

HAWTONVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE TENANCY OPTION

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the current position relating to the operation of Hawtonville Community Centre, the progress being made with the management arrangements following the transfer of the management of the Centre to Newark and Sherwood Homes; and for Members to consider the granting of a 3 year tenancy agreement to Reach (a Local Charity supporting vulnerable adults in Newark and Sherwood).

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Committee last received a report on 19 September 2017 to consider the progress being made to secure the operational management function for the Hawtonville Community Centre in order to increase income and usage and reduce the Centre's operational deficit and cost to the Council.

2.2 Over the last 9 months, partnership working between the Council and Newark and Sherwood Homes (NSH) through the Community Development project has enabled progress to be made in respect of raising the profile of the Centre and attract new user groups with some success - primarily in the evening and at weekends.

2.3 Currently the Centre is used Monday to Friday evenings with such activities as children's dance, yoga and mini soccer. There is a regular Saturday dance session and there is interest from a church group for Sunday morning services.

2.4 However, day-time use remains a challenge and there are currently only two regular bookings: First Class Education using the Centre in the day (although this extends to three separate sessions over three days and 7.5 hours of use per week during school term time); and a Fitness Class on an afternoon sessions once a week.

3.0 The Current Overview

3.1 As indicated above, NSH is now managing the Community Centre on the Council's behalf and has made steady progress on addressing the priorities identified in the Neighbourhood Study, which includes generating more interest and use of the Centre to improve its value and worth to the local community.

3.2 The community centre currently has seven regular bookings as follows:

▪ ***Aerobics Class***

This is an established afternoon ladies exercise group which is operated on a commercial basis and runs during the Autumn/Winter period each year and is reasonably well supported.

- **Elaine Varney School of Dance**
This is a long established school which has relocated to the centre and provides dance instruction and examination for local children running 4 nights a week and Saturday.
- **First Class Education**
This is primarily one to one education support to young people outside of the mainstream education offer running three sessions week in the day.
- **Bible Class**
This is a relatively new a booking and although small in numbers initially it is hoped that it will attract more people over and become a regular booking.
- **RHP Football Club**
This is an indoor mini soccer training programme for children running on a Thursday evening.
- **Yoga Sessions**
This is a new group running on a Monday evening.
- **Youth Club**
This is a new voluntary youth club running on a Wednesday evening and organised by Newark Christ Church to provide activities for your people from the Hawtonville estate.

3.3 Newark and Sherwood Homes has also identified a number of potential community champions who have expressed an interest in supporting the development of community initiatives including a focus on improving the use of the Community Centre.

3.4 Usage of the Centre has grown gradually over the last 9 months with income of £5,533 from user groups achieved between 1 April and 3 November 2017 and this is expected to grow gradually as new groups and activities are introduced which will reduce operating costs to the Council.

4.0 Proposal

4.1 The Council has recently been approached by 'Reach Newark', which is part of Reach Learning Disability (a registered charity). The Charity provides day service provision for over 100 local adults and is interested in relocating its services to the Community Centre from its existing operational base in Newark, which it has outgrown. Reach would be interested in an initial three year tenancy agreement to occupy the Centre in order to deliver its programme Monday to Friday each week from approximately 8.00am to approximately 5.00pm which would enable it to continue to grow and improve its services to its users. Reach has submitted details of its proposal which are detailed in Appendix A to this report.

4.2 Based on the limited day time use of the Centre currently and the offer that Reach is proposing it would seem reasonable to consider the potential for a shared arrangement at the Centre which would deliver greater utilisation of the building during the day yielding further rental income whilst retaining community use of the facilities in the evenings and at weekends.

- 4.3 Given the current limited daytime use of the Centre during the week it is proposed that Members consider the principle of offering Reach a short term tenancy of the Centre for an initial period of three years to deliver its support programme Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 4.00pm.
- 4.4 The tenancy agreement could require and secure the retention of provision for community use with access from 5.00pm in the week and at weekends thereby delivering the anticipated benefits as highlighted in **Appendix A** and a rental arrangement would be negotiated with Reach which would reduce the Centre's revenue costs to the Council.
- 4.5 The proposal would present a number of benefits, it would enable Reach to improve and grow its service offer to its clients through occupation of the Centre when community demand is limited, and it would also maintain community access at times when there is demand and interest for this. Operational arrangements would ensure that the Centre would remain available from 5.00pm to 10.00pm typically on weekdays and at weekends. The arrangement could also retain community use of the upstairs offices for daytime use in the week for meetings, drop in sessions and small community activities booked in advance and programmed accordingly.
- 4.6 In addition Reach has the capability and capacity to offer a management option to provide a reception and administration service for the Centre to the Council and it is suggested that this be explored further as part of the negotiations with the Charity.
- 4.7 However, it must be noted that if Reach were to become the main tenant of the Centre, this could potentially create some displacement of current day-time user groups and therefore every effort would be made to assist the groups affected to find alternative accommodation in the locality.

5.0 Equalities Implications

- 5.1 The Devon Ward and Hawtonville area profile shows a relatively homogenous community (94% of residents were born in the UK) albeit with a significant distribution of ages, from a mean of 46 in the Bellmont Road/Bailey Close area compared to a mean age of 29 in the Staunton Road/Montgomery Road area.
- 5.2 Reach is an organisation that delivers services to a category of persons with protected characteristics and therefore an agreement to allow them to occupy the Centre would facilitate services being delivered to them.

6.0 Impact on Budget/Policy Framework

- 6.1 It is anticipated that if Reach were to become a tenant the overall financial position of the Centre in respects of revenue costs to the Council would be improved through an annual rental payment from the Charity and supplemented by the income that would be generated and retained from other user groups utilising the Centre. Alternatively the revenue costs of the Centre could be transferred to Reach which would then retain the income from user groups thereby incentivising Reach to maximise community use of the Centre and improving the overall short term viability of the Centre.

7.0 Comments of Business Manager & Chief Financial Officer – Financial Services

7.1 The proposed short term tenancy/agreement should generate further income into the Centre with greater activity. Greater certainty over this income level will be created once negotiations begin.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- a) **Members approve the principle of REACH being granted a short term tenancy/agreement for the Centre not exceeding three years on the condition that community use as outlined in this report is protected;**
- b) **The Director - Safety be given delegated authority to progress negotiations with REACH and agree the terms of the tenancy or other agreement for its occupation of the Centre, including rental levels etc; and**
- c) **Officers work with Reach to develop a detailed business case and operating proposal for the Centre to demonstrate greater utilisation of the community resource which can then be presented to Members at a future meeting for further consideration, including how this might impact upon the overall management of the Centre by Newark and Sherwood Homes.**

Reason for Recommendations

To review the running and sustainability of the Hawtonville Community Centre.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Andy Hardy, Community Projects Manager, on 01636 655708.

**Karen White
Director – Safety**