

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE
CABINET

Date: 20th January 2016

1. **REPORT TITLE** Progress on implementing actions from the Community Centre Review

Submitted by: Dave Adams - Executive Director (Operational Services)

Portfolio: Leisure, Culture and Localism

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To update members on progress in implementing the actions from the Community Centre Review.

Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to:

- a) Note the progress made in implementing the Community Centre Review actions and recognise that there is still further work to be done.
- b) Approve the continuation of the Cabinet Panel to provide ongoing oversight of the implementation of the Community Centres Review Action Plan.

Reasons

To ensure the Council's Community Centres assist in meeting the needs of local communities and that their work incorporates the recommendations of the review and subsequent proposals made by the Cabinet Panel.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Community Centre Review concluded in December 2014 and was reported to Cabinet for approval of the action plan and a Cabinet Panel was established to oversee the implementation of actions in relation to the review of the Council's 15 community centres.
- 1.2 Many of the associated management committees were established in 1999 from representatives of the various user groups from the centres and often involved local members on the committee. Over time, some flourished, whilst others dwindled and were left to one or two

individuals to manage and two committees folded, returning the responsibility (and the keys) to the Council. It was this that prompted the review along with recognition of the need to redefine the role of local members in supporting management committees.

- 1.3 To establish a new framework to take matters forward the Council undertook the following 7 steps:
 - a) Invited all those involved in the running of our community centres to a series of meetings to get an understanding of the challenges they faced, the support they needed, their future aspirations and opportunities to improve their governance and business.
 - b) With the support of VAST who offer support and advice to Staffordshire's Voluntary and Community Sector, these meetings developed into a useful network for the voluntary management committees and they have become a lot more self-reliant as a result.
 - c) Public consultation events were held at each centre to gather the views of users and a public survey was circulated in the communities. The results were presented to the network to inform improvements at each centre.
 - d) Improvement plans were also informed by a condition survey and valuation of the asset.
 - e) New committee members were recruited where needed and a management hand book produced for each centre. Each management committee was trained in the use of the hand book.
 - f) The results of the review were reported to Cabinet and a Cabinet Panel established to roll out an action plan that would improve the governance arrangements and financial management of the centres. A key aim is to develop the capacity for many of the community centres to be managed under a full repairing lease.
 - g) The Cabinet Panel and officers are working with each community centre on an individual basis as the strengths and weaknesses of each centre are very different.

2 **Issues**

- 2.1 The following is a summary of the situation in relation to each community centre:

Audley Community Centre, Audley

- 2.2 The management committee have sufficient reserves to take on a long term full repairing lease, subject to detailed negotiations. This may result in a capital sum being paid to the Council based on a formal valuation of the premises to be undertaken by the District Valuer.

Bradwell Lodge, Bradwell

- 2.3 The current 3 year lease with the management committee Community Interest Company (C.I.C) expires in December 2015. The company have sufficient funds to take on a long term internal repairing lease, subject to detailed negotiations. Given the fact that Bradwell Lodge is a

Grade II Listed Building the C.I.C feel unable to give consideration to a full repairing lease.

Butt Lane Community Centre, Butt Lane

- 2.4 Following the establishment of a new management committee in 2011 and subsequent changes, Butt Lane is operating successfully as a community centre. The building is in good condition overall. Therefore discussions regarding moving to a lease will be picked up as capacity permits, following further progress with some of the other community centres.

Clayton Community Centre, Clayton

- 2.5 Officers are currently exploring a joint lease arrangement with the football club that is licensed to use the adjacent football pitches.

Harriet Higgins Community Centre, Poolfields

- 2.6 This centre has been leased to St Georges Scout Group for a period of 30 years from 1 September 2015. The new committee have been successful in winning Signal Radio Community SOS and have gained support from local businesses to refurbish the centre. The work includes new toilets, new kitchen, resealing of the main hall floor and redecoration throughout.

Marsh Hall Community Centre, Wolstanton

- 2.7 The building is in good condition overall. It is well used as a playgroup, but this can be a limiting factor on bookings at other times. Some further improvements have been made with the introduction of the new constitution and management hand book and therefore discussions regarding moving to a lease will be picked up as capacity permits, following further progress with some of the other community centres.

Ramsey Road Community Centre, Cross Heath

- 2.8 Heads of Terms have been issued to the St John's Ambulance for a 25 year full repairing lease on the basis of an annual rental fee.

Red Street Community Centre, Chesterton

- 2.9 The facility was comprehensively refurbished by the Council in 2014. Heads of Terms for a full repairing lease have been issued to the management committee who are working jointly with the football club (who use the adjoining pitches).

Silverdale Community Centre, Silverdale

- 2.10 The building requires alterations due to structural issues with part of the facility, along with boiler replacement, electrical refurbishment and new windows. Consequently, currently there is no desire by the management committee to enter into a lease at this time.

Silverdale Social Centre, Silverdale

- 2.11 The facility is home to Silverdale Boxing Club and Bradwell Table Tennis Club. The boxing club is willing to consider taking on a long

term lease subject to clarification of the long term capital liabilities for the building.

Holly Road Community Centre, Crackley

- 2.12 In spite of repeated attempts over many years it has not been possible to form a sustainable management committee at the centre. This has resulted in very few bookings and limited use. The responsibility has, for some time, fallen to one person who has now reached the stage whereby they are unable to continue in that role. It is anticipated that the keys will be returned to the Council by mid-January 2016. At this point in time the building's use as a community centre will cease and as there is no known operational need for the building it would be appropriate to consider alternative uses for the site as part of the Council's Asset Management Strategy.

Knutton Community Centre, Knutton

- 2.13 Major re-roofing and replacement windows are required, so there is no desire on the part of the management committee to enter into a lease arrangement at this time. Also as part of the centre is sublet for childcare an instruction has been issued for the District Valuer to reassess the rateable value of the centre.

Chesterton Community Centre, Chesterton

- 2.14 A considerable amount of capital works are required to address the building condition to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. It has become evident that a commercial nursery operates from the first floor and as a result a request was made earlier this year to re-evaluate the National Non Domestic Rates, around which further discussions are needed prior to commencing discussions next year around lease arrangements.

Wye Road Community Centre, Seabridge

- 2.15 There is an amount of capital works required so presently there is no desire on the part of the management committee to have further discussions in relation to a lease at this time.

Whitfield Community Centre, Thistleberry

- 2.16 The building is in good condition overall. Some further improvements have been made with the introduction of the new constitution and management hand book and therefore discussions regarding moving to a lease will be picked up as capacity permits, following further progress with some of the other community centres.

Next Steps

- 2.17 Actions so far have concentrated on either those centres where the management committees are willing to take on a lease or those that have needed the most input from officers and Members. This has left a small group in the middle that are financially stable and with centres that are in buildings which are in reasonably good condition and which have had a relatively light touch approach to date. As the Cabinet

Panel's work continues, Members and officers will be in a position to work with the management committees of these centres to apply best practice from the lessons learned so far.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 That the progress made with implementation of the Community Centres Action Plan is noted and that consideration is given to the continuation of the Cabinet Panel to continue to oversee implementation of the Action Plan.

4. Reasons for Preferred Solution

- 4.1 Producing the hand book was something that our volunteers asked for. It has proved really useful for us to specify what the Council and key stakeholders wanted from our community centres and as a management tool for them. It can also enable officers to monitor their compliance.
- 4.2 The role of the Cabinet Panel and local Members in the process has been critical in engaging, supporting and developing management committee volunteers. Prior to the review, some felt they had become burdened with the responsibility for their local community centre without proper recognition. Through the implementation of the review, it has been possible to improve and enhance the help available so that our volunteers feel more supported and valued. Some have now gone on to develop their own vision and achieve their aspirations through the project.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) requires efficiency savings of approximately £4.8m through to 2020. Savings targets for Community Centres are set at £70,000 over this period, to be delivered at approximately £14,000pa from 2015/16.
- 5.2 In 2015/16 this has been achieved by payment of business rates, electricity, water and trade waste collection by all occupied Community Centres and a reduction in grant given by the Council.
- 5.3 In future years this will be achieved by a further reduction in grant given by the Council and reduction in repairs and maintenance following grant of full leases to Community Centre committees.

6. Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

- 6.1 The provision of accessible community facilities contributes to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. There will be a positive impact on those relating to health

improvement, quality of life, and support for disadvantaged communities, community safety and potentially broader regeneration objectives for the Borough.

7. Legal and Statutory Implications

7.1 The Council has powers, under the Local Government Act 2000, to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough's residents.

8. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 The implementation of the recommendations and action plan is in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policy and procedures to enhance community cohesion.

9. Major Risks

9.1 A risk log is maintained and reviewed for the community centre review.

10. Key Decision Information

10.1 This proposal affects more than one ward

11. Previous Cabinet Decisions

11.1 10 December 2014

12. List of Appendices

None

13.. Background Papers

13.1 None

14. Management Sign-Off

Each of the designated boxes need to be signed off and dated before going to Executive Director/Corporate Service Manager for sign off.

	Signed	Dated
Financial Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Risk Implications Discussed and Agreed		

Legal Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Equalities Implications Discussed and Agreed		
H.R. Implications Discussed and Agreed		
ICT Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Report Agreed by: Executive Director/ Head of Service		