



Report of the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods Directorate

South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 14th April 2008

Subject: St Gabriel's Community Centre

Electoral Wards Affected:		Specific Implications For:	
Ardsley & Robin Hood		Equality and Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)		Community Cohesion	<input 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

This report provides an overview of responses collated from a consultation exercise undertaken with regards to the current and future use of St Gabriel's Community Centre. This report also provides details of the current financial position with the facility and details of usage. Members are asked to consider whether a new lease should be negotiated with the church for the facility, the community centre should be returned to the management of the church or the period of time for review of this facility is extended.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Area Committee with an update on St Gabriel's Community Centre in terms of a community consultation exercise that has been carried out, current usage of the facility and running / backlog maintenance costs for the building.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 In November 2007, a report was presented to Area Committee providing an update on Outer South Community Centres and buildings that had been highlighted by the Regeneration Policy & Planning Team, the team have an overview of the operation of community centres across the city. St Gabriel's was one of the buildings highlighted for further action.

2.2 The main reasons for St Gabriels being highlighted was, the high running costs for the facility, the building usage was down to 8 hours per week for youth activities and the

fact that the lease between the Council and the church was due to expire in April 2008.

- 2.3 Following discussions with Ardsley & Robin Hood Ward Members and consideration by the Community Centres Sub Committee, it was decided that a community consultation exercise should be carried out to gain views from local people about the facility – in terms of whether they were aware of the facility, use the building or what activities people would like to see take place at the centre. The next section of this report summarises the results of the consultation and provides financial details about the building.

3.0 Community Consultation Exercise

- 3.1 In January 2008, following consultation with Ward Members, approximately 2000 questionnaires were sent out to households in a defined area in East Ardsley – covering Thorpe, Fall Lane and part of Bradford Road. During the consultation period, 306 completed questionnaires were returned. A further 24 were returned after the closing date and a number of photocopied sheets were also sent back – these have not been included in the results, as the photocopies could be duplications from people who have already completed the form and the questionnaire was allocated at one per household to ensure an accurate report for the rate of return on the questionnaires.
- 3.2 The questionnaire covered areas such as what people currently use or have used St Gabriel’s for in the past, what types of activities they’d like to see being run from the facility, if any local resident would be willing to run such a session and views regarding local community facilities as a whole – enough / adequate / suitable / any that are accessed or used regularly other than St Gabriel’s.
- 3.3 From the number of responses received, 189 people had heard of the facility or used it but another 114 people were not aware that the facility existed or had ever accessed the building. Three questionnaires did not provide an answer to this question. These figures cannot be broken down to areas which residents live in as not all responses gave an address or postcode, so the proportion of residents living in the new estate who responded can’t be provided.
- 3.4 A number of activities were listed in the questionnaire asking people which they’d be interested, the results are highlighted in the table below:-

Activity	Number of interested local people
Health Visitors	57
Advice Surgeries – Police, Housing, etc	109
Activities for older people	95
Children’s Activities / Youth Club	92
Weight Watchers / Exercise Classes	113
Computer / Art / Crafts Club	119
Further Education	114
Social Events i.e. Bingo	54
Councillors Surgeries	95
Mums & Tots / Childcare	55
Other	25

The lack of a community association in the area means that no group currently exists that can take the leadership required to manage this centre and so makes it extremely difficult to organise and promote these types of activities.

- 3.5 A few local residents through the consultation have offered to run sessions from the facility such as Japanese language classes, piano and violin lessons, financial advice sessions and older persons club. All people who have shown an interest would like further details about the level of commitment that would be required to run the sessions. With operation of any new session this would in turn increase the running costs for this facility, even if the lettings were chargeable, this amount would not cover these increased costs.
- 3.6 In terms of a question asked about the availability of community facilities in East Ardsley, this received a mixed response. A number of residents were unaware of what community facilities were available in East Ardsley and a main concern of local people seemed to be the provision of activities for young people – even though the youth club takes place at the facility, there still seems to be a feeling that there is nothing to do or no where to go for young people. A number of people commented on the fact that they were unaware of what took place in community facilities in the area and if they were more informed, may be more likely to participate in such activities.
- 3.7 Youth Service also undertook a consultation with young people on 23rd February. It is understood that this was an open session where young people from East Ardsley participated in a video making exercise and gave feedback about their thoughts about St Gabriel's Community Centre. Unfortunately, we do not have the results at this time and therefore cannot provide this information into the report.
- 3.8 As part of the wider consultation, Youth Service were asked to explore alternative forms of youth provision if St Gabriel's was no longer available. This would be in terms of either relocating to another facility or looking at various options for detached work. Youth Service felt that the use of this facility was the only real viable option in this area to provide sessions for young people in the area.
- 3.9 Consultation meetings have also been undertaken with church trustees to gather their thoughts about the review. The part of the facility that is still being used as a church has a growing congregation and trustees are happy on the whole with the way the facility has been operated as a youth club. The church trustees would be agreeable for a new lease to be negotiated along similar terms to what was agreed before – 15 years with full internal, external and insuring responsibility with the Council. If the facility was handed back to the church, the trustees would find it difficult to sustain the management of the building due to the amount of running costs and level of income generated and feel the only way forward in this scenario would be to sell the building to a third party.

4.0 Building Maintenance and Usage

- 4.1 As of 31st March 2008, the building had cost £25,338.81 to operate. Utility costs came to £2009.98, with maintenance and caretaking fees totaling £23,406.83 – at this time this figure cannot be broken down further. £78 income has been generated for this facility – this was for use of the building as a poll station and a meeting which was held at the centre by Area Management. All Youth Service use is exempt from charges under the pricing and lettings policy, as non chargeable activities for young people don't incur the room hire fees.
- 4.2 From the most recent building survey undertaken in November 2007, a backlog maintenance figure of £7,370 is outstanding on the facility. These works cover outstanding repairs such as a replacement boiler, a new fire alarm system, lighting and works to the gent's toilets. As no backlog maintenance funding is available at present, Ardsley & Robin Hood Members may wish to consider paying for these works

from their Well being capital allocation, if it is decided that the facility should remain open for use.

- 4.3 From Lettings Unit records, the centre is still only used on a regular basis by Youth Service for youth club sessions 8 hours per week. Some other ad hoc bookings do take place in the facility occasionally but there are no other regular sessions going on in the building.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Area Committee is asked to consider the future of this facility in context with the rest of the community centres portfolio which they have delegated responsibility for. If Members decide to retain St Gabriel's, efficiency targets are likely to be set for this facility and ways to create savings will have to be explored – this could include key holding arrangements to reduce caretaking costs – users must be agreeable to this before it can be implemented. The facility will also have to be prioritised with the rest of the Area Committee community centres for any backlog maintenance funding that may come available. If the building was no longer required, any efficiency savings made over and above specified targets would be released to spend across Outer South Leeds to improve key community facilities as identified via the Community Centres Sub Committee.
- 5.2 Members may wish to consider whether they feel that the facility should be kept open for a set period of time, possibly a further year, to see whether there is enough local interest to generate new activities at the facility and then at the end of the year review how the facility has been operating in terms of user numbers, running costs and general condition of the facility.
- 5.3 The lease on the facility between the Council and the church expires on 15th April. Until there is certainty on the future of the building, notice will not be given to the church nor will negotiations for a new lease on the building commence. If the Council were no longer to run activities from the building, a three month notice period would be given to the church. If Area Committee decides that it would be prudent for the Council to retain the facility for a further year before making a decision, then this will be put in writing to the church to make them fully aware of the Area Committees intentions.

6.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

- 6.1 There are no direct implications associated with Council Policy and Governance as a result of this report.

7.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report. Depending on whether Area Committee decide to keep St Gabriel's open as a functional community centre or hand the building back to the church, there will be various budgetary resource implications associated with both options i.e. either an efficiency saving to re-invest into other community centres across the Outer South Area Committee portfolio or and a budget pressure which will have to be offset by the creation of efficiency savings at other buildings.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The Area Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

- 8.2 Members are asked to consider the future of St Gabriel's Community Centre and decide whether the Council should negotiate a new lease for the facility with the church, serve notice that the building is no longer required and so hand back to the church or extend the review on this facility for a further set period of time.