

**SRP 2 - "COMMUNITY CENTRES"  
MINUTES  
Thursday, 28th January 2016**

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

**Also Present:**

Janpal Singh Basran - Ealing CVS & Manager of Southall Community Alliance  
Jane Coughlan - Hospitality and Events Manager, LBE  
Jonathan Kirby - Assistant Director, Major Projects, LBE  
Laurie Lyle - Democratic Services Officer, LBE  
Anna-Marie Rattray - Scrutiny Review Officer, LBE  
Tim Ryder – Chair of Greenford Community Association  
Paul Woodgate - Chair of Acton Vale Community Association.

**1. Apologies for Absence**  
(Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aysha Raza.

**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 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 be agreed as a true and correct record.

**6. Hospitality and Events - Community Use of Facilities**  
(Agenda Item 6)

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Council's Hospitality and Events Manager which provided Members with details of the facilities managed by the Hospitality and Events department, as well as the facilities currently available for community hire.

The report also provided information on the current lettings and the pricing policy, the current marketing and communications strategy being deployed, and usage by local community groups.

In addition, panel Members were provided with a briefing note prior to the meeting from the Council's Head of Regeneration, which was to be read in conjunction with the substantive report.

The briefing note advised Members of the progress made on the redevelopment of Ealing Town Hall, and of the work being undertaken at present to enable the relevant community groups and organisations who hire the Town Hall, to find alternative premises.

The Council's Hospitality and Events Manager, Jane Coughlan attended the meeting and presented the report to the Panel. She informed Members that the Town Hall operations had been significantly revamped in 2008, where prior to that it was being operated on a largely ad-hoc basis.

She said that since 2008/09, the management of the Town Hall has become much more regulated and a new business strategy and pricing policy has been introduced, which includes a discounted community rate of up to 45% which applies to registered charities and to local groups and organisations, whose intention it is to offer facilities to residents of the borough on a non-profit making basis.

She said that in addition to this a 'weekend' rate has been introduced, as well as various 'Community Packages.'

She said that since 2008/09 there have been a large number of regular users of the Town Hall, and these user groups comprise a broad spectrum, which includes; local community associations, religious groups, NHS and the Police.

She said that she was encouraged by the steady increase in bookings of both Ealing Town Hall and Greenford Hall over the last 12 months.

The Chair thanked Jane Coughlan for her presentation, and invited Members to comment and ask questions.

In response to a question from Councillor Ball, concerning when the Town Hall is due to close for refurbishment works, Jane Coughlan advised that the whole Town Hall site is scheduled to be handed over to the developers in March 2017.

In response to a supplementary question from the Chair, Jane Coughlan said that the Council's Regeneration team will continue to provide assistance to Town Hall user groups, in order to help them relocate to suitable alternative buildings in the borough.

Councillor Joy Morrissey said that she wished to congratulate the officers concerned who she believes have so far done a great job in turning around the fortunes of managing the Town Hall, however, she was concerned that the 52 local organisations who regularly use the Town Hall will have very little options once the Town Hall closes for refurbishment.

Councillor Joy Morrissey said that she thought this is likely to have an adverse impact on the local community.

In response to a question from Councillor Conti, Jane Coughlan advised that the income generation target for the year in respect of Ealing Town Hall and Greenford Hall is £800k.

With no further questions forthcoming, the Chair concluded the debate on the item.

The Chair proposed, and it was agreed, that the Panel endorse the objective for the redevelopment of Ealing Town Hall, which is set out in the original developer Marketing Brief which requires that; 'There will 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'.

The Chair said that she was pleased to note that the Council is to provide the necessary support in order to relocate the local community groups who use Ealing Town Hall, and help them find alternative premises on either a temporary or permanent basis.

The Chair said that she was also pleased to note the significant increase in the use of Ealing Town Hall and Greenford Hall since 2010, during which time over 4300 meetings/events have been hosted at these two venues, by 52 different organisations, comprising a wide range of community activities as well as public sector organisations.

The Chair concluded discussion on the item by requesting that her congratulations to the officers concerned be placed on record.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Panel note the report by the Council's Hospitality and Events Manager which provided details of the facilities managed by the Council's Hospitality and Events department and the facilities available for community hire, including information on the lettings and the pricing policy, marketing and usage by community groups;

(ii) That the Panel agree to endorse 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'.

(iii) That the Panel was 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.

(iv) That the Panel notes and formally congratulates the officers concerned on the progress made, in particular the significant increase in the use of Ealing Town Hall and Greenford Hall since 2010, during which time over 4300 meetings/events have been hosted at these two venues, by 52 different organisations, comprising a wide range of community activities as well as public sector organisations.

## 7. **Ealing Community and Voluntary Service (ECVS)** (Agenda item 7)

The Panel received a report and presentation by Janpal Singh Basran, Ealing CVS, and Manager of Southall Community Alliance, on the work being undertaken in the local community by Ealing CVS, and the Southall Community Alliance.

Janpal Basran's presentation featured the following:

- The background of the Ealing CVS, in particular its work in being the lead organisation for the 'Ealing Community Network,' which has been going for over 12 years and has over 450 voluntary community service member groups, and the 'Hounslow Community Network' which has over 240 groups.
- The support services provided by the ECVS, including advice with funding bids, assistance with recruiting volunteers, training and skills courses.
- Ealing CVS current work with local partners.
- The various issues regarding the lack of available premises and the need for affordable, and accessible accommodation.
- Barriers to useage, including; the grant of short term leases, the lack of a premises strategy, the drive to sell off local authority sites which causes the dislocation of voluntary community services.
- The types of community facilities required - office space, desks, telephones, IT.
- Information concerning the alternative sites, the options available – faith venues, church halls, libraries, sports and recreational facilities, Housing Association community centres, Children centres, empty shop fronts, schools, regeneration sites.

Janpal Basran also spoke briefly about the work of the 'Southall Community Alliance,' which he advised Members is a registered charity, which acts as a forum to represent the interests of the local community, and seeks to develop the skills and capacity of disadvantaged groups, and provide facilities and activities specifically targeted at local community groups.

The Chair thanked Janpal Basran for his presentation, and invited Members to comment and ask questions.

In response to a question from the Chair, Janpal Basran advised that Ealing has a thriving voluntary sector, and in this regard it compares favourably to most other London local authorities. He added that the demand for affordable and accessible community facilities has become a real issue in recent years.

In response to a supplementary question from the Chair concerning how the ECVS supports itself, Janpal Basran said that the ECVS is largely a grant reliant organisation that seeks to utilise different types of funding wherever possible.

Councillor Ball said that he too was concerned at the lack of available premises for community use in the borough. Councillor Ball said that he hoped that the Panel would try to come up with a recommendation to address this problem.

In response to a question from Councillor Conti, Janpal Basran said that the borough of Ealing has a number of advantages, which lends itself well to community sector activity, for example; its local economics, the diversity of the borough, and the proximity of Ealing to establishments such as Heathrow Airport.

In response to a point made by Councillor Joy Morrissey, Janpal Basran said that currently there is a real concern that Council owned properties are not being made sufficiently accessible for local community activities. He cited schools in Southall as an example of the problem that exists throughout the borough.

With no further questions or comments forthcoming, the Chair concluded the debate on the item and summed up.

The Chair thanked Janpal Singh Basran for attending the Panel meeting, and for providing Members with a detailed presentation on the work being undertaken in the local community by Ealing CVS, and the Southall Community Alliance.

The Chair requested that the relevant officers get together and develop a community premises strategy, in conjunction with ECVS, which seeks to identify current need, and which examines the potential for using accessible space in a more creative way at an affordable cost.

In closing, the Chair requested that 'ECVS' be considered by the Council as potential partners for the managing of community assets.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Panel records a vote of thanks to Janpal Singh Basran for attending the Panel meeting, and for providing Members with a detailed presentation on the work being undertaken in the local community by Ealing CVS, and the Southall Community Alliance;

(ii) That the relevant officers be requested to develop a community premises strategy, in conjunction with ECVS, which identifies current need, and which examines the potential for using accessible space in a more creative way at an affordable cost;

(iii) That the Panel requests that 'ECVS' are considered by the Council as potential partners for the managing of community assets.

**8. Acton Vale Community Centre (AVCC)**  
(Agenda item 8)

Paul Woodgate, Chair of Acton Vale Community Association attended the meeting and provided a verbal update to the Panel on the work of Acton Vale Community Centre.

Paul Woodgate informed Members that the Acton Vale Community Association is a Council-owned centre, based on the Acton Vale Housing Estate.

He said that the governance of the AVCC is overseen by the AVCC management committee, who undertake all aspects of running the community centre, which has in effect been managed as an 'arms-length' organisation from the Council since 2004.

He said that the AVCC are not just a tenants and residents association, as they do try to serve a wider remit than just the Acton Vale estate.

He said that the AVCC has a selection of rooms that can be used for a wide range of activities, and the activities that currently take place at the centre are wide ranging and include: adult education, fitness and martial arts classes, nurseries, and varied number of commercial events.

He said that in the last year the 'AVCC' has achieved registered charity status which has made a significant difference to the overall running of the centre.

He said that in the last 12 months the AVCC have seen an increase in the amount of business it has been able to attract, and the AVCC has accrued a surplus for the first time since 2011/12, which represents considerable improvement, and is testament to the hard work put in by all those concerned.

Paul Woodgate said that the AVCC aims next year to increase the number of organisations using the centre. He said that other aims and objectives of the AVCC include; making more funding applications, to review the building's office and maintenance requirements, to strengthen links with the local community and to look into the possibility of setting up of a AVCA website.

The Chair thanked Paul Woodgate for his presentation, and invited Members to comment and ask questions.

In response to a question from Councillor Woodroffe, Paul Woodgate advised that the AVCC is owned by the London Borough of Ealing, however the centre is run by the AVCC trustees on an existing management agreement. He added that the AVCC do receive support from the Council such as management and administrative advice, as well as assistance with various cleaning and utility bills.

In response to a question from Councillor Midha, Paul Woodgate said that the AVCC advertise the centre by undertaking occasional leaflet drops on the estate, they also organise 'Open Days,' to increase awareness and help raise the profile of the AVCC.

He said that the AVCC have also received good support and advice in this regard from the 'Acton Community Forum.'

Councillor Joy Morrissey said that she wished to congratulate Paul Woodgate and the AVCC, for their tireless work in the community and for their notable achievements in operating a surplus in the current financial year.

In response to a question from Councillor Joy Morrissey, Paul Woodgate advised that the law requires that any charitable organisation accruing a surplus must have their accounts independently verified. He said that fortunately the AVCC had received this service without charge from a local volunteer.

He said that the AVCC closely scrutinise its finances, including all of its incomings and outgoings. He said that the AVCC also makes a concerted effort to chase up creditors, so that they pay on time.

The Chair said that she was encouraged to note that the AVCC is currently operating at approximately 80% capacity.

The Chair said that she was also impressed by the way the AVCC was being managed, and said she would recommend that the relevant officers consider using the example provided by the Acton Vale Community Association, as a model for informing best practice in the management of other Community Centre's in the borough.

In response to a supplementary question from the Chair, Paul Woodgate said that becoming a registered charity was both a huge plus and a considerable turning point in the fortunes of the AVCC, as becoming a charity means that it is likely that opportunities for further funding will present itself in the future.

He said that another significant development was being able to employ a Centre Manager for three days a week. He said that having a full time Centre Manager allows for a much better day to day routine, and ensures that mundane matters are dealt with promptly, which over the course of the year is integral to the overall operation.

He said that other advantages of having a Centre Manager are that it provides the AVCC with greater opportunities in which to attract more business.

With no further questions or comments forthcoming, the Chair concluded the debate on the item and summed up.

The Chair thanked Paul Woodgate for attending the meeting, and the Chair said that on behalf of the Panel she wished to place on record her congratulations to Paul Woodgate, the staff, the volunteers and all those concerned at the Acton Vale Community Centre, for their hard work and diligence, which has seen the Acton Vale Community Centre achieve in the past year; charitable status, up to 80% capacity, as well as an operational surplus.

The Chair also reiterated her earlier proposed recommendation that the relevant officers consider using the example provided by the Acton Vale Community Association, as a model for informing best practice in the management of other Community Centre's in the borough.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Panel records a vote of thanks Paul Woodgate, Chair of Acton Vale Community Association, for attending the Panel meeting and for providing Members with a detailed verbal update to the Panel on the; aims, objectives, activities and achievements of Acton Vale Community Centre;

(ii) That the Panel formally records its congratulations to Paul Woodgate, and to the staff, volunteers and all those concerned at the Acton Vale Community Centre, for their hard work and diligence, which has seen the Acton Vale Community Centre achieve in past year; charitable status, up to 80% capacity, and an operational surplus;

(iii) That the relevant officers consider using the example provided by the Acton Vale Community Association, as a model for informing best practice in the management of other Community Centre's in the borough.

## **9. Environment and Customer Services - Consultation with Community Associations - Update (Agenda item 9)**

Jonathan Kirby, Assistant Director Major Projects submitted a report which updated the Panel on the progress made with regards to Council's consultation with local community associations.

The report also provided Members with information pertaining to the market rent assessments for the local community centre sites, the rent post 80% subsidy, and the criteria used for the awarding of subsidies.

The Chair advised that representatives from the borough's eight community associations had been invited to the meeting and address the Panel. However, only Tim Ryder, Chair of the Greenford Association has attended.

The Chair invited Members to put any questions they had concerning the Greenford Community Centre, to Tim Ryder.

In response to a question from Councillor Ball and other Members concerning the future of the Greenford Community Centre (CC), Tim Ryder advised that the group 'Ealing Music Service' (EMS), had at various times expressed an interest in taking over the lease of the building, however their initial interest had not materialised into anything significant.

Tim Ryder said that with all due respect he doubted whether the EMS had the capacity or necessary professional management or administrative expertise required to take on the responsibility for running the building.

He said that just over two years ago the Greenford CC's income was approximately £56k, however this has since declined to approximately £22k, and was not enough to sustain the Centre moving forward, therefore reluctantly, the Trustees have agreed to call time on the running of the Centre.

The Chair thanked Tim Ryder for attending the meeting and for responding to Members questions.

In summing up, the Chair acknowledged the progress made with regards to the Council's consultation with local community associations, and the information provided information pertaining to the market rent assessments for the sites, and the rent post 80% subsidy, as well as the criteria for the awarding of subsidies.

The Chair said that she hoped that a solution could be found that would keep the Greenford Community Centre open, and she proposed, and Members agreed, that the Panel requests the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, or 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee,' to continue to monitor the progress of the implementation of the new operating models for the borough's Community Centres.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Panel note the progress made with regards to Council's consultation with local community associations, and the information provided information pertaining to the market rent assessments for the sites, and the rent post 80% subsidy, as well as the criteria for the awarding of subsidies;

(ii) That the Panel agrees to request that an appropriate Scrutiny Committee or the 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee,' monitors the progress of the implementation of the new operating models for the borough's Community Centres, at regular intervals.

## 10. The Panel Work Programme

Anna Marie-Rattray, the Scrutiny Review Officer submitted a report which updated Members with regards to the Panel's remaining work programme in 2015/2016.

The Scrutiny Review Officer advised Members that the next meeting of the Panel in March 2016 will be its last.

She said that at that meeting the Panel will have before them the Panel's draft recommendations to consider and agree.

She said that the meeting will also consider a final update on the latest developments on consultations with the borough's Community Associations.

She referred Members to Appendix 2 of the substantive report which contained the response provided by Ealing CCG, following on from the Panel's previous meeting, concerning the commissioning of services.

The Chair thanked the Scrutiny Review Officer for her report.

The Chair concluded the meeting by requesting that a vote of thanks be recorded in the minutes in acknowledgement of the management and staff of the Oaktree Community Centre, for their efforts in providing a pleasant and congenial ambience in which to host the Panel meeting.

**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 Members note that the items of business for consideration at the Panel's next and final meeting is likely to include the following:

- 'Update on the Environment & Customer Services Department's - consultation with Community Associations'
- 'Recommendations and Final Report of the Panel'

(iii) That the Panel note Appendix 2 of the substantive report which contained the response provided by Ealing CCG (see below), following on from the Panel's previous meeting (28.11.15), concerning the commissioning of services:

*"The CCG is very interested in commissioning services from any space in the Borough that is already within the public domain. A Strategic Estates Group has been established to bring all stakeholders together and look collectively at the maximising the space we already pay for."*

(iii) That the Panel agree to record a vote of thanks to the management and staff of the Oaktree Community Centre, for their efforts in providing a pleasant and congenial ambience in which to host the Panel meeting.

## **11. Date of Next Meeting** (Agenda Item 6)

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of Scrutiny Review Panel 2, is on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2016, and is scheduled to take place in Ealing Town Hall.

Councillor Natasha Ahmed-Shaikh, Chair.

The meeting ended at 9.35pm.

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