



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:
Cabinet

4th October 2010

Manor House Community Centre

Report of the Divisional Director for Safer and Stronger Communities

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report outlines options for the future use of the Manor House Community Centre following its temporary closure in November 2009.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.2. Note the contents of the report
- 2.3. Note the consultation process and outcomes with community group leaders and local residents and Ward Councillors
- 2.4. Agree the appropriate action from the options for the future of the centre as outlined in paragraphs 4.17- 4.20 of this report :

3. Summary

- 3.1. The Manor House Community Centre is situated on Haddenham Road, off Narborough Road and is a building of special interest. It has been a community facility since the mid 1970's providing early years and community activities. In recent years use-age of the centre has declined and the building itself is in a poor state of repair.
- 3.2. On Monday 23rd November 2009 a serious incident occurred at the Manor House Centre which resulted in the death of a staff member and temporary closure of the Centre to enable the police to undertake their investigations. All services and users were re-accommodated in nearby facilities.
- 3.3. In the time that the centre has been closed a number of residents and user groups have contacted the council to express their concerns and desire for the centre to re-open. A petition with 624 signatures in respect of this issue and asking for the centre to re-open was also received by full council on the 16th September

- 3.4. In determining the future of the centre and given the general state of the building and relative to other similar centres low take up by the public of services provided there the following options have been explored
- Closure and demolition
 - Closure and sale
 - Re-open the building.
- 3.5. Officers attended Ward Community Meetings for the two Wards on Wednesday 16th June 2010 to provide residents with an up date on the current position and to engage in a question and answer session. Following this a meeting with Ward Councillors from the two wards was convened on 20th July 2010 and arrangements for further consultation meetings were discussed and agreed. The consultation meetings were held on 25th and 31st August 2010 and 2nd September and 16th September and were attended by a total of 43 people representing user groups and local residents including representatives from the Rowley Fields Action Group and St Mary's School.
- 3.6. The majority view as expressed by residents and user groups was that there was a need for a community facility within the Rowley Fields area for residents to access instead of them having to travel to other buildings away from the local area.
- 3.7. Attendees expressed varying degrees of willingness to be pro-actively involved in its future running should a decision be taken to re-open the Manor House Community Centre.
- 3.8. An assessment of the building with a view to re opening has been carried out. A period of four weeks has been identified to undertake a deep clean, clear out old equipment and rubbish, removal of the graffiti, tidy the grounds and carry out the work from a full Fire Risk Assessment. In order to re-open the centre the Community Services Division would need to identify from within it's existing budget funds in the region of £50,000 for a six months initial period to cover staff and the operating costs of the building.

4. Report

- 4.1. The Manor House Community Centre is situated on Haddenham Road, off Narborough Road and is a building of special interest. It has been a community facility since the mid 1970's providing early years and community activities in particular over that time. More recently there has been a craft and skills centre annexed to the Centre which has closed and re opened on a number of occasions but remains unsustainable. Also attached to the annex is a cottage which had a sitting tenant through the Housing Section. He voluntarily vacated his tenancy at the beginning of August 2010 and the cottage is now empty.
- 4.2. The building is a converted manor house which had a flat roof extension built in the late 1970s. The building has not been subject to any major refurbishment and has received minimal repairs and maintenance over recent years. The building has been subject to investigation regarding large cracks that have appeared on the first floor. The suitability survey scored Manor House in the bottom segment against the other centres held in the Community Services building portfolio.

- 4.3. The usage at the time of the closure of the building comprised of Early Prevention before and after school activities, Learning Disabilities Group, 16 community groups and office accommodation for Early Prevention and Youth Service staff. The office accommodation takes up part of the first floor which can not be accessed by wheelchair bound people. The toilet facilities are thought to be inadequate for the client groups that use the building and would require considerable refurbishment resources to be brought up to standard.
- 4.4. The average annual usage of a building of this size is in the region of 60,000 visitors. The Manor House Centre recorded 12,700 visits between April – September 2009 and attracted 21,000 visitors between April 2008-March 2009. This is significantly below the lower threshold for a building of this size. This equates to an average cost per user of £5.71. The total operational costs for this building are £119,900 (based on the last financial year). This comprises of £67,000 staffing and £52,900 for premises, supplies and services.
- 4.5. Manor House has been identified as a building that is not fit for purpose and concerns have been raised as to the suitability of the facility for the provision of services, particularly those services working with people with Learning Disabilities. The area and building itself have fallen victim to anti social behaviour in recent years which in part has been addressed by the erection of security fencing.
- 4.6. Due to the condition of the building and the significant deterioration of its fabric it is envisaged that substantial investment in the region of £1,000,000 (£1 Million) would be necessary to revitalise the building completely.
- 4.7. Given the condition of the building Officers from the Community Services Section have been working with colleagues from Property and Early Prevention Services for some time to look at options for the future use of Manor House Community Centre.
- 4.8. While options continued to be considered on Monday 23rd November 2009 a serious incident occurred at the Manor House Neighbourhood Centre which resulted in the death of a staff member and temporary closure of the Centre to enable the police to undertake their investigations. All services and users were re-accommodated in nearby facilities. The building was returned to the Council in early December but by that stage it had become clear that staff directly affected by the incident were extremely traumatised making an early return to and re-opening of the centre difficult. A reluctance to re enter Manor was also expressed by some service users and some parents have made permanent alternative arrangements for their children.
- 4.9. Alternative accommodation was identified for the user groups in local community facilities. Some groups have been relocated within other Council provision and others have found their own accommodation. The Early Years playgroup provision has temporarily been relocated to the Rowley Fields Children's Centre and both the Early Years Breakfast and After School Clubs have been relocated to the St Mary's Infants School.
- 4.10. Early discussions with the St.Mary's School Head Teacher indicated that the schools preferred option given the close links between the Early Prevention Services and the Infants School would be to locate services permanently on the school site. To facilitate this a new larger modular building in place of the small, outdated mobile that the school currently uses is being pursued by Children's Services. The costs associated with installing a new modular building have been identified and a planning application has

been submitted. In further discussion the Head Teacher has expressed a desire to access the Manor House Centre were it to re-open to act as an additional meeting venue for extra curricular activities.

- 4.11. The Council has received a number of letters from individuals and local community groups expressing their concern about the closure and loss of community facilities in the area. Full responses were provided to answer the detailed questions contained within these letters. A petition with 624 signatures urging the Council to re open the Centre was presented to the full Council Meeting held on 16th September 2010 by Councillor Cooke.
- 4.12. Officers attended Ward Community Meetings for the two Wards on Wednesday 16th June 2010 to provide an up date on the current position and to engage in a question and answer session with local residents. A meeting with Ward Councillors from the two wards was convened on 20th July 2010 and the arrangements for public consultation meetings were agreed. The consultation meetings were held on 25th and 31st August 2010 and 2nd September 2010 with 14 people representing the Group Leaders and users and local residents including representatives from the Action Group.
- 4.13. A variety of views were expressed at the consultation meetings which ranged from immediate re opening of the centre to an acceptance that the present building was unsustainable on environmental grounds and not ideally located or suitable for the services and activities for the local community to access. The overwhelming view that was expressed however was regardless of its limitations and in the absence of a purpose built community centre in the Rowley Fields area that Manor House should be re-opened as a community facility.
- 4.14. A further meeting with the Centre Group Leaders, representatives of the Action Group and local residents with council officers was held on 16th September 2010. The meeting was well attended by members of the Action Group local residents and the Head Teacher of St Mary's. A frank discussion was had in respect of past use-age and the need were the centre to re-open for the Action Group working closely with officers to proactively champion the centre and get involved in its running.
- 4.15. A report was presented to Cabinet Briefing for the 25th January 2010 meeting regarding options for the future use of the building, and to avoid further additional disruption it was agreed that the building remained closed whilst all options were considered. A further report was presented to Cabinet briefing on 29 March 2010.

Options for Consideration

- 4.16. The following options have been explored and discussed.
- 4.17. Option 1 – Closure and demolition - To demolish the Manor House buildings for sale for housing development ranging from affordable housing to a mixed tenure housing development. Also to explore the removal of some of the Tree Preservation Orders through the planning application process to allow more housing on the Manor House site. A full report in respect of this was presented to the Cabinet Briefing meeting held on 29th March 2010. A number of concerns were expressed by Cabinet Members regarding the viability of this option. Regarding the site itself Members questioned its suitability as a

building plot given at that time there was a tenant on site and the trees subject to preservation orders and were concerned that if the process became elongated the site might become a target for disorder. Concerns were also expressed regarding the lack of alternative community provision within the Rowley Fields area.

- 4.18. Option 2 – Closure and sale – to sell or lease the property to a voluntary and/or community sector organisation. The expectation would be that the building would be refurbished to a reasonable standard and that some local community use would be permitted as part of the agreement. Whilst and in the longer term this may be a viable option in the current climate it is unlikely any voluntary sector or community group would be in a position to take on such a large undertaking without significant capacity building.
- 4.19. Option 3 – Re-open the building – full or partial re opening through ground floor use only and/or limited opening hours with the involvement of local residents and group leaders as a management group operating in conjunction with the Community Services Section. This could be time limited to gauge the interest in developing the usage of the centre for a period of six months and reviewed to agree the next steps.
- 4.20. An assessment of the building with a view to re opening has been carried out. A period of four weeks has been identified to undertake a deep clean, clear out old equipment and rubbish, removal of the graffiti, tidy the grounds and carry out the work from a full Fire Risk Assessment. Two members of the Community Services have been assigned to the building to carry out this work and they would be involved in the re opening arrangements or closure actions dependant on the decision of Cabinet.
- 4.21 Following the last DRS the Community Services budget was reduced by £270,000. Some of this saving was achieved by the reduction in resources due to the closure of Manor House. In order to re-open the centre additional funds in the region of £50,000 for the six months initial period to cover the staffing and operating costs of the building would need to be found from within the existing budget and will need to be managed through a reduction of opening hours.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

5.11 Context

The 2010/11 Community Services budget is £3,961,900. This includes £865,000 awarded as one-growth in the 2010/11 DRS for investment in community centres and a £270k net reduction as part of the 2009/10 DRS (modernisation of community centres programme). The Manor House budget was put forward as part of the £270k reduction.

5.12 Option 1 – Financial Implications for the closure and demolition of Manor House were provided in the report that went to the Cabinet Briefing meeting on 29th March 2010. These were:

- Site demolitions costs are estimated to be £0.1m, with a potential future receipt of £0.2-0.25m depending upon the method of sale.

- The demolition costs will need to be funded by prudential borrowing until such time as the site is disposed of. Any shortfall in the receipt compared with the demolition costs will remain as prudential borrowing. The annual repayment for £0.1m of prudential borrowing is approximately £10k and this will need to be paid out of the Division's revenue budget.

5.12 Option 2 – Closure and Sale

In the current economic climate it is likely that the value to be realised from any sale of the building will be substantially lower than would have been expected were the building sold a few years ago. It is also unlikely that any voluntary or community sector organisation could raise the required for funds for such an acquisition.

5.13 Option 3 – Re- open the building full or partial

A one off Investment of £50,000 would be required for the remainder of the financial year (6 months) to cover staffing and operating costs. Should the building remain open after that a budget of £110k p.a would be required to keep the centre running (Based on a reduction in opening hours and reduced usage). In addition significant investment would be required for a full refurbishment or to revitalise the building completely (should this be required) There is no budget currently available for any of these costs. The Manor House budget was given up as part of the savings put forward in the last DRS. If this option was chosen compensating savings would have to be found from elsewhere within the Community Services Budget. (Yet to be identified)

Ravi Lakhani, Financial Services, x29 8806

5.2. Legal Implications

If disposal is recommended other than on open market terms then further legal advice should be taken. There is a "general consent" issued by the Secretary of State for disposals for an under value of up to £2m for well being purposes which may be applicable.

If the building is brought back into use the Council owes duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 and at common law to both employees and visitors (and indeed in some cases to trespassers). It is noted that an assessment has been carried out but it also noted that the proposed accommodation works for the short term re-opening do not include the toilets, accessibility for disabled persons and personal safety (from breach of security incidents)

5.3. Climate Change Implications

This is an old building which has a high carbon emissions count.

6. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/	Paragraph/References Within the Report
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	NO	
Equal Opportunities Policy	Yes	4.3 Learning Disabilities and access issues
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	4.14 Environmental sustainable building
Crime and Disorder	Yes	4.5 Anti social behaviour
Human Rights Act		
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	4.3 Community Groups some catering for the frail elderly, lunch club and social group
Corporate Parenting		
Health Inequalities Impact		

7. Risk Assessment Matrix

Delete if not required. This only needs to be included if appropriate with regard to the Council's Risk Management Strategy

Risk	Likelihood L/M/H	Severity Impact L/M/H	Control Actions (if necessary/appropriate)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6 etc			

8. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

- 8.1. Briefing Paper to Cabinet Briefing – 25th January 2010
Briefing Paper to Cabinet Briefing – 29th March 2010

9. Consultations

- 9.1. Meeting with Ward Councillors for Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields; and Westcotes Wards held on 20th July 2010
- 9.2. Presentation and question and answer session at Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields; and Westcotes Ward Community Meetings held on Wednesday 16th June 2010.
- 9.3. Consultation sessions with Centre Group Leaders and interested local residents including representatives of the local Save Manor Action Group held on Wednesday 25th August 2010, Tuesday 31st August 2010 and Thursday 1st September 2010.
- 9.4. Partnership meeting held between the local Action Group, local residents, Centre Group Leaders and Council Officers on Thursday 16th September 2010.

10. Report Author

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Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)