 10 facilities will be transferred under the Area Committee's responsibility – this breaks down to three additional centres in Inner South and seven in Outer South.
- 2.3 To drive forward the key responsibilities asked to be carried out in terms of the management of Area Committee facilities, Area Management Teams across the city have been asked to re-visit previous work carried out on the development of a revised community centres letting policy to ensure that it is appropriate to each area.
- 2.4 In June 2007, a report was presented to Area Committee on a draft Pricing and Lettings Policy. This draft policy was based on previous work which had been undertaken on the development of a city wide pricing and lettings schedule. Following on from that report, a three month consultation exercise was undertaken – information was sent to all registered users on the Lettings Unit database, details were displayed in community centres and libraries and the policy was discussed in community centre sub committee meetings. Between July and October, only six responses from user groups across South Leeds were received – comments from those users who replied are attached at Appendix 1. The next section of this report outlines the details of the standard charging bands requested to be implemented and the various levels of discounts that will be available for different types of user groups.

3.0 A revised pricing structure for community centres in South Leeds

- 3.1 A draft pricing structure was presented at the June Area Committee meeting. This draft pricing structure was based upon existing costs to use Council community centres, a benchmarking exercise which was undertaken to look at other types of buildings available for hire in the south locality and costs were also altered to reflect inflation and rising costs of utilities. Following on from discussions with colleagues from other Area Management Teams, Facilities Management, Lettings Unit and

* Belle Isle Foundation, Cranmore & Raylands, Middleton Skills Centre and three Outer South Centres

* Watsonia Pavilion

Regeneration Partnerships Team, the standard charges which Area Committee are being asked to endorse the implementation of are as follows:-

Room Band	Standard Charge for Leeds City Council Directly Managed Buildings in South Leeds
Band A - Large, typically up to 40ft X 40ft (1600 sq ft)	£25.00
Band B - Medium, typically up to 30ft x 30 ft (900 sq ft)	£18.00
Band C - Small, typically up to 20ft x 20ft (400sq ft)	£12.00
Band D – Kitchens	£5.00
Band E – Store rooms	Subject to negotiation

- 3.2 Minimal use of a kitchen (e.g. to make refreshments for a meeting) will be included in the standard charge. More extensive use will be covered by booking a kitchen under the Band D charge rate. Some groups use storage facilities on a permanent basis and it is felt that a charge could be implemented for the use this service to any commercial or profit making organisations using our centres.
- 3.3 It has been agreed that for a smooth transitional period and for Lettings Unit to be able to manage the lettings process easier that one standard charge is required across the city. The facilities this policy will cover are:-

Inner South	Outer South
Holbeck Youth Club (to transfer)	Blackburn Hall (transferred 1/7/06)
Old Cockburn (to transfer)	Gildersome CC (to transfer)
St Matthews CC (to transfer)	Lewisham Park CC (to transfer)
	Morley Town Hall four rooms (to transfer)
	Peel Street CC (transferred 1/7/06)
	Rose Lund CC (to transfer)
	St Gabriels (to transfer)
	Tingley Y&C Centre (to transfer)
	Windmill YC (to transfer)

- 3.4 As mentioned in the previous report presented in June, it is still proposed that a standard charge of £650 is levied for Weddings. Charges for security and cleaning will be additional to the £650 charge and will be apportioned on an event by event basis, as some functions may require more security and / or cleaning than others. If venues are to be used for parties, the hire rate will be the proposed standard lettings charge for any users, plus the costs for caretaking, cleaning and security provided for the function.
- 3.5 The main aim of the revised lettings policy is not to have an immense budgetary impact; it's about creating a standardised charging system for all LCC community facilities in the area, as the current policy hasn't been reviewed for over 10 years. At present, the directly managed community facilities which are the responsibility of the Area Committee, are operating within their budget parameters. Even with the possibility of some income being generated through this policy, there are still high levels of backlog maintenance costs that need to be addressed. The income will assist with the running costs associated with the buildings in the area, and if, where possible; go towards some enhancements to the facilities we have to offer.

3.6 Applications from commercial businesses will be assessed on a case by case basis and will be charged an enhanced rate for use of the community centre. It may be felt that if a business, large company or profit-making organisations who want to use community centres for activities, should be charged a higher rate than a regular community user due to their financial status and revenue generating ability. It is suggested that office space within community centres could be promoted to businesses. Any revenue generated through this would be used to subsidise community lettings or used to improve the buildings further. It will be ensured that there will be sufficient space within the facilities for the provision of community use if a business requests to use one of the facilities for a base.

4.0 A revised discount policy for community centres in South Leeds

4.1 Complimentary to the standard pricing structure is the discount policy. The discount will be apportioned dependant on the type of activity which is being provided to the community. This is detailed in Appendix 2. We are aware that further work needs to be undertaken to make the criteria of the user groups more specific and prescriptive to ensure that the discount policy is not open to abuse by groups who may not receive a discount and have the ability to pay lettings charges.

4.2 One area that has been changed from the draft policy presented in June, is the section on activities for young people. There has been a number of questions raised about the rationale for charging voluntary youth groups such as uniformed organisations, like scouts and brownies, but not charging a statutory provider like LCC Youth Service for use of rooms within community facilities. The discount policy has been amended to reflect these concerns. It is proposed that when work is undertaken on firming up the criteria and definition for each type of user group, that a caveat be included for all free users, not just those for youth activities, that if a group is found to be making a profit or receiving a high level of income from the activities that they are running, they will be required to make a contribution towards lettings fees. The detailed definitions for each group will be discussed at Community Centres Sub Committees to ensure that members are happy with the terms used.

4.3 It is also suggested that if groups are unable to pay any of the lettings fees outlined, they can request for a subsidy from the Area Committee. It is suggested that a lettings subsidy would be granted in exceptional circumstances only. Area Committee would not be asked to cover the subsidy through its Area Well Being Budget but through the offset of the costs against operational budgets for each facility.

5.0 Implementation process

5.1 Various actions need to be undertaken to ensure the implementation of the revised Lettings and Pricings Policy is efficient and effective as possible. Discussions are already underway with the Lettings Unit with regards to the development of a database which will automatically calculate the level of discount based upon the type of the users group. We are aware that further work needs to be undertaken to make the criteria of the user groups more specific and prescriptive to ensure that the discount policy is not open to abuse by groups who may not receive a discount and have the ability to pay lettings charges.

- 5.2 We also aim to put a poster up in each community centre so groups are fully aware how much they would be expected to pay in rooms within that facility. We will be making the process as transparent as possible and clear for users to understand.
- 5.3 Another action South Area Management Team will undertake is to look at redesigning the current lettings forms. Feedback from community centre sub committees has been that the form is complicated and not easily understood. Agreement has been given by the Letting Unit and Facilities Management for this process to be reviewed as part of the implementation of the revised policy.
- 5.4 We are aware that this will all take time to complete and ideally would want to have all processes in place and active from 1st April 2008 but it may not be possible to do so. We will aim to have as much of this work complete by this date but it is anticipated that the new system will go live for new users of community facilities from Summer 2008 and all other users existing bookings will be transferred over to the revised pricing and lettings policy by October 2008, when lettings granted in April are up for renewal.
- 5.5 If there are any disputes from users over the level of discount groups receive, this will be dealt through the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. It is anticipated that a disputes resolution policy will be developed for the lettings process over the next few months alongside the new lettings database and revised lettings application forms.

6.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

- 6.1 The range of community centre issues detailed in this report fit with agreed Council policy and governance arrangements.

7.0 Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

- 7.1 At this stage there are no new legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

Resources

- 7.2 There could be some budgetary impact in terms of increased or even reduced income for community facilities. Any increased income will be re-invested into the buildings to make them of a higher standard for all users. If the income levels were to fall, efficiency saving measures would have to be explored to see how these costs could be recovered.
- 7.3 In terms of staffing resources, an officer from the Area Management Team will oversee the implementation of the new policy with the Lettings Unit, who will still be responsible for the management of lettings for all directly managed community facilities across the city.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The recommendations for this report are as follows:-

- For the Area Committee to note this report
- Area Committee to endorse the revised Pricing and Lettings Policy to be implemented across the area.
- Any alterations to the policy to be discussed and considered by the Community Centres Sub Committee, who have delegated responsibilities from this committee, and then reported back to future Area Committee for final approval.
- An indicative implementation date of 1st April 2008 to be agreed. If this date cannot be achieved, the policy will be implemented as soon as operationally possible.