

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 2 (COMMUNITY CENTRES)

MINUTES

Thursday, 31st March 2016

@ 7.00pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Natasha Ahmed-Shaikh (Chair), Jon Ball, Paul Conlan, Fabio Conti, Swarn Singh Kang, Ciaran McCartan, Tariq Mahmood, Joy Morrissey (Vice-Chair), Gareth Shaw, Chris Summers and Simon Woodroofe.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Aysha Raza.

Officers Present:

Jonathan Kirby - Assistant Director, Major Projects, LBE
Laurie Lyle - Democratic Services Officer, LBE
Anna Marie-Ratray - Scrutiny Review Officer, LBE
Keith Townsend - Executive Director, Environment and Customer Services

Community Centre Representatives Present:

Jeremy Butler - Northolt Village Community Centre
Vivian Hosking - Islip Manor and Viking Community Centres

1. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors; Kamaljit Dhindsa and Mohinder Midha.

2. Urgent Matters (Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be considered in Private (Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

4. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 4)

There were none.

5. Minutes (Agenda item 5)

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 28th January, 2016 be approved as a true and correct record, subject to an amendment to page 1 of the minutes, highlighting that the previous meeting of the Panel took place at the 'Oaktree Community Centre,' Acton.

6. Environment and Customer Services Consultation with Community Associations – Update (Agenda item 6)

Jonathan Kirby submitted a report which updated the Panel on events following on from the last Scrutiny Meeting, concerning the Council's latest consultations with the borough's Community Centres.

The report provided information with regards to; staffing support, leases, business plan development and income generation, energy savings solutions and capital improvements, and new governance structures.

Jonathan Kirby advised Members that since the last meeting there had been an acceptance by the service of Voluntary Redundancy requests, and the service will be moving to its new operating structure as of 1st May 2016.

He said that over the past two months, both the Council and the 'Greenford Community Association' have discussed the opportunity of keeping the facility open, under the current operating arrangements, until 31st July 2016. He said that he was pleased to confirm to the Panel that this has now been agreed between the parties, and the Council has agreed to provide continuity of staff, and the Association has agreed to meet the operating costs from their reserves.

He said this extension of time to the operation of the site under the current Association, allows for the majority of users to complete their current bookings up until the summer break, prior to restarting in September 2016 either at Greenford Community Centre or an alternative site.

He said that since the announcement was made by Greenford Community Association, of their intention to cease operating; a number of interested parties have come forward with proposals to take over the operation of the facility, as an ongoing community function, and as a result of these expressions of interest, the Council will look to run a fair, open and transparent process starting in April 2016 to select a new organisation to take on the lease for the site.

He said that this process will follow the previously successful Asset Transfer Selection process, which has been used to significant community benefit across the borough by the Major Projects Team.

Jonathan Kirby also advised that since the last meeting, the Council have been informed that the 'Northolt Grange Community Association,' have taken the decision to cease operation of the site as of September 2016.

He said that the main reason given was the additional responsibilities that would follow on from the acquisition of the lease, and the corresponding reduction in staffing support, and non-financial viability of the site.

Jonathan Kirby informed Members that to date no community group has approached the Council to take control of the site.

He said that depending upon community group demand and alternative provision in the area, the situation at Northolt Grange will likely follow a similar route to Greenford CC, with the Council seeking to explore viable options for other organisations to take on the site.

Resolved: (i) That the Panel records a vote of thanks to the Assistant Director, Major Projects, and relevant officers in recognition of their effort and hard work in conjunction with the Borough's Community Associations, as the Council move towards a subsidy free Community Centre service;

(ii) That the Panel also records a vote of thanks to the borough's Community Centre spokespersons, in recognition of their effort and hard work, and the spirit of co-operation they have shown in working together with the Council as the Council move towards a subsidy free Community Centre service;

(iii) That officers be commended for their efforts in keeping the Greenford Community Association open until the 31st July, 2016, so that users may complete their programmes/bookings at the Greenford Community Association up until the end of the 2016 summer break;

(iv) That the Panel recommends that the Council continues to do everything within its power, to ensure that the borough's Community Centres continue to provide services for the local community in Ealing.

7. Draft Final Report of 'Scrutiny Review Panel 2 – 2015/2016: Community Centres' (Agenda item 6)

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Scrutiny Review Officer which presented the Panel with its final recommendations to be included in the Panel's final report for submission to the 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee (07.07.16), and the Cabinet (13.09.16).

Resolved: (i) That the Panel agree the recommendations attached to these minutes (see addendum), as the Panel's final recommendations for submission to the 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee (07.07.16), and the Cabinet (13.09.16);

(ii) That the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to approve the final version of the Panel's full report in time for the meeting of the 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee (07.07.16), and the Cabinet (13.09.16);

(iii) That the Panel suggest that topics to be included in the list for selection at the Ealing Scrutiny Conference on May 19th 2016 include: “Support for the local economy/high streets.”

Councillor Natasha Ahmed-Shaikh, Chair.
Scrutiny Review Panel 2 (Community Centres)

The meeting ended at 9.00pm.

ADDENDUM

PROPOSED FINAL - SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 2 (COMMUNITY CENTRES)
RECOMMENDATIONS : 2016/2017

*That the Chair's foreword makes reference to deceased former Ealing Councillor, trustee of 'Northolt Grange Community Association,' and contributor to the Scrutiny Panel, Mr. Frank Impey.

Recommendation 1: The Panel was pleased to note that Cabinet took up its recommendation to provide capital funding for proposals that show a potential for increasing revenue opportunities or reducing operational running costs of the community association leased community centres.

Recommendation 2: That the Council continues to share its expertise with community associations providing them with on-going support including business planning, legal, fundraising and applications for grants and match funding, HR, and health and safety advice.

Recommendation 3: That the Council provides the Community Associations with clear advice and support on how they might become incorporated as charities and the implications that this would have. The Panel noted that the majority of the rent subsidy available to community associations was dependent on them having charitable status.

Recommendation 4: That the Council continues to provide Community Associations with advice on reducing their energy bills and supports them in exploring the potential benefits from availing of the council's energy subsidy.

Recommendation 5: That the Council provides the Community Associations with guidance which clearly outlines the responsibilities of both the Council and the Community Associations in regard to maintenance of the community centre buildings.

Recommendation 6: The Head of Business Rates to review the rates for each of the Community Associations to ensure that they are getting the relief that they are entitled to.

Recommendation 7: Leases for community centres to include requirement that community centres deliver against a number of council priorities including social inclusion, learning, diversity and equality at a local level, that residents have access to a community space from which they can develop, run or access activities and services, and that the views of residents around community centres are captured to ensure that the centres are responding to need.

Recommendation 8: In the event that management arrangements fail, responsibility for the Community Centres ultimately reverts back to the Council, therefore, it is important that risks to the viability of Centres and business continuity are regularly assessed and managed, and that contingency planning is undertaken by council officers in conjunction with centres. This should be done on an annual basis.

Recommendation 9: That the Council facilitates the co-location of community groups and associations where individual sites are struggling financially.

Recommendation 10: That the Council takes steps to promote the community centres in the borough, which include an annual profile-raising article in Ealing Council's Magazine about Community Association and Council-owned community centres and their services, so as to celebrate the work of the existing volunteers and encourage local residents to become volunteers.

Recommendation 11: That the borough's community centres are given a higher profile on the council's website and in council publications to publicise their facilities for hire, and to convey what is available in terms of space and activities.

Recommendation 12: The council should seek to use and promote the use of community centres more widely to deliver other services, e.g. housing advice sessions, other public sector provision, local consultations etc., so that they become important hubs within the community. The council should also work collaboratively with partner organisations, including health partners, to use the centres.

Recommendation 13: That the Council facilitate the sharing of advice and good practice across the council's community centres. This may result in centres benefiting by learning from each other, developing joint funding bids to improve facilities or finding new volunteers.

***Recommendation 14:** That the Panel agrees to request that an appropriate scrutiny committee or OSC should monitor progress of the implementation of the new operating models for the community centres at regular intervals.

**The Panel requested that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee revisit this issue in approximately 6 months' time.*

Recommendation 15: That the relevant officers consider using the example provided by Acton Community Forum and Acton Vale Community Association as a model for informing best practice in the management of other community centres in the borough.

***Recommendation 16:** Ward councillors could make a valuable contribution to the development of community spaces as part of their community leadership role and some ward councillors are already involved in centre management committees. Whilst recognising that there are increasing demands on ward councillor's time, opportunities for greater involvement or support requirements at specific centres could be promoted to councillors.

**After further consideration, the Panel agreed that the above recommendation be deleted from the final report*

Recommendation 17: The Panel recommends that new schools in the borough applying for planning permission, should demonstrate in their respective applications, how the community will have access to their facilities.

Recommendation 18: That the Council continues to support the provision of flexible, multi-purpose centres where there can be dual use of similar facilities and activities for community use, for example the shared sports facilities at Twyford High School.

Recommendation 19: The Panel endorses the objective for the redevelopment of Ealing Town Hall as set out in the developer Marketing Brief which requires that 'there will also be a need to be public access to the building and provision of rooms, including the Victoria Hall, for hire by community and commercial organisations on a similar basis to existing provision'.

Recommendation 20: The Panel is pleased to note that work is being undertaken to support community groups who use Ealing Town Hall to find alternative premises on either a temporary or permanent basis as appropriate for each organisation.

***Recommendation 21:** That the relevant officers be requested to develop a community premises strategy in conjunction with ECVS, which identifies current need and examines potential for using accessible space in a **range of varied buildings right across the borough**, in a more creative way at an affordable cost

**The Panel agreed to amend the above recommendation by adding the words highlighted in bold.*

Recommendation 22: That Ealing Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) are considered by the council as potential partners for the managing of community assets.

***Recommendation 23:** In order to support social infrastructure, larger housing developments should use Section 106 money **and 'CIL'** (Community Infrastructure Levy), to provide space for community groups.

**The Panel agreed to amend the above recommendation by adding the words highlighted in bold.*

***Recommendation 24:** That wherever possible, the Council's Community Centre sites continue to be used to provide services for the local community.

**The Panel agreed to add the above recommendation to the list of final recommendations.*
