

Meeting of the Cabinet - 14th September 2011

Joint Report of the Chief Executive, the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, the Director of the Urban Environment and the Acting Director of Children's Services

Community Centres Review – update

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to update the Cabinet on the review of community centres.

Background

2. Responsibility for the management of designated Community Centres was transferred to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services in 2008.
3. The Cabinet approved a Report “Shaping Communities Centres for the Future” at its September 2010 meeting, which included a review of those Community Centres managed by the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services but also wider provision within Dudley communities.

Update on the review

4. Engagement with Community Centres took place in February 2010 in three events at locations in Gornal, Stourbridge and Netherton with approximately 50 people attending from community associations, voluntary organisations and community organisations.
5. This Report reflects feedback from these events linked to an overall evaluation on current community centres provision taking into account some key principles that should inform decision-making, including:
 - The needs of each area to be considered individually, including the levels of deprivation in the area;
 - Valuing volunteer time and expertise.
 - A fair and consistent support for each community centre;
 - Wider developments such as ‘Big Society’
 - Continued promotion of a corporate approach

- Working with the voluntary, community and faith sector and the wider Dudley Community to build capacity
6. In addition The Dudley Community Partnership is undertaking a pilot project looking at public sector assets in the Brierley Hill area which includes community centres.
 7. A proposed 'Shaping Community Centres for the Future' outline Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1 to this Report. The Action Plan locates further work for Community Centres in the context of our developing approach to "Big Society" with suggestions about how this might be developed further. Overall, this allows us to take a positive approach to Community Centres and is about emphasising that aspect.
 8. Part of that Action Plan includes the need for continued work amongst Council Directorates to promote corporate and community approaches in relation to the wider use of community assets.
 9. This will include work to maximise the use of other council owned public buildings land and public open spaces that currently may have a variety of third party management arrangements governing them. One of the project outcomes would be to identify opportunities for full asset transfer.
 10. Whilst this report focuses upon community centres the review is intrinsically linked to emerging new government policies and initiatives such as 'Big Society', the Open Public Services White Paper and the Localism Bill. Further reports will therefore be brought to Cabinet in due course related to strands of work currently underway around these emerging policies and initiatives.

Finance

11. There are no immediate financial implications to this Report.

Law

12. Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 places a duty on local authorities to establish a local strategic partnership to address collaborative working and develop a community strategy. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything, which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.

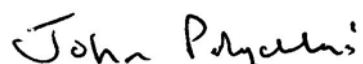
Equality Impact

13. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as necessary with regard to the engagement of any individual community as part of this activity to assess the impact of recommendations in any future Cabinet Report.

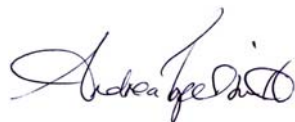
Recommendations

That the Cabinet:

14. Note the work done to date in terms of community centres.
15. Approve the outline 'Shaping Community Centres for the future' action plan in Appendix 1.
16. Receive a further report on local proposals for Big Society, Open Public Services and implementation of the Localism Bill.



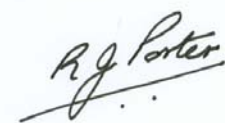
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John Polychronakis
Chief Executive



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Andrea Pope-Smith
Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services



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John Millar
Director of the Urban Environment



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Jane Porter
Acting Director of Children's Services

Contact Officers:

Geoff Thomas	Assistant Director – Chief Executive's
Brendan Clifford	Assistant Director – Adult, Community and Housing Services
Amanda Grove	Head of Youth Service – Children's Services
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Appendix 1

Shaping Community Centres for the future – Outline action plan

- For Community Centres in the Brierley Hill area to be considered in relation to the Dudley Community Partnership Brierley Hill pilot
- Develop an approach to community assets through an asset transfer policy for future cabinet consideration.
- Local Development Trust model - invite any individual Community Centre to explore the possibility of participating in an approach to asset transfer where specified criteria within an approved Asset Transfer Policy and explore wider applicability of the model with the community and voluntary sector to ensure sustainability for community centres
- To 'cluster' community centres as part of a new and revitalised network to promote mutual support amongst the centres which includes new communications approaches
- More equitable service and support across all Centres through consistent and needs-based approaches to administration
- Continue supporting centres in the poorest communities with the highest levels of need to adapt and change their approach over time
- To promote access to services for people currently using and potential users of community centres through extending financial advice and services in the Community Centres as well as access to information more broadly through the centres
- Maintain management information relating to the community centres linked to leases
- Within this overall approach, it is proposed that we continue to support and manage risk for the majority of Community Centres within the DACHS portfolio. Where appropriate and subject to relevant consultation, it is proposed that re-provision of some Centres be considered.
- Ensure strategic fit for Community Centres and other related Council resources to meet the future needs of communities by establishing a process that ensures all property asset related proposals are submitted to the Council's Corporate Property Group for consideration prior to implementation.