

To: City Executive Board
Date: 17 December 2015
Report of: Head of Community Services
Title of Report: Community Centres Strategy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the draft Community Centres Strategy for discussion and amendment prior to a period of public consultation.

Key decision? Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Christine Simm

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan Priorities - Strong and Active Communities; Vibrant, Sustainable Economy; Cleaner, Greener Oxford

Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board resolves to:

1. Approve the draft Community Centres Strategy for public consultation.

Appendix 1: Risk Register
Appendix 2: Initial Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 3: Draft Community Centre Strategy 2016-2020

Introduction

1. Oxford City Council is fortunate in having retained an extensive network of community centres across the city. They differ widely in their size, range of activities hosted and their physical condition. This report is designed to initiate a process for the long term management of the network and the support structures provided by the City Council. The centres represent collectively a substantial investment by the City Council in community managed facilities. The Council's strategic objective is to support them to be active and inclusive places which bring communities together, and support the achievement of the wider objectives of improving skills, reducing inequalities and creating strong and active communities.

2. This report and the draft strategy have been written using the evidence of a needs assessment that was undertaken by SLC consultants and through consultation with a steering group of representatives from the voluntary sector and the Federation of Community Associations. The findings from the needs assessment are included within the strategy. The draft strategy identifies ways in which the Council will support the development of the Community Centre network and prioritise its resources to extend and improve the ways in which the centres can serve their communities.
3. The strategy identifies eight priority themes, four under each of two action areas: Improving Facilities and Sustainable Management.

Improving Facilities

- A. Commission the new Rose Hill Community Centre and establish a strong programme of activities within the centre so that it functions fully as a community hub.
- B. 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.
- C. Work with the Reference Group to extend and improve the range of activities offered at the East Oxford Community Centre, and to consider the results of the feasibility study into its future physical shape and functions.
- D. Develop a prioritised maintenance plan for all centres with a five year time horizon.

Sustainable management

- A. Review 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.
- B. Review the current lease arrangements for each centre and place on a long term stable basis.
- C. Support Associations in developing management skills and expertise and in recruiting volunteers to run the centres' activities.
- D. Support Associations to recruit and retain trustees and manage their buildings.

The development of this draft Strategy

4. A steering group consisting of the CEO of Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Federation, Councillors from all political groups and senior Council Officers has met on three occasions to help to develop the draft strategy.
5. Consultants undertook a geographic and demographic analysis of the community centre network using a Geographic Information System.

6. A 15 minute walk time was applied as the notional catchment area for each centre, based on a judgement of how far residents could be expected to travel to access the service provided by the centres. This has been overlain with ward boundaries, and the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ratings of each lower super output area (LSOA).
7. A criterion based methodology was devised to objectively assess each centre and the way they relate to the local community in terms of providing accessible coverage.
8. The following measures will help to gauge how well we achieve the priorities listed in section three of this report:
 - Usage of the community centres
 - Number of activity sessions in the community centres
 - Number of sessions targeting health improvement
 - Number of sessions supporting targeting improving skills
 - Income at council managed centres
 - Social impact of the community centres
 - Revenue cost to the Council of each centre
 - The number of volunteers in each community centre
 - Satisfaction levels

Very little of these data-sets are currently available so the intention is for the first year of analysis to be used to establish a baseline for targets for future years.

Consultation Process

9. To initiate the consultation, it is proposed that a copy of the draft strategy and a covering letter will be sent to the following key stakeholders:
 - All the Community Associations
 - Community Matters
 - 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 CCG and the Health Trusts
 - Any interested parties
10. Throughout the eight week consultation period, the draft strategy will be available on the Council website and will be available for comment through the on-line consultation page. A press release and posts on the Council's social media sites will coincide with the start of the consultation.

11. Focus group sessions will be organised with representatives of the following groups to draw out more qualitative feedback on matters which affect them:

- Older people (over 60s)
- Health bodies
- Schools and parents
- Young people
- Minority community representatives

Level of Risk

12. The risk register is shown in Appendix 1.

Climate Change

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

Equalities Impact

14. An initial Equalities Impact Assessment is shown in Appendix 2.

Financial Implications

15. The action plan shows the financial position for each strand of the strategy. Developments beyond those currently funded through the Council's capital programme will have to be considered as part of the overall budgetary process for the Council, in the context that capital funding is likely to becoming increasingly tight.

16. The strategy will help support applications for external funding and also for allocating developer contributions.

Legal Implications

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

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List of background papers: None: