

**Report of the Director of City Development**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Subject: West Park Centre Options Appraisal & Response to West Park Centre Campaign Group Deputation to Full Council**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Weetwood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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**

- At its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2013, Executive Board considered a report about the future of the West Park Centre, following its temporary closure in November 2012 due to safety concerns and the consequent urgent temporary decant of users. At that meeting, Executive Board asked for a further report with an assessment of two options:

Option 1: partial demolition of the West Park Centre with refurbishment and re-opening of the remainder;

Option 2: demolition of the West Park Centre and decant of city-wide services elsewhere with a local community facility developed on the existing site.

- The West Park Centre Campaign Group sent a deputation to Full Council in May which sets out five points in support of the centre re-opening:

- the manner of the temporary closure;
- the numbers and types of people affected has been under-reported;
- the practical design of the building
- West Park serves as a base for city wide and regional work;
- West Park the accidental inclusive arts centre didn't start as a plan, it just grew.

These points are responded to in this report so that, in arriving at a decision, Executive board is aware of the issues raised by the campaign group and the group's strong preference that the centre is re-opened.

3. Further to Executive Board in February, an assessment of these options has been carried out by technical advisors Arup. A summary of this advice is included in the report and the full report is available as a background paper. For Option 1, the assessment provided three levels of expenditure: partial demolition and bare minimum to make the building safe (red option); partial demolition with a minimum recommendable level of refurbishment (amber option); and a level of refurbishment which gives the retained building a reasonable lifespan (green option). The estimated cost of Option 1 ranges between £1.5m at a minimum including fees and contingencies to £4.2m inclusive, with the minimum recommended spend, including fees and contingencies, at £2.5m. The estimated cost of Option 2, demolition and a replacement community centre, is in the region of £1.3m including fees and contingencies.
4. The Executive Member and the Leader of the Council have met a number of the West Park Centre users, and offered to meet any users who wished to take the opportunity to do so in advance of the matter being considered further by Executive Board, in order to understand concerns about the temporary closure and relocations; any practical help that can be offered where there are difficulties; and an opportunity to listen to their aspirations for the future either at West Park, (should it be possible to come up with a solution that enables appropriate and value for money investment in refurbishment works to the centre to allow it to re-open), or elsewhere if an acceptable alternative can be found.
5. Most of the users of the West Park Centre have found satisfactory alternatives, although some have a strong preference to return to the West Park Centre and some others would consider returning if the centre re-opened. A small number of the users are not satisfied with their temporary arrangements, the principal issues being: accessible rehearsal space for orchestral / large choral uses; dedicated storage of equipment for some musical uses in particular YAMSEN, and again specifically YAMSEN and also Leeds Talking Newspaper, the extent to which volunteers are drawn from the area surrounding West Park as a rationale for the preference for continued provision in that area; and then a general feeling that there is an incalculable benefit in a number of arts and musical organisations being located together. It should be noted that the Council's Artforms music teaching service has located temporarily at City of Leeds school with the offices based temporarily at Merrion House and that the view of the Artforms management is that this is a satisfactory alternative whilst long term options, either at West Park or elsewhere, are explored.
6. The report provides an assessment of the two options in terms of the extent to which they are capable of meeting the aspirations of users of the West Park Centre. Consideration is also given to the value for money of either of these options. The report concludes that the high cost of refurbishment of the existing centre coupled with the scope for alternative venues to be found for most users, weighs against this option. Accordingly, the report concludes that a more cost effective approach would be to make available some financial support to facilitate permanent moves and / or to invest in a smaller new build facility if necessary.

## **Recommendations**

- Executive Board is recommended to consider the points raised in the deputation to Full Council from the West Park Centre Campaign Group.
- Executive Board is recommended to consider the assessment of the options outlined in this report and agree that:
  - (i) the option for partial demolition of the West Park Centre and re-opening of the remainder is not progressed;
  - (ii) the West Park Centre is therefore demolished;
  - (iii) the Council makes available up to £0.8m of capital, financed from the receipt from the sale of the West Park Centre site, should it be required, to deliver solutions to meet the needs of the remaining users identified in paragraph 3.25 which may include the provision of a new build community facility or investment in an existing community building in the area;
  - (iv) subject to the outcome of (iii), to progress proposals for the disposal of the West Park site.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider and decide the future of the West Park Centre in the context of the outcome of the assessment of two options, as instructed by Executive Board in February 2013. The report also provides a response to the deputation to Full Council in May from the West Park Centre Campaign Group which was in support of the re-opening of the centre.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 As background, the West Park Centre is a former secondary school which opened in 1951 and closed in 1989. A site plan is attached to the report as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 After being used as a temporary decant for nearby schools, the centre was occupied by the schools music service. Opera North and Northern Ballet were based in the centre for a number of years but moved out in 2009 and 2010 respectively, following significant investment in the Grand Theatre refurbishment and Northern Ballet Theatre, both of which included financial support from the Council.
- 2.3 Since then the building has been used mainly to provide facilities for Artforms, the Council's school music and arts service. Responsibility for property management has been with Children's services, and previously Education Leeds. Artforms had let rooms in the building to a variety of groups, but particularly organisations looking for space for music and dance rehearsals and performances. Six external organisations have been based in the centre, including two groups that deliver services for children and adults with disabilities.
- 2.4 The centre has provided useful facilities for music organisations, including the Leeds Youth Orchestra and the West Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra and has

attracted other arts and music based users. Orchestral user numbers are relatively high, particularly on Friday evenings when around 150 children attend Leeds Youth Orchestra rehearsals. The centre is also valued by the local community who use it as a community centre for activities such as diet groups, dance classes and services from organisations such as the NHS stop smoking service. It is also used by a local church as their place of worship each Sunday, which often attracts over 200 attendees.

2.5 Further to a maintenance inspection being undertaken, the centre was temporarily closed by the Acting Chief Asset Management Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Development and Economy on 2nd November 2012 due to health and safety concerns identified. Principally the issues identified related to the condition of the electrical installation and associated risk of water penetration.

2.6 It is evident that the fabric of the building has deteriorated with age and that there are now significant repairs required to re-open the building. A condition survey undertaken by Education Leeds in 2009 highlighted £2.2m of backlog maintenance works that were required to maintain the fabric of the building and its services in an appropriate state of repair. The information from this survey was independently reviewed by Arup prior to the February Executive Board report.

2.7 On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2013 Executive Board considered a report setting out five options for the future of the West Park Centre. Executive Board resolved:

“(a) That the contents of the submitted report be noted.

(b) That approval be given for officers to further develop options 2 and 5, as outlined above and as detailed within the submitted report, in consultation with potential users, with a report being submitted to Executive Board in April 2013 with detailed proposals and costs.

(c) That the proposal to dispose of part of the West Park site that is implicit to the delivery of either options 5 or 2, as outlined above and as detailed within the submitted report, be noted.

(d) That it be approved that the boundary between land to the immediate East of the West Park Centre and the site for the Queen Elizabeth II Fields In Trust scheme follows the existing fence line and site boundary, as detailed within Appendix 1 to the submitted report.”

2.8 The approved options for further consideration were:

Option 1: partial demolition of the West Park Centre and reopening of the remainder;

Option 2: demolition of the West Park Centre and decant city-wide services elsewhere with a local community facility developed on the existing site.

2.9 This report provides an assessment of these two options, including indicative costs, and makes recommendations about the future of the West Park Centre.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The sudden temporary closure of the West Park Centre displaced a number of organisations and caused immediate disruption and inconvenience to users. All users have been temporarily relocated to alternative venues, mainly in the north west of Leeds. The offices of Artforms, the Council's music service, have been relocated to Merrion House with music service delivery taking place at City of Leeds School. The management of Artforms has indicated that they are satisfied with the facilities available at City of Leeds School and are currently negotiating to extend their agreement to use facilities there. It is acknowledged that the loss of the late opening hours and dedicated storage space at the West Park Centre has had an impact on the Youth Service, and on YAMSEN, which provides services for people with special educational needs.
- 3.2 Most of the city wide services that made use of the West Park Centre have managed to temporarily relocate elsewhere, although it is recognised that temporary solutions have involved compromise for most organisations and not all would be considered acceptable by the organisations if it was necessary to continue on a permanent basis. Locations include St Chad's Church and Parish Centre, West Park United Reformed Church and various schools. Some users have struggled to find suitable alternative venues that they are satisfied with. This is particularly true of YAMSEN, which has indicated that its volunteers are mainly from the West Park area.
- 3.3 Following February's Executive Board, the Executive Member for Development and the Economy invited all users to meet him to discuss any concerns and as a result he met a number of users. A number of members from the West Park Centre Campaign Group have also taken the opportunity to have a meeting with the Leader of the Council. In addition, all groups have been contacted by officers to gain an understanding of their current situation and any concerns. A summary of issues raised is attached as Appendix 2.

#### **West Park Centre Campaign Group Deputation to full Council**

- 3.4 The West Park Campaign Group made a deputation to Full Council on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013. In general terms the deputation (the text of which is attached at Appendix 3) raised a series of concerns about the West Park Centre. Specifically, the deputation made five points:
- *The manner of the temporary closure;*  
The Council acknowledges the urgent closure was unfortunate and recognises the impact it had on a range of users of the centre. However, it remains the case that given the serious nature of the condition issue identified and brought to the attention of the Acting Chief Asset Management Officer, the Council had no alternative but to immediately close the building given the health and safety risks that were evident.
  - *The numbers and types of people affected has been under-reported;*  
The Council does acknowledge the West Park Centre attracted a wide range of uses and the nature of the closure will have caused disruption to a wide variety of users.

- *The practical design of the building;*  
The Council agrees that the spatial layout of the West Park building does give good acoustic isolation for its various users. However, the site layout is otherwise inefficient and high in energy costs.
- *West Park serves as a base for city wide and regional work;*  
This point is acknowledged, and was acknowledged in the February Executive Board report.
- *West Park the accidental inclusive arts centre didn't start as a plan, it just grew.*  
It is true that many musical and performing arts organisations were attracted to the West Park Centre and that there was a synergy between these organisations. The Council would agree that this evolved over time and wasn't the result of a strategic plan to develop the centre in this way.

3.5 The deputation has raised issues which Executive Board Members should consider when making a decision about the future of the West Park Centre. Use of the West Park Centre has continued to develop over the years it has been used as a venue. There are many reasons for its popularity, including the space for rehearsals, events and storage; the facilities that were available such as the large hall and its acoustic properties; the availability of free parking and location near the ring road; and it is not expensive for users given the subsidised charges. Most of the centre's users have found satisfactory alternative space or they are making reasonable adjustments to use. However, there are some users that have had to make temporary compromises that they do not find acceptable and who need assistance to manage in their current locations whatever the outcome of the Executive Board decision. These groups also have a strong preference to return to the West Park Centre. The campaign group's deputation uses a figure of £170,000 for the works necessary to re-open the centre, although this is significantly less than the estimates provided by the technical consultants.

### **Options Appraisal**

3.6 In considering the future of the building, account will need to be taken of the level of capital investment required, and whether this provides a value for money solution in the context of potential for permanent alternative locations. The February 2013 report indicated that the capital works for either option would need to be funded from the capital receipt from disposal of part of the West Park site, most likely for housing. There is also a possibility the site may be required for a free school, although any such transaction can be at open market value. There is a further possibility that part of the site may be identified as a possibility to meet primary basic need provision, in which case an exercise will be required to see whether this is physically possible under option 1 or 2, and what impact this might have on any capital receipt value that would otherwise be used to re-provide West Park Centre facilities.

3.7 Of the options considered by Executive Board in February 2013, it was agreed that two should be considered in more detail and reported back to Executive Board in April 2013.

- partial demolition of the West Park Centre and re-opening of the remainder;
- demolition of the West Park Centre and the decant of city wide services elsewhere with a local community facility developed on the existing site.

3.8 The technical consultancy Arup, using construction consultants Davis Langdon, has provided a technical assessment of the feasibility of these options. This assessment is available as a background document.

**Option 1: partial demolition of the West Park Centre and reopening of the remainder**

3.9 The Arup report considers the option for partial demolition and re-opening of the remainder of the building. The estimated cost of the demolition, making good, and a reasonable refurbishment of the remaining structure, which would include the main hall, is estimated by Arup at £3.5m for construction with a total estimate, to include fees and contingencies at £4.2m. This is referred to as the Green category works in Arup's report.

3.10 Partial demolition would see the retention of the southern sections (plan attached at Appendix 4) including existing office block as well as the main hall and section of the building leading down to the rehearsal room. This would allow the remainder of the site to be disposed of for a capital receipt, estimated in the region of £2m (gross) for housing use, which could be used to cover the cost of improvements to the remaining centre.

3.11 At the February Executive Board a figure of £1.7m was reported as the minimum intervention to re-open the building. Members were advised that this figure represented work that would fix identified problems with the building, but would not be a full refurbishment. This was based on a review of the 2009 condition survey with little further inspection. Further inspection has shown that the condition has deteriorated further and the extent of works necessary is now better understood. The previous figure did not include works such as new roofing, windows, demolition or the costs of basic refurbishment. In addition are the demolition and making good costs which would be necessary to assemble a site which could result in a capital receipt to support the refurbishment costs.

3.12 This cost could potentially be reduced should it be considered that a number of items would not need to be wholly replaced e.g. windows and heating systems. However, under any circumstances it is likely that the whole of the electrical system and the boiler systems would need to be replaced as well as a significant level of roof repairs. The costs of this bare minimum approach would be in excess of £1.5m. However, it should be noted that Arup advises against this approach as it still requires significant expenditure but does not provide a retained building which is of reasonable quality, environmental efficiency and has a reasonable lifespan. This is the Red category works in Arup's report.

3.13 A middle ground approach has also been considered that would address the issues to bring elements of the building into serviceable repair and give the building some lifespan, although this would be far from a refurbishment to modern standards. The estimated costs of this approach are just under £2.6m inclusive of fees and contingencies. Whilst this option would provide some insurance against major urgent repairs, the building would still fall short in quality and environmental terms and would still require some reactive maintenance, this option is the minimum that Arup would recommend and is the Amber category works in Arup's report. At £2.6m, this option cannot break even financially as it is over and above the potential land value.

3.14 The partial demolition and refurbishment option has a number of advantages:

- the large hall and layout with storage space can be retained, satisfying previous users who wish to return to the building;
- the refurbishment option allows synergy between like-minded services and users to be maintained and be developed;
- a £4.2m investment would see the building refurbished to a level that would address all major issues and give the building a reasonable lifespan;
- the bare minimum expenditure, in the region of £1.5m, could balance financially with the land value;
- the centre could re-open after a relatively short period following partial demolition and repair;
- non-staffing running costs, which are currently high, should reduce, if investment includes more energy efficient design and reduced space.

3.15 However, there are issues that need to be taken into account in considering this option:

- expenditure at the level of the bare minimum cost is not recommended by the consultants on the basis that it would be unwise to spend £1.5m and still have no guarantee that the building has a reasonable lifespan, or that further expenditure would not be necessary within a relatively short period of time;
- the full refurbishment option at £4.5m significantly outstrips any potential receipt, leaving a budget gap at over £2m. The Amber option is also more costly than the potential receipt value;
- the benefits that this option could bring in terms of continuity and synergy for some of the building's users have to be seen in the context of a significant cost that may not be considered either value for money or best use of Council resources. There may be more cost effective ways of achieving long terms solutions for the building's users should be



considered. It is acknowledged that this will involve compromise about location, space, activity days or timing;

- although reducing the size of the building will assist in reducing running costs, it will still be relatively costly to run;
- there is as a risk that, after spending sums between £1.5m - £4.6m, the refurbished centre would be underused given most users have been able to relocate satisfactorily.

### **Option 2: demolition of the West Park Centre and decant city-wide services elsewhere with a local community facility developed on the existing site**

- 3.16 Demolition of the existing West Park Centre building, with city-wide services moved to alternative premises and a new community facility for local groups has been considered. It is mainly the city wide uses which require the acoustic properties and larger rooms for musical rehearsals and performances and therefore if these uses can be accommodated elsewhere, there may be scope to provide for other users through a smaller replacement community centre at this location.
- 3.17 This option would incur estimated total capital cost in the region of £1.3m, including costs for demolition, making good the site, fees and inflation.
- 3.18 This option would need a venue for the large music use to continue. Further work would be required to firm up a proposal to ensure that a suitable venue is available for these uses. The Council would need to consider providing financial support to cover the costs associated with any proposed permanent relocation.
- 3.19 No one venue has been identified with sufficient capacity to accommodate all of the large music users. There are a number of separate venues across the city that can accommodate them individually. These alternative venues include Grammar School at Leeds, Pudsey Civic Hall and St Chad's Church and Parish Centre. There would have to be some degree of compromise from the groups in terms of preferred location, availability of storage or preferred rehearsal evening. None of these venues offers more than one hall to provide the simultaneous rehearsals that were valued by these groups.
- 3.20 Following demolition of the West Park Centre, a new c300m<sup>2</sup> community facility could be built in the north west corner of the site, in the area highlighted in the plan at Appendix 4. The remainder of the site would be disposed of for development. Further consultation would be needed with local community users to develop a detailed specification, but a square metre rate has been applied for a centre of 300m<sup>2</sup> for the purposes of this report.
- 3.21 Following further discussions with users about their alternative venues and the West Park Centre Campaign Group it has become clear that one aspect of the West Park Centre's location that is valued by them is its proximity to the ring road, parking availability and public transport links for users coming from across the city and beyond. From analysis of use, it is also clear that it has been possible to

relocate most immediate local users of the centre and that this sort of use (e.g. exercise classes) is relatively limited.

3.22 This option has some advantages:

- local users would have access to a modern, purpose built facility that meets their needs;
- the anticipated capital receipt from disposal of the remainder of the site would be more than sufficient to cover the costs of a new build community facility and re-providing city wide services elsewhere.

3.23 However, some issues would need to be examined in more detail should Executive Board wish to move forward with this option:

- more detailed work to ensure that the needs of existing users who are able to relocate are being met sufficiently. Specifically more work would be required to make satisfactory arrangements for the large hall users, and these users may need to be prepared to consider some changes or compromise to their historic arrangements;
- this option would not promote the synergy between like-minded music and arts organisations, some of which are Council services, that has evolved over a period in excess of twenty years and that has been indicated by some users as a key factor in their desire to remain at the West Park Centre.

3.24 Should the Council choose this option, further work will be done to ensure that the investment in a new build facility (build cost in the region of £0.8m, including fees, contingency and risk) is a better solution than any investment required to make existing local facilities suitable. Specifically, YAMSEN has indicated a need for a local facility and a need for storage as its main outstanding practical requirements and that these are lacking in its temporary accommodation. Likewise, the Leeds Talking Newspaper has some specific equipment requirements that would need to be addressed.

### **Alternative Locations for Users**

3.25 Whilst the option exists to build a new community facility on the West Park site, it should be noted that there are local alternatives already in existence. Becket Park Community Centre is approximately 300 yards from the West Park Centre site and can accommodate a variety of community uses. There is capacity for increased lettings at this centre. West Park United Reformed Church is opposite the West Park Centre and has a hall suitable for community activities and is currently used by some of the groups displaced from West Park Centre. St Chad's Parish Centre and the church itself in Headingley are valuable community resources, and again have accommodated some of the West Park Centre's former users. Iveson Primary School is less than a mile from the West Park Centre, has a good size hall and is available for community use. There is also Lawnswood School which although has proven difficult to book in the past, can accommodate community use and is being used for the West Park Residents Association's AGM.

3.26 Even the bare minimum approach under Option 1 would see the building remaining closed for at least a year, with the full refurbishment option taking even longer. Those users that are finding it difficult to adjust to the temporary accommodation they are currently using will need to continue in alternative venues for up to two years, or even permanently should a decision be taken that will result in the West Park Centre being demolished. The table at Appendix 2 sets out the situation with all users and the details of those who have found it most difficult to adjust follows:

- Leeds Symphony Orchestra, Leeds Festival Chorus and West Riding Opera all currently use facilities at St Chad's Church and parish centre in Headingley. The church gets very cold in the winter and has no dedicated storage space. The church has provided some space within the church itself for the orchestra's timpani drums, which are the largest instruments. Other items have to be transported to each rehearsal. The church is receptive to accommodating these groups on a long term basis, although this may require the Council to provide some financial support to make the facilities more comfortable in the winter.
- Leeds Talking Newspaper has not so far found suitable local alternative accommodation for its Thursday productions. The Council has considered a number of options, in particular the offer of space at the Beckett Park Community Centre. However, Leeds Talking Newspaper's preference is to return to a re-opened West Park Centre. It is the officers' view that the facilities at Beckett Park Community Centre could be made suitable, and this option, or investment in an alternative solution, would need to be considered if Executive Board approves the recommendation in this report not to progress with re-opening the West Park Centre.
- YAMSEN is currently carrying out Friday morning events from West Park United Reformed Church and smaller activities from other venues. Volunteers have instruments and other equipment stored at home. The church is much smaller than the West Park Centre's hall and has limited parking. In terms of storage, negotiations are taking place with City of Leeds School for YAMSEN and Artforms to both store their instruments there. YAMSEN's preference is to return to a re-opened West Park Centre.

3.27 It is clear that the current alternative solutions for the above organisations are not considered satisfactory if they were necessary over the long term. However, it is possible that with some investment, either in a new smaller facility or in existing facilities in the area, that satisfactory solutions could be found for these groups. On this basis, should Executive Board support the recommendation at 6.2 (ii), a sum of £0.8m could be ring-fenced from any capital receipt to enable required investment.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Following the request from Executive Board in July 2011, public consultation took place towards the end of 2011. This was in the form of an open evening held at

the West Park Centre, a circulated questionnaire and one to one meetings with the centre's main users. The results of this consultation were published as an appendix to February's Executive Board report.

- 4.1.2 The Weetwood Ward Members have been consulted about the future of West Park. They have expressed the view that the whole centre should be re-opened at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.1.3 In addition, given the proximity of West Park to Kirkstall Ward, the Kirkstall Ward Members have also been consulted. They have also expressed the view that the whole centre should be re-opened at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.1.4 The Executive Member for Development and the Economy has met with a number of users since February's Executive Board to better understand their situation and the Leader of the Council has met with a number of members of the West Park Campaign Group. Officers have met with all user organisations to assist with their temporary relocation and to gauge their views about the future.
- 4.1.5 An e-petition ran for the last two weeks in April. This e-petition sought that the Council "make the electrics of the West Park Centre safe and re-open the centre immediately". The e-petition was signed by 522 people. The contents of this report set out the level of works that are needed at the centre and why, given the scale of those works, it is impossible to re-open the centre immediately.

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

- 4.2.1 An equality, diversity, cohesion and integration assessment has been produced and is attached at Appendix 6. This assessment has found that the recommended options could have a detrimental impact on the West Park community, particularly those users with special needs. This impact could be mitigated by building a new community facility on site.

## **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The future of West Park needs to be considered in the context of the Sustainable Economy and Culture City Priority Plan outcome "All people of Leeds will enjoy the benefits of a vibrant, culturally rich city". This report seeks to balance local need with the ability of the Council to facilitate services for the benefit of the whole of Leeds.
- 4.3.2 Given the high numbers of young people that use the West Park Centre, any decision must consider the aims of Child Friendly Leeds. Most of the young people that attended West Park Centre did so to attend Artforms service provision which is ongoing at City of Leeds School, but consideration must also be given to young people that attended some of the special needs services that were delivered on site. This will be an important consideration when looking at alternative permanent locations for users.
- 4.3.3 There is a possibility that part of the site may be required for a new school in the future. This possibility will need to be considered positively alongside the decision

of Executive Board about the future of the West Park Centre. Further work would be necessary to test how a school could fit on any available land at this site.

#### 4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 Capital costs and valuations have been produced for both options. The West Park site has development potential for housing and has been valued on that basis. The plan at Appendix 5 shows the proposed boundary for disposal if a new community centre is built on site, which is the area outside the Jubilee Playing Fields area.

4.4.2 The immediate capital implications from the options set out in this report are:

	Option 1			Option 2
	Full Refurbishment (Green Scheme)	Moderate Refurbishment (Amber Scheme)	Minimum Health & Safety Works (Red Scheme)	Full demolition and new 300m2 community facility built
Arup estimated construction cost at Q1 2013	£3,407,931	£2,060,907	£1,204,418	£1,038,972
Tender inflation from Q1 2013 to Q1 2014 = 2.2%	£74,974	£45,340	£26,497	£22,857
Sub total for construction work	£3,482,905	£2,106,247	£1,230,915	£1,061,829
Professional fees = 15%	£522,436	£315,937	£184,637	£159,274
Surveys, investigations, permissions	£35,000	£35,000	£35,000	£25,000
Sub total construction and fees	£4,040,341	£2,457,184	£1,450,552	£1,249,104
Project contingency = 5%	£202,017	£122,859	£72,528	£62,305
<b>Estimated total cost</b>	<b>£4,242,358</b>	<b>£2,580,043*</b>	<b>£1,523,080*</b>	<b>£1,308,409</b>
Potential capital receipt (mid point from estimated range £2,000,000-£2,400,000)	£2,200,000	£2,200,000	£2,200,000	£2,900,000
<b>Net cost to Council</b>	<b>£2,042,358</b>	<b>£380,043</b>	<b>-£676,920</b>	<b>-£1,591,591</b>

\* does not include the significant costs of maintenance work that would be required within a relatively short period of time

The total estimated capital receipt from disposal of the West Park site is estimated in the region of £2.9m gross, leaving a surplus, some of which could be used to provide an alternative base for city wide users, or the revenue equivalent to cover rental costs.

- 4.4.3 Any capital receipt from disposal of the site would need to be ring-fenced to reinvest in the preferred option.
- 4.4.4 The demolition works and any refurbishment of the existing West Park Centre or new community centre construction would need to be carried out prior to disposal, so would have to initially be funded from the general capital programme until the income from disposal could be realised.

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

- 4.5.1 It has been suggested that there are restrictive covenants on the site. This was looked into in 1994 when the Council received an opinion from counsel into the enforceability of restrictions contained in the 1947 conveyance. This opinion stated that the restrictions are statements of intent not contractual obligations or covenants and they could not be binding against the Council or a purchaser from the Council.
- 4.5.2 There are no implications for Access to Information.
- 4.5.3 The report is subject to Call In.

#### 4.6 **Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 The costs for Option 1 works to be carried out to the recommended level exceed the anticipated capital receipt by over £2m, causing an unbudgeted financial pressure.
- 4.6.2 To carry out the bare minimum works necessary to reopen the building carries the risk that over and above the £1.5m investment, the building will still require considerable building and repair works in the near future. The overall cost would be higher if works are carried out in stages. Investing such a significant sum in a building that would still be poor quality is not considered a wise use of public money. Additionally, there could be no guarantee that the building's condition would not lead to future closures.
- 4.6.3 The middle ground approach would see all the absolutely essential works carried out and would also address deficiencies within the building, such as repairs to the heating distribution and window replacement. The total cost of this option would be almost £2.6m, but would leave issues such as recommended works to the roof and upgrade of the heating system to modern efficiency standards undone. It is difficult to justify spending such a significant amount of money on a building that still required further roofing works, upgrade of its heating system, improved internal finishes and some asbestos removal.

- 4.6.4 Option 2 carries the risk that the proposed specification for the replacement community facility will not meet the local community's needs and that costs may increase. Detailed consultation needs to take place with the local community to ensure their needs are met. If there is a surplus from the West Park site disposal, this might be needed to address any increase in costs.
- 4.6.5 There is a further risk that the replacement centre is under-used. An analysis of previous West Park Centre users and their current situation (attached at Appendix 2) shows only a limited number that are dissatisfied and that have a local connection. The value for money of spending £0.8m on a replacement community facility needs careful consideration in this context.
- 4.6.6 Finding alternative venues that are suitable for all city wide users has proved a challenge. There is a risk that no single venue will be found and groups have to hire various facilities throughout the city. One of the difficulties groups have had is finding suitable venues at costs similar to those charged previously at West Park. This risk could be mitigated by considering providing financial support towards occupancy costs.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The West Park Centre has been a popular local and city wide resource, particular for arts and music organisations since the buildings ceased to be used as a school. The condition of the centre has deteriorated over time and the building was closed urgently and temporarily by the Acting Chief Asset Management Officer for safety reasons in Autumn 2012; a matter which has been referred to Scrutiny. Users have been relocated temporarily to alternative locations either locally or elsewhere in the city, although not all of these users would be happy if these temporary arrangements were to become permanent should that be necessary.
- 5.2 Some of the centre's users are unhappy and have formed the West Park Centre Campaign Group. The group made a deputation to Full Council in May and made five points in support of the centre re-opening. These points should be considered as part of the decision about the centre's future.
- 5.3 A number of options were brought to Executive Board in February 2013. Executive Board asked for two to be worked up in more detail and brought back to this meeting.

### **Option 1**

- 5.4 In conclusion about Option 1, carrying out the recommended level of works to give the building a meaningful lifespan (the Green option in the Arup report) is prohibitively expensive at £4.2m and would leave an unbudgeted shortfall of over £2m. Therefore this option is not recommended, especially in the context of the Council's overall budget pressures.
- 5.5 Efforts have been made to establish a basic minimum version of this option whereby the partial demolition takes place and the remaining building is made safe. The consultants estimate that this could cost £1.5m (including fees /

contingencies). This is the Red option in the Arup report. However, the consultants would not recommend this approach as the building would still require significant backlog maintenance and further considerable works would be needed to the building in the near future. This approach would see a significant investment in a building that would still not be fit for purpose.

- 5.6 A middle ground approach (Amber option in the Arup report) has also been considered that would see the building made safe and repairs carried out to parts of the roof and the heating system. However, these repairs would result in a building that was still far from up to modern standards and would still have ongoing maintenance requirements.. The cost of these works would be quite high, c£2.6m. Officers do not recommend this option as it does not provide value for money.
- 5.7 A small number of users have found it difficult to find alternative venues. The main cultural users have been able to find temporary alternative accommodation, albeit not necessarily all ideal for the longer term. However, the use by very local groups to West Park is limited. Some groups draw their volunteers from the local area because they are based there and have some attendees who are used to not travelling for their services. There may be alternative solutions for those users requiring the large spaces that the West Park Centre has. This might include, for example, consideration of other large halls in the City for the orchestral and choral uses. There are other facilities in the local area that provide the hall spaces required such as Beckett Park Community Centre, West Park United Reformed Church, Iveson Primary School and St Chad's Church and Parish Centre.
- 5.8 Whilst the aspirations of some of the users of West Park would be met by investing the minimum level (estimate is £1.5m) to re-open the building, this approach is not recommended by officers. The reason for this is that expenditure at this level is still quite high but would not be a long term solution, therefore providing poor value for money and the potential that further works will be required in future, at least to the level of the minimum level that Arup would recommend (£2.6m).

## **Option 2**

- 5.9 Option 2 provides a more affordable cost solution within the estimated level of receipt from disposal of part of the site. Under this option, it could be that £0.8m (the main new build element of the cost) is used to provide a new facility for the smaller group uses or it could be used to invest in facilities at another site in the area so the balance of needs can be provided locally. Should this option be agreed, further work would be done to ensure that the potential replacement is meeting a need that cannot be met in any other way. In this scenario, some support would still need to be given to the larger hall users to enable them to find an acceptable long term solution.
- 5.10 A decision to build a new community facility, albeit a replacement one, or to invest significant sums in refurbishment of the West Park Centre should be considered in the context of recent years' very challenging budget circumstances for the Council. Specifically the recent asset review's focus is to reduce Council assets and ensure that retained assets are well maintained and fit for purpose.



- 5.11 The West Park Centre was closed urgently on a temporary basis for health and safety reasons. However, faced with potentially significant costs to put right in difficult circumstances, it has been necessary to consider whether there are alternative ways to provide for the existing users without incurring such significant capital expenditure at this time.
- 5.12 In conclusion, officers do not recommend Option 1 as it cannot be demonstrated as a wise use of Council resources, in current circumstances, as spending Council money wisely and does not balance financially if delivered to the full extent identified by Arup at £4.5m. If Executive Board is minded to agree with this conclusion, it is recommended that further work is done to identify an acceptable alternative venue for users, including considering either providing a smaller new build community facility, financial assistance to resolve problems with current venues or scope to use and adopt alternative venues to suit the needs of those users where there are still outstanding difficulties as a result of the closure.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Executive Board is recommended to consider the points raised in the deputation to Full Council from the West Park Centre Campaign Group.
- 6.2 Executive Board is recommended to consider the assessment of the options outlined in this report and agree that:
- (i) the option for partial demolition of the West Park Centre and re-opening of the remainder is not progressed;
  - (ii) the West Park Centre is therefore demolished;
  - (iii) the Council makes available up to £0.8m of capital, financed from the receipt from the sale of the West Park Centre site, should it be required, to deliver solutions to meet the needs of the remaining users identified in paragraph 3.25 which may include the provision of a new build community facility or investment in an existing community building in the area:
  - (iv) subject to the outcome of (iii), to progress proposals for the disposal of the West Park site.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 Arup report April 2013

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<sup>1</sup> 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.