

**REPORT TO:** Employment, Learning, Skills & Community  
PPB

**DATE:** 11 January 2012

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Communities

**PORTFOLIO:** Neighbourhood, Leisure and Sport

**SUBJECT:** Community Centres

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

### 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To provide an annual report on the Community Centres for the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

**i) the report be noted.**

### 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Community Centres service consists of five buildings, Castlefields, Ditton, Grangeway, Murdishaw and Upton. The centres have programmes of community activities, varying models of community café's and service outlets, i.e children's centre, youth centre, day services. These centres provide a community hub, a central point at the heart of these communities for residents to enjoy chosen activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods. They are based in the most severely deprived wards in the Borough and are well utilised. Churchill Hall and Windmill Hill Community School also receive grant funding to support community use.

### 4.0 **COMMUNITY CENTRES PERFORMANCE**

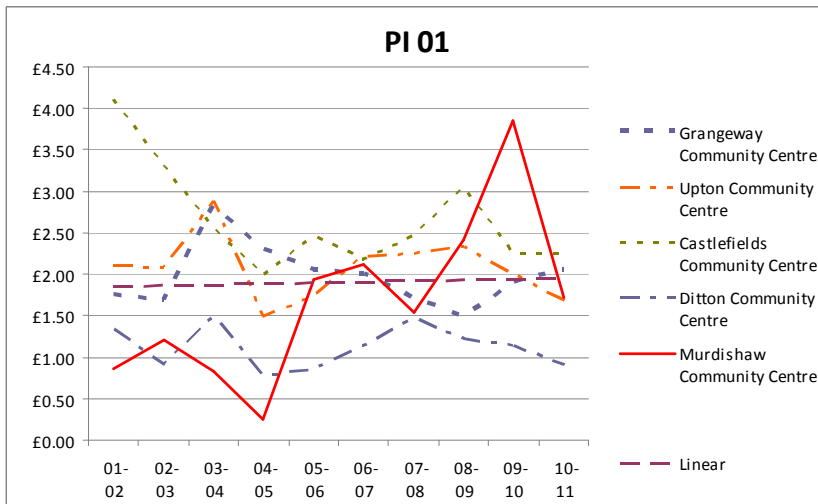
4.1 Community centres contribute to a whole area approach to health and wellbeing. They provide a nucleus to support community activity and access to services in neighbourhoods. The activity supports the Council's key priorities.

4.2 Community centres are safe, accessible facilities located in the heart of our communities. They serve both the local and wider community and promote participation, inclusion and cohesion. All centres are designated Emergency Rest and Hate Crime Reporting Centres.

4.3 The Community Centres service demonstrates continuous improvement through its performance monitoring and contributions to the Council's

efficiency programme.

- 4.4 The Community Centres are benchmarked as part of APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) against other Civic, Cultural and Community Venues owned and run by other local authorities. This provides performance data but also trend information over a number of years. All of Halton's community centres have progressed positively overall on their indicators earning them nominations for APSE national awards for improved performance.
- 4.5 The following graphs represent service performance information over a five-ten year period for HBC Community Centre's. Some of the performance indicators (PI's) displayed were introduced to the data set at a later date in the ten year span and therefore have less year's for comparison.
- 4.6 The analysis is made against eight key performance indicators (PI's) from a suite of twenty nine. The PI's highlighted are key ones and used to determine APSE's best and most improved performing participants.
- 4.7 Over the five - ten year period to date, HBC have won most improved awards for both Ditton and Upton Community Centre's. This year we are shortlisted for 'most improved' Community Centre at Murdishaw and 'best' for Upton Community Centre for the 2010/11 period.
- 4.8 Following the submission of data in July 2011, shortlisted authorities are required to undergo a rigorous validation of both financial and management data by an approved APSE Validator. Hence, external scrutiny to our data collection and performance management. The validation confirmed our submission with no discrepancies identified.
- 4.9 In addition to year on year centre user information linear trend lines ----- illustrate characteristics in linear performance, this gives us a good overall picture of services direction of travel.
- 4.9.1 **The Data Set**



#### 4.10 PI01 Net Cost Per User excluding Centre Establishment Charges (CEC)

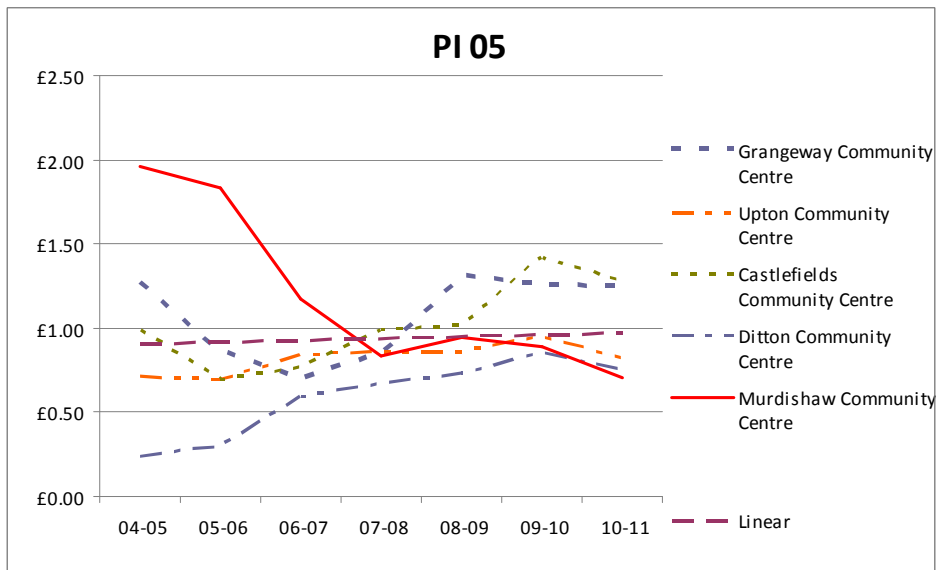
Net cost per user has come down in the 10-11 operating year in four centres, It shows that either cost has come down, attendances have increased or both. Grangeway has increased slightly, overall this is **positive**.

The linear trend shows a slight rise in the net cost per user in centres. This is due to increased employee related expenditure, rising utility costs. This PI has generally been kept in check due to the continual increase in centre's annual attendance. Increased attendances year on year across the service is **positive**.

##### **Area of focus**

*Reductions in staff costs, (this year by almost 10%) good energy housekeeping (showing a year to date reduction of over approximately 20%), management of additional costs such as overtime allied to rising attendance should serve to bring down the net cost per user this year and next. This in turn will bring about a positive trend.*

#### 4.11



### PI 05 Total Income Per User

The linear trend over the five year period is an upward trend which is a **positive** direction of travel.

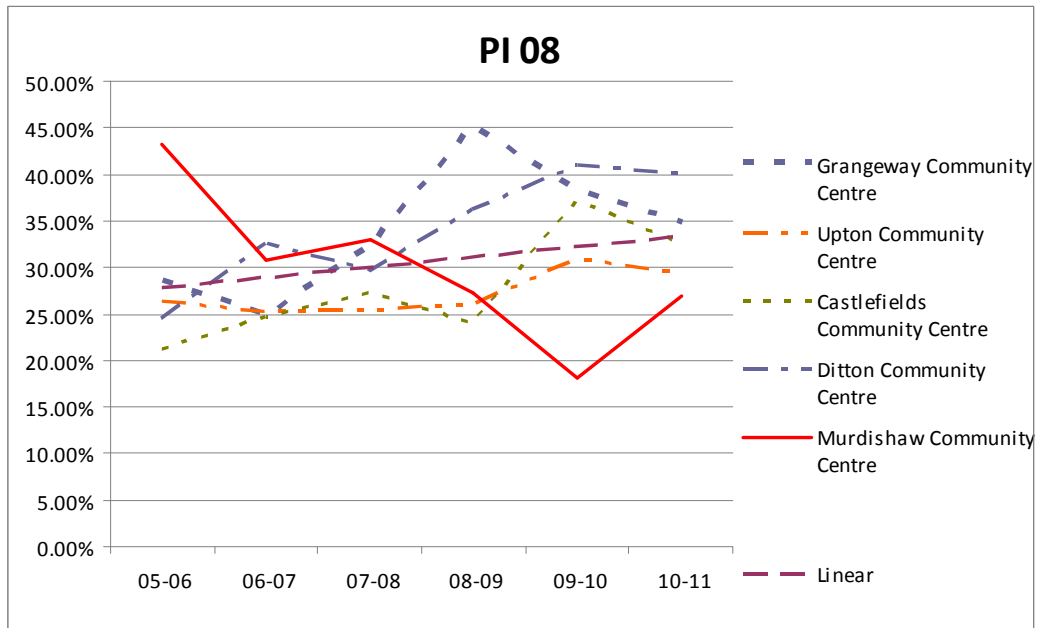
Total income per user dropped in all centres in 10-11 but whilst this may appear negative it is as much to do with an increase in attendances than a decrease in income.

Significant drops in income are usually due to uncontrollable reasons and affect this PI trend overall. Murdishaw for example showed a significant drop in income between from 05-08 due to the incremental withdrawal of revenue funding from the RSL's from £30K to £0k over the period.

#### **Area of focus**

*From 06-09 over three years increases in income were healthy, it should be stressed that maintaining current income level's is a challenge. It is important therefore to get a balance between community use and establishing services who can use Community Centre's as a base location.*

4.12



**PI 08 Operational Recovery ( Including Centre Establishment charges)**

The linear trend over the ten year period is an upward trend which is a **positive** direction of travel.

The percentage variance is 6% over the performance period from 27% in 05-06 to 33% in 10-11.

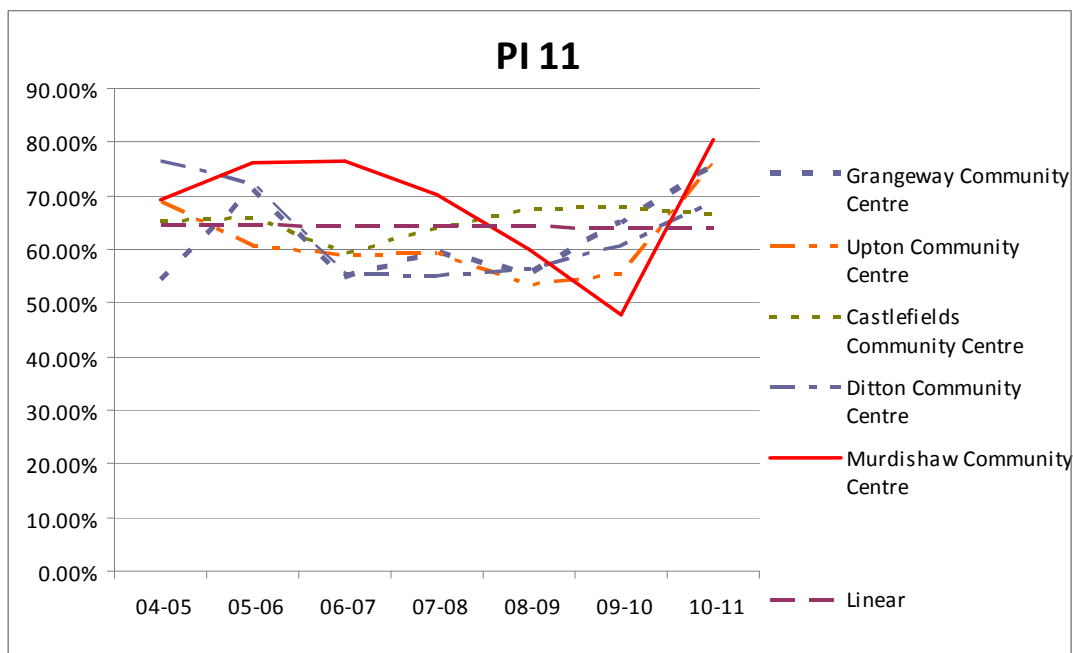
Operational recovery has dropped slightly across four centre’s though all four remain at 30% or above, Ditton is 40%.

Murdishaw has improved dramatically from 18% to 28% due to good income in the operating year; this is very **positive** and hence contributed to the short listing for most improved performer.

4.13

***Area of focus***

*Increased centre fees and charges and a reduction in the block booking discount served to push up operational recovery over 5 years. With prudent management and finding more efficient ways of working and developing partnerships it is envisaged that operational recovery will continue to improve across the service this year and next. Our target is to achieve over 35% on linear trend by 2013.*



### **PI 11 Staffing Costs as a Percentage of Total Costs**

Employee related costs is the single largest cost to a service hence the high base line, this is typical of the national picture. However there is a marginal downward trend for Halton in contrast to the national picture, which is **positive**.

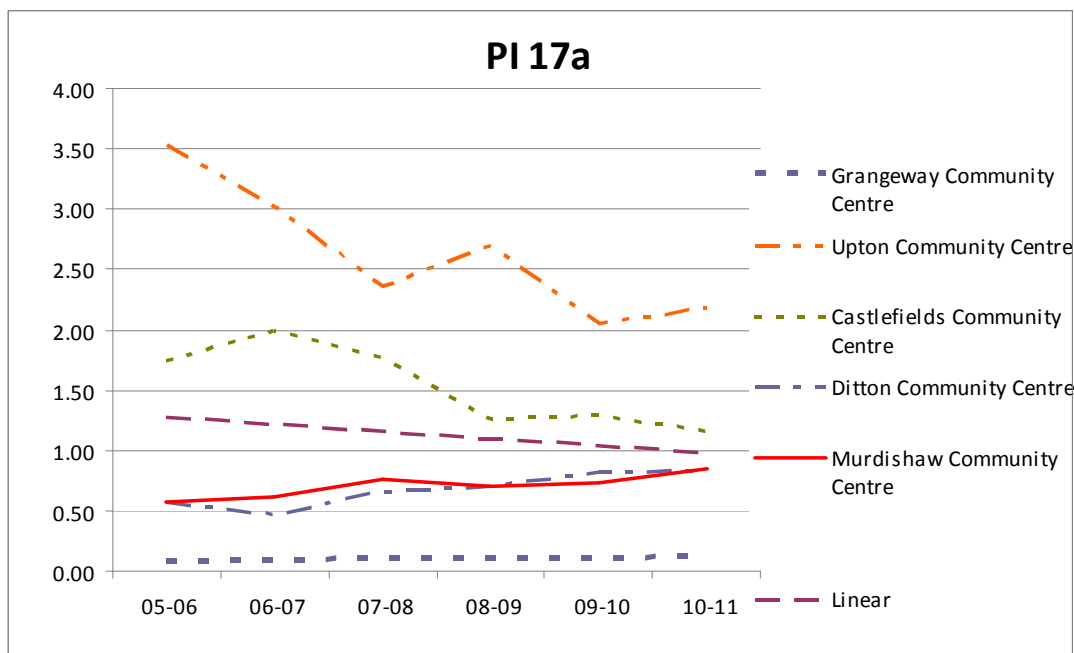
Staffing cost as a proportion of the whole has changed very little over the seven years. A downward trend is reflective of good management and appropriate use of resources, despite the increase in staff pay through increments and job evaluation in 08-09.

4.14 Premises related costs have gone up which may have a bearing on the picture but not as significantly or sharply as staff costs. Utility costs have gone up dramatically but this has been countered by good energy housekeeping.

In 09-10 Murdishaw had vacant post for half the year hence the sudden increase.

#### ***Area of focus***

*A concerted effort is being made to manage and reduce overtime; we have recorded significant reductions this year from over 974 hours in the first quarter of 10-11 to 156 in the first quarter of this year, a 624% reduction. This has been achieved by taking a lieu first approach, liaising closely with colleagues in Welfare services, revising rotas and strategically programming. We will continue to monitor and manage our resources.*



### **PI 17a Visits per Household- Catchment Area.**

The catchment area is deemed as being within 5 minutes drive time of the centre. There is a downward trend in centre's over all, particularly affected by Upton where users travel further to use the centre's Sports Hall (40% of total attendance) and the Main Hall when used for exercise classes.

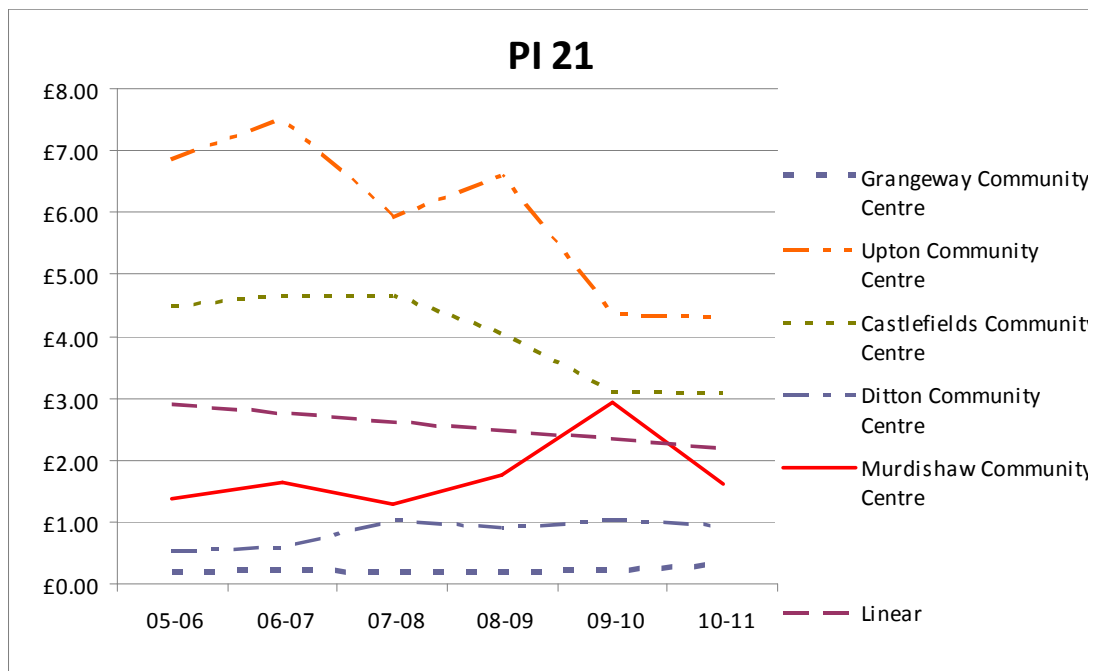
Castlefields shows a downward trend due to gradual drops in attendance overall, moving into a new centre in the New Year should see this trend reverse and impact on the overall linear trend.

4.15 Another factor having a bearing on the trend is activities delivered by Community and Statutory agencies and health and healthy living activities which typically attract the wider community, examples include; meetings, credit union, surgeries, pensioners groups and social service's activity.

Murdishaw Ditton and Grangeway has by in large retained their status as a local community hub. New housing developments and areas that are regenerated significantly can influence this PI.

### **Area of Focus**

*It shouldn't be regarded as a negative if a centre has a downward trend as long as user numbers remain healthy, rather it is a recognition that usage of Community Centre's can change. Consultation and engagement activity provides us with an insight into catchment usage. However, the service recognises a need to focus on ensuring local communities are the greatest beneficiaries of facilities in their neighbourhoods. A more intensive analysis of usage is planned for early 2012 to get a more detailed picture of local usage.*



### **PI 21 Net Cost per Household Catchment area**

This graph shows a downward trend which is **positive**. It is evidence that centres are performing well showing a drop of almost a £1 over five years.

Costs are managed and income is increasing though as the graph shows this has begun to plateau. Murdishaw shows the greatest drop in net cost per household in the main due to a good operating year and income from bookings and events, hence its shortlist for most improved centre.

4.16

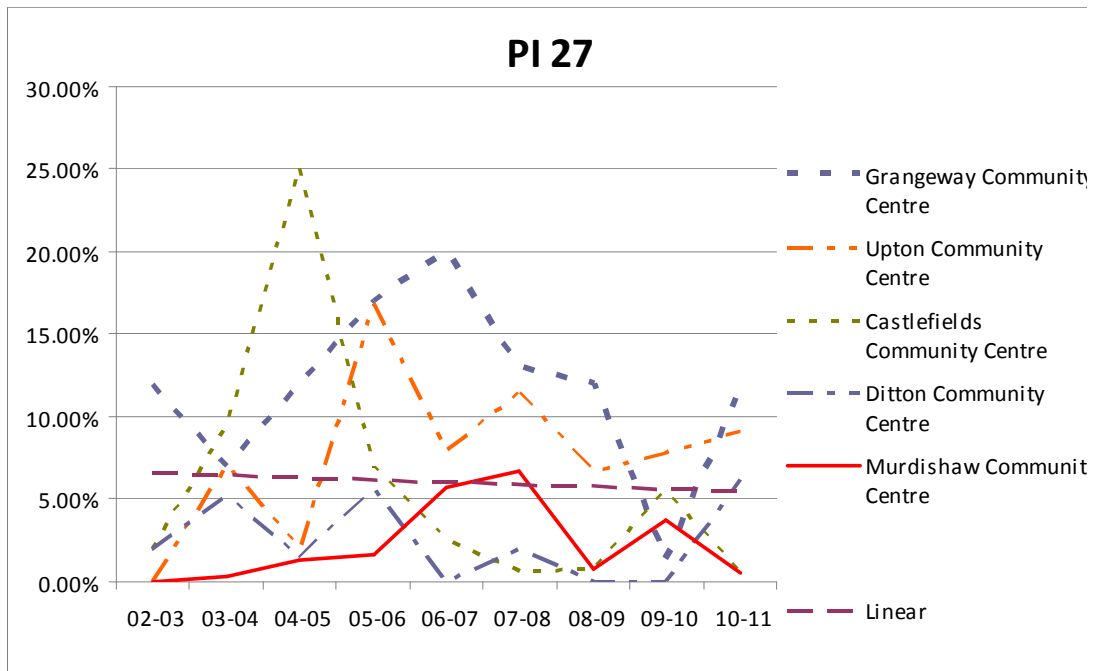
Operational recovery PI 08 confirms centre improvement over the same five year period; the linear trend line has similar characteristics.

### ***Area of focus***

*We will continue to bring down the net cost per household to demonstrate effective management and sustain services.*



4.17

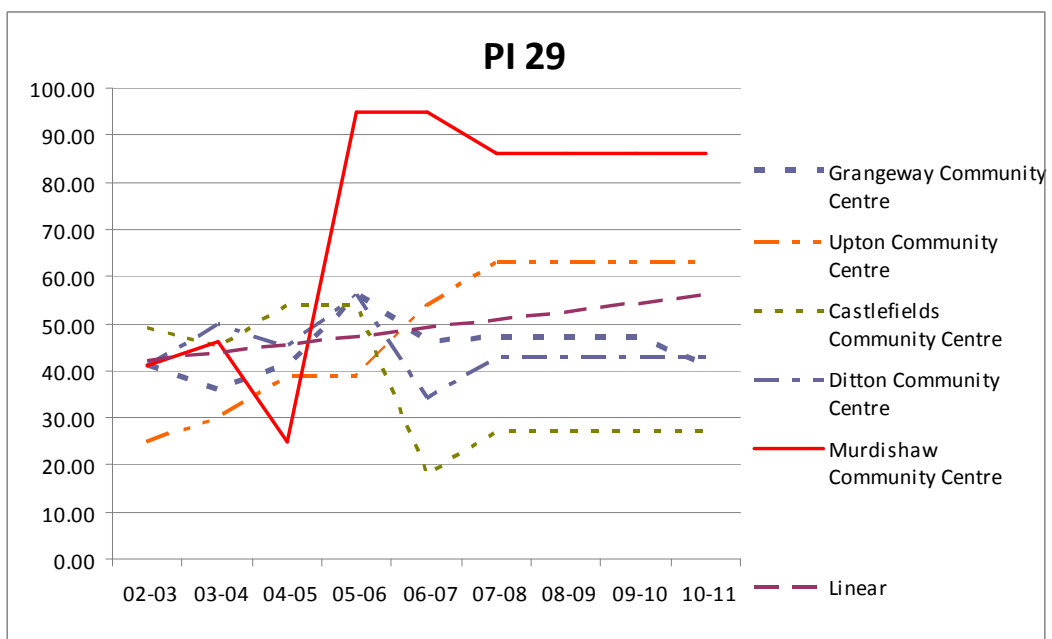


**PI 27 Staff Absence**

The picture for staff absence over a nine year period is mixed but the linear trend overall is downward which is **positive**.

It is immediately apparent that from 2009 onward concerted efforts to tackle absenteeism have been successful; four centres are below 10% two of which register below 1 % in 2010-11.

Murdishaw and Castlefields are ranked first and second in performance networks in this category.



## **PI 29 Quality Assurance and Community Consultation**

Both quality assurance and consultation are important and ensure that we provide good customer care. The service is responsive and demonstrates that Community Centre's host activities and events that best suit the communities they serve.

The graph shows an upward linear trend which demonstrates we have worked hard to improve in this area which is **positive**.

This PI is supported by the tireless work of Community Development Officers, two of whom work from three of the Community Centre's.

Activity in this area has been constant for a number of years and centre user group consultation in 2010-11 showed high levels of customer satisfaction across areas such as centre cleanliness, access and staff helpfulness and appearance.

The involvement of local people on Forums, Project Groups and as Centre Members ensures we continue to provide events that are well attended. In 2010 and 2011 there were notable events that attracted good audiences. The Halloween intergenerational events, Grangeway 'Green event' and a series of seasonal events throughout the year at Murdishaw are examples of this.

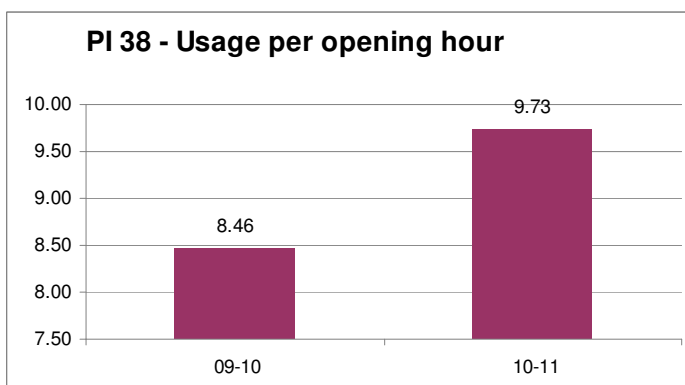
Murdishaw is in the top quartile in this category and has customer satisfaction questionnaires in both the centre café and on the office reception desk.

### ***Area of Focus***

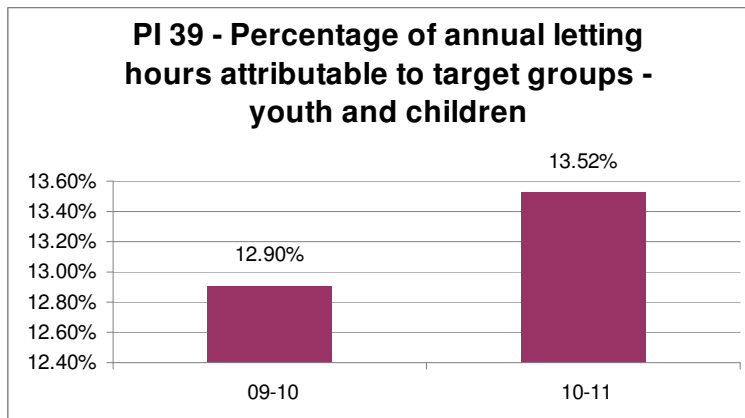
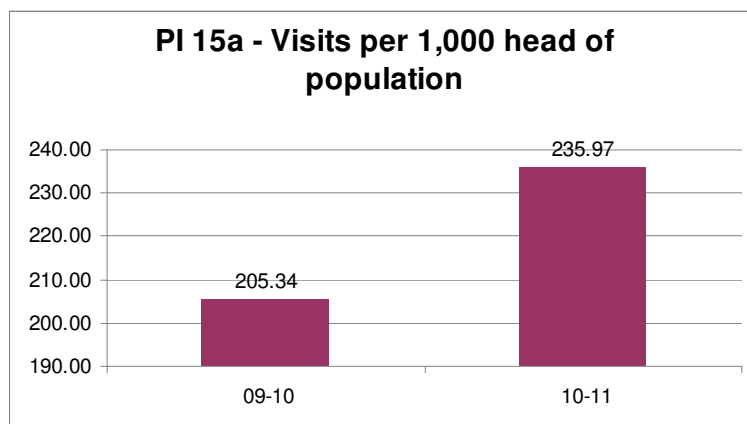
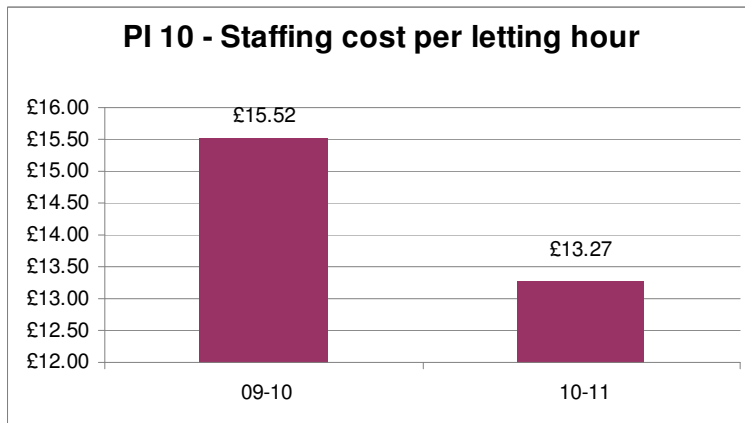
*We will continue to consult and engage with our users and the wider community in partnership with other community stakeholders. We will seek to strengthen community involvement in centre governance arrangements.*

## 4.18 **What Other PI's Tell Us That a Centre is Performing Well?**

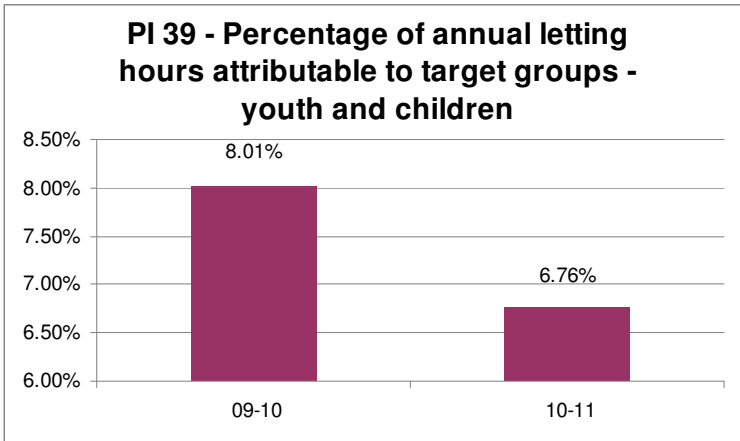
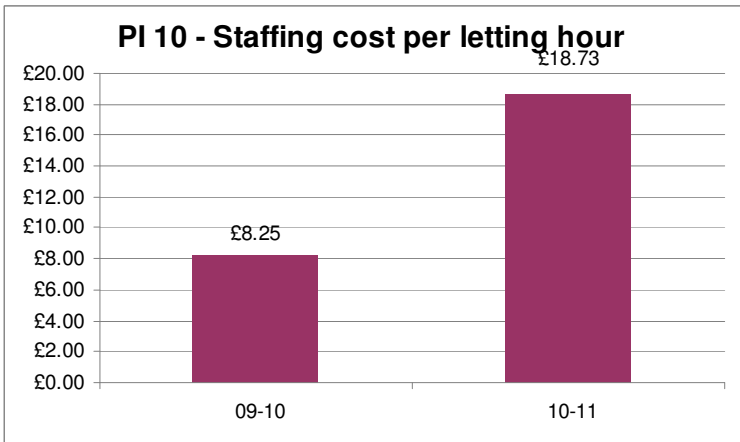
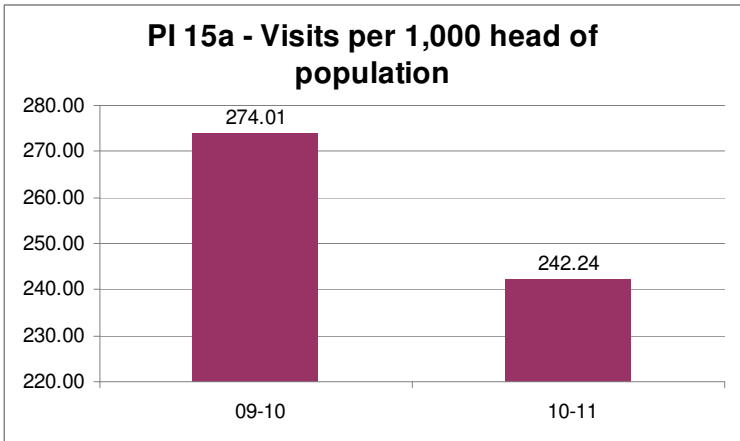
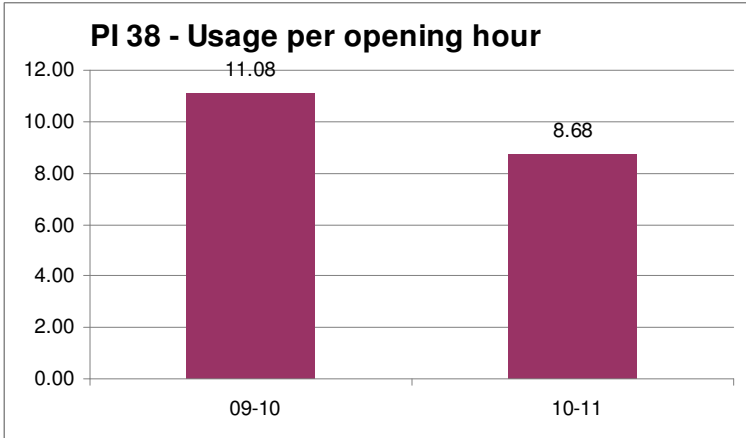
The following four graphs show the annual improvement across four other PI's for Murdishaw Community Centre. PI 38 compares the total number of users against annual opening hours of the centre.



The following three PI's are self-explanatory.



In contrast Compare this to a centre where performance data tells a slightly different story i.e. Castlefields and it becomes clear how performance networks can be used to help focus attention on failing services and areas requiring intervention.



It is important to say that Castlefields has been the subject of some intensive support and the Ditton Team Leader has been supporting Castlefields Development Programme.

This information is available for all five of the centres.

## **5.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF CENTRE ACTIVITY IN 2010/11**

### **5.1 At Murdishaw**

Following the withdrawal of the Play Services the Community Centre absorbed operational management of the Play Centre annex which provided the centre with much needed additional bookable space.

In addition, alterations to the Housing Office enabled better use of the space by the community. It is now utilised for 1-1 teaching and for alternative therapy sessions.

Four groups joined the centre to manage the new allotment space, these included the Stroke Association, Adult Services, Physical and Sensory Disability Services and the Lunch Bunch, in support of this we set up a gardening course that 12 people attended.

### **5.2 At Grangeway**

Sure Start to Later life established their base in the community centre, the service has flourished using the centre as a platform for helping vulnerable adults.

We negotiated a non-occupancy retention rate to charge against the indoor bowls league in order to safeguard their continued use whilst increasing income.

Establishment of a Community Forum led by the Community Development team. Meetings are regularly attended by 20+ people; this group have been instrumental in agreeing some local targets. The group submitted an application to WREN for funding for external lighting for the centre's multi use games area.

### **5.3 At Upton**

We converted the cleaning room into a bookable group room; we had over 50 bookings in this room in 2010-2011.

Staff organised a community event which was very successful, these staff went on to achieve an event management qualification.

The Community Café recorded an income of Over £20,000 for the first time.

#### 5.4 **At Ditton**

The Centre secured over £3000 to reinstate the community garden at the back of the centre.

The centre supported a successful OFSTED inspection of non-educational service provision and has since gone on to support recommendations to further improve service provision.

Country Garden Catering moved in to the centre and provides centre catering as well as buffet provision for special occasion catering in the borough.

#### 5.5 **At Castlefields**

The centre supported a string of successful open days and user consultation events to determine what residents would like to see in the new centre.

### 6.0 **WIDER SERVICE DELIVERY**

6.1 The service recognised a need to secure income some years ago now and has established service level agreements with Children's Services, Action for Children to deliver Youth Services, Adult Day Services, Sure Start to Later Life, Riverside Housing and Liverpool Housing Trust.. These SLA's provide approximately £100,000 income to the service. The remainder of community centre income is dependent on usage albeit the centres generally benefit from regular hirers. Income and usage across all centres has steadily increased over the last five years, indeed 2010/11 was the first year in the last five to see a dip in income, £32 k less than the previous year. The wider economic context and reduction in public funding in austere times has had an impact. However, overall the service still generated £287,121 of income in 2010/11, 16% above the income target. To put this further into context the lowest figure of income in the five year period still demonstrates an increase of £81k (£287,121 total income) in our lowest income year and an increase of £113,136 (£319,395 total income) in our best performing year on the average income across the centres.

6.2 Until a few years ago regular hirers received 25% discount on their fees, we have steadily reduced this to 5% and whilst levying annual hire increases these have been slightly elevated above inflation (approved by Executive Board Sub-Committee) to generate additional income. The hire charges remain competitive and income levels have increased helping to sustain a viable service. Retention fees have also been negotiated for bookings which are seasonal which impacts on the availability of space, i.e indoor bowls at Grangeway during the winter months on Friday evenings but its outdoors in the summer months. They now pay a retention fee to hold that availability however, should we receive bookings for Friday evenings in the summer months for that space the retention fee is discounted. A proposal to extend retention fees to monthly bookings will be incorporated in the

annual fees and charges proposal for next financial year.

- 6.3 Efficiency measures have been significant in the service with savings of £94k have been met in this financial year through reduced establishment costs.
- 6.4 Managing absence, overtime and altering working practices has also had a significant impact on efficiency. Lone working during the daytime has been introduced across all community centres, weekend working was analysed and rota's revised to reduce cost implications, a lieu first approach to additional hours is embedded with the staff and close working with colleagues in Welfare Support to tackle long term sickness has had a significant impact.
- 6.5 Energy efficiency has been another area of focus for the service. The Energy Efficiency Officer completed audits at two of the centres and made recommendations to reduce energy consumption. The gas and electricity consumption across these centres has reduced by around 20% across the board reflected in the utility charges. Some trade waste bins have been replaced with recycling bins providing a cost saving to the service and landfill costs for the authority. This success was hi-lighted in a recent edition of In Touch and on the Intranet as a blue print to achieve cash savings through energy efficient approaches in Council buildings. Further audits and energy efficiency practices are being rolled out to all the Community Centres.
- 6.6 The service is going live from October 2011 with a new building management software system which has been designed and built internally. This has been a long term project to streamline the level of administrative tasks that community centres require for managing bookings, invoicing, procurement, managing stock, health & safety, collating performance data etc. Following a full implementation and admin requirements review will be conducted alongside the Divisional Manager for Administrative Services.
- 6.7 Procurement arrangements across all the Community Centres are currently being reviewed working in partnership with the Stadium. They have recently reviewed and renegotiated all their suppliers and will extend those arrangements to community facilities, to be completed by December 2011. The community centres service will benefit from lower costs to procure goods and delivery direct to site.
- 6.8 A new community centre for Castlefields is scheduled for February 2012 as part of the regeneration programme. The community centre will be central to the local centre which has been designed to create a community hub concept where access to health services, public transport, shops all happens from one central location. The new community centre will have a library facility and it is registered as a digital centre offering e-access for drop in use and training. The new café will be open seven days a week. The Children's Centre will have a key presence in the new building which will be positive for centre usage and getting young families integrated into

wider community activity.

## **7.0 FUTURE CHALLENGES**

- 7.1 Securing service level agreements and fixed income for the community centres is a key objective. Adult Day Services are currently reviewing their usage and this is likely to have a negative impact for community centres. Securing alternative use and income is a priority.
- 7.2 Increasing income and efficiency across the centres is paramount. The service strives for continuous improvement and seeks opportunities to increase income levels as the APSE data demonstrates.
- 7.3 Sustaining the community café at Grangeway is a medium and long term issue. The initiative commenced as a partnership approach however this has altered as HITS has closed and the YMCA who were leading the project have reduced their role. There is currently a Local Foods Bid with the Lottery which if successful would sustain and enhance the approach with partner involvement. If the bid is unsuccessful we need to consider our approach to a café provision as we can't sustain the current model.
- 7.4 Ensuring the centres meet local need and usage demonstrates this. Strengthening how feedback and evaluation from local people existing and non-users is a key objective for 2011/12.
- 7.5 Maintaining and sustaining a non-statutory service in the current climate.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **8.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Intergenerational activity, community activity, youth service delivery in community centres, NEET training in Grangeway Community Café. Deliver Halton's Got Talent each year engaging with hundreds of young people, signposting to culture and performing arts activities and showcasing youth hubs to increase participation.

### **8.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Employment within the service areas, community delivery points for training and employment initiatives and lifelong learning, future job funds placements, work experience for young people and adults with learning disabilities.

### **8.3 A Healthy Halton**

Community cafes, health initiatives, health based activity in community centres such as physical activity, smoking cessation, breathe easy, stroke association, community gardening, healthy eating, cook & taste, weight management. 19% of usage in community centres is directly health outcome related. Community Centres are SHOP (Safer Homes for Older



People) and HELPS (Home Equipment at Low Price) outlets providing low cost safety equipment.

#### **8.4 A Safer Halton**

A sense of community and community connectedness reduces residents fears of crime where they live, they are likely to feel a stronger sense of belonging and safety in an environment where the communities know each other, are active and there are established links to other stakeholders like police, housing, community wardens, etc. Community Centres provide a community hub and platform for this.

#### **8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Community Centres contribute to wider community initiatives and regeneration in the areas they are sited. There are numerous community gardening and local environmental projects across the service working jointly with key stakeholders.

#### **9.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

9.1 APSE performance monitoring enables us to have comparator information in addition to our local performance data to consider the centres performance. This provides a robust mechanism to continuously monitor and evaluate service provision.

#### **10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

10.1 The community centres provide open and accessible services to all members of Halton's community. Their locations enable community activity and the delivery of services to marginalised groups in a neutral setting in their neighbourhoods.

#### **11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.