

Report of: The Director of City Development

Report to: Outer South Community Committee, (Ardsley & Robin Hood, Morley North, Morley South and Rothwell)

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Date: Monday 20th October 2014

For decision

Morley Heritage Centre

Purpose of report

1. To consider a response to the deputation from Morley Heritage Centre (MHC) presented to full Council on 26th March 2014 and considered at Executive Board on 16th July 2014.

Main issues

2. The collections of MHC have been gathered by Mr Peter Aldred over the last 50 years and consist of newspaper cuttings, photographs, documents and objects relating to the history of Morley and the surrounding area. As the collection has grown, Mr Aldred has become concerned over its long term future and use and a small group of volunteers, under the name MHC has formed to assist Mr Aldred.
3. Since July 2013 MHC has been open to the public in three premises, consecutively, on a pop-up basis. Premises have been identified and supported financially by East St Arts. The nature of the property arrangements with East St Arts means that MHC is vulnerable to termination of its lease at short notice (two weeks), if a commercial tenant is identified for the premises. This has resulted in MHC relocating twice since January 2014. The group is now seeking a more secure home, which provides good public access and ability to provide space for educational visits and other community activities, for the collection.
4. At full council meeting on 26th March 2014 Members referred a deputation from MHC to Executive Board for further consideration of the issues raised. The deputation, attached at **Appendix 1** requested the Council “to consider allowing the MHC a permanent location within the town centre and within current council owned property”. The MHC aspirations are supported by the local MP.

5. At present the Council does not have any appropriate vacant premises in Morley town centre. The asset review of Council property in the Morley area, including use of the Town Hall, is expected by the end of the financial year. As part of this, should suitable accommodation become available, the group will be advised.

Options

6. Outer South Community Committee is asked to:
 - a. Note the deputation to Council;
 - b. Note the request of Executive Board for the Outer South Community Committee to consider whether there is local support to fund this initiative should Leeds City Council, or other accommodation, be identified.

Corporate considerations

Consultation and engagement

7. Ward members for Morley North and South have been consulted and have indicated that if suitable premises could be provided they would “look favourably on a partnership funding approach where Leeds City Council, Community Committee and MHC itself agreed to a joint funding arrangement to make sure the centre is sustainable in the long run”. Other comments included that it should be noted that council owned premises should not be the only option considered and also a preference from one member for use of the upper floor of the library for this purpose.
8. The Town Clerk, Morley Town Council advises that MHC has not yet made any formal approach to the Town Council for assistance.

Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

9. As part of the Executive Board consideration an Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening form was completed which concluded that the issue had the potential to create a perception that one group is being treated more favourably than others. The issue may also impact on the location of council services in the Morley area.

Council policies and city priorities

10. The request of the deputation is consistent with the best council plan and, in particular, the best council objective of ensuring high quality public services through the most efficient use of our buildings and through supporting community aspirations.

Resources and value for money

11. Whilst there is no immediate financial consequence on this report, should premises become available and approved for use by MHC, there will be an on-going associated rental costs of any premises.

Legal implications, access to information and call in

12. If the collections of MHC were to be housed in council premises the legal status and constitution of MHC as an organization would need to be established. The council would provide advice and assistance in this process.
13. If council premises is identified the council will need to understand the legal ownership status of the collections held by MHC. Should MHC, for any reason cease to exist as an organisation, the council may find itself liable for legal responsibilities with regard to the collection.

Risk management

14. MHC as an organisation currently has no legal status although they intend to apply for charitable status subject to receiving funding from HLF, East St Arts and the Council. If the council provides premises and MHC ceases to exist as a group, the council would be left with responsibility for material, the legal ownership of which is currently unclear.
15. MHC currently has no revenue to support the acquisition or rental of premises. There is a risk they would be unable to fund any additional costs associated with the use of council premises. This risk would need to be addressed through the Outer South Community Committee and any potential partnership arrangement.

Conclusion

16. The Council has no suitable vacant space which would meet the requirements of MHC for publicly accessible displays. However, it is possible that the current asset review could identify suitable premises either owned by the Council or others. If premises are identified for MHC, it will need to be supported and funded from local sources hence the referral to Outer South Community Committee which may seek to identify a suitable partnership arrangement.

Recommendations

17. Outer South Community Committee is asked to:
 - a. Note the deputation to Council;
 - b. Note the request of Executive Board for the Outer South Community Committee to consider whether there is local support to fund this initiative should Leeds City Council, or other accommodation, be identified.

Background information

None.

My Lord Mayor and Fellow Councillors, my name is Pete Trigwell,

I am the Chair of the Morley Heritage Centre, I would like to introduce you to Mr Bob Beach who is the secretary of the heritage group and Mr Peter Aldred who is the president and founder of the Morley heritage centre. Many thanks for this opportunity to speak to you today, and I would ask that Leeds City Council listen to the concerns that will be raised and give further consideration to them.

We are at present a small group of volunteers, who as you will probably be able to deduce from our title all committed to displaying and preserving a written, photographic and oral display of the heritage of Morley and the surrounding areas.

I would now like to tell you a little about how the heritage centre came about, the collection that we have at present on display in a pop up shop on Queen Street in Morley, is the brainchild of Mr Peter Aldred. Peter is a well known local man who has collected everything and anything to do with the history and heritage of Morley for the last 50 years.

Peter, I know if he was speaking to you today, would be the first to say that he is not getting any younger and his wish is that his collection be preserved for the enjoyment of not only the people of Morley, but for the people of all the surrounding areas.

Our vision as a group is that not only do we display this collection, but that we also expand it, we aim to do this by:

1. being committed to further local heritage research in Morley and its surrounding areas,
2. By passing on the experiences of the group and its friends to the younger members of our community
3. By working alongside all local schools to foster an understanding of what local heritage means to them and their families.
4. by helping people within the community that may be isolated, find a place that they can visit to pass on their own life experiences, to different age groups.

As we do not at the moment have any funding, we are for the present a nomadic group. By this I mean that we have no permanent premises for us to display and carry forward the aims of the group, which have been outlined already. We are currently supported by East Street Arts and it is they that find us the temporary accommodation that we are using at the moment. However these premises are always subject to availability and as the local economy seems to be recovering we expect in the near future we will have nowhere to house this wonderful collection. We are in the process of seeking funding from the Lottery Heritage Fund, and are awaiting a reply.

As a group of committed enthusiasts we feel that the centre can play an important part in the continuing development of Morley. It has become very apparent in the short time that we have been open to the public that it is a well supported project. The footfall we are now seeing has steadily increased into hundreds of visitors per week, with over 347 positive and 0 negative comments having been placed in our visitors book, which has only been in operation since mid- January.

It would seem that the people of Morley are very much of the opinion that they want somewhere where they can go and see and talk about their history and heritage, this is only made possible by having such a display within the town centre of Morley, having it in such a position makes the whole project more accessible to local groups, businesses and schools, it also becomes a place where local people can relate and record their experiences of local events and heritage.

Although we are very passionate about this project we realise that we are only a small band of enthusiasts. Once we have established funding from the Lottery Heritage Fund and with the support of East Street Arts and hopefully Leeds city Council we will acquire the help and mentoring to turn this into a show case venture. We will at that time apply for charity status.

In conclusion, If we are going to progress with this project, then a permanent location is paramount for success, if we have permanence then this centre can continue to develop into a focal point that can be woven into the very fabric of Morley itself, at this moment in time we do not have the revenue to secure premises especially in the town centre, where our experience has shown that such a centre will thrive. We would therefore ask the council to consider allowing the Morley heritage Centre a permanent location within the town centre and within current council owned property.

Thank You