

Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission Report

Community Centres Use of Shared Space

Assistant City Mayor, Councillor Sarah Russell
Lead director: Liz Blyth

Wednesday 4th December 2013

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All wards
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- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission with information regarding the proposal to offer rent free open access space in identified community centres as part of the new charging scheme previously presented to the Commission in August 2013. The intention of the proposed approach is to make community centres more accessible to local communities and to create more opportunity for people to engage in local provision.

2. Recommendations

Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission is asked to note the report and to make any comments or recommend further action as appropriate.

3. Background:

Community Services implemented a new charging scheme on 1st September 2013. The aim of the new scheme is to rationalise the charges of community centres to provide consistency across the city. As part of the August 2013 report an additional recommendation was agreed to determine and seek the viability of any potential space in community centres where local residents could use the space for free on a non-exclusive basis. This report provides the Commission with the community centres that have been considered suitable to offer pre-defined open access space.

Shared space is defined as an area or room not restricted for sole use over a defined period of time. Shared spaces can include an open hall or reception area, a walk through room that gives access to a different part of the building, or a room where there are other activities going on, such as a library.

After considering the availability and viability of where shared space would be suitable the list of community centres identified are in the table below:

1	African Caribbean Centre	Café Area
2	Brite Centre	Library and Reception Area
3	Eyres Monsell Centre	Lounge
4	Fosse Centre	Library
5	Linwood Centre	Hall
6	Manor House Centre	Lounge
7	Netherhall Centre	Hall and Lounge
8	Northfields Centre	Lounge
9	St Matthews Centre	Library
10	Stocking Farm Centre	Healthy Living Centre Reception
11	Thurnby Lodge Centre	Community Library
12	Tudor Centre	Area behind reception and adjacent small rooms

The availability of free shared space will be pre-defined to ensure that the space can be hired at other times. The examples of the types of use are outlined in Appendix A.

Intended use of shared space

Some community groups have indicated that they feel the new charging scheme will have an adversely impact on their group activity. The free use of shared space is intended to give small and new community groups the opportunity to access community areas, at no cost, so that they have time to establish, seek funding or develop in other ways. Some groups may want to continue using shared space on a more long term basis. There is no intention to limit access to shared space.

Benefits of this proposal

The proposal increases the opportunity to promote and develop new groups; attempts to engage new users using a softer approach which would otherwise be put off by charges from the establishing of a constituted group; and provides opportunities to engage hard to reach communities and support their development and therefore contribute to build community resilience.

Community Services intend to make this offer to the community so that relationships can be developed with the local community and residents can then work in partnership within the centre. It means that the local people can influence the way that the local community centre link with the community it directly serves.

It is important that there is a consistent approach across the city. This proposal allows community members to understand what they can expect from community centres across the city. It will also mean that staff can be confident about supporting communities and community groups

From a community perspective the use of free space can allow groups of people to meet and focus on establishing themselves without being concerned about room hire charges. For example a reading group could meet at Linwood Centre in the hall area which also provides a regular snack bar. People attending the reading group will have the opportunity to purchase refreshments, find out about participating in other activities or support in developing new activities. Using free shared space in this way the Council is also able to provide opportunities for local people to overcome social isolation.

It is therefore hoped that by taking a more flexible approach to the way community facilities are made available local residents feel empowered to take more ownership and work in partnership with the City Council to develop their local centres.

Following the views and comments of the Scrutiny Commission it is proposed that the scheme would be fully implemented from 1st January 2014 which would include writing to existing community groups and organisations currently using the centres and produce a poster campaign to promote the scheme in centres.

An outline Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted which highlights a generally positive impact across the protected characteristic.

4. Details of Scrutiny

This report is to be presented to the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission on 4th December 2013

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no significant financial implications arising from this proposal, as the shared spaces in question cannot be reserved for sole use and therefore no potential income is being foregone.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

5.2 Legal implications

This Report concerns a proposal to charge persons different amounts for accommodation, as part of a discretionary community service. However, the nature of the accommodation that is either charged for or free will not be the same; free accommodation will be offered on a non-exclusive (i.e. shared) basis. Both types of accommodation will also be available to all persons. Therefore, there are no legal implications associated with the recommendations in the Report.

Greg Surtees, Senior Solicitor. Ext: 37 1421

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment

The proposal is in effect a mitigating action in response to the earlier decision regarding a new charging scheme for community centres, whereby some community groups indicated that the charges posed a barrier to their accessing community centre space and therefore maintaining their group activity. The proposed free use of shared space addresses this barrier and therefore promotes equality of opportunity for local groups accessing community centres. The proposed shared space also has the benefit of different groups of people using the centres being aware of the diversity of local users, and thus assisting in the fostering of good relations between those with different protected characteristics – another feature of our public sector equality duty. It is anticipated that all protected characteristics will benefit from these positive impacts.

Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead

5.4 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

None.

6. Background information and other papers:

None

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A – examples of the scheme

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

No

Examples of the proposed scheme

Example One

At the Brite Centre a lunch club is being run using the community kitchen. This would not be charged as there is no sole use space.

Example Two

At New Parks Community Centre a lunch club is being run using the kitchen to cook and the hall to eat in. There would be no charge for the kitchen, but there could be a charge for the hour the hall is used as this is space that can be let and it is possible to separate it from the rest of the centre.

Example Three

At St Matthews Centre a new group is set up, a small group of people want to meet in the Library each week to knit, crochet and chat. There would be no charge. The Library is not space that can be isolated, other people will be using it at the same time.

Example Four

In Linwood Centre a book club uses the hall each week. There is no charge as the hall is a walk through area and other people may also be using the space to consume items bought at the snack bar.

Example Five

At African Caribbean Centre a group want to run a coffee morning each week. They are using the cafe space, which is not sole use, so there is no charge.

Example Six

At Fosse Centre a group want to have bowls club each week in the main hall and then to have coffee and biscuits in one of the rooms off the Library. There is no charge for the hour in the room off the Library, but they have to pay for the hour in the hall whilst they play bowls.

Example Seven

A Group at Eyres Monsell Community Centre is established and they want to share photography skills. For three months they use the lounge. Then they decide that they want to be able to have separate space and they rent a room at the centre. They are only charged after they start to rent the sole use room.