

William Gascoigne Community Centre – Progress Report Member briefing February 2013

Background:

The William Gascoigne Centre, which is adjacent to the Middleton Leisure Centre, is in a poor state of repair. Middleton Leisure Centre is undergoing refurbishment which is due to be completed at the end of March 2013. Members agreed to the proposal to relocate William Gascoigne users in the leisure centre, following refurbishment, providing all users needs were met.

Officers from Sport and Active Lifestyles, Facilities Management, Corporate Property Management and Strategy and Commissioning met with William Gascoigne users during 2012 to consult on the proposals. At that time the users were:

- Middleton Mother and Tots
- People in Action (adults with learning disabilities)
- DAZL (dance group)
- Youth Service.

All users were supportive of the move to the leisure centre. With the exception of the youth group, all users visited the leisure centre to look at the available accommodation and discuss their needs. Although young people declined to visit the leisure centre, even though they were supportive of the move, youth officers did attend the site visit so are aware of the building and its facilities.

Progress:

Due to the demolition of the swimming pool at the leisure centre during autumn 2012, the William Gascoigne Centre had to be closed for four weeks as it was deemed unsafe to be kept open during the works. During this time DAZL relocated to the South Leeds Academy. They have since informed the council that they are happy to remain there and would not be returning to the William Gascoigne Centre nor relocating to the leisure centre. Therefore only the Mother and Tots, People in Action and Youth Service will be relocating.

User agreements have been drafted for these three groups, setting out their terms of occupation, responsibilities and charges. Further meetings are due to take place with the groups to go through the user agreements. Site visits will also take place as soon as it is safe to visit which is likely to be late February.

Environment and Neighbourhoods will subsidise the groups' use of the leisure centre as they currently enjoy free lettings under the current community centres pricing policy and it was agreed they were not to be financially disadvantaged by the move. If, in the future, elected members amend the pricing policy and introduce charges where use was previously free, the charges will apply to the groups who relocate from the William Gascoigne Centre.

As the external play area for the mother and tots group cannot be completed until the building refurbishment is completed, the mother and tots group will have the option of moving into the building and using it without a play area, or remaining in the William Gascoigne Centre until the play area is completed.

Parks and countryside will be carrying out the external works but cannot begin until the building is handed back to Sport and Active Lifestyle on satisfactory completion of the refurbishment.

The building will be declared surplus in due course. Demolition of the William Gascoigne Centre is expected to place within a reasonable timescale, following the decant of all users. This will reduce the risk of the building becoming an eyesore and attracting criminal or anti-social behaviour.