

**Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access & Performance)**

**Report to North West (Inner) Area Committee**

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2012**

**Subject: Area Update Report**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse, Kirkstall, Weetwood.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

This report provides Members with a summary of sub groups business since the December Area Committee. The report also includes an update on the referral of the West Park Centre to Scrutiny Board, an update on the current condition of Batcliffe Wood House and information on the Community Centres Pricing Policy.

**Recommendations**

The North West (Inner) Area Committee is asked to:

- Note and action as appropriate the actions and Key Messages from Sub Groups as set out in section 3.
- Note the referral of the West Park Centre to the Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board.
- Recommend that City Development Directorate review and consider Batcliffe Wood House for inclusion on the Derelict and Nuisance Property List.
- Note the information provided on the Community Centres Pricing Policy.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on recent Sub Group business and the current position relating to other project activity. The report also includes an update on the referral of the West Park Centre to Scrutiny Board, an update on the current condition of Batcliffe Wood House and information on the Community Centres Pricing Policy.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 An Area Committee update report is submitted at every cycle of Area Committee meetings unless there is no additional business to report from sub groups or any other project activity to report. Partner organisations and Council services will contribute information to the Area Update Report.

## **3 Main issues**

### **Forum and Sub Group Key Messages**

#### **3.1 Planning Sub Group**

- 3.2 The Planning sub group has met on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2013. They discussed a variety of planning applications and issues. Issues discussed include:

- § DCLG Permitted Development Consultation
- § Neighbourhood Planning
- § Neighbourhood Design Statements update
- § Core Strategy
- § Re'New and Unipol report into INW Housing Market
- § Tesco, Kirkstall District Centre
- § Headingley Cricket Stadium
- § 45 St Michaels Lane
- § Bodington Hall
- § Sukhothai, St Annes Road

- 3.3 The Area Planner Update Report also forms an agenda item for the Area Committee.

#### Key Messages

- 3.4 There were no Key Messages from the Planning Sub Group.

#### **3.5 Environment Sub Group**

- 3.6 The Environment sub group has not met since the last meeting of the North West (Inner) Area Committee. The next meeting is scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

#### Key Messages

- 3.7 There were no Key Messages from the Environment Sub Group.

### 3.8 **Joint Inner and Outer Transport Sub Group**

3.9 The Joint Inner and Outer North West Area Committee Transport Sub Group met on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2012. They discussed a variety of transport issues. Issues discussed include:

- § *New Generation Transport (NGT) update* - Member update on the current position statement and the timescales being worked to with regards the present round of consultation. Members discussed the links with the NGT and Planning. Further discussions will take place as part of the Site Allocations process.
- § *Area Bus Network Review* – Metro consulted Members on Metro’s programme of Area Bus Network Reviews and the forthcoming review in Leeds.
- § *20 mph speed limits and cycle routes* - Members reviewed 20 mph and cycle route plans for the City, including designated access routes.
- § *Site Allocations Update* - Members discussed the recent round of consultations with Planning.

Actions for discussion at the next meeting:

- § Core Strategy and Site Allocations – transport related.
- § City Deal and financial considerations

#### Key Messages

3.10 There were no key messages from the joint Transport sub group.

### 3.11 **Forum Update**

3.12 There have been no forums held since the last Area Update Report to Area Committee. A Hyde Park and Woodhouse Forum was scheduled to take place but this was cancelled due to severe weather.

### 3.13 **West Park Centre Scrutiny Board Referral**

3.14 The Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) agreed to accept the request for scrutiny in relation to West Park Centre from the North West (Inner) Area Committee, at its meeting on 24 January.

3.15 Cllr Atha, accompanied by Cllr J Bentley, presented the request on behalf of the Area Committee.

3.16 The Scrutiny Board agreed that their work will look at the decision to close the centre last autumn and the history of the centre leading up to that decision. It was agreed that the scrutiny review should take place at a full Board meeting. A date for this will need to be agreed, as the work programme for all of the remaining scheduled Board meetings is full.

- 3.17 The Board noted that the Executive Board is due to receive a report on the future of the West Park Centre at its meeting on 15 February. The Scrutiny Board agreed that it would not undertake any scrutiny activity in advance of that meeting.
- 3.18 In line with normal practice, any Executive Board decision will be subject to call in. Should this occur, then the Board will need to consider the impact for its planned review. The next meeting of the Scrutiny Board takes place on 21 February.
- 3.19 Batcliffe Wood House**
- 3.20 Batcliffe Wood House has been raised as an issue of concern for the North West (Inner) Area Committee on a number of previous occasions. Batcliffe Wood House is a large traditional stone built detached property off Queenswood Gardens, Headingley. The property was previously owned by Leeds City Council but was disposed of in 2004.
- 3.21 It was not possible to maintain the house as a single property because of its size and it is believed that whilst in the ownership of Leeds City Council, the property was divided into 4 flats which were let individually. Since the sale, the property has been occupied for most of the time as 4 flats, although there have been times when not all 4 flats have been let.
- 3.22 There is a restriction which was imposed by Leeds City Council on the property at the time of sale prohibiting the house from being let to students. The owner has previously requested that this restriction be lifted or partially lifted to allow students to live at property.
- 3.23 The property has been fully vacant since September 2010, with the site becoming increasingly dilapidated and a focus for anti-social behaviour. Local concerns are that the owner intends to destroy and demolish the property, redeveloping its location for student accommodation.
- 3.24 Based on the previous concerns in connection with the use of the property City Development Directorate took legal advice on the issues of its occupation by students, which is in breach of the restrictive covenant. Legal Services advised that the Council could potentially apply for an injunction, but the court may only choose to order damages, which would not be an adequate remedy. In light of this advice no such legal action was pursued but the owner was contacted to remind him of his obligations under the sale contract. Since then the property has become unoccupied.
- 3.25 In respect of the unacceptable state of the property, there are obligations in the sale contract that the building should not be allowed to fall into an unkempt, unsightly or unsafe condition. The Council, acting in its capacity as landowner, could attempt to enforce this obligation and bring about works to tidy the property and bring about repairs. However, the Council's Compliance Team has recently inspected the house and it was found that works are underway to renovate the property. The building is being stripped out and as there is too much rubbish for a skip, this will need to be removed by lorry. This will be done once all of the rubbish is out of the building.

3.26 Given the ongoing work, the Council Officer inspecting the building considered it not to be in an untidy condition. If at some time the house is found to be in an unacceptable condition then it may be possible for the Council to take enforcement action.

3.27 With regard to any possible future proposals to redevelop the house for student housing, any redevelopment would be subject to the receipt of planning permission. Also should the owner require bank funding for the scheme, the banks will want to be satisfied there is clean mortgagable title to the property before construction works commence. The title still contains the restriction against student lettings and this may stall a redevelopment scheme progressing. It is likely in these circumstances the Council will be approached with a request to remove or vary the restriction. This could be refused, but the grounds for refusal will be very weak if planning permission for student use has been granted and no real reason can be proved why the restriction should be retained.

3.28 Given the Area Committee concerns that the property does continue to be a nuisance it is recommended that City Development Directorate review and consider Batcliffe Wood House for inclusion on the Derelict and Nuisance Property List that the Council has produced.

### 3.29 Community Centre Pricing Policy

3.30 Clarification has been sought by Councillor J. Walker about the Community Centre Pricing Policy (Appendix 1) and those charges levied under section 13 for Political Meetings.

Category	Main Groups/Type of User	Sub Group	Charge
13.	Political Meetings	Councillor & MPs surgeries	No charge seven days per week.
		Political Group meetings	Standard Charge
		Town & Parish Councils	If Town and Parish Councils do not have a building of their own, their use of community centres will be free for meeting. For any other use they will be charged the standard charge.

3.31 The Pricing Policy was agreed by the North West (Inner) Area Committee at its meeting in February 2010 and its charges in relation to political meetings are in line with all the Area Committee policies agreed citywide.

3.32 The citywide portfolio of community centres is currently being looked at in order to ensure they are accessible and sustainable. This work is at a very early stage but further information will be brought to the Area Committee as work progresses.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Elected members have been consulted on the content of this report.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 There are no equality and diversity issues in relation to this report.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

4.3.1 The Area Committee Functions and Priority Advisory Functions were approved by the Executive Board in June 2009. This approval was rolled forward to 2010/11 and is also being rolled forward to 2011/12 with amendments to the environmental delegation. The Area Functions are included in the Council's Constitution (Part 3, section 3c).

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

4.4.1 There are no resource implications as a result of this report.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 There are no legal implications or access to information issues. This report is not subject to call in.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 There are no risk management issues relating to this report.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 This report provides members with an update on recent Sub Group business and other project work undertaken by the Area Support Team.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 The North West (Inner) Area Committee is asked to:

- Note and action as appropriate the actions and Key Messages from Sub Groups as set out in section 3.
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## **7 Background documents**

- None