

To: City Executive Board
Date: 15 September 2016
Report of: Head of Community Services
Title of Report: Community Centre Strategy 2016 to 2020

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To request that the City Executive Board approves the Community Centres Strategy which has been updated following consultation
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Christine Simm, Culture and Communities
Corporate Priority:	Strong, Active Communities; Efficient, Effective Council
Policy Framework:	Leisure & Wellbeing Strategy
Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. Adopt the Community Centre Strategy	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	The Community Centres Strategy
Appendix 2	Risk Register
Appendix 3	Initial Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 4	Summary of the Consultation feedback

Introduction and background

1. The draft Community Centres Strategy was approved for public consultation by the City Executive Board on the 17 December 2015. We received 181 responses to the consultation, most of which were from representative organisations. The consultation generated some very useful feedback which has shaped and improved the strategy.
2. The strategy identified eight priority themes, four under each of two action areas: Improving Facilities and Sustainable Management. These themes were in the main

supported through the consultation process and while we have made a number of changes to the strategy as shown in appendix four, the priority themes have remained the same.

Improving Facilities

1. Establish Rose Hill Community Centre as a widely used and inclusive community hub.
2. Draw up development plans for the Blackbird Leys and Barton Community Centres aimed at widening and improving the range of functions and activities which they offer, and securing effective community involvement in the management of these centres.
3. Consider the feasibility study on the development of East Oxford Community Centre and work with the Reference Group and stakeholders to extend and improve the range of activities offered at the centre.
4. Develop a prioritised maintenance plan for all centres with a five year time horizon.

Sustainable management

5. Identify and consult on ways in which those centres that are currently managed by the City Council can be effectively managed in future on a long term and stable basis with strong community involvement.
6. Review the current lease arrangements for each centre and seek to agree new long term arrangements.
7. Support Associations in developing management skills and expertise and in recruiting volunteers to run the centres' activities.
8. Support Associations to recruit and retain trustees and manage their buildings.

The consultation process

3. To initiate the consultation a copy of the draft strategy and a covering letter was sent to the following key stakeholders:
 - All the Community Associations
 - Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action
 - Oxfordshire County Council (focused on social care)
 - The Parish Councils
 - All the Primary and Secondary Schools and the FE Colleges
 - The Clinical Commissioning Group
 - Various health partners
 - Any interested parties
4. Throughout the eight week consultation the draft strategy was on the Council's website and available for comment through the on-line consultation page. A press release and posts on the Council's social media were used to launch the start of the consultation.
5. Focus group sessions were organised with representatives of the following groups to draw out more qualitative feedback on matters which affect them:

- Older people (over 60s)
- Health partners
- Young people
- Minority community representatives
- Federation of Community Centres

6. The feedback from these sessions is included in appendix four.

Summary of consultation results

7. The questionnaires showed a good level of support for most aspects of the strategy and we also received a lot of written responses and very useful feedback from the focus groups. The common themes from the consultation were:

- **Improved communication of what's available**
The consultation supports the need to better communicate what's available; this is included in the action plan.
- **Relationships with the Community Associations**
The Council very much values the work of the Community Associations and this is stated in the strategy. We have recently taken on a new employee who now works closely with and supports Community Associations.
- **Recognising the value of Community Centres**
While the broader value of well-run Community Centres is very much addressed in the strategy, we have added a new task to the action plan to find a way to demonstrate their social and economic value and a work group has been set up.
- **Sustainability of Community Centres and Associations**
The strategy recognises with reducing resources and aging buildings that this is a key issue. We will address this by creating a prioritised maintenance plan, working better with Associations and supporting them to obtain external funding creating business plans and recruiting and training trustees and volunteers.
- **Leases and licences**
A number of respondents wanted to be reassured that that the process of putting suitable leases in place would be progressed within reasonable timescales. The strategy states that we are aiming to have them all in place by November 2017. We are hopeful that we will be able to speed this process up now the West Oxford Community Centre lease has been agreed by CEB.
- **Terminology**
The used of the term tiers has been deleted as it created the suggestion of a hierarchy that was not intended.

Level of Risk

7. The risk register is shown in appendix two.

Environmental

8. Current and future projects within the centres will continue to place a high priority on ensuring low carbon technology is implemented.

Equalities Impact

9. The Equalities Impact Assessment is shown in appendix three.

Financial Implications

10. The action plan shows the financial position for the strategy. Developments beyond those currently funded through the Council's capital programme will have to be considered as part of the Council's overall budgetary process in the context that capital funding is likely to becoming increasingly tight.
11. The strategy will help support applications for external funding and also for allocating developer contributions.

Legal Implications

12. The main legal implications are covered in the section on leases.

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Background Papers: none
