

NORTH WEST (INNER) AREA COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 14TH NOVEMBER, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor J Akhtar in the Chair

Councillors J Walker, N Walshaw,
C Towler, B Atha, J Illingworth, L Yeadon,
J Bentley, S Bentley and J Chapman

39 Declarations of Disposal Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

40 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: M Hamilton and G Harper.

41 Temporary Closure of the West Park Centre

The Director of City Development and Chief Officer Strategy, Commissioning and Performance submitted a report which provided an update on the West Park Centre following its temporary closure due to health and safety concerns.

The following officers were in attendance:

Christine Addison, Acting Chief Asset Management Officer
Anne Chambers, Head of Corporate Property Management
Neil Charlesworth, Community Asset Officer
Sarah Sinclair, Chief Officer (Strategy, Commissioning and Performance)
Children's Services
Ken Morton, Young People & Skills, Children's Services

Addressing the report, Christine Addison, Acting Chief Asset Management Officer confirmed that the decision to temporarily close the West Park Centre was made following receipt of information which suggested that the existing electrical system was potentially dangerous and a health and safety concern.

The Acting Chief Asset Management Officer reported that in considering the information available to her, she took the view, that in light of the health and safety concerns raised (risk of electrocution), this was an emergency situation and arrangements be made for it's immediate temporary closure.

Councillor Atha sought clarification that the building was being closed on a "temporary basis"

The Acting Chief Asset Management Officer confirmed that the decision taken was the temporary closure of the centre.

In brief summary the following issues were highlighted:

- The issues identified within the last survey report, carried out in 2009, were not acted upon and had led to the current deterioration of the building.
- The need to carry out a full inspection to determine if, in addition to electrics, there were any other health and safety issues that required addressing.
- The importance of ensuring that the existing users are kept informed in relation to the temporary closure and receive regular updates on progress.
- The relocation of existing users and how this could have been achieved in a more eloquent manner.
- In finding alternative venues, existing user groups should not be financially burdened.
- The possibility of bringing part of the building back into use, as an interim measure, as soon as possible.
- Security of the building, particularly due to the openness of the site. It is essential that the centre is protected from further damage and potential vandalism.
- The need to undertake a lessons learnt exercise, review systems and processes i.e. could the Emergency Planning Unit have been involved to ensure the best and most timely support was provided to displaced users.

Councillor Yeadon requested that a list of the user groups and where they had been reallocated to, be supplied to Committee Members.

The Chief Officer (Strategy, Commissioning and Performance) Children's Services confirmed that the requested information would be supplied to Committee Members.

In drawing the discussion to a conclusion the Chair said, it was the view of the Area Committee that the West Park Centre was a valuable community asset and a well used facility. It was important that inspection works were undertaken without delay and any repair works be carried out in order to regain the operational use of the building.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To inform the Executive Board that it is the opinion of the North West (Inner) Area Committee that the West Park Centre is a valuable community asset and should continue to operate as an educational, cultural and community facility.

- (ii) That an update report be prepared for the next meeting of the Area Committee scheduled to take place on Thursday 13th December 2012.