

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	<b>Meeting:-</b>	Cabinet
2.	<b>Date:-</b>	24 September 2014
3.	<b>Title:-</b>	Review of Directly Managed Community Centres
4.	<b>Directorate:-</b>	Environment & Development Services

### 5. Summary and Recommendations

On the 26<sup>th</sup> February Cabinet met to consider the 2014/15 budget. As part of the budget proposals a number of potential revenue savings were put forward which included to “transfer or close uneconomical community buildings offer leases to current users of community buildings for users to take over the running responsibility for the buildings and thereby reduce the councils costs”.

The important role the centres have played in the communities over the years is recognised, however a number of the centres are now poorly used, income does not cover expenditure and their condition is deteriorating.

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014 Cabinet agreed with regard to the ‘Use of Land and Property Assets to Maximise Growth’ to make properties held in localities available to local organisations or free them up for development except where they are needed to house key services.

Cabinet’s decision in setting the 2014/15 budget included savings in the cost of community buildings of £20,000 in 2014/15 and a further £30,000 in 2015/16.

This report identifies the outcome of a review of community buildings and makes recommendations relating to the future of the buildings.

### 6. Recommendations

**Cabinet is asked to approve:**

- **The retention of Swinton Public Hall and Eastwood Community Village.**
- **The closure of community facilities at Fir Close - Wath, Oaklea Retreat – West Melton, Greasborough Public Hall, and Broom Valley – Rotherham, which could all be released for development in accordance with Cabinet’s decision of 5 February 2014.**
- **Further review of options at Rawmarsh Aged Persons Centre, St Johns Green Centre and Springwell Gardens, with a further report to Cabinet on these facilities by March 2015.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

### **7.1. Background**

The Asset Management Service has directly managed various community buildings across the borough for a number of years. There has been little or no recent investment in the condition of the properties and many have significant backlog maintenance costs which will affect medium to longer term revenue cost requirements if the buildings are retained. The popularity and usage of the buildings has declined over recent years.

As part of the budget setting process for 2014/15, Cabinet approved various budget savings proposals which included the following for community buildings:

*“transfer or close uneconomical community buildings, offer leases to current users of community buildings for users to take over the running responsibility for the buildings and thereby reduce the council’s costs”.*

In order to carry out Cabinet’s decision, a review of community buildings has been completed covering the usage of the buildings, review of revenue running costs, consideration of backlog maintenance of the buildings, the potential capital receipts that may be obtained from closing the buildings and any opportunities for releasing sites for development in support of economic growth.

As part of the review an extensive consultation exercise was carried out including seeking opinions from local Ward Members and the users of the building. The option of asset transfer has been considered where relevant and we have looked at any options put forward for increasing the future demand of the buildings.

#### **Review findings**

Financially, the community buildings are not recovering their expenditure and whilst revenue running costs have been increasing the rental income received as a result of hourly lettings has gradually declined. In the majority of cases the community centres are making a loss.

Most facilities have utilisation that varies between only 3% and 12% of available letting time (9.00am until 9.00pm six days per week). Only Swinton Community Centre achieves more than 50% usage (70% in 2013/14 and 54% so far in 2014/15).

Local Ward Members were consulted on options for the facilities in April 2014, followed by a wider general public and user consultation where notices were placed in the centres to seek the views of user groups etc. A number of replies have been received.

A summary of the findings and conclusions from the review, including consultation feedback, is shown in the table below:

## Community Buildings – Summary of Usage, Costs and Consultation Outcomes

Centre Name	Area	Ward	Other facilities nearby and distances	Usage; % Hours	Revenue Running costs 2013/14	Income from lettings 2013/14	Annual net cost	Consultation Outcome/Comments	Final Rec'n
Greasbrough Public Hall	Greasbrough	Wingfield	Greasbrough Library small meeting room 250 mtrs,  Methodist Church Potter Hill Greasbrough 50 mtrs,  Forty Martyrs Church Hall Rockingham- 1000 mtrs	3%	£13,581.00	-£2,466.13	£11,114.87	A prominent public hall. External bookings have virtually dried up and the only regular bookings now are from Ward Members who hold their weekly surgeries from the building.  There are other facilities in the area including the Greasbrough Library and Ward Members would be able to hold surgeries there.	Close. This site could be disposed of for development purposes.
Oaklea Retreat	West Melton	Hoover		7%	£15,147.00	-£1,230.00	£13,917.00	Limited occupancy but does provide a venue for a club supporting adults with learning difficulties. Strong representation received from support workers, volunteers and members of the club. We could work with the group to find an alternative venue.	Close. This site could be disposed of for development purposes.
Fir Close	Wath	Wath Upon Dearne	Montgomery Hall, Wath	4%	£9,739.00	-£729.00	£9,010.00	Strong representation from support workers who provide a centre for activities for people with learning difficulties.  Other than that use, which is only twice a week, the usage is very small. Recommend closure of the building but to work with the group to find an alternative venue.	Close. This site could be disposed of for development purposes.

Centre Name	Area	Ward	Other facilities nearby and distances	Usage; % Hours	Revenue Running costs 2013/14	Income from lettings 2013/14	Annual net cost	Consultation Outcome/Comments	Final Rec'n
Broom Valley Clubroom	Broom	Boston Castle	St Barnabus Centre, Brunswick Road Broom- 100mtrs	10%	£12,462.00	-£2,408.00	£10,054.00	<p>Councillor R McNeely requested that we work to try to keep the building open and look for other opportunities from other groups/ business in the area.</p> <p>The bridge club, who have a number of elderly members, supported retention of the building.</p>	Close. This site could be disposed of for development purposes.
St Johns Green Community Centre	Kimberworth	Wingfield	<p>St Johns Green Church Hall- 25 mtrs,</p> <p>Black Hut Kimberworth Road Kimberworth- 600 mtrs,</p> <p>Forty Martyrs Church Hall, 1/2 mile</p>	No external bookings	£12,475.72	£0.00	£12,475.72	<p>The community has virtually no external bookings. The local TARA runs a daily café from the building but historically has used the building free of charge. The TARA submitted a request for community asset transfer although it is not clear that the TARA has the capacity to sustain the building.</p> <p>The building is attached to Kimberworth District Office and there is a desire within neighbourhoods to vacate this building. In the circumstances before any decision is taken on the building the long term future of the District Office should be considered and the effects on the neighbourhood locality.</p>	Further review

Centre Name	Area	Ward	Other facilities nearby and distances	Usage; % Hours	Revenue Running costs 2013/14	Income from lettings 2013/14	Annual net cost	Consultation Outcome/Comments	Final Rec'n
Rawmarsh Peoples Centre	Rawmarsh	Roth'm East	High Street Centre Rawmarsh, 250 mtrs,  Rawmarsh CSC Barbers Ave Rawmarsh 600mtrs	7%	£7,992.00	-£1,067.00	£6,925.00	<p>The usage of the building is only 7%, which is by a local bingo group. Representations have been received from a number of Ward Members and local discussions did take place at Rawmarsch CSC to discuss options.</p> <p>Councillor Vines requested the centre remain opened and requested an opportunity to develop its use over the next 12 months. We have also had a request from Integrated Youth service who are looking for a location in the Rawmarsh locality.</p> <p>Recommend further opportunities are explored with the respective parties.</p>	Further review
Springwell Gardens Community Centre	Eastwood	Roth'm East	Eastwood Village Community Centre- 1.5 miles, Unity Centre St Stephens Road Eastwood 1 mile, Mowbray Gardens Community Centre 450 mtrs	10%	£25,961.00	-£10,971.00	£14,990.00	<p>The offices within the building are let to Rotherfed. Rotherfed also holds regular meetings and support seminars from the large meeting room in the building. However, Rotherfed may not be able to run the building within their current resources. If necessary, we can assist Rotherfed with a search for alternative premises if the building closes. We could consider a further review pending outcome of discussions and needs of Rotherfed.</p> <p>Asset Management is also carrying out a review of accommodation as part of the rationalisation of other properties, which could identify additional options for the use of Springwell gardens.</p>	Further review

Centre Name	Area	Ward	Other facilities nearby and distances	Usage; % Hours	Revenue Running costs 2013/14	Income from lettings 2013/14	Annual net cost	Consultation Outcome/Comments	Final Rec'n
Eastwood Village	Eastwood	Roth'm East	Untiy Centre St Stephens RD Eastwood- 600 mtrs, Springwell Gardens Community Centre 1.5 miles	12%	£8,148.76	-£7,384.00	£764.76	Net costs are minimal  Emails have been received from Ward Members requesting the centre remains open. In view of its position and the use and support of the building by the local residents group, it is recommended that the centre remains open and the opportunities for further lettings explored. We are currently liaising with Clifton Community Learning partnership who are looking for a learning centre within the Eastwood area.	Retain
Swinton Public Hall	Swinton	Swinton	Swinton Libaray meeting room, Charles Street Community Centre	54%	£31,597.00	-£25,892.00	£5,705.00	Honey Pot Café provides a community facility within the building. This is a well run facility with good occupancy rates and potential for further income. Representations from councillors to retain the building. There are some long term maintenance implications with backlog maintenance requiring an investment over the next ten years of £212k, including a significant investment in 2018 which indicates that around £141k is required to cover mainly electrical installations.  The revenue accounts for 2012/13 show a profit of £8962 and 69% lettings and 2013/14 showed a profit of £4572 and 70% lettings	Retain

## 7.2 Recommendations

Based on a range of parameters including usage, financial information, Ward Member feedback and consultation responses from users, the Director of Internal Audit & Asset Management recommendations for the centres are as follows:

- Retain **Swinton Community Hall** and **Eastwood Village** which are considered to be sustainable with further potential for development and interest.
- **Rawmarsh Aged Persons centre** – In view of the interest from the Integrated Youth Service, the relatively low net cost and potential for further interest, it is recommended to retain this facility in the short term pending a further review to consider the options.
- **St Johns Green Community Hall** is connected to Kimberworth Park District Office. The TARA runs a small community café from the premises most days of the week. The long term future of the whole building is under review and any long term decision on either the community building and /or the district office should not be taken in isolation, as there may be other longer term benefits for the whole of the St Johns Green shopping centre / campus from a holistic solution. Therefore, a further review of the whole site should be undertaken as a joint initiative with Neighbourhoods.
- **Springwell Gardens** - Rotherfed currently occupies the offices within the building to provide support for the tenants/ residents organisations. Rotherfed also uses the large meeting room for bigger meetings. Asset management has been looking at other various options to retain the building which may include the option to relocate other services within the centre. These are tied in with other rationalisation opportunities which are currently being worked up and it is, therefore, proposed to retain the building pending a further review.
- **Greasbrough Public Hall, Fir Close, Oaklea Retreat, and Broom Valley** are not sustainable therefore it is proposed to close the buildings and assist where practicable to find alternative locations for existing non-council users to continue their activities, at no cost to the council.

## 8. Finance

As part of the 2014/15 budget settlement on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 Cabinet agreed to a revenue savings in 2014/15 of £20,000 which has already been taken from this year's budget. In addition there is a further revenue saving of £30,000 in 2015/16 as a result of further savings in revenue running costs for caretaking and cleaning costs.

Failure to close the buildings would result in budget pressures for 2014/15.

Subject to disposal of the community centres there may also be a potential capital receipts and growth opportunities as indicated for each building subject to closure within appendix A.

No allowance has been made for any decisions to demolish any buildings.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

If the recommendations of this report are not carried through there will be a resultant annual budget pressure as a result of failing to deliver the approved budget savings.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

End users will have to find alternative accommodation to continue their business or community use, though the Council believes there is adequate alternative provision within the communities.

Sites released from community use will be used to:-

1. For service deployment i.e. Rawmarsh Aged Persons centre as a youth service hub and /or Springwell gardens is under consideration for other service use.
2. Free up sites to support the growth and development agenda.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

- Cabinet Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014.
- Consultation with Ward Members 9<sup>th</sup> April 2014
- Consultation with users and other council and third party partners June 2014.
- Capital Strategy & Asset Review Team 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014

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