

# Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda  
Item:  
  
**A.5(b)**

Meeting Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013  
Portfolio: Communities and Housing  
Key Decision:  
Within Policy and  
Budget Framework  
Public / Private Public

Title: UPDATE - SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY CENTRES  
Report of: Director of Community Engagement  
Report Number: CD 27/13

## **Purpose / Summary:**

In July 2012 the Panel instructed a Task Group to undertake a one day scrutiny of Community Centres and to make initial investigations into the support provided to them. The Task Group made a number of recommendations. This report updates the Panel of actions taken in relation to the recommendations.

## **Recommendations:**

The Panel is asked to note the actions taken

## **Tracking**

Executive:	
Overview and Scrutiny:	
Council:	

## **1. BACKGROUND**

**1.1** A one day scrutiny of Community Centres was undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

**1.2** A report was drawn up that included 5 recommendations

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 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

## **2. ACTIONS TAKEN**

### **2.1 Recommendation 1 - Ownership**

**2.1.1** The Council owns all 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 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 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.

## **2.2 Recommendation 2 – Funding Criteria**

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

- Service Level Agreement arrangements, their use and scope
- The current social and economic value of Community Centres
- Summary and next steps for Community Centres and Carlisle City Council and Partner Support.

**2.2.2** This meeting formed part of the process to establish Service Level Agreements with all the Centres. A draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) was drawn up and all Centres were individually visited by the Communities, Housing and Health Manager or the Wellbeing Manager to consult on the Agreement. The agreements included all the criteria that Centres will have to meet in order to access funding in 2013/14. With support from the Wellbeing Team, Centres will begin to identify needs within their communities. Appropriate activity can then be delivered by the Centres to match those identified needs.

## **2.3 Recommendation 3 – Community Centre Managers Meetings**

**2.3.1** All Centres were contacted to ask permission for the Wellbeing Manager and the Community Development Officer for Social Enterprise to attend part of their Managers Meeting. Managers were also reminded that if they had any issues, to not wait for bi-monthly meetings, but contact either the Wellbeing Manager or the Community Development Officer for Social Enterprise and they would both identify

what help and support they could offer. Contact details were given and dates of meetings after November was requested.

**2.3.2** The Manager stated that the Centre Managers would be in touch after their November meeting. Centre Managers have not responded.

**2.3.3** A further request was made to the centre managers to ask if Officers be allowed to attend the January Managers meeting to explain their roles and identify the best way to ensure regular dialogue is maintained. A request was also made for Centre Managers to forward a list of their issues.

**2.3.4** All Centre Managers and Chairs of their Management Committees were individually visited in January 2013 to discuss the draft Service Level Agreements. They were asked to identify any issues they might have. Issues raised have been responded to. These related mainly to lease requirements, incorporation and grant provision.

## **2.4 Recommendation 5 – Toolkit**

**2.4.1** Ten of the Centres through the Federation are members of Your Community Matters. This is an organisation that offers up to date advice regarding a number of issues relevant to community centres. They also have an impressive website which offers a range of information that Centres can download, in effect a 'toolkit'. They can be contacted by telephone and a member of staff will offer comprehensive advice. 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.

**2.4.2** Your Community Matters also offers free legal clinics delivered by LawWorks in partnership with Dechert LLP. Centres can access expert advice on the following areas of law:

- employment
- incorporation (as a company)
- contracts
- property
- intellectual property

This is a service that runs every month and is accessible over the phone or face-to-face.

**2.4.3** The two Centres who are not members have been given joining instructions and dependent on their income it could be free to join or the maximum amount would be £74.00.

## **2.5 Recommendation 5 – Young People**

- 2.5.1** As each Centre is different, all Centres were asked to send the Young Persons Champion a brief paragraph explaining what a young persons potential role would be if they joined a management committee. It was felt that Centres would be best placed to identify this and it would form part of initial discussions with young people. This information could have been taken to the different youth groups that the Officer works with and would enable her to start identifying innovative ways to involve young people. It was suggested that this might be something the Chair of their committees would like to put together.
- 2.5.2** Unfortunately no responses have been received. When recent visits were carried out by the Wellbeing Manager, Centres raised issues about a lack of new members of all ages to their committees. It was suggested that a publicity drive by all Centres be undertaken to raise awareness of the Centres and their role in the community. This would be of great assistance to would be volunteers who perhaps have little understanding of their local Community Centre.

## **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1.** There has been a significant amount of attention given to Community Centres following the Task Groups recommendations. The centres have been informed on numerous occasions that both the Wellbeing Manager and the Community Development Officer for Social Enterprise are both available if they have any concerns. Centres are also advised they can access the Corporate training programme, the take up for this offer is extremely poor.
- 3.3.2** It is hoped that new Service Level Agreements will maximise the outreach benefits of the community centres, linking council services with local communities. This will ensure every community centre knows what its purpose is, how it can meet its objectives and what it requires in terms of staffing and resources to deliver its business plan. 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 centres will aid sustainability.

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