



Report of: Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods

Report to: Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 2nd April 2009

Subject: Pricing and Lettings Policy for Community Centres

Electoral Wards Affected:
Headingley
Hyde Park & Woodhouse

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

This report asks the Area Committee to endorse and implement a revised Pricing and Lettings Policy. A draft version of this policy was presented to the Area Committee in November 2008 and following this a three month consultation exercise undertaken.

The report also provides information regarding the work underway to implement the revised policy, policy by the Lettings unit to ensure a smooth transition from the existing policy to the revised one.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 This report outlines a revised Pricing and Lettings Policy that is to be implemented across Inner North West Leeds on behalf of the Area Committee. The policy gives details of how much groups will be charged for the use of the community facilities managed by the Inner Area Committee. In addition, the policy outlines a schedule of discounts which will be applied to some community organisations when hiring community centre facilities.
- 1.2 Implementing this policy will ensure that the Area Committee is effectively managing these resources in line with departmental and City Council priorities and ensure a policy that is consistent.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Previous reports to the Council's Executive Board and the Area Committee have covered the community centres review and the agreement of proposals to transfer responsibilities for community centres to Area Committees. The Area Committee now has responsibility for the following portfolio of centres; Headingley, Little London, Meanwood and Woodhouse.
- 2.2 In line with this new responsibility, the Area Committee is asked to agree the introduction of a consistent charging policy for all centres under its portfolio to be complemented by a discount policy which ensures that local community groups and organisations are best served by the facilities and are able to use them at a free or discounted rate depending on the activities being held and their benefit to the community.
- 2.3 As outlined in previous reports to the Area Committee, a number of responsibilities will be transferred to the Area Management Team to carry out on behalf of the Area Committee. These are:
- Liaising with users, user groups, local members and management committees on issues related to centres in their area
 - Developing proposals for re-shaping the portfolio in the area
 - Developing capital schemes and funding packages
 - Monitoring the service level agreement with City Services and monitoring capital and revenue budgets
 - Ensuring that leases and licences are in place and reviewed periodically
 - Developing, implementing and overseeing the administration of a new schedule of pricing and discounts for centre usage.
- 2.4 In November 2008, a draft Pricing and Lettings Policy was presented to the Area Committee. The Area Committee will recall that this draft was based on previous work which had been undertaken on the development of a city-wide pricing and lettings schedule.
- 2.5 Following approval by the Area Committee for the development of the proposed Pricing and Lettings Policy a 3 month consultation was undertaken by the Area Management Team.
- 2.6 Information was sent to all registered users on the Lettings Unit database and details were displayed in all four community centres. Between December and February 2009 7 responses were received. Most of these responses were groups seeking confirmation of their discount.
- 2.7 There were 2 comments received from Political Groups who felt that they should not be charged. However there does not appear to be any rationale to approving a discount for these groups therefore it is recommended that the proposed standard charge is applied.

3.0 A revised pricing structure for community centres in Inner North West Leeds

- 3.1 The Area Committee are asked to endorse the implementation of the following standard charges as outlined in the draft Pricing and Lettings Policy submitted to the Area Committee in November 2008.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Room Band | Standard Charge for Leeds City Council directly managed community centres in |
|-----------|--|

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| | Outer North West Leeds |
| Band A – Large, typically up to 40ft x 40ft (1600 sq ft) | £25.00 |
| Band B – Medium, typically up to 30ft x 30ft (900 sq ft) | £18.00 |
| Band C – small, typically up to 20ft x 20ft (40 sq ft) | £12.00 |
| Band D – Kitchens | £5.00 |
| Band E – Store rooms | Subject to negotiation |

- 3.2 Minimal use of a kitchen, e.g. to make refreshments for a meeting, will be included in the standard charge. More extensive use will be covered by booking a kitchen under the Band D charge rate.
- 3.4 It is important to note that these proposed charges are exclusive of any discount scheme that the Area Committee would want to introduce.
- 3.5 As mentioned in previous reports, it is proposed that a standard charge of £650 is levied for weddings. Charges for security and cleaning will be additional to the £650 charge and will be apportioned on an event by event basis.
- 3.6 If venues are to be used for parties, the hire rates will be the proposed standard lettings charge for any user, plus the costs of caretaking, cleaning and security provided for the function.
- 3.7 In relation to charges for FE colleges and Adult Learning, corporate level discussions have been undertaken with colleges and adult learning institutions. Charges have been agreed based on £2.50 per hour, Monday to Friday for small and medium rooms and £10.00 per hour for large rooms and weekend / council holiday use. For lettings that exceed 2000 hours per year an annual service charge will be calculated. The charge will be 25% of the total cost.
- 3.8 It has been agreed corporately that for a smooth transitional period and for the lettings Unit to be able to manage the lettings process, that these standard charges are applied across the city.
- 3.9 The main aim of the revised lettings policy is to create a standardised charging system of all council community facilities in the area and create opportunities to generate increased income for the centres to address a high level of backlog maintenance costs. This has arisen largely due to inadequacies in the current system underpinned by a policy that has not been reviewed for 10 years. The income will assist with the running costs associated with the buildings and where possible go towards enhancements to the facilities.

4.0 A revised discount policy for community centres in Inner North West Leeds

- 4.1 It is important to stress that the charging policy is accompanied by a discount policy. This will ensure that user groups who are providing community services that meet local priorities, will benefit from free or subsidised lettings. A discount policy will also provide greater clarity for the rationale and “cost” to the Area Committee for allowing

discounted or free use. The discount policy is outlined in Appendix 1. Corporate discussions suggest that further work needs to be undertaken to make the criteria of the user group more specific and prescriptive to ensure that the discount policy is not open to abuse by groups who may have the ability to pay lettings charges.

- 4.4 The Area Committee will recall that it was agreed at the November meeting, that if groups are unable to pay the letting charge they can request a subsidy from the Area Committee. Criteria for the subsidy would be based on the relevance of the group's activity to the Area Delivery Plan. It is proposed that initially the Area Committee considers covering the cost of the subsidy through the operational budget for the facility taking into account its budget parameters. In the event of ongoing pressures on the operational budget, due to variations in caretaking, energy costs and varying levels of income from lettings, it is further proposed that the Area Committee consider approval for expenditure through its well-being budget.

5.0 Charging for office space

- 5.1 There are some organisations using space in community centres as an office base. These range from Council Departments to voluntary or community groups. It was agreed by Executive Board that an annual service charge is calculated based on the total cost to operate each square metre of the facility. Currently, Corporate Property Management is in the process of confirming all room sizes. Current office space arrangements within community centres in the Inner North West are as follows;

| Centre | Organisation |
|---------------|---|
| Little London | Youth Service |
| Meanwood | Meanwood Valley Baptist Church and Youth Service Meanwood Elders |
| Woodhouse | Caring Together in Woodhouse & Little London and Youth Service |

- 5.2 The exact charges for each organisation using community centres as an office base will be calculated on a case basis following the receipt of information from the Corporate Property Management. The proposal would be for a lease agreement to be entered into with all relevant organisations, with discounts linked to clear community benefits that would be delivered as a result of the activities undertaken. A report will be submitted to a future Area Committee providing further details of how this will effect individual organisations.

6.0 Implementation Process

- 6.1 Work is underway to ensure the implementation of the revised Lettings and Pricing Policies across the city are efficient and effective. Area Management Teams are working with the Lettings Unit to develop a database which will automatically calculate the level of discount based upon the type of user group. This is to ensure that the policy is relatively simple to apply for the benefit of the customer and with no additional administration burden for the Area Management Teams.

- 6.2 To further ensure that the policy is easy to understand from a customer perspective it is suggested that posters outlining the charges are displayed in each facility so users are fully aware how much they would be expected to pay for room hire.
- 6.3 It is anticipated that the new system will go live for new community referrals from October 2009. Existing bookings will be transferred over to the revised policy at the same time which coincides with the renewal of their lettings granted in April 2009.
- 6.4 If there are any disputes arising from the revised policy, these will be dealt with through the Council's Complaints Procedure. It is anticipated that a disputes resolution policy will be developed for the lettings process over the next few months alongside the new database.

7.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 7.1 There are no implications as the range of community centre issues detailed in this report fit with agreed Council policy and governance arrangements.

8.0 Legal and resource implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.
- 8.2 There could be some budgetary impact in terms of increased or reduced income for community facilities. Any increased income should be re-invested into the facilities to make them of a higher standard for all users. If the income levels were to fall, efficiency saving measures would have to be explored to see how these costs could be recovered.
- 8.3 In terms of staffing resources, an officer from the Area Management Team will oversee the implementation of the new policy with the Lettings Unit, who will continue to be responsible for the management of lettings for all directly managed community facilities across the city.
- 8.4 Caretaking, cleaning and facilities management services will continue to be provided by Corporate Property Management.

9.0 Recommendations

- 9.1 The Area Committee is asked to:
- Note the content of this report
 - Endorse the revised Pricing and Lettings Policy to be implemented in the inner north west community centres.
 - Agree the indicative implementation date of 1st October 2009. If this date cannot be achieved, the policy will be implemented as soon as operationally possible.

Background reports:

- Executive Board March 2006
- Inner North West Area Committee June 2007

- Inner North West Area Committee December 2007
- Inner North West Area Committee November 2008