

**A REVIEW OF COMMUNITY CENTRE PROVISION BY
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Draft Brief for Review

Version 2

Section 1

1.1 Purpose of the review

Newcastle Borough Council is keen to work in partnership, to further develop its ability to deliver services that meet the needs of local communities in an effective and efficient manner. The Borough currently has fifteen community centres through which a variety of activities are delivered but the impact is unknown, and therefore Cabinet approval was given in July 2012 to review how they are run, how they are used, and what their potential for the future might be.

With the increased national government focus on increased multi-agency neighbourhood working and the Localism Act, there is an opportunity to look at how well the community centres supported by the Council currently serve their local communities and how they could be utilised more effectively and efficiently in addition to understanding what other facilities they are in competition with.

Against this climate a review of the Borough's fifteen Community Centres is required that:

- Analyses the area profiles and identifies with the Council, stakeholders and partners how the use of community centres contributes to meeting local priorities
- Makes recommendations on the possible options for each community centre in terms of area priorities, service delivery options and fitness for purpose
- Develops a series of options for the future use and management of community centres
- Produces a final report including key findings and recommendations.

Section 2: Proposed Methodology of the Review

It is proposed that the methodology employed for the review will combine a desk top investigation, structured interviews, discussions with key individuals & partners, market research, and review of local and national impact.

In summary it is proposed to focus on the following key issues as part of this review|:

- A desk top study of current centre usage, of staffing, of income and expenditure, and of historic stock condition surveys.
- Interviews with key managers, politicians, service providers, and voluntary sector agencies to gain overviews of the issues, and to test out possible scenarios and options for some or all of the centres.
- A review of Management Committee's capacities, and the scope for enhancing these.
- Structured interviews with a sample of users (groups & individuals) of each of the fifteen centres.
- Structured interviews with a sample of residents.
- A review of National policies i.e. The Localism Act, and assessment of the potential impact for the Council.
- SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, option appraisal, risk assessment and recommendations for each individual centre.

Section 3: Local and National Context

The local context

The Council currently owns fifteen community centres within the confines of the Boroughs Boundary. These vary in the degree of the activities provided, their facility mix, stock condition, locality, the level of competition from the immediate market place; however they are all operated by volunteers under an informal management agreement which has a range of issues that need to be addressed as part of the review of the Community Centres.

1. Audley Community Centre – Audley LAP.
2. Bradwell Lodge Community Centre – East Newcastle LAP.
3. Butt Lane Community Centre – Butt Lane LAP.
4. Chesterton Community Centre – Greater Chesterton LAP.
5. Clayton Community Centre – Clayton LAP.
6. Harriet Higgins Community Centre – Town, Thistleberry & Poolfields LAP.
7. Holly Road Community Centre - Greater Chesterton LAP.
8. Knutton Community Centre – Knutton/Cross Heath LAP.
9. Marsh Hall Community Centre - East Newcastle LAP.
10. Ramsey Road Community Centre - Knutton/Cross Heath LAP.
11. Red Street Community Centre - Greater Chesterton LAP.
12. Silverdale Community Centre – Silverdale, Parksite & Keele LAP.
13. Silverdale Social Centre - Silverdale, Parksite & Keele LAP.
14. Whitfield Community Centre - Town, Thistleberry & Poolfields LAP.
15. Wye Road Community Centre – Clayton LAP.

Over time there has been a variety of changes at local and national level which have impacted on the current approach and necessitated the current need for change. The move towards greater diversity in provision and the range of providers to meet shifting needs and social preferences of the public, has heralded change at a local and national level about how best to deliver community provision.

Key changes affecting the Borough's community centres and their role in serving local communities in recent times can be identified:

- Overall, citizens enjoy greater mobility and have more specialised interests, networking opportunities and access to a greater diversity of social and leisure choices
- There has been a significant growth from other voluntary, public and private sector providers in the development of modern flexible use facilities
- For the numbers of people using many of the community centres compared to the cost of providing them, it may prove to not be the most cost effective model for meeting community needs.

There has been a move towards working through the ten locality areas in the Borough through eleven Local Area Partnerships (LAP's), eight of which have one or more Community Centres in their area (see above). The LAP's have been established to encourage key people, including local residents, community groups and partner agencies, to plan and oversee improvement plans for each of these areas, and can provide an opportunity for consultation.

The National Context

Local government plays a crucial role in the life of the communities it serves. It is directly responsible for vital public services, from street lighting, housing, waste collection and community facilities which often act as the focal point of an area.

Central Government is committed to passing on new powers and freedoms to local councils who have the direct responsibility for delivering local services, and as a direct result the Localism Act 2011 will have the following implications for the services it delivers, such as the provision of community centres:

- Makes it easier for local people to bid to take over the amenities they feel strongly about and retain them as part of their local life.
- Ensures that local social enterprises, volunteers or community groups with a bright idea for improving local services get a chance to say how things are done.
- Enables local residents to call to account local authorities for the careful management of tax payer's money.

Section 4: Vision for the Centres

In order to adequately undertake the review of the Borough's fifteen community centres, on 20 June 2012 Cabinet agreed:

- The scope and timeframe for the community for the community centre review and the establishment of a project working group.
- To receive a further report in relation to the modernisation of community centre provision within the Borough.
- That the scrutiny coordinating committee form a working group or task and finish group to shadow the work of the project group and as part of its work visit each site, speak with committees, users and make recommendations to the Cabinet of the future of centres.
- That an interim report be submitted to Cabinet with a detailed plan of how the review will be conducted, including engagement with management committees and stakeholders, having obtained the task and Finish groups view on the plan.
- That regular progress and update reports and provided to the task and finish group on a regular basis.

The objectives of the community review will be as follows:

- To ensure transparency and equity in resourcing Community Centres in order to provide effective services to local people.
- To provide continuously improving community facilities and centres, which meet local need and achieve the aspirations of neighbourhoods.
- To ensure better use of resources by establishing a single resource for Community Centres. Resources will be allocated transparently and according to the Community Partnership Agreement with the Community Association.
- Better management of buildings and centres by having robust governance & performance management arrangements in place.
- 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.
- 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.
- Better services provided through an improved network of Community Centres 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.

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

Action	Completed by
Community Centre Commissioning Team in place	August 2012
Review of the existing physical and social infrastructure in the vicinity of each facility.	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.
Identify a range of funding to meet both capital investment needs and for ongoing revenue support.	February 2013
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

Section 5: Appraisal of current Community Centre provision within the Borough

The brief requires an assessment of the value of community centres in meeting local priorities. This appraisal will be carried out by visiting each centre, by conducting interviews with key staff, volunteers and users and thorough desk top study. A summary of the whole portfolio follows.

Financial Assessment:

- Improved revenue position

- Competition
- NNDR Savings
- Financial management

Social Assessment

- Views of the local community
- Views of local users of the centre
- Views of partners
- Views of non users of the community centres
- Other community provision within the locality of community centres

Quality Assessment

- Delivery of services
- Marketing
- Health and safety
- Management committee competencies

Physical Assessment

- Stock condition reports
- Design of building
- Scope of improvements

Economic Assessment

- Capital investment
- External funding
- Economic climate
- Capital Receipt's
- Management alternatives

<h2>Section 6: Structure for reporting findings</h2>

It is proposed to review each of the fifteen community centres on a ward basis using the criteria set out in section 5 of this brief. Following the review it is proposed to present findings for each community centre under the following headings:

- Location and description of the area.
- Centre Description.
- Summary of key users and centre programme.
- Financial position statement for the centre.
- Vision for the Community Centre.
- Proposal for the community centre.
- Timeframe for implementation of the proposal.