

Report of the Area Leader – South East Leeds

Report to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Date: Monday 15th October 2012

Subject: Friends of Drighlington Community Library request for Community Rental Subsidy.

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| 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 to enable discussion with interested parties on the potential of Community Asset Transfer.
2. Drighlington Library is based in one room in Drighlington Meeting Hall building, the remainder of the property provides community meeting space. The Friends of Drighlington Community Library have produced a business plan to address the issue of the transfer of the library. They do not want to take responsibility for the whole building and there is no other local group at present that could engage in a community asset transfer. As a result Drighlington Meeting Hall has been transferred to Environment and Neighbourhoods and delegated to Outer South Area Committee.
3. When the sole management and running of Drighlington's library service is handed over to the Friends of Drighlington Community Library, Leeds Library and Information Service will have no further interest in Drighlington Meeting Hall.
4. Friends of Drighlington Community Library is solely run by volunteers and they 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. This report requests the rent and service charge for this space be reduced by £6,860. This proposal to reduce the charges by 100% is supported by Morley North Ward members.
6. A lease arrangement will be put in place with a review mechanism taking effect within the 12 month period which would give time for future arrangements to be considered (a Tenancy at Will would be issued pending the lease agreement being signed).

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that the rent and service charge for Friends of Drighlington Community Library's use of the Library space within the Drighlington Meeting Hall are discounted to nil for a period of 12 months, and that this agreement is backdated to the commencement of the letting. It is suggested that the arrangement be reviewed annually to determine whether the letting agreement should continue and agree the future arrangements, with a view to reducing the level of discount on a sliding scale.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report outlines a request from Friends of Drighlington Community Library to waive the standard community rental agreement (CRA) cost for space within Drighlington Meeting Hall and requests that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods agrees a 100% reduction of £6,860 for the rent and 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. The Friends of Drighlington Community Library have produced a business plan to address the issue of the transfer of the library service from the council to the group.
- 2.3 The 'Friends of' group decided they could not manage the whole building but wanted to deliver an independent library. It was agreed that the building would remain under the control of the council but that the library service would transfer to the 'friends of' group.
- 2.4 Leeds Library and Information Service will terminate their service in Drighlington on 27 October 2012. A handover audit will take place with the Friends of group on 29 / 30 October ready for the group to begin operating independently from November. Council officers are working with the friends group to ease the transition.
- 2.5 Library staff have delivered training to volunteers and allowed volunteers to shadow staff in order to fully equip them with the skills necessary to provide a library service.
- 2.6 Morley North Ward members have been consulted and are supportive of the centre being transferred to Environment and Neighbourhoods and to their portfolio of community centres until such times as a community asset transfer is feasible. Meanwhile, the day to day management of the centre and the community lettings would continue 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 Leeds Libraries have announced that they will keep the Library open until 27 October 2012 after which date they will hand over the Library to the community. At the moment discussions are being held with the Environments and Neighbourhoods about the possible charges for rent and utilities.

- 3.2 Friends of Drighlington Community Library are a local group of volunteers working to keep the Library open. They have over 60 volunteers who open the Library on Tuesdays between 9 am and 7 pm. The "Friends" have a management committee of 9 Trustees who organise the rota, organise events and fundraising.
- 3.3 Friends of Drighlington Community Library have stated the following in support of this request :
- The Friends of Drighlington Community will serve the local community, develop sound literary, cultural and social skills by means of the following:
 - arrange access to a range of books for all ages and subjects.
 - 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.
 - encourage general reading throughout the year not just in term time to improve literacy and participate in the summer reading challenge.
 - Drighlington Infants and Primary School have asked us 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.
 - provide a photocopier for business, club and individual use.
 - continue to encourage young children to participate in art and craft activities during school holiday periods.
 - encourage more people to use the library by providing jigsaws, board games and daily newspapers etc.
 - start a Reading Group where adults can enjoy books together
 - develop Story Times for pre-school children.
 - Continue to develop links with the Morley Literature Festival.
- 3.4 A building survey was carried out on the 14th August 2012, a rental assessment was undertaken and costs given (£5000 per annum for premises + £1,860 for services charges).
- 3.5 Friends of Drighlington Community Library will take occupation of the space on the understanding that there would be a CRA (Community Rental Assessment) undertaken. The group has been made aware that, in future, the use of space and the terms of occupation must be agreed in advance. However, when the assessment was completed it was significantly higher than was anticipated.
- 3.6 It is requested that the rent and service charges for this space are reduced by £6,860 and the organisation charged nil. This proposal to charge a nil fee is supported by Morley North ward members. A lease arrangement would be put in

place with a review mechanism taking effect within the 12 month period which would give time for future arrangements to be considered (a Tenancy at Will would be issued pending the lease agreement being signed).

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, until the building is handed over.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Friends of Drighlington Community Library have expressed concerns that the withdrawal of the library TALIS system prevents them from providing the same services to the community as are currently on offer. It has been confirmed due to security and licensing issues the current library management system and Internet will be removed. The group will be offered alternative solutions and £3,000 by the Library service to set up their own Library Management System.
- 5.2 The waive of £6,860 costs is requested, due to the group being unable to cover rental costs as a group of volunteers.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the rent and service charge for Friends of Drighlington Community Library use of the Library space within the Drighlington Meeting Hall are discounted to nil for a period of 12 months and that this agreement is backdated to the commencement of the letting. It is suggested that the arrangement be reviewed annually to determine whether the letting agreement should continue and agree the future arrangements, with a view to reducing the level of discount on a sliding scale.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 There are no background papers associated with this report.

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.