

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - RECOMMENDATION/RESPONSE PROFORMA

TITLE/PROJECT NAME: COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE FROM EXECUTIVE/CHIEF OFFICER/PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TIMESCALE	COMMENT/OS REVIEW PERIOD
<p>1. The County Council should take the lead role in developing a strategy for Community Buildings.</p> <p>This strategy should be developed within the context of the County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy and be a key priority for partner organisations in improving outcomes for local people. The issues identified in this report should be used to inform partners of the benefits community buildings can make to partner organisation priorities and in addressing quality of life issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesley Davies • Rachael Shimmin • Morris Nicholls • Michele Hodgson • Brian Myers • John Lethbridge 				<p>Community buildings offer a variety of provision which satisfies local priorities and service delivery for other providers including the County Council e.g. Adult learning and youth work. This could be more consistent across the piece as could be the capacity among management committees to plan and deliver on a local agenda.</p> <p>The ownership of community premises is not always the prime driver of an improvement process, but could be if the County Council wished to focus on and make community buildings models of best practice.</p> <p>We can put together a Service Asset Management</p>

					<p>Plan for community buildings with basic property information and principles.</p> <p>However, we need to determine what a Strategy for Community Buildings looks like.</p> <p>A 'Sustainable Communities Strategy' is being developed through the Local Area Agreement (LAA)</p>
<p>2. The County Council should support the principle of "asset transfer" of community buildings to community ownership. This is in line with government thinking on assets being transferred to communities.</p> <p>The County Council should ensure that the process of asset transfer is reflected in a Community Buildings Strategy that clearly takes into account a robust business plan that details:</p>					<p>This process is already beginning e.g. Tanfield Lea Activity Den, Pioneering Care Centre Newton Aycliffe, Shotton Community Association, Phoenix Arts Hare Law, Crook Business Centre, Witton-le-Wear. The sustainability test and the production of robust business plans for asset transfer should be the principle drivers of this process.</p> <p>DTA/CLG application approved and will receive an official launch on the 28th November. Big Lottery funding will not be applied for at this point as we are not at that stage of development. A scoping meeting is to take place with the DTA/CLG at the</p>

					<p>end of March 2008 to clarify the programme of support DCC will receive.</p> <p>We need to establish the process, and the consultation and governance arrangements for this.</p>
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<p>2 (continued)</p> <p>a. an assessment of the quality of current building stock;</p> <p>b. an options appraisal for each building and</p> <p>c. discussion with stakeholders</p> <p>The County Council should ensure that the assessment of current buildings needs to be carried out against established criteria which can identify those buildings that are high priority, medium priority and low priority.</p> <p>Following this exercise, discussions should be entered into regarding the possible transfer of the assets to the community. This should be based on a full risk and sustainability assessment.</p>					<p>(a) This is available.</p> <p>(b) The scope and objectives of the appraisal needs to be prepared first. What is the 'vision' for the buildings individually and collectively – who is going to produce this? A community buildings health check may be available on some buildings through the Community Buildings Consortium.</p> <p>We currently have Health and Safety and DDA audits in place on DCC properties.</p> <p>Criteria yet to be identified ?</p>

<p>The County Council should not consider off loading costly liabilities onto local communities.</p> <p>The County Council should explore opportunities offered through the "Community Assets Fund" to make this real.</p>					<p>Asset transfer could be discussed as part of a "Durham County Council Community Buildings Consortium" ? We need to be sure that the Council's actions are not perceived as coercive.</p> <p>Sustainability/Business Plans key to this (Tanfield Lea Activity Den example is cautionary tale however)</p> <p>Pioneering Care Centre are the only organisation in a position to put forward an application owing to the availability of business plan and feasibility study.</p>
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<p>2 (continued)</p> <p>The Community Buildings Consortium should be invited to take a lead role in facilitating discussions with key stakeholders (Community Trustees and the</p>					<p>How do we get 'sign up' to the role of the Community Buildings Consortium and establish its role in the governance of the Community Buildings</p>

<p>County Council in the first instance), to determine the level of interest and associated challenges.</p> <p>The Community Buildings Consortium should be commissioned by the Local Area Agreement Board as part of its Sustainable Communities Strategy to undertake this exercise.</p>				<p>Strategy? The Community Buildings Consortium is in a situation of flux at the moment and needs to clarify future direction.</p> <p>Do we need some interim arrangement pending consolidation under the LAA Board?</p> <p>See note above regarding the Comm. Buildings Consortium it is still debatable whether the County Consortium prepared is strong enough for this role.</p> <p>See above</p>
<p>3. The County Durham Strategic Partnership Framework may wish to reflect in its Sustainable Community Strategy, informed by the County Councils Community Buildings Strategy, the benefits and support for one stop shop /multi purpose community centre's in meeting the needs of local communities and responding to the shared vision of local partners.</p>				<p>Local partnerships are not currently robust enough to support this process. The new County Durham Council arrangement at local level could provide an appropriate mechanism through which to make progress</p> <p>How do we establish this Authority's requirements re future Service delivery needs to accommodate in asset transfer deliberations?</p> <p>Our requirements may have a major bearing in the selection of assets for transfer and the sustainability issue.</p>

<p>Through the Partnership Framework opportunities could then be facilitated with partners to consider joining up "community based facilities" that reflect a one stop shop type arrangement making best use of resource to strategically meet the needs of the communities served.</p>					<p>Local partnership arrangement post LGR ?</p>
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<p>4. The County Council should invest in capacity building initiatives for local management committees (trustees) to support them manage and better understand for example their legal responsibilities, the need for DDA compliance and associated management issues.</p> <p>The County Council should explore through a Community Buildings Strategy the need to have a dedicated resource within each of its community buildings that would support community trustees and help deliver the business of the organisation.</p>					<p>Currently this process is somewhat piecemeal and un-coordinated and tends to depend on local requests for support. National initiatives e..g Community Matters “Visible” are often inconsistently distributed or advertised across the sector.</p> <p>EiC have staff in some buildings and area officers who advise other organisations</p> <p>Property advice can be provided but this needs to be organised on a controlled and structured basis because of resource implications. Is there potential to secure extra funding for resources (Note: we cannot promise to secure additional property resource even if funding is available).</p> <p>Opportunities for increased capacity buildings need to be looked at as part of the unitary council developments.</p>
<p>5. The County Council should identify resources that will help support a programme of repair and maintenance. A programme of</p>					<p>Capital funds are currently available + DDA funding. EiC provides Minor Improvement grants for DCCCV buildings</p>

<p>repair should be considered as part of a Community Buildings Strategy.</p> <p>A Community Buildings Strategy should reflect an assessment of the quality of the County Council's building stock and take into account the stock of partner agencies, with a view to "pooling" resources with partner organisations so that a strategic approach is adopted when investing in community based services delivered through "joined up" one stop shop arrangement that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of resource.</p>				<p>(£25K per annum) and Supplementary Grants for non DCC buildings (£50K pa)</p> <p>Major investment in most of the Authority's buildings is needed. Option appraisal/life cycle costing would probably indicate a clear case for replacement rather than repair in most instances.</p> <p>Need to explore further links with economic development to develop funding opportunities.</p> <p>Partner agency involvement in a Strategy and resource pooling needs to be thought through and commitment</p> <p>See comments above regarding audits and local planning deficiencies</p> <p>The Scrutiny Review of Community Buildings owned by this Authority was concluded, culminating in proposals reported to and approved by Cabinet in August 2007. A process of systematic review is in place seeking Cabinet to respond on progress re: the OS recommendations.</p>
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<p>6. The County Council should agree a standard for Service Level Agreements (SLA) that provide for a contractual arrangement with Community providers.</p> <p>The standard should be underpinned directly by the local COMPACT (that provides the framework for an SLA) and be COMPACT compliant.</p> <p>It should be outcome focussed and people centred. It should reflect principles of Equality and Diversity and taking into account a children and young persons centred perspective.</p>					<p>Second draft of a generic CA SLA went to the Corporate VCS Review Group on Thursday 22nd November. This is still a work in progress.</p> <p>This will probably be revised dependent upon the scale and nature of the contract being entered into.</p> <p>The draft is Compact compliant</p> <p>Ditto</p> <p>Development of COMPACT training for officers and members is planned and a session with the One Voice Network will take place in the near future</p>
<p>7. The County Council should promote the benefits of its community buildings in promoting quality of life issues.</p> <p>The County Council should support the dissemination of this report to a wide range of stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally with a view to celebrating the work of community organisations in</p>					<p>This is reflected in the current approach and recent DCC reports</p> <p>Should explore marketing strategies with Teesdale Village Halls Consortium.</p> <p>I am not aware of it being spread widely at this point. Agreed. Details need to be</p>

<p>promoting the quality of life of their community.</p>				<p>agreed.</p> <p>In terms of the Scrutiny Review it is not yet evident what a Community Asset Transfer Strategy would look like. <i>The report is useful in that it identifies key elements that would help in shaping a Community Buildings strategy .A Community Buildings Asset Management Plan is available with building data and immediate management objectives. An Asset Transfer Strategy appears to go beyond this into issues of governance, decision-making, Service delivery, sustainability and support. Further work and thought is needed on this which will lead to the development of a community buildings strategy for Durham County Council.</i></p>
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<p>7 (continued)</p> <p>The County Council should extend an invitation to Barry Quirk, who is leading on a review of community management and ownership of public assets, to meet with the key</p>					<p>Agreed. As an alternative it should be possible to secure other alternative experts – see link with IPF.</p>

<p>stakeholders to share his views on the review and explore opportunities for how best the County Council and its partners may support community management and ownership of public assets.</p>					
<p>8. The County Councils Overview and Scrutiny function will systematically review progress on all recommendations.</p> <p>That the first review for all working group reports is completed in 6 months time (December 07).</p>					<p>Presumably there should be an Authority based Board to provide governance/monitoring if this is not picked up by a Community Partnership.</p> <p>Thought is needed therefore on where the lead role in developing policy <i>informed by a Community buildings strategy</i>, within the Authority, exists;</p>