



Agenda Item:

Originator: Stuart J. Byrne

Tel: 0113 2145875

Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate

Meeting: Inner East Area Committee

Date: 23rd September 2010

Subject: Inner East Community Centres Update Report

<p>Electoral Wards Affected:</p> <p>ALL</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)</p>	<p>Specific Implications For:</p> <p>Equality and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Council Function <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Delegated Executive Function available for Call In <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Delegated Executive Function not available for Call in Details set out in the report <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Executive Summary

The management of Community Centres became a delegated function of Area Committees in 2006-07. Delivering the Community Centres function in the current financial climate will be difficult, with budgets under increasing pressure over the next few years.

This report updates the Inner East Area Committee on progress to date with the ongoing work to develop those community centres vested with Environment & Neighbourhoods within Inner East Leeds and highlights a number of issues facing these centres.

The report also seeks approval to reconvene the Community Centre Working Group and nominate membership to it. This will enable the Area Committee to consider some of the more complex issues facing the portfolio and allow the development of an overall strategy for the community centres in Inner East Leeds.

Purpose of This Report

1. The purpose of this report is:

To update the Area Committee on the ongoing work to develop those community centres vested with Environment & Neighbourhoods within Inner East Leeds and highlights a number of issues facing these centres.

2. The report also seeks approval to reconvene the Community Centre Working Group and nominate membership to it.

Background Information

3. The Community Centres delegated function forms part of Leeds City Council's constitution, which provides the framework within which the council conducts its business and makes decisions. The constitution describes who is responsible for making decisions and how decisions are taken.

4. A detailed report outlining the delegation description was presented to all 10 Area Committees in October/November 2009. The delegation includes:

- The management of controllable revenue budgets
- Making investment decisions from their own Well Being budgets and applications for capital from the Councils Major Maintenance Fund
- Responsibility for setting charges and discounts for centres in their area within a common framework, and agree a schedule of charges for implementation.
- Allocating capital receipts arising from the disposal of a community centre to address category 1 (immediate) and 2 (essential) backlog maintenance on other Community Centres within the same area.

5. In addition, Area Management Teams on behalf of the Area Committees were given responsibility for the following functions:

- Liaising with users, user groups, Members and Area Committees on issues relating to centres in their area
- Developing proposals for re-shaping the portfolio
- Developing capital schemes and funding packages
- Monitoring the service level agreement for centres in their area and capital and revenue budgets
- Ensuring that leases and licenses are in place and reviewed periodically
- Developing, implementing and overseeing the administration of a new schedule of pricing and discounts for centre usage

Update on Inner East Area Committee Portfolio

6. Below is a summary of the current position and the work undertaken so far with those community centres vested with the Inner East Area Committee.

Alston Lane Community Centre

7. A management/user group has been established to help develop Alston Lane Community Centre. We have also been able to attract some inward investment into this centre from a number of ENEHL contractors, who have fitted a new kitchen and a

number of new windows. The centre has also been decorated throughout. The ultimate aim is to develop sustainable use of the centre, with the management group taking over responsibility of its day to day running.

Bangladeshi Community Centre

8. A management committee of local community members has been established who have, as of April 2009, taken over the running of the centre. However they are also requested additional support from Leeds City Council to help them through the first couple of years of start up. Area Management, the Neighbourhood Services Team and the management committee have been working together to determine what further support is required.

Cross Gates Community Centre

9. Discussions took 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 was not seen to be an option. There is moderate use of this centre and it causes few problems, so it was agreed that the focus on this centre was not pressing. However, with the recent cancellation of a number of bookings, it is recognised that we now need to develop a future strategy for the centre.

Ebor Gardens Community Centre

10. Is a well used centre and is also a base for the Youth Service in Burmantofts & Richmond Hill. In late 2009 the B&RH Ward Members indicated that they would like to see their £40k of Ward Based Initiative money invested in this centre. Corporate Property Management were asked to work up a scheme and also agreed to put in a similar amount to undertake backlog maintenance. This work has now been completed and has provided large scale renovation of the building, including: new roof; new toilets; new windows; décor throughout. This has been well received by users.

Harehills Place Community Centre

11. Harehills Place is in a very poor state of repair and is currently closed on Health and Safety grounds. It was suggested that the insurance money from the Pakistani Centre fire could be spent on bringing Harehills Place up to a decent standard. However, Corporate Property Management have advised that to upgrade the building in the current format would not be financially or operationally viable. 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 remodelling of the centre which would be needed to make the building fit for purpose.
12. Since this assessment was made, a site visit was undertaken on 12 November 2009 by 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. 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. 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. Since the closure of the centre, a number of potential buyers have come forward and expressed an interest in purchasing this centre.

13. 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 was sought. This was considered by the Area Committee in February 2010. Its view, given the buildings current state, was that to upgrade the building in the current format would not be financially or operationally viable. However, it requested an options paper be worked up for providing alternative community provision in Harehills as, having recently passed both the Pakistani and Bangladeshi Centres to local groups, disposing of a third centre may appear as if Leeds City Council is withdrawing its community provision within the area.
14. The current position is that while the building remains closed, Leeds City Council is still incurring a cost for maintaining it. It is unlikely that sufficient funding can be found to bring the building back into use and there is outside interest for the purchase of the building. The options paper is currently being worked up and will be subject to discussion at the Community Centre working group (referred to later in this report) with proposals for the future of the building being brought to the next Area Committee.

Henry Barran Community Centre

15. 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 is currently in place for Families Forward, a voluntary group working with the courts to provide a supervised contact for children and parents. Similar contracts are being looked at for other organisations using the centre as an office base. There are a number of large scale maintenance issues that need to be resolved within the centre. As these require large amounts of funding, these are currently in abeyance pending a review of council funding. This has led to a local perception that Leeds City Council are planning to withdraw from the centre. To counter this view, Area Management aim to establish a management/user group, to help take forward the development of the centre and promote better usage. Discussions are also ongoing with Children's Services as to the future of Children's Centre provision on the site.

Kentmere Community Centre

16. A management/user group has been established to help develop Kentmere Community 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. There are currently a number of groups that have expressed a possible interest in use of office space within the centre. These are currently being investigated. Funding of £37,500 was also identified through the Area Committee to invest within the centre. Corporate Property Management were asked to work up a scheme for refurbishing the centre. This work has now been completed and has provided large scale improvements to the building.

Lincoln Green Youth Base

17. Is generally used by the Youth Service in Burmantofts & Richmond Hill. There has been moderate use of this centre and it has caused few problems, so it was agreed that particular focus on this centre was not pressing. However, with a drop in use over the last year, it is recognised that we now need to develop a future strategy for the centre. It has also been raised with Youth Service as to why this centre was transferred to Neighbourhoods & Housing as it is primarily a base for youth delivery.

Nowell Mount Community Centre

18. The centre is generally in a good state of repair and has been decorated throughout in the last year. Work is currently ongoing to promote increased usage by a number of

local community groups. However, due to its limited size, increased usage is beginning to create capacity issues.

Richmond Hill Community Centre

19. The centre is very well used and Richmond Hill Elderly Action is based out of it. Further use of the centre by adult social services is also being explored for work with elderly people. How this would impact on the day to day management of the centre remains to be established. Richmond Hill Community Centre poses a strong opportunity for the Area Committee as a Capital investment of £250,000 had been identified to refurbish and extend the building. Corporate Property Management have been looking at what could be done with this money. However, this work is currently in abeyance due to a review of Leeds City Council finance.

Shantona Community Centre

20. Shantona Women's Group are the sole occupiers of this centre but all cost are currently being met by Environments & Neighbourhoods. This has led to discussions as to whether Shantona would like to take on a formal lease for the building. They have expressed an interest but are currently experiencing funding difficulties. Shantona Women's Group have secured £100,000 to extend the building and provide childcare facilities, which should increase their future viability. This funding however does not cover the full cost of the work and Shantona are currently trying to identify additional resources, in order to commence the work.

South Gipton Community Centre

21. Is mainly used by the Youth Service, with some Children's Centre use and is in a very poor state of repair. At the February 2010 Inner East Area Committee, it was agreed to declare the building surplus to requirements and support the asset transfer of South Gipton Community Centre to GIPSIL. The aim was to enable them to access the Community Builders Fund (CbF). Using this funding GIPSIL proposed to rebuild the centre to provide a multi-functional community centre from which they would deliver their support services and work in partnership with complimentary agencies such as Youth Service and to deliver appropriate additional support services to the local community. Unfortunately, due to the current economic climate, GIPSIL have decided to withdraw their CbF application to focus on their core business. This means that there is no future strategy for South Gipton Community Centre.

22. Given the poor state of the centre and that it is unlikely that sufficient funding can be found to bring the building back into a decent state, the Area Committee is asked to confirm that South Gipton Community Centre is still surplus to Area Committee requirements. The Community Centre Working Group would then be requested to work with users of the building to identify alternative provision for young people currently accessing this centre.

Development and Use of Community Centres

23. The Area Committees may wish to consider a range of options available to enhance the community centre service:
- Investing in centres through their Well-being fund, to improve the fabric of buildings
 - development of a marketing strategy to promote centres to users who do not access them currently
 - rationalization of centres so that resources can be directed at centres most used

- asset transfer, through sale or lease, to voluntary / community / faith groups who are better equipped to deliver services that meet local need

Community Centre Working Group

24. The Inner East Area Committee established a working group to look at a long term strategy for the development and use of community centres in inner East Leeds. It has delegated powers to act on behalf of the Area Committee and the policies and strategies developed by the group are brought back to the Area Committee for final approval. This group however has not met for some time and since the last Local Election, two members of the group no longer sit on the Area Committee.
25. Given the number of Community Centres that the Inner East Area Committee are responsible for and the range of issues outlined above which face these centres, it is recommended that the working group be reconvened and be constituted as follows:
26. Membership:
The Area Committee Chair plus one Elected Member from each ward
A representative from: Area Management;
Corporate Property management;
Neighbourhood Services Team – in attendance to provide professional advice.
27. Aim:
To put forward a long term strategy for the development and use of community centres in Inner East Leeds. These may include proposals for:
- Continued direct management by the Area Committee
 - 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
28. The Working Group shall meet as necessary and will report back to the Area Committee.
29. The Area Committee will need to approve all final decisions.

Equality Considerations

30. There is a perception that some centres are only accessible to some sections of the community. All centres need to demonstrate that they comply with the Council's equality commitments. This applies to both directly managed centres and leased centres. Advice and guidance and appropriate monitoring procedures need to be developed and implemented to better address this issue. This work will be incorporated within the centre action plans as they are developed.

Implications for Council Policy and Governance

31. The community centre issues detailed in this report comply with agreed Council policy and governance arrangements.

Legal and Resource Implications

32. The Community Centres delegated function allows the Area Committees to retain revenue savings which are made within the financial year, to enable them to deliver on their investment priorities, as identified within their local action plans or Area Delivery Plan.

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. In order to progress this work it is recommended that the Area Committee reconvene the Community Centre Working Group and that they consider the findings that 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 Committee is asked to:
- Agree the content of this report and to comment on any issue raised.
 - Reconvene the Community Centre Working Group and nominate membership to it.
 - Confirm that South Gipton Community Centre is still surplus to Area Committee requirements.