



To: Executive Cllr Community Development and Health  
Report by: Trevor Woollams (Head of Community Development)  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services March 14<sup>th</sup> 2013  
Wards affected: All

## Future Management of the Council's Community Centres

### Key Decision

#### 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the conclusions of a review of the way the Council's community centres should be managed into the future to ensure they are protected for community use in a climate of reducing public sector resources.
- 1.2 The community centres are primarily based in the north and east of the city in wards with higher deprivation levels. They provide affordable, accessible and comfortable spaces for residents and groups to meet and participate in activities. In line with the community development strategy, the centres are promoted to our priority groups which have higher levels of need. We get around 130,000 visits a year from our priority groups across our 5 main centres.
- 1.3 The report highlights the key drivers for the review which are long term financial sustainability and greater participation by local residents in the management of their local centres. It notes that Cambridge City Council is unusual amongst District Councils in still directly managing its own community centres.
- 1.4 The report notes that the Council's centres and the staff that run them are highly valued and there is little desire from other facility providers or members involved in the review for wholesale change (for example by outsourcing all the centres to a Community Trust).
- 1.5 Instead, the review concludes that the Council's strategy in terms of community centre management should be to:

- a) Continue to employ its own staff to run its community centres but that staff will actively seek ways of reducing running costs through efficiencies and/or increasing income.
- b) Seek to engage local residents to form community boards or associations which would work with their centre managers to shape management decisions and discuss ways to reduce costs or increase income.
- c) Where community groups or associations express an interest in taking over the running of a centre, to positively support them, helping to build their capacity and learning from the successful transfer of Trumpington Pavilion which is leased to and managed by local residents.

1.6 This incremental approach is aimed at sustaining the Council's community centres over the longer term whilst increasing the sense of community ownership and reducing the net cost of the service.

## **2. Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- 2.1 To agree the strategy for the management of the Council's community centres 2013-2016 as set out in Section 7 of this report
- 2.2 To endorse the approach being taken by partners to develop management arrangements for the new multi-use centre at Clay Farm.

## **3. Context**

- 3.1 The context for this review is the need for the Council to find ways of ensuring it can protect the community centres that it owns for the benefit of local residents. The Council needs to do this within a financial climate where it also has to make significant savings over the next 4 or 5 years.
- 3.2 The community centres are primarily based in the north and east of the city in wards with higher deprivation levels. They provide affordable, accessible and comfortable spaces for residents and groups to meet and participate in activities. This helps to build community cohesion, strengthen local neighbourhoods and improve the confidence of some of our more vulnerable residents. In line with the community development strategy, the centres are promoted to our priority groups which have higher levels of need. We get around 130,000 visits a year from our priority groups across our 5 main

centres (Meadows, Brown's Field, Buchan Street, Ross Street and 82 Akeman Street) plus a further 28,000 visits from non-priority groups.

<b>Number of visits:</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13 (to Dec)</b>
Children	20,478	27,939	20,209
Young people	10,503	8,839	5,762
Older people	8,647	10,014	5,773
Families	40,466	34,439	28,209
Local people	31,151	37,812	22,622
People with disabilities	6,710	8,405	6,215
BAME	6,347	4,900	5,532
<b>Total Priority groups</b>	<b>124,302</b>	<b>132,348</b>	<b>94,322</b>
<b>Total non-priority groups</b>	<b>28,773</b>	<b>28,051</b>	<b>22,403</b>

3.3 The net cost to the Council of managing its community centres is £525k. Some staff have dual roles, both managing a centre and providing community development support in the community. Their community development hours have been removed from this calculation to focus on the actual cost of running the community centres. The figures include normal repairs and renewal costs (currently under review as part of a corporate process) but do not include capital depreciation.

3.4 The centres included in the calculations are shown in the following table:

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Net Cost (13/14 budget)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Meadows	£264k	Includes the youth and family wings and cafe
Buchan Street	£68k	Has some key holders
Browns Field	£124k	The team of Project Workers based at the centre is now managed by ChYpPS
Ross Street	£24k	Has some key holders
82 Akeman Street	£18k	Has some key holders
37 Lawrence Way	£8k	Managed by Kings Hedges Neighbourhood Partnership
Nun's Way Pavilion	£10k	Managed by KHNP from April 2013.
St.Luke's Barn	£9k	Managed by St,Luke's School (under review)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£525k</b>	

3.5 In addition, the move towards localism and greater community involvement in the way the Council runs its centres means we need to

find ways to support residents and community groups who wish to play an active part in the way their local community centres are managed.

- 3.6 The Community Right to Challenge enables voluntary groups or organisations to challenge local authorities to let them take over the running of a particular service. Should this happen with one or more of the Council's community centres, the Council would need to assess the challenge and, if it were sound, run a procurement exercise which would open up the opportunity to any organisation, voluntary or private. The risk with this approach is that the successful bidder may not be a local, or voluntary sector, organisation. Officers believe that a consensual approach, with the Council working with local residents who express an interest in running their local centre (as happened with Trumpington Pavilion) is much more appropriate.
- 3.7 There will also be some major new community facilities provided over the next 3 or 4 years within the growth sites. The fact that they are new means that we can design them with different management models in mind which are sustainable, build in community involvement and minimise revenue costs for the Council.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 A review of the management of the Council's Community Centres was set out in the Community Development and Health Portfolio Plan for 2012/13. The Head of Community Development has been supported in the review by Marilyn Taylor (of Marilyn Taylor Associates) who has extensive experience of community development, and community facility provision and management, across both the public and voluntary sector. Marilyn has provided both knowledge and independent challenge to the review.
- 4.2 The objectives for the review were confirmed at this Scrutiny Committee's meeting in June 2012 as:
- To protect access to the City Council's community centres for all residents, including our most vulnerable and disadvantaged, into the future.
  - To build upon and strengthen the sense of 'community ownership' for each centre currently owned and managed by the City Council.
  - To ensure the community centres currently owned and managed by the city council have strong governance and management

arrangements that are affordable and sustainable over the longer term.

- To ensure new community facilities planned for the growth sites at Clay Farm and NIAB1 have management arrangements that ensure the facilities are accessible to all residents, including our most vulnerable and disadvantaged, and that are affordable and sustainable over the longer term.

## **Phase 1**

- 4.3 Phase 1 of this review involved an independent assessment of the community centres managed by Council staff and workshops with centre staff. The Phase 1 report by Marilyn Taylor was reported to this committee in June 2012.
- 4.4 In summary, the Phase 1 report concluded that the community centres managed by Council staff are well run, well used and well maintained. The activities within the centres are predominantly promoting health and well-being and are generally aimed at more disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in line with the Community Development's service priorities. Whilst community development expertise is seen as a vital component within the centre management staff teams, it was recognised that building management responsibilities dominated staff time.
- 4.5 The Phase 1 report also highlighted that whilst community use of the centres was high, involvement of local residents in the management of the centres was low and mainly restricted to the use of approved key holders in all the centres except The Meadows Community Centre and Brown's Field Youth and Community Centre.
- 4.6 In terms of centre provision in other areas of the country, Marilyn highlighted a long-standing trend for community centres to be transferred to community management. In fact, Cambridge is now unusual in still directly managing most of its community centres.
- 4.7 The Phase 1 report recommended that 3 options should be explored in Phase 2 of the review with respect to the Council's existing community centres that it directly manages. These were agreed at this committee's meeting in June 2012:
- a) Promoting wider community involvement and partnership
    - Greater use of keyholders
    - Closer work and shared resources with other providers
    - Community involvement in the operation of centres

- b) Externalising facilities management (buildings maintenance and cleaning)
- c) Community / social enterprise management  
This could be a wholesale transfer to a single trust, individual centre transfers to suitable community organisations (in a similar way to Trumpington Pavilion), or the transfer of a cluster of centres (e.g. in the north of the City).

## **5. Phase 2**

5.1 Phase 2 of the review was completed in January 2013 and included:

- A survey and analysis of 25 other community facility providers in the City
- 2 workshops (20<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013) bringing together the Council's centre staff, ward councillors and other providers of community facilities within the City.
- Analysis of provision in a selection of other Authority areas.

5.2 The survey of other community facility providers looked at issues around funding, facility use and challenges and the findings informed the workshops. In summary the key findings were:

- Turnover ranged from under £20k to over £100k a year.
- Use profiles were similar to the Council managed facilities and were predominantly community based groups.
- The greatest challenges were fundraising, finding volunteers and keeping the buildings maintained.
- However, most providers are positive about the future with a number planning improvements to their facilities and more planning to broaden their use.
- Some providers wanted to increase the amount of volunteers and community groups involved in the running of their facilities.

### **Workshop 1**

5.3 The first workshop took place on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and explored the potential for closer collaboration between the Council managed centres and those managed by other providers. Many of the other providers taking part had a paid centre manager or administrator who arranged bookings, cleaning and general maintenance. They were usually supported by some volunteers who acted as trusted key holders. This model is broadly similar to the management arrangements at the Council's smaller centres (not at the Meadows

and Brown's Field) where staffing is minimal and the activities at the centres are mainly provided by groups hiring rooms at the centres.

- 5.4 There was little real enthusiasm from those participating for wholesale changes to create shared management arrangements between Council run centres and centres managed by other providers. Retaining independence and control over their own local facility was important to the other providers. However, there was strong support for closer collaboration between the Council managed centres and other providers. In particular, around issues such as building repairs and maintenance, shared promotion of the facilities and closer networking between staff to exchange ideas and knowledge and to help with advice when problems arise.
- 5.5 Participants agreed that it was important to work incrementally to build trust and capacity and strengthen support mechanisms over time so that we would collectively be better placed to help a provider who found themselves in a crisis situation at some time in the future.
- 5.6 Some of the other providers acknowledged the capital funding support that they had received from the Council's developer contributions which had helped to pay for improvements to their facilities.

## **Workshop 2**

- 5.7 The second workshop took place on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013. This workshop focused firstly on practical ideas for collaboration and agreed that we should:
  - a) Set up a simple web-based directory of all the main community facilities in Cambridge and its immediate surroundings. We should ask Cambridgeshire.net to host the directory which would provide links to each provider's website and/or provide details of rooms available and contact details.
  - b) Organise quarterly network meetings for centre staff from both the Council managed centres and other providers. The meetings would be themed and guest speakers could be invited to inform participants. These meetings could be used to explore some of the common issues raised in workshop 1 such as bulk buying opportunities, reliable and affordable maintenance contractors, insurance, entertainment licenses etc.
  - c) Maintain an e-mail group of centre managers so that members of the group had quick access to other managers if they needed help or advice or mutual support.

- 5.8 Participants then focused on the sustainability of the community centres managed by Council staff given the challenging budget savings facing the Council in the next 4 or 5 years. It was noted that whilst the Council's Community Development service provided crucial support across the city, it was entirely discretionary. Many other Councils either did not provide such services or provided very basic services. Those Councils that had their own community facilities had handed over the management to Trusts or residents' groups, often with little back up support if things went wrong.
- 5.9 The workshop noted that whilst there appeared to be little support for wholesale change, the Council had to look at ways of reducing the net cost of its community centres. Participants discussed ideas about how savings might be made and/or income increased. There was a strong view that the staff working in the Council's centres should be involved in generating ideas and in taking some of the ideas from the workshop forward.
- 5.10 The workshop also agreed that local residents should be encouraged to get involved in the running of their local Council community centre through community boards or associations which would work with their centre manager to shape management decisions and discuss ways to reduce costs and/or increase income.
- 5.11 Again, the workshop supported an incremental approach so that the strength of local resident involvement and sense of ownership in their local centre could grow over time alongside measures to reduce the net running cost of the centres. There was a recognition that local residents may not want to get involved in management issues or that it may take a significant amount of time and effort to build local interest. If and when the community associations expressed a desire to take over the management of a centre, staff would support them both to build their capacity and to make sure they had a model that was financially sound.
- 5.12 The Council does already have examples of resident's groups managing its community centres. Trumpington Residents Association successfully manage Trumpington Pavilion and Kings Hedges Neighbourhood Partnership (KHNP) will start managing Nun's Way Pavilion from April 2013 under a service level agreement. KHNP already manage 37 Lawrence Way with the assistance of community development staff.



## 6. Conclusions

6.1 The conclusions from the review are:

- Strong support for the Council's community centre provision which is primarily located in the areas of the city with the highest deprivation levels.
- Valued the staff working in the Council's community centres
- Lots of other community facility providers in the city who are experiencing similar challenges
- The capital grants using developer contributions were very helpful to other providers wishing to extend and improve their facilities
- Support from other providers for collaboration and provision of mutual support but most providers want to retain their independence
- Encourage and strengthen the involvement of local residents in the running of their local centres
- Support residents / community groups who are interested in running their local Council owned community centre
- Recognition of the Council's need to reduce costs
- Take an incremental approach to building resident involvement and reducing costs

## 7. Strategy

7.1 Given the conclusions of the review, officers have set out a proposed strategy to shape and direct the future management of the Council's existing community centres. In acknowledgement of the Council's challenging savings requirement, the Strategy includes proposals to reduce the net running cost of the community centres by £100,000 over a 3 year period. The strategy is shown at 7.2 below.

### 7.2 **Strategy for the Management of the Council's Community Centres 2013 - 2016**

7.2.1 The Council will protect its existing community centres for the residents of Cambridge in a difficult financial climate.

- i) The Council will continue to manage its own community centres.
- ii) Centre staff will seek to actively engage local residents in the management of their centres and, where appropriate, form informal community boards or associations.
- iii) Where residents express an interest in running a centre themselves, Community Development staff will support them to do this by helping them to increase their capacity and seeking a sustainable and affordable management solution.

- iv) Community Development managers will work with centre staff to identify efficiencies and/or opportunities to increase income. This work will involve the community boards or associations as they become established. Some examples of things we might do that were raised at the workshops included promoting wedding receptions at the Meadows Centre, greater use of trusted key-holders, reviewing hire charges (e.g. reducing them at low-use times), better promotion of the facilities (e.g. to businesses at times when community use is low), provide and promote high quality ICT facilities at centres (e.g. projectors & screens, WiFi etc.).
- v) When any existing posts within the Council's community centres become vacant, managers and centre staff will consider whether the work can be carried out more efficiently before recruiting to the post (for example by increasing the hours of another existing post to work across 2 centres or by sharing managers across more than one centre).
- vi) Community Development will reduce the net cost of running the Council's community centres by a total of:
  - £35,000 in 2013/14
  - a further £35,000 in 2014/15
  - a further £30,000 in 2015/16
  - Making a total ongoing net saving of £100,000

7.2.2 The Council will work with other providers of community facilities within Cambridge and its immediate surrounding area in a spirit of co-operation and mutual support.

- vii) Centre staff will work with managers of the centres of other providers to seek joint solutions to mutual challenges such as those identified in the review.
- viii) Community Development will work with other providers to jointly promote the community facilities across the city and its immediate surrounding area. This will include co-ordinating network meetings and an e-mail support group and setting up and maintaining a centres database on Cambridgeshire.net.
- ix) The Council will continue to use appropriate developer contributions, in consultation with ward councillors and other providers, to improve community facilities and community access to community facilities in the City.

## **8. New Community Centre provision in Growth Sites**

8.1 Four new community facilities are currently being planned or are under construction in the growth sites:

- a) A new community centre within the University's north west Cambridge development (Castle ward)
  - b) A new community café within the NIAB1 development in north west Cambridge (Castle ward)
  - c) A new multi-use centre at Clay Farm (Trumpington)
  - d) New community facilities at Trumpington Meadows within the new primary school (within Haslingfield Parish in South Cambs)
- 8.2 The new community facilities at Trumpington Meadows are due to open this summer and will be managed by the new primary school.
- 8.3 The new community facility within the University site is due to open around September 2014 and will be managed (along with some public open space on the development) by a joint venture company with charitable status. The University and the Council will each have a 50% stake in the company. The University has agreed to meet the costs of the joint venture company for the first 12 years after which the Council will meet half the costs. Initial estimates are that the joint venture company will cost around £200,000 a year (net) to run but this depends upon design, use etc.
- 8.4 The community café on the NIAB1 site will be leased to the Council. Timing for the opening is uncertain but likely to be around summer 2015. There are restrictions preventing the café being run by a commercial operator but officers will be looking at options including management by a social enterprise.

### **Clay Farm Community Centre**

- 8.5 In the June report to this committee officers were asked to report back with recommendations about the future management of the Clay Farm multi-use centre. This centre is being built by the City Council and will include health provision, a library, café, police and social care touch down space, community hall and rooms and youth facility. There will also be housing above the centre managed by Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association. Delivery is being managed by a Project Board comprising partners (including Trumpington Resident's Association) and led by the Head of Strategic Housing. A design partner, ADP Ltd. has been procured and the design process has commenced. The centre is due to open in 2015. This committee has received reports on this project at previous meetings.
- 8.6 A stakeholder event to consider shared operational needs to help inform decisions about management models for the centre was held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The main message from this event was that stakeholders wanted the centre to be seen as a unified facility and not

just a collection of different services. To encourage this, the design should seek to provide shared space and the management should include shared staff. So, for example, a parent might take their child to the centre to participate in a children's activity in the hall and whilst waiting for them, take a book or magazine from the library area have a coffee in the café area whilst they read. The parent might also book a GP visit.

- 8.7 The centre will remain in the ownership of the City Council. However, partners have been considering governance and management options that will provide a financially sustainable solution and satisfy each partner's needs. Importantly, we need to find a solution that will enable the space within the centre to be used and managed as flexibly as possible.
- 8.8 Partners have considered an option of granting leases to each partner, however, this will require each lease to have a defined and exclusive area of occupation which conflicts with the desire for the flexible use of space.
- 8.9 Instead, partners favour a similar model to the joint venture company being progressed with the University. The centre could be leased to the company which would be governed by its own Articles of Association and not by different policies and procedures of each partner. The company would employ its own staff and partners' stake or shares in the company could be commensurate to their financial contribution. Shares could be transferred should any partner organisation change or new partner emerge. Trumpington Residents Association (and/or other emerging resident's association) could have representatives co-opted onto the board. The company could seek charitable status which could bring added benefits and opportunities to access alternative funding.
- 8.10 There are many complexities to overcome if we are to accommodate all of the partner's needs and aspirations and achieve the flexible design and management arrangements that we all say we would like. Separate lease arrangements will almost certainly be required for the housing element and it may be that the health elements will also require separate arrangements due to issues such as confidentiality. However, partners intend to progress this model further, learning from the negotiations with the University.
- 8.11 An estimate of the revenue contribution that the City Council will need to meet to cover its proportion of the management costs will be fed into the Council's Medium Term Strategy in the autumn.

## **9. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

Set out in the report. The proposed strategy for the management of the Council's existing centres will deliver on-going savings of £100,000 from 2015/16.

The Council has included a revenue contribution of up to £100,000 towards the cost of the Joint Venture company which will manage the new community centre on the University site. This contribution will not be required for the first 12 years after the centre opens.

More work is required to understand any revenue contribution that will be required by the Council towards the management of the new Clay Farm multi use centre and the community café on the NIAB1 site, both of which are due to open in 2015. Allowances will need to be included in the Council's Medium Term Strategy later this year.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

If and when a member of centre staff leaves, the Head of Community Development will take the opportunity to review staffing with the centre staff themselves to consider whether there are opportunities to work more efficiently. For example, by sharing more staff across 2 or more local centres.

There will be staffing implications if community groups take over the management of the Council's community facilities. Any such changes will be managed in accordance with the Council's organisational change policy.

### **(c) Equal Opportunities Implications**

Equality of opportunity is central to the service. The Council's community centres are situated within the city's more deprived wards and are extensively used by residents on low income, older and younger residents and by BME communities.

The proposed strategy seeks to protect the community centres for the city's residents whilst acknowledging that the Council faces significant savings targets over the coming years.

An Equalities Impact Assessment of the proposed strategy has been carried out and can be found on the Council's website at this link:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sites/www.cambridge.gov.uk/files/document/s/community-centre-management-review-2012-eqia.pdf>

Measures to reduce the net budget for the Council's community centres may have negative or positive impacts on various equalities groups and each significant change will need to be assessed carefully before being implemented.

Not all changes will have a negative impact. For example, transferring the management of a centre to a local charity or Resident Group may reduce running costs and improve the availability of the facility through the use of volunteers. Also, charities can often access funding through other sources. Improving the energy efficiency of a building would reduce energy costs. Greater use of trusted key holders could broaden use and increase income.

Examples of changes that may have a negative impact are:

Increase the amount of hire by businesses to increase income. This may reduce availability of space for voluntary groups.

Restructuring staff to reduce costs – this may reduce the opening hours.

Increasing hire charges – any significant increase may make the centres unaffordable to some groups, especially those helping people on low incomes.

**(d) Environmental Implications**

Staff try to ensure that the Council's existing community facilities are energy efficient and we take the opportunity to encourage other community facility providers to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings when we give capital grants.

**(e) Consultation and Communication**

Staff managing the Council's community centres are engaging daily with residents and community groups.

The strategy seeks to increase resident involvement in the running of their local centre and to increase collaboration

between the Council's staff and staff managing the community centres owned by other providers.

The strategy has been developed with the engagement of staff, ward councillors and representatives from community groups and other centre providers.

**(f) Community Safety**

Much of the work carried out by Community Development staff indirectly improves community safety through improved understanding, reduced prejudice, mutual respect.

**(g) Procurement**

There may be procurement implications associated with any future asset transfer arrangements. The implications will depend upon the model being taken forward.

There will also be procurement associated with the Clay farm facility design and build (which is being managed directly by the Council) and there may be procurement implications at the NIAB1 café if, for example, the Council decides to look for a social enterprise management solution.

## **10. Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- i) Existing and Planned Community Centres – Future Management Options: Report to Community Services Scrutiny Committee June 2012  
[http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s12400/Com\\_Services\\_28.6.12\\_-\\_Community\\_Centres\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s12400/Com_Services_28.6.12_-_Community_Centres_-_FINAL.pdf)
- ii) Review of the Council's Neighbourhood Community Projects: Report to Community Services Scrutiny Committee January 2013  
[http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s14892/NCP\\_3\\_year\\_prog\\_CS\\_Scrutiny\\_Jan\\_13\\_Final.pdf](http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s14892/NCP_3_year_prog_CS_Scrutiny_Jan_13_Final.pdf)
- iii) Package of Documents from Marilyn Taylor for Phase 2 of the Review including:
  - a. Phase 1 Review Options
  - b. Survey of Community Facility Providers
  - c. Notes from workshops 1 & 2
  - d. Review of provision by other councils<http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s17447/Centres%20Review.pdf>

## 11. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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