



Report of the Area Manager West North West

Outer West Area Committee

Date: 18th December 2009

Subject: Pricing Policy for Community Centres

Electoral Wards Affected:

Calverley & Farsley
Farnley & Wortley
Pudsey

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 sets out proposals for a revised pricing policy (from the one originally proposed in the Pricing and Lettings Policy report which the Area Committee endorsed in April 2008) for directly leased/managed community centres. The pricing policy does not apply to Centres which are leased to community organisations.

Members are asked to approve the recommendations made in the report in relation to a revised pricing policy, set out in Appendix 1.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for a revised pricing policy for directly leased/managed community centres, and seeks Members approval for recommendations made in relation to the revised pricing policy.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 In July 2006, as part of the annual Area Function Schedule, the Outer West Area Committee became responsible for a portfolio of community buildings across West Leeds. In addition, at the same time a number of responsibilities which related to these buildings, transferred to the Area Management Team to carry out on behalf of the Area Committee. One of these responsibilities was developing, implementing and overseeing the administration of a new schedule of pricings and discounts for centre usage.

- 2.2 The rationale of implementing a new pricing and discount policy was due to the fact that up to that point a complex pricing structure for the centres had been in operation for some time (at least ten years). This pricing structure was not equitable with different centres having different discount policies and different prices for same size rooms.
- 2.3 Consequently, Neighbourhood Services Team produced a new pricing and discount policy, the aims of which were to create a standardized charging system across the City based on room sizes and categories of groups e.g. older people, younger people etc. Area Management Teams were then asked to consider this policy (as a desk top exercise) against the likely impact on known existing users of directly leased centres. In Outer West's case this only applies to Calverley Mechanics Institute.
- 2.4 This desk top exercise was carried out and on the basis of this the new pricing and discount policy and a likely indication of the resulting proposed charges for current users of Calverley Mechanics Institute were presented to the Area Committee in April 2008, who in turn approved it. This approval was made with the caveat that those organizations who had received a historical discount or were a registered charity would continue to receive a 50% discount against standard charges, and those who did not receive a discount or were not charities would pay the proposed standard charges.
- 2.5 The new pricing and discount policy did not go live until Autumn 2009. It is fair to say that its introduction was not been met with resounding support from user groups across the City, some of whom have seen a marked increase in charges. Consequently, the introduction of new charges has been suspended, and users have been informed by Neighbourhood Service Team, that a further review of the proposed new charging policy will be taking place and until this has occurred, charges will revert to the old policy prices.
- 2.6 As a result of the level of dissatisfaction that has arisen across the City in response to the new charges, and specifically in Outer West Leeds, the Outer West Area Committee called for a task and finish member sub group to be established in Outer West (at their October 2009 meeting), to agree on the way forward in relation to the new pricing and lettings policy. This group, consisting of a representative from each of the three wards across the area, met on the 25th Nov 2009.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Whereas, the new pricing and discount policy which was presented to the Area Committee in April 2008 was a fair policy it has resulted in large percentage increases for many groups, some of whom have been using their community centre for years, some of whom, who, although they make a slight profit, provide activities for the local community such as youth groups, amateur dramatics and health groups. Such activities can also be perceived as having a link to the Area Committee's Area Delivery Plan themes e.g. thriving and stronger communities and learning.
- 3.2 Consequently, a revised pricing policy is needed which has the following objectives:
- supports such groups, who also help to maintain/encourage community engagement;
 - is relatively equitable across the city i.e. takes account of historical discounts etc;

- will not see a reduction in users of centres;
- does result in an increase in charges for use of centres (albeit with appropriate discount applied by user group) as charges have remained static for at least ten years, and not least in light of the fact that the decision has now been taken to allow Area Committees to keep any additional income above that which is set in the budget for community centres.

3.3 With this in mind, Neighbourhood Services Team, in conjunction with Area Management Teams across the City have arrived at a revised proposed pricing and discount policy, which is aimed at creating a more lenient policy. Appendix 1 shows the proposed user/category groups against proposed discounts (where appropriate) for Outer West. Appendix 2 shows how these proposals will affect current users of the centre.

3.4 This revised proposal was discussed with Members of the Outer West Task and Finish Member Sub Group on the 25th November 2009, who gave their support to the new proposals. In addition, this group also agreed that those groups who would see a slight –moderate increase in their charges should be encouraged to apply to their local Ward Members/Area Management for assistance in meeting these charges via MICE money/small grants.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

4.1 The introduction of a new pricing policy for community centres will ensure a consistent approach to charging for these facilities across the City.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

5.1 The new pricing policy will enable Area Committees to keep any additional income that is raised above that which is set in the community centres budget. However, this would have to be offset against potential discounts awarded to those groups who are facing a slight-moderate increase in charges.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 It is concluded that the revised pricing and discount policy as set out in Appendix 1 meet the objectives outlined in paragraph 3.2. and has been agreed by the Task and Finish Member Sub Group and therefore should be adopted.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that the revised pricing and discount policy is approved as set out in Appendix 1, and those groups who are likely to face a slight to moderate increase in charges should be encouraged to approach their local Ward Members/Area Management for assistance in meeting these charges via MICE money/small grants.

List of Background Documents:

Outer West Area Committee April 2008 – Community Centres Pricing and Lettings Policy report