

| Report of   | Meeting | Date                        |
|---|---------|-----------------------------|
| Director of Communities<br><br>(Introduced by the Cabinet Member (Social Justice, Communities and Wealth Building)) | Cabinet | Wednesday, 15 December 2021 |
| Is this report confidential?  | No      |                             |
| Is this decision key?   | No      |                             |

## **Moss Side Community Centre Update**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Cabinet of the findings and recommendations of the Moss Side Community Centre Task Group.
2. To seek approval on resource and management arrangements for the centre going forward.

### **Recommendations to Cabinet**

3. Cabinet is recommended to approve the proposals of the task group, as listed in paragraphs 25 to 34.
4. Cabinet is recommended to approve the creation of a new £16,000 revenue budget, to support the operational management of the community centre.
5. Cabinet is requested to agree to give delegated authority to the Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets) to create a charging structure, general conditions for community use and determine staffing requirements.

### **Reasons for recommendations**

6. Recommendations are made following a robust public consultation exercise and appraisal by a member task group. The task group is satisfied that the proposals in this report are in the best interests of both existing centre users, and the wider community who are potential users.
7. Creation of a new revenue budget, a charging structure, usage conditions and staffing requirements are key to the effective management of the community centre, and its ongoing sustainability.

### **Other options considered and rejected**

8. The task group has considered and rejected a number of alternative options, including external management of the community centre, and revocation of existing user licences to create a 'clean slate' for provision in the centre. By discussion and consensus, task group members have rejected alternatives, as not being in the best interests of the local community at the current time.

### **Corporate priorities**

9. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

| <b>An exemplary council</b>                  | <b>Thriving communities</b>              |
|--|--|
| A fair local economy that works for everyone | Good homes, green spaces, healthy places |

### **Background to the report**

10. Moss Side Community Centre was built by the Central Lancashire Development Corporation, in or around 1985. It is in the Council's ownership, but day to day operations have historically been managed by a voluntary committee. In January 2021, the Council took over management of the centre on an interim basis.
11. No changes were made to the licences or uses of the centre at this time, however when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and became increasingly serious, all regular user groups with the exception of childcare (an essential service) suspended their activity.
12. Moss Side Community Centre Improvements has been a longstanding project on the Leyland and Farington Hub action plan. Previous issues with anti-social behaviour and poor lighting around the building have led to people avoiding the immediate area, and users withdrawing to transfer to alternative venues.
13. In March 2021, a task group was set up from the Leyland and Farington Community Hub with the following membership:

Cllr Aniela Bylinski Gelder (Chair) Cllr Mary Green  
Cllr Jane Bell  
Cllr Colin Sharples

### **Task Group Findings**

14. The task group identified and discussed a number of factors, including:
- The public perception of the community centre building
  - The condition of the community centre building
  - Accessibility to / availability of the building
  - The range of activities provided by existing users

- The need to consult publicly and gauge opinions on the centre
15. The Council's Facilities Team were asked to visit and survey the building for any outstanding repairs or potential safety issues. As a consequence, an electrical safety check was carried out and faults were identified. Remedial work was carried out as required.
16. Additional works were carried out, including:
- Safety repairs to external noticeboards
  - Removal of spray paint graffiti
  - Plumbing works in kitchen
  - Leaf / detritus clearing from gutters and drains
17. Survey questions to seek feedback from the public were discussed and agreed by the task group (attached at appendix 1.) Consultation was carried out in a number of forms:
- Online at southribble.gov.uk from 1 to 30 June
  - By phone to 625625 from 1 to 30 June
  - In person at the community centre on 3 / 4 / 5 June
18. In total, 132 responses were received. Of these, 85 respondents (64%) said they did not use the centre. 47 respondents (36%) did use the centre.
19. In terms of profile, the majority of respondents (90 people / 70%) were female. 30 respondents (23%) were male. Age groups 26-40 and 41-65 attracted the most responses, each with 46 (35%.) 31 respondents (23%) were aged 66+, and just 9 respondents (7%) were under 25.
20. Of the 85 respondents who said they did not use the centre, the most popular reasons why were:
- 'Don't know what goes on at the centre' – 52 people / 39%
  - 'No suitable activities – 32 people / 24%
21. The most popular answers to 'what would you like to see at the community centre' were:
- Activities for children and young people – 89 people / 67%
  - Community shop / café – 65 people / 49%
  - Activities for older people – 65 people / 48%
  - Private hire, e.g. birthday parties – 61 people / 46%
22. 36 people (27%) said that they would be willing to volunteer at the community centre, with 43 (33%) saying 'maybe' and 53 (40%) 'no.'
23. The task group read comments and feedback from respondents on:
- What types of provision people would like to see at the community centre
  - What the main concerns are about where people live
  - What time of the day people would like to use the community centre
  - The activities that people would be interested in volunteering in
  - The skills and/or qualifications that people could bring as volunteers
24. The same survey questions to seek feedback from existing user groups were discussed and agreed by members. Four complete responses were received, with some verbal

comments from a fifth. This means all but one of the existing user groups responded. Key themes arising from their feedback include:

- All users wish to continue operating from the centre
- The building is in need of refurbishment and modernisation
- Wi-Fi / broadband connectivity is required to deliver activities
- There is scope to broaden the range of provision at the centre
- There are concerns around safety, e.g. youths gathering, broken glass, poor lighting

## **Proposals**

The task group proposes that:

25. South Ribble Borough Council should, at least for the foreseeable future, retain management of the community centre. This includes use of SRBC staff for caretaking and cleaning purposes.
26. All existing use groups be allowed to continue to utilise the centre on a licensed basis, with no exclusive use given to any one organisation.
27. Improvements are made to external lighting around the community centre building, and that consideration is given to enhanced CCTV.
28. New signage is erected, identifying the community centre as an SRBC building.
29. New noticeboards are mounted, displaying a timetable of usage / availability, and contact details for bookings.
30. Wi-Fi / broadband connectivity is installed in the building.
31. A schedule of charges is drawn up by the Council's estates team which is proportionate and fair for the type and duration of hire.
32. Use of the community centre over coming months is monitored, with future consideration given to wider improvement works, e.g. kitchen refurbishment and additional car parking, in line with usage rate and visitor numbers.
33. Officers from the communities and estates teams support promotion of the centre and its potential uses, with a view to bringing more community groups into the building.
34. Potential use of space in the building is discussed with Lancashire Constabulary, to enable a police presence in the local community.

## **Costs**

35. There are a series of costs involved in managing the community centre which the Council is liable for. National Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) have been confirmed as £2944.10 for 2021/22.
36. For comparison, a breakdown of operational management costs at Clayton Brook community centre is attached at appendix 2. This totals £37,280 per annum.

37. A £5500 revenue budget to is already in place for Moss Side community centre, previously paid as management fee to contribute towards utilities, caretaking and cleaning.
38. Income from user groups also offsets the operational management costs. For 2021/22, income is expected to be £15,000. Although no charging policy is currently in place, this is a conservative forecast, given the lost income from groups who have suspended activity through the pandemic.
39. As an estimate, given the above figures, it may be more realistic to consider an annual revenue requirement of around £16,000. This budget would solely cover day to day operations; any refurbishment or building modernisation costs would incur a capital consideration.

### **Climate change and air quality**

40. The work noted in this report does not directly impact on the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda.

### **Equality and diversity**

41. The work of the task group has challenged Moss Side Community Centre's ability to be inclusive, accessible and bring communities together.
42. At this stage, there are no negative impacts on any of the protected groups. There are potential positive impacts on age and disability, through activities which reduce social isolation, and support good mental and physical health.

### **Risk**

43. Pending the approval of proposals in this report, a risk register will be created in line with council management of the building.

### **Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer**

44. Costs in relation to the centre would be met from in-year underspends in 21/22 and included as a growth item within budget setting for 22/23.

### **Comments of the Monitoring Officer**

45. There are no issues of concern from a legal perspective with what is proposed. The council would – for the foreseeable future – retain the management function and users would operate by way of licence.

### **Background documents**

There are no background papers to this report

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – survey questions  
Appendix 2 – estimated running costs

| Report Author:                      | Email:                          | Telephone:      | Date:    |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
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