

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE BOARD  
Date of meeting 13.06.05**

**Report of: Val Johnson Business Unit Manager  
Neighbourhood Renewal Unit**

**Title: African Caribbean Centre**

**Ward: Cowley Marsh**

**Report author: Craig Buckby  
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**Key Decision: No**

**Lead Member: Cllr D. Paskins**

**Scrutiny responsibility: Community Scrutiny**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Executive Board agrees:

1. To consider the options
2. That in the event that the condition in option 1 (the production of an acceptable business plan by ACCAN) is met that the Executive Board agrees in principle to consider implementation of the proposal.
3. That in the event that the business plan is (i) not forthcoming or (ii) not acceptable, the Executive Board agrees not to implement the proposal, but to ask Neighbourhood Renewal to continue to support ACCAN for further proposal development.

1. This report outlines the work carried out with ACCAN to move forward the development of an African Caribbean Centre for Oxford. A suitable building has been identified (Hollow Way medical centre) this building is currently on the open market The aims for the centre would be to provide Health, Education Advice and Training. Because the property is on the open market it is felt that the Councils interest in this property is commercially sensitive, therefore it is requested that this report be dealt with as "not open to the public" as laid out in the Constitution.
2. ACCAN are the organisation that has championed the development of an African Caribbean Centre over many years. Oxford City Council has agreed to assist this group both through Capital investment and officer time. There have been many attempts to secure agreement in terms of the size, location, nature of provision and funding for a centre. None of

the proposals have been successful for a variety of reasons; mainly no suitable sites have been available for a new build; the centre size was too ambitious; and the proposed provision was too recreationally focused.

- 3.1 The latest proposal has seen a re-focusing of the needs of the community and a realisation of the limitations with regards to funding and the physical space available. The concept of a purpose built centre has been replaced with a refurbishment option. The wish to provide recreational activity has been replaced with a provision of services that will assist the community in a structured way.
- 3.2 The following information has been provided by ACCAN and outlines the areas of work that the centre would provide. It is important to note that this is written by ACCAN and reflects their organisations view only.

#### HEALTH:

To have health professionals based at the centre to offer services and advice to those needing support in that area, i.e. Healthy Living Initiatives, Mental Health, Women's Health, HIV (this list is not exhaustive). The management of the project/ service will be the responsibility of health visitors (working with local PCT's), nurses, social workers and other health professionals.

We believe that ACCAN will be in a position to bid for and obtain money from Central Government (Department of Health, and the Strategic Health Authority).

#### EDUCATION:

In the light of the performance of black children within the State Education System, we believe that the centre will be in a position to address a number of issues, by establishing and supporting the After School Clubs, The Saturday school, Homework club and Pre-school activities based in the building, to offer remedial work, deal with issues of exclusion, career guidance and mentoring.

We are also aware of the issues surrounding the lack of provisions for the older members of the community. The aim is to work in partnership with educational professionals such as Teachers, Youth Workers and Education Officers. The aim will be to access funds from both the Central Government and the Local Education Authority.

We aim to work in partnership with local schools, where we will be in a position to offer support to children who have been excluded,

## ADVICE:

The centre will house Advice Workers who will be in a position to provide advice covering a number of areas, including Employment, Welfare Benefits, Pensions Advice, Debts, Housing, Education and Health.

We have already secured the support of Turpin, Miller and Higgins Solicitors, who were awarded a three-year contract by the Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire City Council and the Vale of the White Horse.

The firm has agreed to provide outreach advice under the TMH housing advice service funded by Oxford City Council, ACCAN will aim to obtain funding for this service through the Legal Services Commission and the Central Government. We hope to establish links with other organizations such as CAB, Agnes Smith Advice Centre and the local centers based in Barton.

## TRAINING:

The organization will offer training to members of the community, e.g. IT training aimed at both the young and the old, return to learning (mothers returning to work), run workshops where necessary, for personal, career and other development needs.

We aim to work in partnership with the local further education colleges, and the Learning and Skills Council.

The aim will be to obtain funding and support from the County Council and the Department of Education

- 3.3 This proposal has the potential to bring to a successful conclusion a long standing commitment to provide a provision for the African and Caribbean communities in Oxford. The property at Hollow Way offers the ideal venue to provide the proposed services. The services being proposed fit well with the social inclusion agenda being developed by Neighbourhood Renewal and Strategy and Review Business Units. However a lot of work is still to be done, not least the business case, which at the time of writing had yet to be completed.

## OPTIONS

4. Option 1. The proposal would require Oxford City Council to purchase Hollow Way Medical Centre. The property would then be leased to ACCAN to deliver the services laid out in the business plan. The detail of the lease and legal details will need to be developed if this option

was chosen. This action is reliant upon ACCAN producing a business plan by the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2005 that is acceptable to Oxford City Council.

Option 2. The business plan is not adequate for investing in a property purchase. Assistance will be given to ACCAN to better develop a business plan and re visit the proposal at a later date.

Option 3. Oxford City Council does not wish to add another property to its current community centre provision at this time. A community centre strategy is being developed and the outcome of this will determine the need to expend or otherwise the community centre provision within the City.

5. Risk, See appendix 1

6. Legal implications

Even in the event that the Executive Board agrees option 1, recommendation 1; for the avoidance of doubt; the Authority is making no commitment to the purchase of Hollow Way Medical Centre, until the matter is brought back to Executive Board for full consideration and express consent.

7. Financial Implications.

The implications in choosing option 1 would be the bringing forward £400,000 from the Capital Programme, from 2007/08 to 2005/06. This money is earmarked for an African Caribbean Centre. Other financial implications are the stamp duty at 3 % and an amount for refurbishment at some £90,000. Neither of these two requirements are covered in the £400,000 allocated. The Authority would need to allocate this cost to another budget.

7.1 Option 2 and 3 have an implication to the Capital Programme. The allocated £400,000 may have to be reallocated to another project.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:

Portfolio Holder: D Paskins

SMB

Legal and Democratic Services: Lindsay Cane

Financial Management: Penny Gardner

Human Resources: (where staffing implications – name of officer)

Background papers: None.

APPENDIX 1.

RISK

OPTION	RISK	COMMENT
Purchase of Hollow Way	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The property is being marketed at £390,000. Oxford City Council's Estates Dept has put a value of £300,000. Also stamp duty at 3% would be required. There would also be an amount required for refurbishment. The total in the Capital Programme (currently) would not cover all the cost's</li> <li>2. There would be ongoing maintenance needs, there is already a substantial backlog of maintenance need to all community centres</li> <li>3. Rent would be required, it is clear that ACCAN would require rent and rates free as with other community centres</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To reduce the risk a requirement of any agreement would require a financial contribution from ACCAN. Either through their own resource or from other funder.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Members could decide based upon the Business Plan to increase the capital programme allocation to meet the full costs.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. The maintenance needs would be passed onto the tenant in the lease agreement.</li> <li>5. Rent should be charged at a level that is meaningful but does not make the project unfeasible. This would need to be stated clearly at the beginning of the process.</li> </ol>

<p>The Business Plan is not adequate</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The risk of this is high. The organisation has a track record of having very good ideas and concepts but little in the way of delivery. It is also likely that the organisation will require the Authority to provide much more in the terms of resources than is possible.</li> <li>2. This would mean that the window of opportunity to purchase Hollow Way would be missed. The property would most likely be sold to another party.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If the Business Plan is not adequate then further assistance will be given to ACCAN to ensure that they have a robust plan. Assistance would also be given in identifying other properties and funding opportunities</li> <li>2. See above</li> </ol>
<p>Oxford City Council does not wish to add another property to its community centre provision</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A new community centre provision has yet to be determined in advance of the community centre strategy. This may be rendered redundant if the strategy identifies over provision or possible co locations for the services proposed in the ACCAN Business Plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any new provision should be placed upon hold until Council has adopted the community centre strategy.</li> </ol>