

**SRP 2 - "COMMUNITY CENTRES"  
MINUTES**

**Thursday, 26th November 2015.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors: Natasha Ahmed-Shaikh (Chair), Paul Conlan, Fabio Conti, Kamaljit Dhindsa, Ciaran McCartan, Joy Morrissey (Vice-Chair), Tim Murtagh (substitute for Chris Summers), Aysha Raza, Gareth Shaw, Andrew Steed (substitute for Jon Ball), and Simon Woodroofe.

**Also Present:**

Jonathan Kirby - Assistant Director, Major Projects, Ealing BC.

Laurie Lyle - Democratic Services Officer, Ealing BC.

Samantha Powell - Principal Planner, Planning Services, Ealing BC.

Anna-Marie Rattray - Scrutiny Review Officer, Ealing BC.

Gary Redhead - Assistant Director, Schools Planning and Resources, Ealing BC.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

(Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jon Ball, Mohinder Midha and Chris Summers.

**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 Panel held on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 be agreed as a true and correct record.

**6. Consultations with Community Centre's in Ealing**

(Agenda Item 6)

The Panel gave consideration to a report by Jonathan Kirby, Assistant Director, Major Projects, which provided Members with an update on the progress made with regards to the Council's work with local Community Associations, in order to mitigate the impact of a zero based subsidy to Community Centre's in the borough.

Jonathan Kirby attended the meeting and presented the report to the Panel. He said that the Council were seeking to make community centre operations self-sustaining by 2017/18, so that each centre has long-term security, is no longer reliant on a Council subsidy, and can afford an increase in rent.

He said that in seeking to achieve this aim the Council had been in extensive consultations with representatives from the various community centres in the borough, and the areas covered include:

- *Staffing support and proposals*
- *Reduction in associated costs, covered by the council, such as Grounds maintenance and FM*
- *Longer leases and Rent Reviews*
- *Cost Saving measures, such as Energy Efficiency and capital improvements*
- *Governance and Operational Structures*
- *Increased income Generation*

He said that the Council have made progress in a number of these areas, to enable positive outcomes, should the opportunities that have presented themselves, be taken up. He said that the Council will now be moving forward with negotiating and offering new long term leases and developing proposals for Capital investment, on a site by site basis.

Following the officer's presentation of the report, the Chair invited the representatives of the borough's Community Associations' that were in attendance, to address the Panel for up to three minutes each. Their comments are summarised below.

Malcolm Ede (Greenford Community Centre), reiterated his previously stated concerns that the Cabinet's decision to withdraw subsidies is likely to disproportionately affect, residents in Ealing North.

He said that despite the staff's best efforts to make the centre more efficiently run this had proved only partially successful, and the withdrawal of management and administrative support by the Council merely compounded the difficulties they were facing.

He said that the centre would be convening a special meeting of the Trustees in the coming weeks, however he felt it unlikely that the centre can achieve charitable status.

He said that all the staff at Greenford Community Centre remain committed to explore opportunities in order to generate further income, and will continue to pursue endeavours such as; an increase in fees and offering after school provision.

He said that the centre would continue to co-operate and liaise with the Council, and he will seek to get the site listed, although to date this had proved unsuccessful.

The Panel were advised that with regards to the Viking and Islip Manor Community Centres that additional bookings had been secured, and there were lots of diverse community activities taking place on both sites.

Concerns were raised at the current electric bills for both sites, which were averaging approximately £7k per annum.

Jeremy Butler (Northolt Village), said that the centre currently does not have charitable status, however they would like to secure charitable status in the long term as it makes sound financial sense, and he would be approaching the Council for advice on how best to achieve this.

Vic Cove (Perivale), said that Perivale Community Centre is currently a registered charity, is very well run, and remains popular with locals, with 96% to 100% attendance on most days.

He said that despite its popularity, he was unable to say at present whether the centre in its present format could remain self-sustaining after 2018, as the threat of further cuts has ensured that realistically, the centre is only able to forecast up until the end of the current financial year.

He said that the centre currently pays for its own manager, and in part for administrative and caretaker duties.

He said that the association is currently exploring ways to increase its income, although scope for doing so is limited somewhat by the fact that the association is classified as a non-profit making charity.

Gayle Tinsley (West Acton), said that the West Acton Community Centre was currently well attended, and caters to a very diverse range of attendees.

She said that despite previous undertakings by the Council, there was a long term problem with community centre's roof that was yet to be resolved, and this could prove pivotal as to whether the centre remains viable in the future.

The Chair thanked the community centre representatives who addressed the Panel.

The Chair then led the Panel into a further discussion during which Members put forward a number of suggestions, set out below, which Members believe can assist the Council in ensuring the continued delivery of community activities in a more self-sustaining and cost effective way:

- That the Cabinet be recommended to provide capital support for any proposals that show a potential for increasing revenue options, or reducing operational running costs, so as to support the continued provision of the borough's Community Association run Community Centres.
- That the relevant officers be requested to liaise with representatives of 'Ealing Music Services' so as to understand the plans for the service's relocation, if any.
- That the relevant officers be requested to liaise with Ealing CCG and Ealing Public Health to promote the use of the facilities provided by Community Centres, for health promotion services.

- That the Assistant Director, Major Projects, be requested to provide advice to Community Associations in the borough, on (i) how they might become 'incorporated' as charities; (ii) a list of those community centres who currently qualify for rate relief, and those who do not; and ensure that officers speak to all the community associations in the borough, with regard to reducing their energy bills, and availing of the Council's energy subsidy.
- That the Assistant Director, Major Projects, be requested to provide further update report on the borough's Community Centres, at its next meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2016.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Panel note the report by the Assistant Director, Major Projects, which provided an update on the provision of community centres in the borough, and the progress made on the Council's work with local Community Associations to mitigate the impact of a zero based subsidy in the borough;

(ii) That the Panel agrees to recommend to the Cabinet that it provides capital support for any proposals that show a potential for increasing revenue options, or reducing operational running costs, so as to support the continued provision of the borough's Community Association run Community Centres;

(iii) That the Panel agrees to liaise with representatives of 'Ealing Music Services' so as to understand the plans for the service's relocation, if any;

(iv) That the Panel agrees to liaise with Ealing CCG and Ealing Public Health to promote the use of the facilities provided by Community Centres, for health promotion services.

(v) That the Panel agrees to request that the Assistant Director, Major Projects, provide:

*Advice to Community Associations in the borough, on how they might become 'incorporated' as charities;*

*A list of those community centres who currently qualify for rate relief, and those who do not; and to ensure that officers speak to all the community associations in the borough, with regard to reducing their energy bills, and availing of the council's energy subsidy;*

(vii) That the Panel agrees to receive a further update report on the borough's Community Centres, at its next meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2016.

## **7. Community Use of School Premises**

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Gary Redhead, the Assistant Director, Schools Planning and Resources, which provided Members with details of schools in the borough, currently providing dual use community facilities.

Gary Redhead attended the meeting and presented the item to the Panel, he was assisted by Samantha Powell, Principal Planner, Planning Services.

Gary Redhead informed the Panel that the Council positively encourages all schools in the borough, regardless of their type, to offer extended use of their school buildings/facilities to the local community.

He said that whilst the Council offers support, it does not centrally manage or coordinate community use activity in schools, therefore it was not possible for him to provide the Panel with up to date accurate data on the level of community use offered by all schools across the borough.

He referred Members to Appendix 2 of his report which he said provided the Panel with an outline of the facilities and current offers of all dual use centres in Ealing, which are also schools.

He said that in terms of the level of use of schools by the community, this is an area which individual schools and their governing body decide on, taking into account various factors such as safeguarding, insurance, staffing and revenue implications.

He said that schools do tend to view their facilities as a community asset and so will offer extended use on moral grounds. He said that the schools are also incentivised to offer extended use on financial grounds, where letting their facilities to the local community can act as an additional revenue stream to subsidise the school's own operating costs.

He said that whilst he was not able to provide data on community use in schools across the borough, there was no evidence of any correlation between an individual school type, and the level of use of its facilities by the community. However, in general secondary schools and larger primary schools tend to enjoy a proportionally higher take up of use by the community.

He said that in addition to the existing state schools in Ealing, the Council is currently projecting to require a number of new schools before the end of this decade to provide sufficient places to meet rising demand.

He advised that the Council's 'Planning for Schools Development Plan Document (DPD),' seeks to positively plan for primary and secondary school place provision in the borough to meet the identified need, including promoting increased access to facilities associated with the schools to the wider community.

Samantha Powell, Principal Planner, Planning Services, said that dual use of facilities can result in mutual beneficial use to both parties. She said that not only do local community benefit from the use of school sports facilities, the schools themselves also benefit from having additional and improved facilities, a widening of networks with a whole range of other organisations, such as local sports clubs and an improved relationship with their communities.

She said that by opening up their schools to a wider range of community groups and clubs, the schools can develop new pathways which can allow young people to make the transition from school sport to community sport, and realise opportunities that will hopefully lead to a habit of lifelong or long term participation.

She said that the planning policies such as those referred to in the report are used to ensure that sports, halls and open space facilities are included in the design of any new schools, and that wherever possible, these facilities are made available to the wider community.

She added that generally, such provision and detailed arrangements for wider community use would be secured by condition, and/or s106 legal agreement associated with the planning permission.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Panel note the report by the by the Assistant Director, Schools Planning and Resources, which provided Members with details of schools in the borough who currently provide dual use community facilities.

The Panel also noted information provided in the report that gave details of how the Council can support the provision and extended use of community facilities within schools, through its planning policies;

(ii) That the Panel agrees to adopt the proposal 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.

## 8. The Panel Work Programme

The Panel received a report by the Scrutiny Review Officer which updated Members on the Panel's 2015/2016 work programme, including details of agenda items scheduled for the Panel's two remaining meetings in the municipal year in January and March 2016.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Panel notes the outline work programme for 2015/2016, as set out in the appendix to the substantive report;

(ii) That the Panel note that the items of business for consideration at the next meeting are likely to include the following:

- Ealing Community Network
- Council Halls for hire
- Draft recommendations and report of the Panel
- Panel Work Programme

## 9. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 6)

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of Scrutiny Review Panel 2, is on Thursday 28th January, 2016, and is scheduled to take place in the 'Oaktree Community Centre,' South Acton.

Councillor Natasha Ahmed-Shaikh, Chair.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm

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