

Report of the West Leeds Area Manager

Inner West Area Committee

14th September 2006

Subject: Community Centre Report – Management Status & Current Stock Condition

Electoral Wards Affected:
Armley
Bramley & Stanningley

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

Council Function	<input checked="" 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"/>
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Executive Summary

This paper gives an overview of the current stock of community centres that are to be transferred to the Area Committees in West and outlines the current status of their management committees.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 To brief Members on the current state of the Neighbourhood and Housing portfolio of community centres to be transferred to West Leeds Area Management and the current state of their management.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Council's portfolio of community centres has been undergoing review for the past three years because of escalating running costs, maintenance and use have not been in keeping with the Council's objectives.

2.2 Most community centres were managed by or leased from the Dept of Learning and Leisure. However, many of these centres no longer served a purpose that met that department's objectives and it was agreed to transfer those centres that were not being used primarily for the delivery of youth services to Dept of Neighbourhoods

and Housing. Where a centre was considered too run down or duplicate it was agreed by the Executive to either declare the centre surplus to requirements and either sell or demolished the building.

2.3 Those that have been transferred to Neighbourhoods and Housing have been fully surveyed for backlog maintenance and guidance provided for Area Management in the future management of these centres.

2.4 At the last Area Committee meeting a paper was presented on the transfer of Community Centre management and the delegation of pricing for the use of centres to Area Committees by the 31 July. Members raised concern about the state of each centre to be transferred, and expressed the view that each centre must be in good condition and fit for purpose.

3.0 Update of Centres

3.1 Inner West

There are five community centres in inner west Leeds that this paper considers. Three have already been transferred to Neighbourhood and Housing, one will be transferred later in the year and one is owned by the Strategic Landlord that is seeking assistance from Area Management. These are:

1. Fairfield Community Centre
2. New Wortley Community Centre
3. Sandford Community Centre
4. Moorside Community Centre
5. Strawberry Lane Community Centre

3.2 **Fairfield** – this centre re-opened to the public after being closed for more than two years for renovation. Sure Start Bramley provided £140,000 to completely overhaul the centre, including installing a new kitchen, works to internal walls and heating systems. The centre has no outstanding maintenance issues and is leased to the Fairfield Partnership for nil rent in 2006/07. It is expected that 10% of the commercial rent will be charged in 2007/08- about £1300. the centre is managed by the Fairfield Partnership who has been funded for four years by the Safer Stronger Community fund to deliver a programme of intensive neighbourhood management. Three people have been employed directly under this scheme and one other through the Fairfield Partnership's own resources. The Partnership is now in the implementation phase of their programme with support from Area Management.

3.3 **New Wortley** – this centre is owned by the New Wortley Community Association but the land is leased from the council for a peppercorn rent. The building was completely refurbished by European funding and has no outstanding maintenance issues. Further European funding for a community café and community worker has also been successful and this will continue until December 2007. The aim of this project is to make the centre financially sustainable. The Council has agreed to renegotiate the lease on the land to allow for development of surplus land and for the Community Centre to benefit directly from the disposal of this surplus. This received approval from Asset Management Group on 10th March 2006.

3.4 Because the land is being leased, the receipts (ground rent) are returned to the Dept of Neighbourhoods and Housing. It is proposed that a percentage of this ground rent is 'ring fenced' to the Inner West Area Committee. The proposal is for

50% to be paid to the Dept of Neighbourhoods and Housing and 50% to the Area Committee. The Area Committee would then make a grant of this money to New Wortley Community Centre towards the running and maintenance costs of the building. In future years should NWCC become financially sustainable, this revenue could be directed to other community centres within inner west or any other projects considered appropriate by members. Members are asked to consider this.

- 3.5 **Sandford** – this centre was closed on 10 March 2006 because anti-social behavior forced the caretaker from the property. Negotiations have been successful with the Youth Inclusion Project (YIP) to lease the building completely for both their offices and to run programmes for youth and their parents from the centre. YIP took possession on Monday 23 August and plan their official opening on Wednesday 25 October. This building is of solid construction and has little backlog maintenance. There is a need to make it comply with the Disability Discrimination Act but the centre will be lease to YIP as it is. YIP will be responsible for all future maintenance as part of their leasing arrangements. Because there was some minor damage and the building was not in a clean state at hand over a period of free rent has been agreed to. Future rent will be paid at 10% of the commercial rate, (about £900 per year) .
- 3.6 **Moorside** – this centre was build by public subscription in 1959 and the land leased from the council for a perpercorn rent to the Moorside Tenants Association. This committee left the centre in January 2006 and handed the keys back to West Leeds Homes. The centre has been empty since. A new committee called the Moorside Community Centre Association has formed and have negotiated a 12 month lease on the building with the option to extend. Area Management is working with this group to assist in getting themselves and the centre established. The centre is in good condition but has had some recent vandalism because it is empty. The management committee has submitted an application to the Well Being Fund for funds to assist them in their first year of operation.
- 3.7 **Strawberry Lane** – this has not been transferred but is scheduled to come to Neighbourhood and Housing later in the year. A full maintenance survey has yet to be done on the centre. This will be the only council managed centre in the Inner West portfolio and the only one that Area Committee will need to set a pricing policy for.
- 3.8 **Wyther** – in addition to the list above there is also Wyther Community Centre that still belongs to Learning & Leisure. It is in a bad state of repair and overgrown with weeds and has rubbish fly-tipped in the grounds. There is one group - the Twilight Twirlers - using the centre five evenings a week. The Council's Executive has agreed to this centre being declared surplus to requirements. The Community Centre Review Committee, who have been undertaking review of all centres across the city, has offered the Twirlers either alternative accommodation at Hollybush Primary School or full lease of the Wyther Centre providing the Twirlers management can put forward a business case for their successful running the building. While they have agreed to negotiate taking on a lease, they need to reassure the Council on their capacity to meet the financial commitments of running the Centre. Area Management officers are working with them on developing a business plan.

4.0 Outer West

- 4.1 There are four centres identified in outer west that will be transferred to the Outer Area Committee. Three centres that already have been transferred to Neighbourhood and Housing and one that is set to transfer from Education Leeds.
- 4.2 The centres are:
- 1.0 Swinnow Community Centre
 - 2.0 Greenhill Community Centre
 - 3.0 Calverley Mechanics Institute
 - 4.0 Lower Wortley Community Centre
- 4.3 **Swinnow** – this centre is run by the Swinnow Community Centre Association, a registered charity. Area Management was provided with £11,000 to address backlog maintenance in 2005/06 and this has been spent on improving the floor, replacing the windows and fixing outside lighting and paving. A small amount was left over and this will be used to replace some of the doors and service the boiler. The current committee struggles to keep the centre financially viable and has lost a few committee members recently. They are in debt because of excessive gas heating bills and at this date look like disbanding soon. The opportunity to sell this centre to the PCT for a LIFT surgery to replace the Gables surgery has recently re-emerged and this may be a way forward for this centre. A portion of the receipts from the sale of this centre would be retained by the Area Committee. A new LIFT building will include a community space that local people can use.
- 4.4 **Greenhill** – run by the Greenhill Community Association this centre is currently leased and financially buoyant. The Area Committee granted £12,000 to undertake repairs of some backlog maintenance, which have included new windows, security grills, disabled access and lighting. There is a small amount of funds left that will be used for replacing doors. The current Committee has decided to resign from running the centre because of a change in their circumstances and are seeking new committee members to take over by September. West Leeds Healthy Living Network have offered to help with this transition.
- 4.5 **Calverley Mechanics Institute** – this is the only managed property that is in the Neighbourhood and Housing portfolio for outer west. The building is not a listed building but is of Victorian vintage. It has had significant work done in the past two years to include disabled lift but has a number of backlog maintenance issues. The most pressing is the total replacement of the boiler, which has ceased working. This will cost around £12,000 and has been included in City Services capital bid for community centres for 2007/08. The centre is used by local out of school and children's groups as well as an amateur theatre group. The net cost of running this centre is around £8000 pa. The Outer Area Committee will be able to set new pricing structure for this centre once handed over to the Area Committee. Guidance on a pricing structure will be provided by the Partnership Team from Neighbourhood and Housing.
- 4.6 **Lower Wortley Community Centre** – this is currently owned by Education Leeds and the upper floor leased to the Lower Wortley Community Association. It is a Grade 2 listed building and has the potential for large repairs and maintenance bills. The lower floor is currently not in a fit state to be leased. Negotiations are continuing with Education Leeds to bring the downstairs up to standard before Neighbourhood and Housing will accept a transfer of this asset. The Lower Wortley

Community Association has found a user for the lower floor space but is unable to progress in letting this space until the final renovations are completed.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 The current state of centres has a bearing on any leasing arrangements that may take place. Neighbourhood and Housing has stated as part of its policy that centres will be made fit for purpose before leases are negotiated. In the case of inner west centres are all fit for purpose except Wyther Community Centre. In the case for outer west centres both Swinnow and Greenhill's boilers are nearing the end of their economic life and need replacing, while Calverley Mechanics Institute's boiler has completely broken. City Services has included boiler replacement in its capital works for community centres in 2007/08.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 To note the contents of this report

6.2 Agree to make a grant from lease income of money to New Wortley Community Centre towards the running and maintenance costs of the building as outlined in paragraph 3.4.