

Item no.

Report to: Resources Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13th September 2005

Report of: Head of Asset & Property Management

Subject: Community Centres

Ward: All

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update to Scrutiny in relation to the development of a property strategy for Community Centres subsequent to the report of the Asset & Property Manager on 20th April 2004.

2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 The Head of Regeneration & Community Development, Harrison & Johnson Chartered Building Surveyors, Black & Veatch Electrical Engineers have been consulted on this report.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Subsequent to the presentation of a report on the 20th April 2004, significant progress has been achieved in relation to the collation of base information to inform the property strategy.
- 3.2 Building surveying consultants have been engaged to undertake full condition and mechanical and electrical surveys on all 7 community centres across the District. As a consequence of the surveys this has identified that with the exception of Parkside, significant expenditure is required to bring the properties back into good condition. A summary of the expenditure is located in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 As the majority of the buildings are pre war and show significant signs of physical and functional obsolescence, it is considered prudent to await the completion of the suitability and sufficiency surveys before incurring additional expenditure.
- 3.4 The outstanding surveys are scheduled to be completed by the end of October at which time the Head of Regeneration and Community Development and the Asset & Property Manager will be in a position to develop a strategy combining the property information with current use and future demand assessments together with information on the availability of other facilities. Decisions regarding improvement, redevelopment or closure recommendations will be brought forward for further Council consideration.
- 3.5 Whilst considering the condition surveys for the Community Centres, the Asset & Property Management team along with Economic Development and Community Development have been working together in the progression of facilitating the refurbishment of Wheatley Hill Community Centre, which can be considered as an excellent illustration of how the asset can be retained and be almost self sufficient whilst providing an invaluable service to the community.

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- 3.6 Wheatley Hill Community Centre is well established offering an extensive range of services. The Association themselves have secured funding in excess of £1.3 million over a six year period.
- 3.7 Complex legal negotiations are almost resolved resulting in the formalisation of a lease between the Council and Wheatley Hill Community Association for a 25 year period. The creation of the lease has enabled our Regeneration and Development section to assist the association in securing community funding in excess of £300,000. Negotiations are currently underway regarding the disposal of part of the community centre site in order to raise capital to enable all works at the centre to be completed.
- 3.8 Whilst the Wheatley Hill centre is a huge success, it has illustrated the complexity of points of law surrounding the centres and the need to liaise closely with Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation and the Charities Commission.
- 3.9 Invaluable lessons have as a consequence of this scheme been learnt by Council staff across a range of disciplines in partnership working with the Community Associations that can be applied to other schemes.

4.0 Position Statement and Option Appraisal

- 4.1 It is essential that the suitability and sufficiency surveys are completed on all centres to enable the Asset & Property Manager to create a community centre service plan which will determine the current position, expected costs and recommendations of each centre on an individual basis.
- 4.2 Once any recommendations as a result of a service plan have been agreed, it is suggested that all centres are placed on standardised lease agreements clearly defining responsibility and liability.
- 4.3 In addition, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the Council need to provide an improved level of support to Community Associations to assist them in achieving their objectives particularly where the refurbishment of buildings are being undertaken involving the application for funding. It may be appropriate to develop a multi disciplinary action team within the Council to facilitate a package of services to ensure the successful implementation of service development at the centres and this proposal will be reviewed as part of the evaluation process.

5.0 Implications

- 5.1 Financial
The Council for the year 2005/2006 has a budget of £18,500 for major repair works and £9,500 for minor repair works. Although, the year one costs identified are in excess of this, the existing budget has enabled the emergency works identified in the reports to be carried out. Once a final assessment has been made and an action plan developed, it will be necessary in conjunction with the Head of Economic and Community Development, to submit a programme of bids for funding to facilitate identified schemes.
- 5.2 Legal
The creation of any lease concerning a community centre is a complex process. Consideration must be given to any existing trust agreement consent obtained from both the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation and the Charities Commission.

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- 5.3 Policy
No current policy exists in relation to community centres; however, it is considered that there is a need for full option appraisals to be undertaken once key property review information is available.
- 5.4 Risk
A full risk assessment has been completed.
- 5.5 Communication
There are no communication implications.
- 5.6 Corporate
The actions associated with the report comply with the Councils Corporate objectives to make the most of opportunities for investment, economic growth and employment and reduce inequality in the District.
- 5.7 Equality and Diversity
No direct implications.
- 5.8 E-Government
No direct implications.
- 5.9 Procurement
No direct implications.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the content of the report be noted with a view to receiving a detailed service plan relating to Community Centres following the completion of suitability and sustainability surveys. It is anticipated that the service plan and full recommendations will be completed within 6 months.

Background Papers/Documents refereed to in the preparation of this report

- i. District of Easington Risk Assessment

Dale Clarke. Head of Asset & Property Management.

APPENDIX 1

Summary of Costs

Community Centre	Year One Costs	Total Cost
Deaf Hill	£48,175	£98,275
Eden Lane (Peterlee)	£181,525	£258,175
Parkside (Seaham)	£7,750	£36,550
Seaton	£39,150	£50,000
Thornley	£141,025	£239,025
Wheatley Hill	£232,800	£292,800

Notes

All costs have been provided by Harrison & Johnson Chartered Building Surveyors and Black & Veatch Electrical Engineers. Total costs are projective up to 15 years.

The costs indicated for Wheatley Hill Community Centre can be discounted due to the ongoing refurbishment and extension works.