



Report of the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods

Inner North West Area Committee (Special Meeting)

Date: 17TH January 2008

Subject: Woodsley Road Multi-Cultural Community Centre

Electoral Wards Affected:		Specific Implications For:	
Hyde Park & Woodhouse		Equality and Diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	Community Cohesion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Narrowing the Gap	<input type="checkbox"/>
Council Function	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delegated Executive Function available for Call In	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Delegated Executive Function not available for Call In Details set out in the report	<input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

Woodsley Road Management Committee has asked to enter into negotiations with the Council to establish terms of such an agreement for either leasing or purchasing the Woodsley Road Multi-cultural Community Centre (WRMCC).

Area Management officers have been working with the Management Committee for a number of years, seeking reassurance that the Committee would be able to manage the running of a community centre effectively and equitably. A management agreement was signed in March 2007 between the WRMCC Committee and Council. This set out objectives that were to be met ahead of negotiations commencing.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Area Committee with an update on progress made at Woodsley Road Community Centre over the past 18 months, as requested at the last Committee meeting. It seeks approval for Area Management to undertake an options appraisal regarding the future management of the centre.

2.0 Confidentiality

2.1 Appendix 1 relates to financial matters of Woodsley Road Management Committee, and is therefore deemed exempt under the Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3). The public interest in maintaining the exemption in relation to this appendix

outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information by reason of the fact that by disclosing these details, the reputation of the organisation could be detrimentally affected before they have attempted to satisfactorily resolve the matter.

3.0 Background Information

- 3.1 Woodsley Road Multi-cultural Community Centre (WRMCC) is part of the community centre portfolio delegated to the Area Committee in 2006.
- 3.2 A Management Committee has been in place since the centre opened in 1997 which influences the running of the centre, without direct responsibility for all the services and activities delivered there. They do however have influence over some services and policies at the centre, such as requests for room hire charges for funerals to be waived.
- 3.3 The Management Committee has for some time expressed an aspiration to purchase the freehold of the building or enter into a long lease arrangement with the Council, which would give them direct responsibility for all aspects of the running of the centre.
- 3.4 Similar requests have been received in relation to the Pakistani and Bangladeshi centres in Harehills. Negotiations are presently underway with those expressing an interest in the purchase of the Pakistani Centre. Disposal by way of the building freehold and a long lease arrangement are both being explored.
- 3.5 In order to move towards achieving this aspiration a management agreement was put in place, setting out key milestones and objectives that need to be met before the Council will consider alternative management arrangements for the centre. The management agreement was agreed by the Area Committee in February 2007.
- 3.6 In mid November a meeting was held between the Management Committee and Council, with the Executive Board Member for Environment & Neighbourhoods, the Chief Regeneration Officer and Area Management. The meeting was arranged at the request of the Management Committee to raise the profile of their aspiration to purchase or long lease the centre.

4.0 Management Agreement Progress

- 4.1 Whilst the Area Committee has received updates previously, Area Management has been continually working to support the Management Committee, both directly and through Voluntary Action Leeds.
- 4.2 Constitution & Governance
With assistance from Voluntary Action Leeds the Management Committee is now fully and properly constituted.
- 4.3 Status
The Management Committee is now a registered charity. A requirement of being a registered charity is that proper Annual General Meetings are held. The first AGM under charity regulations was held in March 2007, at which the results of a Management Committee election were announced. The Management Committee now has members from non-Muslim backgrounds, women and Muslim women.

4.4 Business/Development Plan

Over a period of several months, officers from Area Management have been working with the Management Committee, providing advice and support, so that a business plan can be developed. This has now been produced, agreed by the Committee and shared with both ward Members and Area Management.

4.4.1 The business plan sets out the Management Committee's objectives and its methods to achieve these. In summary, it covers a review of the centre's current usage; a marketing strategy for increasing bookings; a funding strategy, exploring expansion opportunities such as social enterprise initiatives; and a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

4.4.2 One particular emphasis that the business plan was requested to focus on was the need to make the centre more accessible to, and inclusive of the whole community. Concerns have been raised in the past that the centre is viewed as being predominantly for the use of one section of the local community.

4.4.3 It is intended that the implementation of the plan will be closely monitored by Area Management over the coming months, to ensure that the Management Committee is meeting the objectives both within the plan and the management agreement.

4.4.4 Crucial to the assessment of officers, as to whether the Management Committee is in a position to take on the management of the centre, is the increase in lettings and the widening out of access to all the local community.

4.5 Policy Development

Alongside the development of a business plan, the Management Committee has also produced a series of policies which will help govern the way the centre is used and managed. Policies produced include health & safety, child protection, recruitment & selection, equal opportunities, complaints and equality & diversity.

5.0 Funding

5.1 Since 2005 the Area Committee has provided Well-being support to Woodsley Road. Initially this was in the form of £22,000 per annum to pay for a Centre Manager through Voluntary Action Leeds. In March 2007 the Management Committee decided that they did not wish to continue with the Centre Manager arrangements and therefore this funding ceased.

5.2 In order to ensure that progress continued, £5,000 of Well-being funding was allocated in April 2007 to provide continued developmental support to the Management Committee, again through Voluntary Action Leeds. To date this funding has not been spent and there is an outstanding request from the Management Committee for the funding to be paid directly to them, to contribute to the cost of a part-time centre worker.

5.3 The Management Committee is also seeking a contribution towards the implementation of their business plan, through payment of a percentage of the lettings income from the centre. As only a small number of users pay for use of the centre (as with other centres across the city) the income generated is relatively low, approximately £7,500 per annum. The Management Committee has indicated it would like £2,500 of the annual lettings income, which would be match funded by the Leeds Muslim Council.

5.4 One of the objectives laid out in the management agreement is in regard to monies owed by the Management Committee to the Council, following refurbishment works at the centre in 2003. To date this matter has not been resolved, although correspondence has recently taken place. Detail of the debt is shown at Appendix 1.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Whilst some work still needs to be done to achieve the objectives of the management agreement, good progress has been made to date by the Management Committee.

6.2 A business plan has been developed by the Management Committee, which is now being implemented to bring about change at the centre. The progress against the plan is being monitored by the Area Management team, in order to provide assurance that the Management Committee is in a position to take on the management responsibility of the centre.

6.3 Following work undertaken by the Management Committee towards achieving objectives set by the Council, options around the ownership and/or management of the centre could start to be explored.

6.4 Work with the centre is resource intensive for Area Management and it is felt that the limits of influence over change at the centre are being reached.

6.5 With regard to the issues of funding detailed at 5.2 and 5.3, the Area Committee could take a decision on this now, or defer till the next Area Committee meeting in February, when Well-being matters will be considered.

7.0 Options for Appraisal

7.1 An options appraisal would look to explore the feasibility of the following:-

7.1.1 Freehold Disposal

Within this option there could be a range of consequences for the Council, and the Management Committee, dependent on the agreed purchase price of the freehold. This option would mean that the Council ceases to have any capital or revenue responsibility for the centre.

7.1.2 Long Lease

A long lease agreement would be undertaken over a set period of time, e.g. 25 years, similar to arrangements at the Burley Lodge Centre. Under this arrangement revenue costs associated with the centre (approximately £70,000 per annum) would be transferred from the Council to the Management Committee. It would be likely that within the terms of the lease the Council would continue to be responsible for essential repairs and some capital works to the building.

7.1.3 Maintain Existing Arrangements

If neither freehold disposal nor a long lease arrangement were feasible, or acceptable to the Area Committee, then the remaining option would be to continue as present. This would not have a detrimental financial impact on the Council as future revenue

and capital costs associated with the centre are currently planned for as part of the community centre portfolio. However, this option would raise significant issues for the Management Committee, as their main objective would be unachievable.

8.0 Next Steps

- 8.1 If the Area Committee agrees to the undertaking of an appraisal on the management arrangements at Woodsley Road, work will be undertaken to explore the feasibility and implications of the options outlined above. It is envisaged that Area Management would be in a position to report back to the Area Committee at its April meeting.
- 8.2 Should the Area Committee not agree to an options appraisal, Area Management will work with the Management Committee to try to establish a suitable alternative.
- 8.3 In either eventuality Area Management will continue to work with the Management Committee to ensure progress against objectives within both the management agreement and their business plan.

9.0 Recommendations

- 9.1 Members are requested to:-
 - a) note and comment upon the contents of the report;
 - b) approve the undertaking of a options appraisal regarding alternative management arrangements of Woodsley Road Community Centre; and
 - c) decide whether it wishes to take a decision on funding issues outlined at 5.2 and 5.3 now, or defer until the next Area Committee.