

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning & Skills Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 17th November 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health and Community

SUBJECT: Community Centres Annual Report 2007/08

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Employment, Learning & Skills Policy and Performance Board on the performance of Community Centres in 2007/08 and any issues impacting across the service.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

(1) The report be considered.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Community Centre service is part of the Community Involvement Team (CIT) and sits in Cultural and Leisure Services in the Health and Community Directorate. There are 5 Council run Community Centres, Upton, Ditton, Castlefields, Grangeway and Murdishaw. Across the service we employ 31 staff and have 17 active volunteers. We provide a grant to Churchill Hall, which is run by the TH Brown Trust.

3.2 Community Centres are safe accessible facilities located in the heart of our communities; they serve both the local and wider community and promote inclusion, equality and diversity and community cohesion. The Community Centres' service contributes to the 6 key council priorities, a summary of which is provided in this report.

Community Centres have three distinct usages;

- A base for community groups and activity;
- A platform for service delivery at a local level;
- Space for private and commercial hire.

3.3 Community Centre Performance

The Community Centres' Service has delivered 21,213 hours of community activity in 2007/08 with 277,298 attendances across the 5 sites and an income of £254,178 levered into the service.

The service continues to have a mix of community use and service level agreements with Youth Service, Adult Day Services and Children's Services.

Last year's annual update to PPB identified a number of service developments which have been progressed:-

Quality standards for customer care are still being researched for the most appropriate model for Community Centres the 'Visible Communities' Model was not appropriate. The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) continue to look at the feasibility of adapting the QUEST quality standard for sport and leisure facilities and will be progressing this area of work with a new cross cutting focus on leisure and community facilities.

The development of a Luncheon Club at Murdishaw, Its purpose being to provide a meeting place for Carers, Family Members and people with Dementia. This was launched in August with 25 attendees and is supported by the Alzheimer's Society. Numbers have been maintained at approximately 12 per week plus facilitators. It is envisaged a Christmas lunch booking will increase numbers further.

Planning for the new Community Centre for Castlefields, is ongoing and an options appraisal for the delivery of the Centre's Community Café is being developed for presentation in January 2009.

The Youth Hub at Grangeway continues to evolve, the refurbishment is complete and service users are beginning to hire the facilities. It is expected that Youth Parliament and the Youth Bank will move in once a Hub Co-ordinator has been appointed.

- 3.4 The table shows the comparator performance between 06/07 and 07/08. Overall income has increased across the service with the exception of Murdishaw Community Centre. This is due to the staggered withdrawal of revenue funding from Riverside and Liverpool Housing Trust, which has reduced by 50% to £5k. In this context the centre has made a fairly good recovery and this will continue to be an area of focus to continue an upward trend in both income and usage.

There is a decrease in levels of usage across the two years at three of the sites these are Castlefields, Upton and Ditton.

At Castlefields we have seen a reduction of 3775 visits this is largely due to the withdrawal of a Community Café Service as external funding came to an end and we were unsuccessful in a lottery bid to continue the service. At the centre we are providing a limited refreshment service and continue to explore opportunities to re-establish a café service in the interim whilst the new centre is developed.

At Upton we have seen a reduction of 1077 visits. The centre was partially closed for redecoration and this will have impacted on this figure but most significantly is the sports hall. There is a long standing problem with the roof at Upton and any wet weather causes roof leaks which then forces the closure of the sports hall for health and safety reasons. This issue continues to be negotiated with Property Services to find a solution.

At Ditton we have seen a much more significant reduction of 7471 visits. One of the key reasons for the drop in usage is the move by Youth Services to provide more outreach and less centre based activity. Over the reporting period this has resulted in a significant drop accounting for approximately 2000 centre users.

A more in depth analysis of bookings has shown an increase in the number of bookings and hence the range of activities available but some new bookings need time to grow whilst others such as Havana Nights book 3 sessions a week but only have two participants. The second most significant factor we have identified is centre user groups with older participants in particular Riverside Arts and the Bridge Club. Participants are generally 80+ and numbers have dropped dramatically and over a relatively short term including the reporting period, these sessions total 3 per week and this again accounts for approximately 1350 users.

We are in discussion with our users and service providers to further analyse the data and propose measures to increase greater usage.

Centre	Usage 06-07	Usage 07-08	Variance (last 2 years)	Income 06-07	Income 07-08	Variance (last 2 years)
Grangeway	61,880	68,734	6854	£82,957	£88,540	£5,583
Castlefields	35,267	31,492	(3775)	£27,182	£31,214	£4,032
Upton	66,202	65,125	(1077)	£55,829	£55,828	(£1)
Ditton	95,386	87,915	(7471)	£57,162	£58,558	£1396
Murdishaw	19,755	24,032	4277	£23,136	£20,038	(£3,098)
Total	278,490	277,298	(1192)	£246,266	£254,178	£7,912

Fig 1

The service continues to participate in the Association for Public Service excellence (APSE), performance monitoring across a number of key performing areas. The centres continue to perform well and Ditton was nominated for Most Improved Performer award continuing the profile of excellence as Upton was nominated the previous year. This year's nominees are due to be announced for Civic Cultural and community buildings.

3.5 The range of activities has been expanded and 2007/08 saw new bookings for; Halton Adult Learning, People into Jobs, Floristry, Sewing classes, Social Enterprise outreach, Falconry taster sessions and Digital Photography.

3.6 We strive to engage with our Service Users through varying models of engagement from customer satisfaction to supporting centre user committees and board or management bodies. We will be initiating a service user model of engagement at Castlefield's Community Centre at the request of users, which is a positive reflection on their sense of ownership for the facility.

3.7 **Investment in Community Centres and programming**

A A successful WREN application of £50,000 has enabled us to begin planning for furnishing the new Community Centre for Castlefields. Development is scheduled for completion in November 2009.

B Refurbishment work carried out at Upton Community Centre has generated a positive response from service users and this is expected to be reflected in the 08/09 reporting period, particularly on secondary spend in the Community Café which has been an area of most significant improvement

C Ditton's youth space has been redecorated with costs being met by the Children's Centre.

D Funding from Area Panel for new stage equipment, curtains, lighting tracking and a sound system has improved Upton as a performance space and the HEARTS Theatre group continue to act as the lead organisation demonstrating the benefit of supporting community led projects.

E The Centre Members Committee at Grangeway Community Centre is currently fund raising to pay for a makeover of the stage. This is testimony to investment in supporting community activity and the reciprocal benefits to the broader community.

F Murdishaw Board of Directors has been instrumental in attracting funding for improvements at the Centre with successful applications to WREN and Area Panel.

G Area Panel funding for both Ditton and Upton Community Centre's have enabled us to improve performance space. Area Panel funding for Murdishaw has enabled a series of community events and improvements to site security.

3.8 Service Improvements

Some additional service activity which has enhanced the service over the year is;

- Taster sessions at Murdishaw, which netted £1200 income, and recorded over 1000 attendances.
- Halton's Got Talent heats leading to a very successful finals showcase at the Brindley.
- A very successful community open day at Grangeway Community Centre, which attracted over a 1000 people.
- Significant Investment in public accessible ICT at Ditton Community Centre worth over £10,000.
- A SPLASH funded summer scheme at Upton Community centre for 11-16 year olds, which attracted over 70 attendances.

3.9 Supporting Health

Health interventions and promoting access to health has been in clear evidence through Community Centres, indeed hirers have experienced good uptake when delivering sessions from Community Centres this perhaps illustrates the benefits of having well run, safe and accessible centres.

Bookings by the PCT include 'People's involvement sessions', Health checks, Flu vaccinations and healthy eating initiatives such as 'Cook and Taste', Vegetable Box Scheme and Luncheon Clubs.

Centres are currently used for health and welfare groups such as the Castlefields Healthy eating group (CHEG), and Counselling and support services such as the Alzheimer Society, Stroke Association, Age Concern and Smoking Cessation.

3.10 Supporting Employment Learning and Skills

Activities in our Centres which support employment learning and skills are;

Active recruitment of local residents to the Community Centre service.

Internally organised taster sessions most notably February through to April at Murdishaw Community Centre for example Digital Photography, Jewellery making.

Learning 'outreach' opportunities have been introduced at Ditton Community Centre.

Training providers such as Learn Direct are delivering from Castlefields Community Centre offering training three days per week 6 hours per day for people undertaking NVQs.

Halton People into Jobs have introduced outreach activity at Upton and Murdishaw Community Centres.

There is evidence that successful 'Public sector pathway into employment placements and volunteer placements in Community Centres have lead to permanent employment and provided some participants a route into training and higher education.

In progress for 2008/2009;

Discussions with the Adult Learners Team around Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) have evolved and classes for adults are due to be implemented at Upton and Murdishaw.

Planning for training facility at Grangeway Community Centre will provide young Adults leaving care with access to life skills and confidence training. HBC working alongside HITS will provide the lead.

3.11 Supporting Children and Young people.

The benefits of Children and Family based activity at Community Centres has long since been established, Sure Start evolving into Children's Centres has left a legacy of child friendly accessible safe facilities as well as self run Playgroups and Mums and Tots groups.

Children and Young people Area Networks (CYPANS) were established last year and a successful Joint Area Review (JAR) is testament to a well-run service. Ditton Community Centre was a key facility pivotal to that assessment.

The production of a Play Strategy is expected to have implications across Community Centre's emphasising the need for increased play activity. Community Centres regularly cater for children's activities so are well positioned to support any changes in service delivery.

3.12 Supporting A Safer Halton

Following increasing incidents of anti social behaviour in Grangeway the Community Involvement Team (CIT) called a stakeholder meeting in February 2008 to discuss what action could be undertaken to tackle local issues. It was important to acknowledge existing interventions such as Positive Futures work and local youth work, the meeting was attended by Youth Services, Police, Fire Brigade, HITS, Publicans,

Officers, Retailers and Residents. It was agreed that the group would undertake a multi agency walk of the estate with young people (co-ordinated by Youth services), discuss hot spots and agree what action could be taken to 'resolve differences'. As a result of this a group has now been established called Helping Hands which meets regularly and has made a difference. Fires at the back of the centre have ceased and glass is not being broken on the games area, 15 people regularly attend meetings at the Community Centre.

Local PCSOs regularly visit Community Centres and the benefit has been two fold. Users have the opportunity to get to know and trust them and the Centres themselves are less likely to be targeted for nuisance behaviour.

Investment into CCTV is needed but there is no core funding for upgrading and maintenance. It is hoped that due to the location of Community Centre's we can demonstrate to neighbouring facilities and registered Social Landlords (RSLs) that joint funding arrangements could improve local surveillance with external cameras routed through Community Centre Monitoring Systems.

3.13 Supporting Urban Renewal

Community Centres continue to provide a focal point to undertake consultation most recently Castlefields where the next phases of local regeneration and the village square have been exhibited.

One off events like building schools for the future' public meetings have been held at Community Centres.

3.14 Future Developments

3.14.1 A plan will be implemented for Touring Network Art's Council Funding. This funding is designated to provide performing arts activity in Upton and Murdishaw. A children's theatre group and taster workshops have been suggested, developing links to the local schools will be key to the success.

3.14.2 The Community Garden at Murdishaw is currently being developed and it is expected to provide a great opportunity for service users to undertake environmental activity whilst at the same time provide produce for the Centre's Community Café. The project is a great example of departments working together for shared outcomes.

3.14.3 Community Cafes continue to provide the focus for discussions around healthy eating, opportunities for social networks, training opportunities and engaging with volunteers. The focus for future café provision will be;

- A training kitchen proposal at Grangeway Community Centre.

- An options appraisal for running the kitchen at the new Castlefields Centre.
- Expanding Country Garden catering and developing a 'next step challenge for Adults' with learning.

3.14.4 Internal energy audits will be carried out at all centres as it is estimated between 20-40% of buildings energy consumption can be prevented through implementing simple changes such as fitting energy efficient light bulbs and instructing staff to undertake simple housekeeping tasks. Centre Coordinators will be conducting Centre Audits in conjunction with Property Services to identify energy saving opportunities. It is hoped that this will contribute to alleviating the anticipated increases in energy costs.

3.14.5 Upton Community Centre could benefit from substantial funding for providing targeted youth activity in the area. Several options have been presented in order to develop the delivery of youth provision in the area this is linked to the Council's Youth Task Force funds. Investment in the Centre is one of the options that has been presented. Regardless the Centre continues to serve the local community well, developing the daytime programme could see Upton once again rise to the challenge of Most Improved Performer in the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Performance Networks awards.

3.14.6 Under utilisation in Centres during the day-time continues to provide the focus for partnership discussions and a new Tenant(s) will be sought for the Portage Centre at Ditton.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Discussions are being held to progress hirers' liability cover for Community Centres and other leisure facilities.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Low consumer confidence may have a continued impact on user figures however bookings remain healthy particularly for health interventions and training, better promotion of these activities will help user figures.

6.2 Increasing fuel costs and the end of the councils fixed term energy agreement will result in increased costs to run Community Centres.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 Community Centres are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and continue to foster a strong image of inclusivity. The range of activities on offer at Community Centres is developing, recent examples include; 'Beat the Blues' and the Alzheimer's Society for older people and Games nights for young people.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

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