



Report of the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods Directorate

South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 15th March 2010

Subject: St Gabriel's Community Centre – 12 Month Review Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ardsley & Robin Hood

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 provides a review of the operation of St Gabriel's Community Centre over the last 12 months. It highlights the work of the Management Committee, Area Management Team and partners in supporting the development of the centre and provides options for the future.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Outer South Area Committee with an overview of activity that has taken place at St Gabriel's Community Centre over the last 12 months since it was decided to extend the review period on the building for a further year.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 In November 2007 work on the Outer South's Community Centre portfolio commenced. The scope of the work was to ensure that the Area Committee had a portfolio of facilities which were well used, in relatively good condition and were financially efficient to operate. From this exercise, a number of buildings were highlighted for review, with St Gabriel's Centre being one of them.

2.2 St Gabriel's was drawn into the review due to a number of factors – the lease between Leeds City Council and the church for the building was up for renewal, the centre was only being used for eight hours per week for Youth Service sessions and the facility cost nearly £23,000 to operate in 2007/08, with only £279 income being generated.

2.3 Following consideration of a report in April 2008, a further report was presented to Outer South Area Committee in March 2009 detailing the situation. In March 2009 the Area Committee decided that the facility could have an extended review period of 12 months due to community interest shown in developing new activities at the facility and the numbers of local community members wanting to establish a Management Committee which would publicise and promote the building as well as working with local people to deliver activities which people would like to participate in.

3.0 St Gabriel's Community Centre - 12 months on

3.1 During the extended review period agreed at Outer South Area Committee in March 2009, work has continued at the centre led by the Management Committee which has seen a range of activities promoted together with a number of new activities developed. As with similar community facilities, activities have been trialed and discontinued if not supported with sufficient numbers. One of the difficulties faced is that the Management Committee has struggled to establish some activities due to the 12 month operating period; they felt a longer period would have benefited them. Significantly, the group has lost the services of its Secretary for nearly a year due to family illness. This has created pressure on some members of the management committee who have had to take on additional tasks.

3.2 Support from Area Management Team

3.2.1 The Area Management Team has continued in its role of providing support and guidance when required. However, since the protocol (Appendix A) was put in place the Management Committee has been more effective in dealing with issues as they have been able to approach officers such as, Corporate Property Management direct. The sections below highlight the progress made, the challenges faced and the next steps.

3.2.2 Use of the facility has been maintained at around 30 hours per week. The majority of activities taking place continue to fall under the category of free lettings, therefore no additional income has been generated but caretaking costs have decreased. This is due to the key holding arrangements with the Management Committee. The timetable below shows the programme of regular activities taking place at the centre. In addition to this regular weekly programme a number of activities take place alongside other activities. These include a book club, community meetings and holiday fun sessions for children.

Day	Activity
Monday	Youth Service 7.00 – 9.00pm
Tuesday	Mums & Tots 9.30 – 11.30am Youth Service 6.00 – 8.00pm Management Committee 8.15 – 10.00pm
Wednesday	B.Bop 9.30 – 10.30am Labour Party (second Wednesday monthly) 6.30 – 1.00pm Councillors Advice Surgery (fourth Wednesday monthly) 5.30 – 7.30pm
Thursday	Mums & Tots 9.30 – 11.30am Youth Service 6.30 – 9.00pm
Friday	Coffee Morning 1.00 – 11.30pm Soup Lunch (Monthly) 11.00 – 2.00pm Bingo Monthly
Saturday	Boxing Session Youth Service
Sunday	

3.2.3 The table below provides an updated financial position in February 2009/10 against the end of year figures for 2008/09. Please note that the figures at February are subject to change due to any charges which may come through on the account by the end of the financial year:

Cost Type	2008/09	2009/10 (at 08/02/10)	Variance
Rates	£1,109	£1,164	£55
Caretaking	£18,963	£6,102	£12,861
Premises (utilities / supplies / services)	£4,302	-£2,256 (due to large credit on electricity bill)	£2,046
Management Fee (LCC Corporate Property Management)	£2,455	£299	£2,156
Insurance	£430	£0	£430
Maintenance costs	Included in premises costs in 08/09	£1,830	£1,830
Income from Lettings	-£294	-£60	£234
Total	£26,965	£7,079	£19,886

The table above still highlights a significant level of savings on the running costs of this facility. It is felt that these costs could possibly be trimmed back even further by a reduction in cleaning hours at the facility. It also needs to be flagged up that the electricity bill credit is a one off, so in future years the costs on this budget heading will increase. However, this is very good progress with costs reduced significantly since the review commenced in 2008.

3.3 St Gabriel's Management Committee

- 3.3.1 The Management Committee was established by local residents in response to the first review. Since then the committee has operated with a membership of at least 10, including local residents, young people and supported by local Councillors. The committee's main focus continues to be around generating activities and promoting the facility for use by local people. The management committee has also taken on responsibility as key holders for the facility, in order to reduce caretaking costs at the centre.
- 3.3.2 While the Management Committee have experienced some set backs in programming activities for reasons expressed earlier, they have organised three major additions to their calendar of events this year with the staging of a Summer Fayre and Christmas Fayre. Also, more than 30 people traveled to Blackpool for the annual lights show.
- 3.3.3 Concerns regarding the building being fit for purpose now centre on the kitchen area which is clearly in need of an upgrade. Consideration of this should take account of how such work might improve the sellability of the centre as a local resource. Some concern has also been expressed about the poor state of the roadside barrier outside the centre. It is intended to highlight these issues at the next Community Centres Sub Group.
- 3.3.4 The management committee is still encouraging more activities at the centre and is keen to explore again the provision of computer courses by providing internet access to the building.

3.4 Views from St Michael's Church

- 3.4.1 As with previous reports the views of St Michael's Church have been sought. St Michael's own the facility and Leeds City Council had a 15 year lease for St Gabriel's with them until it expired in April 2008. Part of the facility is still used for church services and it is understood that the congregation is growing at the church.
- 3.4.2 In addition to St Gabriel's, St Michael's Church has a church hall which they hire out for local community activities. This is very well used and they find it hard to cater for all parties interested in hiring out space at the church hall. Where possible, groups are referred to St Gabriel's to see if the space there would be suitable for use.
- 3.4.3 The trustees at St Michaels also comment that they feel that the youth facilities on offer at St.Gabriel's are first class and feel that the facility should remain open for the local youth to meet and socialise. They also opine that there is a great need for a youth club in the Falls and East Ardsley overall and believe that St.Gabriel's offers the ideal place and facilities.
- 3.4.4 The church trustees remain of the view expressed in March 2009 that if Leeds City Council were to cease their involvement with St Gabriel's Centre, then they would have no option but to sell the building, as they feel they wouldn't have enough time or sufficient funds to commit to the running of the facility or to carry out any repairs to the property.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

- 4.1 There are no direct implications associated with Council Policy and Governance as a result of this report.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 5.1 The legal implications of this report would be associated with the implementation of any lease agreement between Leeds City Council and church trustees. The lease would follow the standard terms and conditions, as agreed by Executive Board in 2005, for a six year full internal and external repairing and insuring lease with a break clause after a three year period.
- 5.2 Depending on whether Area Committee decide to keep St Gabriel's open as a functional community centre or hand the building back to the church, there will be various budgetary resource implications associated with both options i.e. either an efficiency saving to re-invest into other community centres across the Outer South Area Committee portfolio or and a budget pressure which will have to be offset be the creation of efficiency savings at other buildings.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 While there are a number of other community facilities in the area, it is acknowledged that these facilities are usually fully booked. Having successfully addressed previous issues such as having appropriate furniture and equipment in use the management committee has now raised the issue of 'fit for purpose' with regards to the condition of the kitchen. It is proposed to consider this at the next Community Centres Sub Group and report back to the Area Committee. It is also planned to look again at expenditure particularly cleaning costs to see if they can be reduced further. This will also be highlighted at the Community Centres Sub Group.

- 6.2 A further issue is in regard to youth service provision and while sessions continue at the centre it is not clear how the youth bus operational in the Ardsley & Robin Hood impacts on the youth club. It is hoped to explore this further at the next Ardsley Robin Hood Members.
- 6.3 When considering future options the Area Committee is asked to note that the Management Committee are operating near to or at their full capacity and have clearly been under pressure with the Secretary being unavailable due to family illness.
- 6.4 Following consideration of the above information, three options are put forward for Area Committee to decide upon: to close the building, to extend the period of review by a further 12 months or for a longer term lease to be put in place. The lease would be under the standard Leeds City Council terms of six years with a break clause after three years.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 Outer South Area Committee is asked to consider the following recommendations:
- 7.1.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report
- 7.1.2 Members are requested to agree on one of the following options for the future of the building:
- Close St Gabriels and return to the facility back to the church
 - Extend the review period for a further 12 months
 - Leeds City Council to take on a six year lease with the church for the facility

Background Papers

- St Gabriel's 12 month review, March 2009