

COMMUNITY CENTRE REVIEW

Submitted by: Executive Director – Operational Services

Portfolio: Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek authority to commence a review of Community Centres provided by the Council and to establish a project group to undertake this work.

Recommendations

(a) That Cabinet agree the scope and timeframe for the Community Centre review and the establishment of a project working group.

(b) That Cabinet agree to receive a future report in relation to the modernisation of Community Centre Provision within the Borough.

Reasons

To facilitate the decision-making and delivery processes regarding the provision of Community Centres for the residents of the Borough.

1. Background

1.1 There are fifteen Community Centres within the Borough, which are currently operated by local management committees under an informal management agreement. Given the nature of this agreement there are a number of key issues that need to be addressed to ensure the long term sustainability of the Councils Community Centres which are as follows:

- ◇ There are a limited amount of resources within the repairs and renewals fund and capital programme for maintaining the Community Centres. Given this situation the Council allocates the spending of this limited resource on a needs basis which often means funds are not equally disseminated across all fifteen community centres which has lead to different standards of community centre provision across the Borough, meaning some centres are more appealing to hirers than others.
- ◇ The current management agreement between the Council and local management committees prevents applications being made to several external funding bodies given that the management committees are unable to demonstrate security of tenure. This issue is becoming increasingly important for the management committees given the budgetary pressures that currently exist within the public sector in order to ensure their long term sustainability.
- ◇ The degree of performance information in relation to each of the fifteen community centres is limited. As a result resources support is generally provided to the management committees on a reactive basis not necessarily related to need or demand.

1.2 Given the key issues identified above it is proposed to undertake a full review of the provision of Community Centres within in the Borough to ensure that the servcies delivered from them meet the needs of our communities as well as value for money for the Council

2. **Issues**

2.1 In order to adequately undertake the review of the Boroughs fifteen Community Centres it is proposed to establish a project review team to adequately assess the provision of the Community Centres across the Borough. The role of the team of the team will be to:

- ◇ Ensure transparency and equity in resourcing Community Centres in order to provide effective services to local people.
- ◇ Provide continuously improving community facilities and centres, which meet local need and achieve the aspirations of neighbourhoods.
- ◇ Achieve management of buildings and centres by having agreed leases in place with all Community Centres who are in a position to accept one by April 2013.
- ◇ Achieve a better quality of service by ensuring Community Centres are fit for purpose – this will be determined by use, user views, community aspirations and building quality.
- ◇ Develop capacity and maximise resources through increased support to volunteers and Community Centre management committees through the working group. This should help centres access external funding.
- ◇ Provide a more diverse range of activities being delivered from Community Centres by developing capacity in communities and explore transferring Council assets to community groups where it is appropriate to do so.
- ◇ Provide better services provided through an improved network of Community Facilities including those that are operated by partner organisations, the private sector and or the third sector in the Borough which ensure quality and meet local need. This is likely to include the re-provision of a number of Community Centres.
- ◇ Better services by ensuring that the re-provision of Centres does not result in a reduction or removal of a service, rather than the improvement of a service.

2.2 The table below sets out an initial timetable and work programme for the team.

Action	Completed by
Community Centre Project Review Team in place	July 2012
Review of the existing physical and social infrastructure in the vicinity of each facility, including consultation with users and non-users of the centres to establish local needs and barriers to wider usage.	October 2012
Review the capacity of each Community Centre management committee identifying specific training and other development needs.	October 2102
Identify key gaps in service provision and work with management committees to develop a business plan for their community centre that will ensure its longer-term sustainability. This could include identifying opportunities for asset transfer.	Timetable to be developed based on above assessment with aim to complete by April 2013
Cabinet report providing an update on the work undertake by the project review team.	January 2013
Identify a range of funding to meet both capital	February 2013

investment needs and for ongoing revenue support.	
Develop options for the long term sustainability and management of Community Centres in partnership with the community and voluntary sector.	March 2013
Review management arrangements linked to the options above and implement proposals.	From April 2013

2.3 It is envisaged that the community centre review will be driven by the Councils Leisure Strategy Manager who will report directly to the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, with regular updates being provided to the Cabinet Member with a responsibility for Stronger Active Neighbourhoods. However it should be noted that and input will be required from other service areas within the Council, although not exhaustive, including:

- ◇ Assets and Regeneration
- ◇ Finance
- ◇ Business improvement and Partnerships
- ◇ Central Services
- ◇ Planning

2.5 A longer-term aim of the Community Centre provision in the Borough will be to deliver effective community based activities that are provided through a well located network of high quality community centres, providing services our communities want and that are well managed and resourced. To achieve this, the project will work closely with partners, and third sector agencies to ensure that those organisations that become independent are linked into the appropriate support networks.

3 **Proposal**

3.1 That Cabinet agree the scope and timeframe for the Community Centre review and the establishment of a project working group.

3.2 That Cabinet agree to receive a future report in relation to the modernisation of Community Centre Provision within the Borough.

4. **Reasons for the Preferred Solution**

4.1 To enable key decisions to be made in accordance with the work programme identified in section 2.3 of this report, and to achieve the Council's vision for Community Centre provision of delivering effective community based activities that are provided through a well located network of high quality community centres, providing services people want and that are managed and well resourced.

5. **Financial and Resource Implications**

5.1 It should be noted that the Community Centre review will be carried out within existing revenue resources of the Council

5.2 The current budget for the provision for Community Centres for the financial year 2012-13 has been set at £203,560 excluding central establishment costs. It is therefore envisaged that the community centre review will ensure that this valuable resource is spent in an effective and efficient manner whilst still maintaining a service that meets the needs of the

Boroughs Communities.

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 As part of the Community Centre review and the implementation of any recommendations, an equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Overall any changes will be made in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policy and procedures to enhance community cohesion.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 A full risk assessment/log will be developed in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Risk Manager and will be subject to regular review.

10. **Key Decision Information**

- 10.1 It is proposed that in order to achieve the aim of the Council for Community Centre provision across the Borough, that the following outcomes will be achieved as a result of the Community Centre review:

- ◇ Transparency and equity in resourcing Community Centres in order to provide effective services to local people.
- ◇ To ensure that the Community Centres continuously improve, and meet the aspirations of local neighbourhoods.
- ◇ To develop capacity and maximise resources through increased support through the Community Centre commissioning group. This should help the existing management committees access external funding.
- ◇ A more robust management structure for community centres.
- ◇ Increased capacity and competencies within local communities, enabling the Council to explore transferring Council assets to community groups where it is appropriate to do so.

11. **Previous Cabinet Decisions**

None

12. **List of Appendices**

None