



Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services)

Date: 30th September 2013

Subject: Community Centre Charges

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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. Board Members will recall that in April of this year a report was received and considered which provided information on current charging arrangements for the use of the Council Community Centre portfolio that is delegated to Area Committees and overseen on their behalf by Environment and Neighbourhoods directorate. This information was requested by Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 18 March 2013.
2. The report highlighted the complexity of the current arrangements and the wide range of factors that influence the levels of charges/subsidies awarded. This affects the extent to which it is possible to maintain transparency and consistency and demonstrate value for money and which can cause confusion and frustration to existing and prospective users as well as administrative difficulties for officers.
3. In brief summary, the main areas of discussion in April were:
 - The complicated and bureaucratic arrangements in place for the use of community centres.
 - The apparent lack of transparency in how charging subsidies were provided to some organisations.
 - The numerous charging rates and their complicated application.
 - The involvement of numerous Directorates in the process and the consequential lack of accountability and plethora of bureaucratic recharges.
 - The need for continued involvement of Area Committees in the process.

4. The Board resolved the following:
 - (i) To agree the guiding principles outlined in the report in terms of providing a basis for future policy and procedures and as a means of bringing consistency and transparency to the charging arrangements.
 - (ii) To request that officers come back to a future meeting of Scrutiny to report on progress made to address the identified failings in the current process.
5. Councillor Peter Gruen, the responsible Executive Board Member, has been invited to today's meeting to provide Board Members with a verbal update

Recommendations

6. Members are asked to note the update provided and offer any appropriate comment.

Background documents¹

None used

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.