



Report of the West North West Area Manager

Report to Inner West Area Committee

Date: 3rd April 2008

Subject: Update on Community Centre Issues in Inner West Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected:

Armley

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call in Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

Following the decision to close the West Leeds Family Learning Centre from 31st March 2008, the Jobs and Skills service will be moving to Strawberry Lane Centre, Tong Road, Armley where the caseworkers will continue to assist local residents seeking work and training. Finance will be provided to facilitate the move and subsequent operation of the service from the venue.

To also update members on the funding secured by New Wortley Community Association from development of the land relinquished for development and which will assist in the future operation and maintenance of the centre.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To update members with recent operational and financial developments regarding the operation of jobs and skills service from Strawberry Lane and New Wortley Community Centre.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 New Wortley Community Centre.

- 2.2 Members will be aware that New Wortley Community Association are an independent management committee who run New Wortley Community Centre and who are therefore responsible for raising finance to ensure the continued maintenance and operation of the building and services which serve the local community. A peppercorn rent is charged by Leeds City Council by way of providing support.
- 2.3 To raise additional finance the Association have negotiated the release of spare land for development as a pharmacy and treatment centre. The development started in 2007 and is near completion.
- 2.4 The terms of the lease agreement were that during the construction phase the developer would pay £1,250 per annum (in this instance 17th August 2007 until 16th August 2008 or the date of practical completion which ever is the sooner) following which a rent of £2,500 will be payable. This will be payable until 16th August 2012 when the rent shall be reviewed as per the 5 yearly rent review process. The term of the lease is 99 years from 17th August 2007.
- 2.5 Previous discussions regarding where this additional funding should be placed suggested that it should be used to increase the Inner West Well Being Budget from which members could allocate the funds to New Wortley Community Association or any other appropriate project relevant to their delegated functions.
- 2.6 However because the Well Being Budget is mainstream council funding subject to carry forward and annual budget setting and which is not guaranteed the official advice is that it should not be added to the Well Being Fund but placed in the Community Centre Budget held centrally. This will ensure a clear audit trail.
- 2.7 It is suggested that members agree to allocate this funding to New Wortley Community Association via the Community Centres budget for a specific purpose such as the payment of utility bills and insurances and which should be reviewed annually as the centre moves towards sustainability.

3.0 Strawberry Lane/St.Bartholomew's Community Centre.

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Armley Helping Hands and the Youth Service are presently operating from Strawberry Lane Community Centre. However the Youth Service are vacating the premises on 31st March 2008 in order to move to the former Bramley Community Centre. This will leave 3-4 rooms empty. Members will also be aware that West Leeds Family Learning Centre is closing from 31st March 2008 and it is necessary for the Jobs and Skills service to find alternative accommodation.
- 3.2 Following discussions with all parties it has been agreed that Jobs and Skills staff (approximately 9) move to Strawberry Lane as soon as the Youth service have departed. Jobs and Skills are willing to pay rental income of approximately £ £18,900 to offset the running and maintenance of the site and which will contribute to the overall costs of this building.
- 3.3 Leeds City Council are directly responsible for the financial upkeep of the building both for external and internal maintenance through a centrally held budget.

4.0 Main Issues

- 4.1 It is important to secure the delivery of local services locally and from venues familiar to local people who would not access services if they had to travel far from their community. This will certainly be the case for the Jobs and Skills service who will remain local and for New Wortley Community Centre where services such as the Neighbourhood Wardens and Police Community Safety Officers hold surgeries and other services are provided.

5.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 5.1 The proposals contribute to the priorities of the Departmental, Council and Corporate Plans by aiming to create better neighbourhoods and confident communities. The proposals also aim to ensure the sustainability of community venues and services.

6.0 Member Consultation

- 6.1 Members are aware of these proposals through previous reports brought to the Area Committee and through informal discussions

7.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 7.1 Legal Services and relevant departments are in discussion regarding the agreements that need to be in place to ensure the smooth running and financial probity of the transactions and arrangements.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 That Jobs and Skill will move to Strawberry Lane Community Centre following vacation by the Youth service at the end of March 2008 and that the required income will be paid to support this move. This will provide opportunities for partnership working with other occupiers on the site and secure the delivery of a much needed service in west Leeds.
- 8.2 That New Wortley Community Centre are now able to access additional funding to secure the continued operation and maintenance of the centre.

9.0 Recommendations

- 9.1 To note the contents of this report and to note the move of Jobs and Skills to Strawberry Lane Community Centre for the income associated with that move.
- 9.2 To approve the allocation of finance raised by the new development at New Wortley Community Centre to assist with the payment of running costs to ensure the sustainability of the centre and local services.