

Report of the East North East Area Manager

Inner East Area Committee

Date: 5th February 2009

Subject: Community Centre Update Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

Burmantofts & Richmond Hill
Gipton & Harehills
Killingbeck & Seacroft

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

The Area Committee set up a Member working group to develop those community centres which are vested with the Environment & Neighbourhoods within Inner East Leeds. The group has been concentrating on the development of a strategic approach to those centres.

At two separate meetings the Area Committee resolved that both the pricing and discounts policy as presented to them in June 2007 and October 2007 respectively be used as a basis for further consultation with users of community centres and that the responsibility to prepare the final document be delegated to the Member Working Group to be presented to the Area Committee in time for implementation; (30th January 2008, minute 69(2)(3) refers). The policy will now be implemented in October 2009.

Purpose of This Report

1. The purpose of this report is:
2. To update the Area Committee on progress to date with the ongoing work to develop those community centres vested with the Environment & Neighbourhoods within Inner East Leeds.
3. To update Members on the findings of the recent consultation on the proposed new Pricings and Lettings Policy for Environment & Neighbourhoods community centres within Inner East Leeds.

Background Information

4. Since 1st July 2006 the Area Management Teams have had some responsibilities for the community centres vested with the old Neighbourhoods and Housing Department. These centres in Inner East Leeds are: Cross Gates CC, Richmond Hill CC, Alston Lane CC, Henry Barran CC, Ebor Gardens, South Gipton, Harehills Place, Kentmere CC, Lincoln Green, Nowell Mount and Shantona Centre.
5. Additionally, the Bangladeshi and Pakistani centres also fall under the remit of Environments & Neighbourhoods but officers are currently working to transfer these centres into community ownership / management and they will cease to be Area Management's immediate responsibility.
6. The Area Committee roles in relation to the community centre portfolio include overseeing revenue budgets, operational arrangements and the use of the centres, agreeing and implementing a schedule of charges and discounts for directly managed centres and making asset management and investment proposals to ensure the portfolio is sustainable and meets local needs.
7. The Area Committee already discussed the charges for room hire in community centres (13th June 2007 – "Community Centres – Development of Area Committee Charging Policy") and discounts available (24th October 2007 – "Community Centres – Pricing and Discounts Policy"). It also agreed the consultation process and to establish a working group to look at community centre issues (11th September 2008 – "Update on Community Centre Pricings and Lettings Policy Consultation"). The consultation period was extended to December 2008.
8. Following the consultation, the working group is in a position to recommend to the Area Committee, the adoption of the Pricing and Lettings Policy and discounts available, as presented in Appendix B. The charges and discounts reflect the city wide situation; planned implementation is in October 2009.

Main Issues

Community Centres Working Group

9. The working group has been established by the East (Inner) Area Committee. It has delegated powers and acts on behalf of the Area Committee. The policies and

strategies developed by the group are now being brought back to the Area Committee for a final approval.

10. Membership:

Cllr. Brian Selby, Cllr. Roger Harington, Cllr. David Hollingsworth
Stuart Byrne supports the work of the group for Area Management.

11. Role of the Group:

- (i) To develop the Charging and Discounts Policy for Inner East Leeds;
- (ii) To put forward a long term strategy for the development and use of community centres in Inner East Leeds;
- (iii) To establish the final best option for each of the centres and work up a detailed plan of action to help achieve the goal.
- (iv) To decide the spend of £15k allocated to the group at the December 2008 Area Committee meeting.

12. Current Position:

The Inner East Leeds Area Committee currently has responsibility for 13 community centres. These are:

(i) Killingbeck and Seacroft ward:

- Kentmere CC
- Alston Lane CC
- Cross Gates CC

(ii) Gipton and Harehills ward:

- Pakistani CC
- Bangladeshi CC
- South Gipton CC
- Harehills Place
- Henry Barran CC
- Shantona CC

(iii) Burmantofts and Richmond Hill ward:

- Richmond Hill CC
- Ebor gardens CC
- Nowell Mount CC
- Lincoln Green Youth Base

13. The centres are in a varied state of use and repair. As it is unlikely that the Area Committee would be able to maintain the entire portfolio of community centres to the same high level of use and maintenance, the working group needs to consider all the available management options.

These include:

- Direct management by the Area Management
- Formation of management/user committees and transfer to them of all management responsibilities

- Establishment of a lead user and transfer to them of management responsibilities
 - Transfer of assets to outside bodies
 - Leasing of centres to outside bodies
 - Disposal/sale of assets and use of resulting capital receipts
14. At its last meeting on 12 January 2009, the working group agreed to concentrate, in the first instance, on 6 centres (Richmond Hill, Nowell Mount, Kentmere, Alston Lane, Henry Barran and South Gipton). However, if an opportunity to develop any other centre presents itself, it will be picked up. At the same time, the resource intensive nature of this work must be recognised. The group also considered the allocation of the £15,000 approved for use within the Community Centres portfolio. The working group felt that this money should be split equally amongst the three wards of Inner East Leeds and that it should be focused on those centres which have been identified as a priority. It was also agreed that this money should be spent on furniture and equipment as the fabric of the buildings is part of the cyclical maintenance programme. Additional capital improvements can also be funded through the Wellbeing capital.
15. Work has been going on to bring up to date the information available for each of the centres. This includes a description of each centre, size and usage of rooms, timetable of activities taking place in each centre, organisations using the centre with contact names and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analyses for each centre. At the same time, a detailed, visual inspection of each centre has been made to assess what immediate problems can be identified; this includes photographic evidence. An example of the level of data available is shown in Appendix A. Members are welcome to inspect information on any centre they are interested in.
16. Below is a summary of work undertaken so far:
17. Bangladeshi CC
A management committee of local community members has been established with a view of taking over the running of the centre. A meeting took place with Elected Members, Officers and the committee in December 2008, where minor amendments were requested to the Heads of Terms leasing agreement. These amendments have been made and the committee aims to have an agreement in place by the end of January 2009. The management committee plans to take over the responsibility for the centre in April 2009. Leeds City Council Lead – Neighbourhood Services.
18. Pakistani CC
Sale of the Pakistani Centre is currently being agreed. The latest information from the legal team dealing with the sale is that contracts have been agreed with the purchasers but that a number of documents are still awaiting signature. Funds are due to be deposited with the purchasers' solicitors in January 2009. Completion of the sale is imminent, once this has occurred. The capital receipts and the insurance claim for the burnt down hall is to be invested in the local area. Leeds City Council Lead – Neighbourhood Services.
19. Kentmere CC
A management/user group has been established to help develop Kentmere Community Centre. £40,000 has also been identified through SSCF funding to invest within the centre. The ultimate aim is to develop sustainable use of the centre, with

the management group taking over responsibility of its day to day running. Leeds City Council Lead – Area Management.

20. Alston Lane CC

A management/user group has been established to help develop Alston Lane Community Centre. There is also interest from a number of organisations, who may wish to take up office accommodation within the centre. This could provide a regular income for Alston Lane. The ultimate aim is to develop sustainable use of the centre, with the management group taking over responsibility of its day to day running. Leeds City Council Lead – Area Management.

21. Cross Gates CC

Discussions have taken place with Children's Services to determine whether Cross Gates CC could form part of the proposals for Phase 3 Children's Centre development in the area. This however does not currently seem to be an option. Work on this centre will be picked up in the next phase.

22. Richmond Hill CC

Two fledgling development trusts have expressed an interest in an asset transfer of this centre but no firm proposals have been received. The use of the centre by adult social services for work with elderly people is being explored. Richmond Hill Elderly Action Aid is social services' partner in this project. How this would impact on the day to day management of the centre remains to be established. Leeds City Council Lead – Area Management.

23. Henry Barran CC

Work is currently ongoing to rationalise the current usage of space within the centre, ensuring that relevant leases and lettings are in place for users. A letting arrangement currently in place for Families Forward, a voluntary group working with the courts to provide a supervised contact for children and parents, provides an additional income. Similar contracts are looked at for other organisations using the centre as an office base. Once this work is completed, the aim is to establish a management/user group, to help take forward the development of the centre. Discussions are also ongoing with Children's Services as to the future of Children's Centre provision on site.

24. Nowell Mount CC

The centre is generally in a good state of repair and work is currently ongoing to promote increased usage by a number of local community groups.

Pricings & Lettings Policy

25. In October 2004, the Council's Executive Board agreed a draft lettings and pricing policy for all community buildings which key objectives included: -

- Lettings arrangements and the prices charged for the use of the community centres should be transparent and be consistently applied across all centres;
- Prices charged for the use of the facilities should make a significant contribution to the costs of overall service provision and there should be no hidden subsidies;
- Lettings and pricing arrangements should encourage access to community facilities for everyone.

26. Following on from these themes, East North East Area Management conducted a consultation exercise between October and December 2008 within the Inner East

electoral wards. The primary focus of the consultation was to communicate the latest draft pricing schedule and to gain feedback from community centre stakeholders. There were three main themes which ran alongside the key objectives highlighted above:

- (i) Has the policy been well communicated;
- (ii) General views on the proposed Lettings and Pricing Policy;
- (iii) How will these changes affect your organisation and what are your concerns.

27. A policy pack (Appendix B) was sent to all groups where lettings information was available and some consultation packs were also distributed by hand. To engage other community centre stakeholders who may not have details registered with the Leeds City Council, posters and additional policy packs were placed within centres to be promoted and distributed by caretakers.
28. 58 individuals/groups expressed their opinions on the Lettings and Pricings Policy and considered implications upon their activities.
29. The reviewed Pricing and Lettings Policy was widely accepted. Further to this it was also acknowledged that charges have to be levied in order to maintain a portfolio of sustainable community buildings. However, there were some general concerns about how such charges would be used. Further, concerns were raised regarding the equality of the discounts available and how these would be applied to groups, especially those within the voluntary and community sectors.
30. Although it was widely accepted that community buildings are expensive to run and that income generating activities have to be pursued in order to provide sustainable services, there were some worries about the impact upon groups which may have little or no income generating activities but still provide an invaluable public service.
31. Overall, the general consensus was that the new policy was clear, easy to understand and adequately presented. Although some concern was raised as to the impact of the policy on individual groups, this was more to do with implementation of discounts, rather than the policy itself.
32. A more detailed analysis of the Pricing & Lettings Policy consultation is included at Appendix C.
33. Further more

Implications for Council Policy and Governance

33. Any new community centre policy will become a policy of the Council. It will contribute to the transparency of use and the quality of the governance.

Legal and Resource Implications

34. There are no legal implications beyond those associated with a policy change.
35. There are likely to be resource implications to the Area Committee if:
 - A) in the future, operational costs exceed the income available;
 - B) the use of additional finances raised by charges.

Conclusions

36. Overall, the working group has provided Inner East Area Management with a clear direction on the development of community centres in the area.
37. Through the consultation process on the new Pricing & Lettings Policy, it was generally accepted that the new policy provides a clear and easy to understand approach to charges within local community centres, which is uniform across all centres within the area. Although some concern was raised as to the impact of the policy on individual groups, this was more to do with implementation of discounts, rather than the policy itself. It is therefore recommended to the Area Committee that it adopts the new Pricing & Lettings Policy for use in Environment & Neighbourhood directly managed community centres from October 2009.

Recommendations

38. The Area Committee are requested to:
39. Note the work of the Community Centres Working Group and ratify the proposed allocation of the £15,000 Community Centre budget on equipment and furnishings.
40. Note the findings of the consultation process around the Pricing & Lettings Policy.
41. Adopt the new Pricing & Lettings Policy for use in Environment & Neighbourhoods directly managed community centres from October 2009 – as presented in Appendix B.

Background Documents

42. The background documents used in this report were:
 - A committee report from 13th June 2007 – “Community Centres – Development of Area Committee Charging Policy”
 - A committee report from 24th October 2007 – “Community Centres – Pricing and Discounts Policy”.
 - A committee report from 11th September 2008 – “Update on Community Centre Pricings and Lettings Policy Consultation”