



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 22nd November 2012

Title: COMMUNITY CENTRES

Report of: The Director of Community Engagement

Report reference: CD54/12

Summary:

This report provides a response to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panels Task and Finish report looking at Community Centres. It provides some background and context before addresses the specific recommendations.

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny:

Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel should consider this response and assess if it provides an appropriate basis for acting on the Task and Finish Groups findings.

Recommendations:

Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider this report and provide advice and support in the implementation of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations.

Contact Officer: Keith Gerrard

Ext: 7350

1. Background

The Wellbeing Team has always and continues to offer advice and support to Community Centres with the aim of assisting them to become more effective, self sufficient and maximising their contribution to local communities. The City Council provides revenue grants totally approximately £304,000 and building maintenance in the region of £124,000pa to Community Centres.

Until February 2011 the City Council also supported Community Centres through its Community Engagement Manager. Working with Community Centres was the principal function of this role. The officer visited each centre on a regular basis (at least once a month and often weekly), provided reminders when, for example, safety certificates were due to expire and arranged the Community Centre Managers meetings (setting the agenda, leading discussions). The City Council also provided administrative support for individual Centre's monthly Board meetings.

The post of Community Engagement Manager became vacant in February 2011 and was deleted from the operational structure in April 2011. Liaison with Community Centre was from that point lead through the Wellbeing team, specifically the Community Development officer leading on Enterprise. This role could not offer the detailed level of involvement with each centre which had previously been provided. It was made clear to all the Centres that support would still be given. The lead officer met with all Centre managers on a number of occasions to reinforce this. This commitment remains ongoing.

In May 2011, a workshop was organised by the City Council, for the Community Centres to identify their needs. They identified training, individual Officer's roles and raised concerns about the future of their grants. In response to their request for training over £8,000 was spent in 2011/12.

In October 2011, the Wellbeing Manager, came into post. She attended one Federation meeting and one Managers meeting. It was made clear by the meeting organisers that any future visits would need to be by invite only.

In response to the Community Centres request for training relating to funding applications, the Wellbeing Manager commissioned the CVS to put together a bespoke training package and subsequently a six session package was offered to Centre Managers. A date was set which then had to be cancelled due to a low take up of

place. A second date was set but once again insufficient Centres agreed to attend, making it financially unviable to hold. Instead a one day session was rearranged which nine of the centres attended. Community Centres are also advised they can access the corporate training programme

In 2011 ICT Connect was commissioned by the City Council to help Community Centres develop new websites with the facility for Community Centre staff to update sites themselves. In November 2011 graduate apprentice started work on the project and has subsequently worked with the Community Centres to produce a completely new design that is fully standards compliant (accessible for the disabled), mobile device friendly and incorporates social media including Twitter, Facebook and Google calendars. Feedback has been extremely positive. In addition Immediacy training was given to the centres Community Centres are now requesting First Aid Training which the Wellbeing Manager is in the process of arranging.

A meeting has been arranged in November, facilitated by CVS and supported by the Portfolio Holder to develop Service Level Agreements between Centres and the City Council. The aim is to maximise the outreach benefits of the Community Centres, linking City Council services with local communities. This will ensure every Community Centre is able to meet clear objectives. Business planning will be a key component in how Community Centres plan their future activity both in the short, medium & long term. In addition a marketing strategy to raise the profile of the Community Centres will aid sustainability. The Wellbeing Team are working proactively with the centres to support them to achieve this.

The support previously offered on HR issues could potentially have left the City Council open to litigation.

2. Community Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group – Support to Community Centres

The recommendations of the group are listed below with an update of the position to date by each and further actions:-

- A) That clarification of the ownership of each Community Centre building is sought as soon as possible.**

Update

The City Council owns all Community Centres except Longtown and Brampton

Longtown Community Centre

The Community Centre is subject to an unusual arrangement whereby the City Council holds title in trust for the Longtown Memorial Hall Community Centre charity which arose from a Charity Commissioners Scheme established in 2003. There is no lease or contract between the City Council and the Community Centre. The City Council undertakes the repairs.

Brampton Community Centre

The City Council surrendered their leasehold interest of the property known as the Irthing Centre, which included Brampton Business Centre units and the wooden hut and buildings occupied by Brampton Community Association, on 30th April 2009, to Cumbria County Council. The County Council leased the building to Brampton and Beyond Community Trust

In addition:-

Downagate Community Centre

The City Council owns the land and buildings. Lease dated 22/3/2002 to the Downagate Association. The tenants are responsible for all internal and external repairs apart from the retaining wall to the A69. The Association have leased a small area of land to the Northern Gas Networks Ltd dated 14/12/2005 for a term of 30 years.

- B) That Community Centres are provided with details on the criteria which will be required to access funding in 2013/14 as soon as possible.**

Update

The November meeting of Centre Managers will be facilitated by the CVS. Also in attendance will be the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Housing and the Community Development Officer for Enterprise. The outcome of the session will be for Managers to have a greater understanding of:

- Service Level Agreement arrangements, their use and scope
- The Cumbria Compact - an agreement between the Public Sector and the Voluntary & Community sector.
- The current social and economic value of Community Centres
- Summary and next steps for Community Centres and Carlisle City Council and Partner Support.

This meeting will form part of the process to establish Service Level Agreements with all the Community Centres. This will include the criteria that Community Centres will have to meet in order to access funding in 2013/14. With support from the Wellbeing Team, Community Centres will begin to identify needs within their communities. Appropriate activity can then be delivered by the Community Centres to match those identified needs.

- C) That consideration is given to an Officer from the City Council to attend part of the bi-monthly Community Centre Managers meeting to discuss ongoing issues and support. Consideration should also be given to an Officer from the Council visiting each Centre Manager individually in order facilitate a better relationship with the Community Centres.**

Update

The Wellbeing Manager contacted all Community Centres on the 12th October requesting that she be invited to attend part of the Community Centre Managers meeting to discuss ongoing issues and support

The Manager from Brampton Community Centre responded with the following:

“We would like to discuss further at our November managers meeting the support we feel we need from City to see if there are any generic needs that we need and then decide on whether it is worth your time to come to meetings on a regular basis. As you are aware all the centres are different and have different needs and it may be that the individual centres would get more from you by meeting with you on a one to one basis to discuss needs. I hope this is acceptable to you and we will be in touch after our November meeting”

Previously an Officer from the City Council, Dave Trussler, visited each Community Centre on a monthly basis as his main role was to support Community Centres. In some cases the visits were weekly and this took up a large part of his role. The role of the Wellbeing Manager and the Community Development Officer for Enterprise are different and cover a wider range of areas of work and associated projects. A further request has been made to the Centre Managers that they be allowed to attend the January Managers meeting to explain their roles and identify the best way to ensure regular dialogue is maintained.

Officers appreciate each centre will have different needs and the Wellbeing Manager has requested in the first instance that each centre email them with a list of their needs.

- D) That a Toolkit is developed for Community Centre Managers (or indeed for all Community groups) providing information on ‘how to’ do things and offer practical guide on funding, staff issues and contact numbers for advice and support.**

Update

All Community Centres except Downagate and Belah are, through Carlisle and District Federation of Community Organisations, members of Community Matters. Both Centre Managers have been provided with details of how to join Community Matters.

Community Matters champions voluntary and community action at a neighbourhood level, as a means of local people taking control of issues in their area and fostering community spirit. They do this in three ways:

Membership

By creating a national network of Community organisations and activists who share their vision and support our aims. Their membership is constantly evolving to meet changing social needs, and includes multipurpose community organisations,

communities of interest, local support and infrastructure bodies, and Associates. Members are supported with a comprehensive range of tool kits and hands-on advice and support, and help shape the direction of Community Matters by electing representatives to the National Executive Committee.

Services

By developing and delivering low-cost, targeted and practical support. This includes training and consultancy; free advice and legal services; business development support; online resources; and a dedicated youth department. They also offer deliver specialist programmes like Communitybuilders and Community Assets Matter, along with campaigns such as Red Flags crisis management and The YES Project for youth engagement. To underpin their commitment to the highest standard of community work they developed VISIBLE Communities™, comprising their nationally recognised quality standard and development tools.

Campaigning

By building a comprehensive programme of external affairs work covering policy, parliamentary affairs, communications and a growing portfolio of research work. They also seek to enable community activists by providing campaigning resources and briefings on legal and regulatory issues. In addition they are a member of and provide the secretariat for the Community Sector Law Monitoring Group, which lobbies on behalf of 15 voluntary and community sector networks.

They are increasingly committed to widening participation and access by delivering services and information online. This site was launched in November 2010 and will be further developed in the coming months.

The Council is unable to offer advice on staff issues. Clarification has been sought from the Council's Insurance Officer and the Council's insurers:

Their advice is:-

The City Council's insurers would consider this kind of service to be classed as a Professional Indemnity activity. This would mean that the City Council's insurers would have to put up any potential claims made against the City Council as a result of alleged 'wrong advice or bad service. The City Council only holds indemnity for statutory functions provided by the City Council and as Community Centres are external organisations we are not insured to offer this service.

- E) That the Community Support Worker (Children and Young People) look at innovative ways of recruiting young people onto management committees**

Update

As each Community Centre is slightly different a request has been made to Centre Managers and Centre Committee Chairmen asking to explain the potential roles that young people could be involved in at individual centres. This information would be shared with the wide range of young people that the Community Development Officer for Children and Young People has contact with. This would enable her to start identifying innovative ways to involve young people.

Impact assessments

Does the change have an impact on the following?

Equality Impact Screening	Impact Yes/No?	Is the impact positive or negative?
Does the policy/service impact on the following?		
Age	Yes	Positive
Disability	Yes	Positive
Race	Yes	Positive
Gender/ Transgender	Yes	Positive
Sexual Orientation	Yes	Positive
Religion or belief	Yes	Positive
Human Rights	Yes	Positive
Health inequalities	Yes	Positive
Rurality	Yes	Positive

If you consider there is either no impact or no negative impact, please give reasons:

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If an equality Impact is necessary, please contact the P&P team.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2012

EX.130/12 SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY CENTRES (Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Communities and Housing

Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel Community

Subject Matter

Pursuant to Minute COSP.70/12, consideration was given to a reference from the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 11 October 2012 regarding the final report of the Community Centre Task and Finish Group. The Panel had resolved:

"That the Community Centre Task and Finish Group report be approved and referred to the Executive for their formal response to the recommendations."

Copies of Report OS.30/12 and the Minute Excerpt had been circulated.

The Lead Member of the Community Centre Task and Finish Group was in attendance at the meeting. The Member began by expressing thanks to the Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder and Officers for their willingness to assist scrutiny with this one day piece of work. She added that Community Centre Managers had been extremely grateful for the time taken to meet with them, but had indicated that they felt isolated due to a lack of communication with the City Council.

The Task and Finish Group accepted that Community Centres required to be run as a business and that the Council needed to assist in that regard. It was also noted that support from Management Committees varied at each Centre, but most provided a lot of support. Although the Committees were supportive, they often lacked the necessary skills required. Constitutions were restrictive in terms of recruitment, in addition to which Managers had difficulty encouraging younger people onto Committees.

She further drew attention to the difficulties around grants and funding; and evidence provided by representatives of the Carlisle and District Federation of Community Organisations.

The Lead Member then outlined in some detail the Task Group's recommendations, together with the rationale therefor:

1. That clarification of the ownership of each Community Centre building is sought as soon as possible.

2. That Community Centres are provided with details on the criteria which will be required to access funding in 2013/14 as soon as possible.
3. That consideration is given to an Officer from the City Council to attend part of the bi-monthly Community Centre Managers' meeting to discuss ongoing issues and support. Consideration should also be given to an Officer from the Council visiting each Centre Manager individually in order to facilitate a better relationship with the Centres.
4. That a Toolkit is developed for Community Centre Managers (or indeed for all Community groups) providing information on 'how to' do things and offer practical guide on funding, staff issues and contact numbers for advice and support.
5. That the Community Support Worker (Children and Young People) look at innovative ways of recruiting young people onto management committees?

The Chairman of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel was concerned that examination of the issue had been restricted to one day only, since clearly relationship problems did exist between the City Council and the Community Centres. Notwithstanding that she felt that the five recommendations detailed above were excellent and, if there was sufficient capacity to carry those out, they would make a real difference in terms of addressing the issues identified.

In conclusion, the Chairman stressed that a great deal of time, effort and funding was expended with a view to addressing the needs of the community. People were enthusiastic and she felt sure that a meeting of minds could arise.

The Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder thanked the Task and Finish Group for their quite detailed work, commenting that some of the recommendations had already been met.

The Portfolio Holder said that work required to be done on both sides in order to improve the issue of communication. Referring to recommendation 3, it was her understanding that City Council Officers had to be invited prior to attendance at the bi-monthly Community Centre Managers' meetings. She alluded to recent very useful e-mail correspondence, which may also be of use to Managers. Development of a Toolkit for Community Centre Managers would also be of assistance.

She further believed that all Community Centres were members of "Community Matters" from which a great deal of advice could be obtained.

In conclusion, the Communities and Housing Portfolio Holder moved that the Executive respond to the recommendations at the next meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel scheduled for 22 November 2012. The Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder seconded the recommendation.

Summary of options rejected None

DECISION

That the Executive had considered the final report of the Community Centre Task and Finish Group attached to Report OS.30/12; and would respond to the recommendations at the next meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 22 November 2012.

Reasons for Decision

To respond to a reference from the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel