



Report of the East North East Area Manager

Inner East Area Committee

Date: 4th February 2010

Subject: Community Centres Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

**Burmantofts & Richmond Hill
Gipton & Harehills
Killingbeck & Seacroft**

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 outlines three strands of community centres work within Inner East Leeds which require consideration by the Area Committee. The report:

- a. Updates the Area Committee on the review of the Pricing & Letting Policy for Inner East Leeds and seeks approval for implementation of the revised Discount Schedule.
- b. Updates the Area Committee on the current position with the closure of Harehills Place Community Centre on health & safety grounds and seek approval for the building to be declared surplus, in order to progress its disposal.
- c. Updates the Area Committee on the current position with the proposed transfer of South Gipton Community Centre to GIPSIL in order for them to secure Community Builders Funding to build a new community facility. It seeks approval for the building to be declared surplus, in order to progress this.

Purpose Of This Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - a) Update the Area Committee on the review of the Pricing & Letting Policy for Inner East Leeds and seeks approval for implementation of the revised Discount Schedule.
 - b) Update the Area Committee on the current position with the closure of Harehills Place Community Centre on Health & Safety grounds and seek approval for the building to be declared surplus.
 - c) Update the Area Committee on the current position with the proposed transfer of South Gipton Community Centre to GIPSIL in order for them to secure Community Builders Funding to build a new community facility. In order to progress this, the Committee is asked to agree for the building to be declared surplus.

Background Information

2. Since 1st July 2006 the Area Management Teams have had responsibilities for the community centres vested with the Environment & Neighbourhoods directorate. The 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.
3. The Area Committee role 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.
4. Since the last report to the Inner East Area Committee about Community Centres, three areas have arisen that require committee consideration. These are detailed below.

Main Issues

Pricings & Lettings Policy – Approval of Revised Discounts Schedule

5. 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.

6. 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. The reviewed Pricing and Lettings Policy was widely accepted and it was agreed to implement the new policy and discounts schedule from October 2010.
7. However during preparations to roll the new policy out, it became clear that it unfairly penalized many voluntary and community groups, with much larger bills than they had previously paid. Given this went against the aim to promote access to community facilities for everyone, it was agreed to put implementation on hold while an in depth review of the discounts schedule was undertaken.
8. This review has now taken place and a revised Discounts Schedule has been produced (Appendix A). This has been considered by the Area Committee Community Centre Working Group and it is felt that the new schedule now addresses the majority of concerns raised, while still meeting the aims of producing a fair, consistent and transparent Pricing & Letting Policy.
9. The Area Committee are therefore asked to consider and approve the revised Discounts Schedule, for implementation April 2010, within those directly managed community centres that it is responsible for.

Harehills Place Community Centre

10. Harehills Place Community Centre (formerly a church), located on the corner of Harehills Place and Harehills Road, was constructed in the early 1900s. There is no designated parking space for the community centre though there is on street parking on Harehills Place.
11. The centre has traditionally attracted the wider Harehills community although use has declined due to the building's poor condition and inadequate facilities.
12. Leeds City Council's Architectural Design Services, who carried out a visual survey and condition report in February 2005, rated the building as 'Grade C – Poor. Exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended. Requires major improvements to comply with DDA'.
13. In addition to the condition survey carried out in 2005, Strategic Design Alliance were commissioned to carry out a roof condition survey in May 2009. The outcome of this survey was that if the roof was repaired up to current British Standards, it would cost in the region of £125,000 excl. professional fees.
14. The building remains in a very poor condition. Corporate Property Management have advised that to upgrade the building in the current format would not be financially or operationally viable.
15. It would cost in the region of £500,000 in order to address the outstanding maintenance issues, but this would be basic repairs to bring the building up to a safe standard. It would not provide for any remodeling of the centre which would be needed to make the building fit for purpose.

16. Since this assessment was made, a site visit was undertaken on 12 November 2009 by Ian Cawthorne, who is the Health & Safety Officer for Environment and Neighbourhoods. This visit raised grave concerns about ongoing use of the building and identified items such as fire risks; fire escape routes; electrical hazards; internal roof; internal walls; Legionella; flooring; DDA compliance.
17. Given the serious nature of the concerns raised and the Council's duty of care to its users, a decision was made to cease use of this building with immediate effect.
18. Users were informed of this and were offered assistance in identifying alternative venues for their delivery. The building was then closed until a decision on its future could be made.
19. Since the closure of the centre, a couple of potential buyers have come forward and expressed an interest in purchasing this centre.
20. This information has been considered by the Area Committee Community Centre Working Group. Its view, given the buildings current state, is that to upgrade the building in the current format would not be financially or operationally viable. Therefore given the interest from potential purchasers, permanent closure of Harehills Place on health & safety grounds and subsequent disposal is seen as the best option for the centre.
21. As Harehills Place Community Centre falls under the delegation of the Inner East Area Committee, approval for permanent closure on health & safety grounds and agreement to dispose is sought from the committee. If disposal is agreed, a business case can then be drawn up and a report submitted to Executive Board, requesting that the capital receipt be ring fenced for improving other directly managed community centres in the inner east area.
22. This option would also provide an annual revenue saving to Leeds City Council, based on 2008/09 figures, of £64,098.

South Gipton Community Centre

23. As discussed at the October 2009 Area Committee, the proposal for South Gipton Community Centre is to transfer the building on an asset transfer basis to GIPSIL. This will enable them to access the Community Builders Fund (CbF). Using this funding GIPSIL proposes rebuild the centre to provide a multi-functional community centre from which they will deliver their support services and work in partnership with complimentary agencies to deliver appropriate additional support services to the local community.
24. The Community Builders Fund is a £70m investment fund which takes forward a commitment to build more cohesive, empowered and active communities. It is designed to empower citizens and communities by strengthening the resilience of multi-purpose community-led organisations across England through a mixture of financial and advisory support.
25. The type of the organisations that will be supported by the investment fund will have to have the ambition and capability to fulfill the following roles:
 - Offering a place for communities to meet.
 - Support and promote active and empowered citizens and community groups.

- Providing and hosting community services.
 - Mobilising opportunities and resources within and into a local area.
26. The application process was launched in September 2009. Key points of the fund are:
- £70 million for neighbourhood based voluntary sector organizations.
 - Bids are expected between 200k and 2 million; anticipated 80 awards.
 - Mix of capital and loan 40% capital 60% loan mix.
 - Funding to be determined within 18 months -end date March 2011, but can be provided after this date.
27. Although, development of this project is still in the early stages, a number of benefits can clearly be seen. By transferring this centre to GIPSIL, they will be able to access funding streams that we as a Local Authority cannot. Transferal would also produce an annual saving within the Community Centres Budget, as GIPSIL would take on all running costs. This would produce a reduction of circa £110,000 based on 2008/09 figures.
28. In order to progress the funding application to CbF, the Area Committee gave GIPSIL support in principle for the project idea. However, it has come to light that in order to obtain the necessary approvals through Asset Management Group and Executive Board, the Area Committee would need to declare the centre surplus to its requirements before an asset transfer could take place.
29. Given the obvious benefits that access to the CbF would give and the new community facility it would provide, the Area Committee are asked to agree that South Gipton Community Centre be declared surplus to its requirements. This however should be made with the caveat, that this is being made because of the opportunities that the Community Builders Fund offers. If the bid is unsuccessful, the committee is advised to retain the option to keep the centre.

Implications For Council Policy And Governance

30. 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

31. There are no legal implications beyond those associated with a policy change of approving the revised Discount Schedule.
32. However, there are resource implications to this report as supporting the proposals for South Gipton Community Centre and Harehills Place would entail transferring of one centre to GIPSIL and the disposal of the other. This however would enable the provision of a new community facility in Gipton while overall would reduce Leeds City Council revenue costs and create a Capital receipt.

Conclusions

33. As can be seen from this report, there are a number of critical decisions that need to be made by the Area Committee in order to progress work on the community centres portfolio within Inner East Leeds. These have been considered by the Area Committee Community Centre Working Group and their findings have been set out in this report. The committee is therefore requested to note the content of this report and support the recommendations set out below.

Recommendations

34. The Inner East Area Committee are asked to:
- a) Approve for implementation the revised Pricing & Lettings Discount Schedule.
 - b) Agree the permanent closure of Harehills Place Community Centre on health & safety grounds and approve for the building to be declared surplus to Area Committee requirements.
 - c) Agree that South Gipton Community Centre be declared surplus to Area Committee requirements, in order to progress its transfer of to GIPSIL. This agreement is made with the caveat, that this is being made because of the opportunities that the Community Builders Fund offers. If the bid is unsuccessful, the committee is advised to retain the option to keep the centre.

Background Documents

35. 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”
 - A committee report from 5th February 2009 “Community Centres Update Report”
 - A committee report from 22nd October 2009 – “Update on the Community Centre Portfolio in Inner East Leeds”.