OXFORD
CITY
COUNCIL

To: Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28th November 2012   **Item No:**

Report of: Angela Cristofoli, Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager

Title of Report: Community Centres Update

<u>**Summary and Recommendations**</u>

Purpose of report: To provide an overview of Oxford City Council Community Centres and work with Community Associations

Report Approved by:

Finance: David Watt
Legal: Jeremy Franklin

Policy Framework: Strong and Active Communities

Recommendation(s): To note and comment on the contents of the report

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Background

1. Oxford City Council supports 17 Community Centres with 17 Community Associations running these Centres. There are currently 2 Community Centres under direct management of Oxford City Council. Support to all these Centres contributes directly to the Council's aims of strengthening local communities and addressing social inclusion. The Centres offer a range of community activities, which contribute to the health and well being of residents across the city.

2. The range of activities/events/services that Community Centres provide includes:
    *   Meeting spaces
    *   Health provision
    *   Family support

- Youth facilities
- Recreation spaces
- Welfare and advice services
- Credit union
- Computer centres
- Music recording and arts studios
- Function rooms
- Community regeneration schemes
- Spaces for worship
- Work clubs
- Community offices
- Kitchens
- Sports & cultural activities
- Social Clubs
- Older people's groups spaces
- Training facilities

3. Generally voluntary management committees manage the Oxford City Council Community Centres; they are all registered charities or incorporated bodies benefiting from substantial voluntary input from local people. Oxford City Council supports the Community Associations by providing rent free facilities and generally, the Council is responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of the buildings, and Community Associations are responsible for the contents. The Council also funds the external grounds maintenance and refuse collection.

4. The Community Centres across the City are listed below together with the contact officer within the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team:

Community Association and Community Centre	Lead Officer contact in Communities and Neighbourhoods Team
Oxford Asian Cultural Association, Asian Cultural Centre	Martin Tudge
Barton Community Association, Barton Neighbourhood Centre	Phil Jones
Bullingdon Community Association, Bullingdon Community Centre	Phil Jones
Cutteslowe and District Community Association, Cutteslowe Community Centre	Helen Thompson
Donnington Community Association, Donnington Community Centre	Phil Jones
East Oxford Community Association, East Oxford Community Centre	Mark Spriggs
Florence Park Community Association, Florence Park Community Centre	Helen Thompson
Headington Community Association, Headington Community Centre	Phil Jones

Jericho St Barnabas Community Association, Jericho Community Centre (building not owned by OCC)	Helen Thompson
Littlemore Community Association, Littlemore Community Centre	Luke Nipen
North Oxford Community Association, North Oxford Community Centre	Helen Thompson
Northway Community Association, Northway Community Centre	Mark Spriggs
Regal Community Association, Regal Community Centre	Lois Muddiman
Risinghurst Community Association, Risinghurst Community Centre	Phil Jones
Rose Hill Community Association, Rose Hill Community Centre	Cheryl Snudden
South Oxford Community Association, South Oxford Community Centre	Helen Thompson
West Oxford Community Association, West Oxford Community Centre	Helen Thompson
Other	
Blackbird Leys Youth and Community Centre (OCC managed)	Luke Nipen
Cheney Community Hall (Cheney School)	Mark Spriggs
Jubilee 77 (OCC managed)	Luke Nipen
Wood Farm Community Association	Phil Jones

Support for Community Associations

Training for Trustees

5. A series of five training sessions, run in partnership with Community Matters, was delivered late in late 2011 for trustees of Community Associations. The training covered:
    - Roles and Responsibilities of Charity Trustees
    - Recruitment and employment of staff and volunteers
    - Health and Safety, risk assessments and safeguarding
    - Good financial procedures, licenses and permissions
    - Hiring policies and practices for community buildings

6. On average 12 trustees attended and came from around half of the Community Associations. This training was described as 'informative', 'enlightening' and 'transformational' by those who attended; the sessions were also described as 'friendly' and great opportunities to meet people from other centres.

7. From the feedback and evaluation of these sessions and also as a result of audits carried out this year, a series of further training is planned for early next year. The provisional programme is:

Roles & responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities of charity trustees – what does it mean to be a trustee, what is the latest legislation trustees have to know and adhere to, what's in your constitution and what does it mean.
Business planning	How should charities plan for business – successful business plans, how to move towards financial sustainability.
Fundraising	How to construct a good bid, where to look for grants and practice at writing bids.
Health & Safety	Health and safety legislation that applies to running a community centre.
Employment – disciplinary and grievance procedures	Disciplinary and grievance procedures plus recruitment of employees and surrounding guidance and procedures.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	Update on safeguarding procedures

8. There has also been increased interest by Community Associations in learning more about incorporation and becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. We have arranged training for those interested Community Associations this month, led by Blake Lapthorn. 10 Community Associations are sending representatives to this training event. This will cover the options for incorporation and also the benefits and drawbacks of both their existing structures and the possible new incorporation options.

Audit of policies and procedures

9. Community Associations managing Oxford City Council Community Centres have specific responsibilities and obligations to fulfil in line with Charity Law and other legislation. We conducted audits earlier this year of their governance, health and safety and financial procedures in line with Community Matters' national standards to ensure our Community Centres are managed by fit for purpose organisations.

10. The Communities and Neighbourhoods Locality Officers completed the audits over an eight week period, visiting each Community Centre in person and completing the checks onsite. Broad similarities were found across all centres, with the Community Associations' greatest strengths generally found in AGM procedures, accounting and minute taking, and most significant weaknesses evident in health and safety practices and procedures, including fire bell checks and knowledge of safeguarding procedures.

11. The basic checklist contained the following:

Policy
Health and Safety policy
Safeguarding policy (include CRB procedure)
Employment Policy
Data Protection Policy
Governing document e.g. constitution/articles of association
Health and safety policy
Minutes evidencing annual review of above policies
Procedure
Governance
AGM – advertised, held and documented in line with Governing document
Minutes from Association meetings from previous 6 months
Latest accounts
Membership list
Trustee induction procedure
Health and Safety
Building risk assessment
Fire risk assessment
Fire checks record
Minimum fire extinguishing equipment
Food hygiene certificate
First aid procedure
First aid kit and accident book
Emergency contacts for the centre displayed by entrance
Employment
Employment process – advertising, interviewing and documentation for employment
Staff contracts - pay/pension, disciplinary & grievance policy
PAYE reference number
Licenses and Registrations
Premises licence (alcohol if applicable)
Music Licenses
TV – any live viewing or pictures from any device
Registration with the Information Commissioner (as appropriate e.g. CCTV)
Insurance
Contents
Employer liability
Public liability
Vehicle (MOT, Insurance, Tax) if appropriate

12. Based on the audit results we are following up with individual Community Associations to the support they require to reach the expected basic standard across all measures within the audit.

We have set a programme to ensure each Association achieves the minimum standards within our audit. This is also supported by the Trustee Training programme in addition to officer support.

<u>Satisfaction surveys</u>

13. In 2011 we conducted satisfaction surveys with four community centres in Oxford. We aimed to measure overall user satisfaction at each centre, and to identify priority areas of work for each centre to focus on going into the future. This was successful, and we found overall user satisfaction in the centres we surveyed was above 75% satisfied. We plan to repeat this survey work at these centres over the next two years.

<u>Recycling</u>

14. At Oxford City Council we are aiming to increase recycling across the city. Our Community Centres currently do not all have contracts which include recycling, and so we are working to change this. We have started with four centres in the city to switch over to recycling contracts. We have worked to ensure centre users are made aware of proposed changes in advance of contracts being made live so they can share their thoughts and any concerns with the foreseen practicalities of the new contracts. This is to make sure new contracts suit the centres' needs as best as possible. We are continuing to roll this programme out to all other Community Centres.

Future work

15. Currently, we have a system of accreditation through Community Matters called VISIBLE which assesses policies, procedures and meeting community needs. This process has seen 4 Community Associations successfully achieve the accreditation. However the process, cost and ability to achieve for smaller Associations of this accreditation has led to some discussions as to whether there could be amore localised accreditation especially as we have now audited all the Community Associations.

16. There has been a lot of recent work on addressing the lease/licence issue with Community Associations. As part of this, we have been discussing with Oxford Federation of Community Associations (OFCA) the development of an Operational Agreement. This would be developed jointly with OFCA to reflect:
    - the legal and safe minimum for operation
    - developmental needs expressed by the community
    - The Council's and Community Associations own observations of improvement needs.

17. This could be developed as The Oxford Standard for Community Centres with an agreed route for assessment on a Gold, Silver and Bronze scale:

Bronze   That an Association is achieving the minimum standards for running a Community Centre, that all legal responsibilities and

safety considerations for users are conducted in a timely and appropriate manner. This is the COMPULSORY minimum standard

Silver   Association has achieved its agreed targets in the 3 strands set out; partnership working, local involvement, and capacity building.

Gold   Association are reaching out to the local community to monitor their situation; conducting local consultations on satisfaction and needs/ desires, reporting and analysing results and creating specific action plans to develop, improve or change their way of operating.

18. It is hoped to take this approach forward soon following discussions and agreement with all the relevant stakeholders.

Summary

19. There have been a number of initiatives and projects taken forward by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team to ensure that the Community Associations operating with Oxford City Council Community Centres have had support in the valuable voluntary work that they do for local communities. This will continue to enable local residents, particularly those in areas of deprivation, to access social, leisure, learning and other opportunities, take part in the life of their neighbourhoods, get help and support locally and build community cohesion and wellbeing.

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Background papers: none

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