

# Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission Report

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## **Developments in Community Services**

Assistant City Mayor, Councillor Sarah Russell

Lead director: Liz Blyth

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Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014

## **Useful information**

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

### **1. Summary**

This report provides an update on the developments taking place in the Community Services Section following the implementation of the organisational review and the introduction of the access control scheme. The report also provides information on the staff changes; the impact on the new fees and charges scheme introduced in September 2013; the availability of the centres for hire; and the review of partnership agreements by the Scrutiny Commission.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission is asked to note the report and make any observations and comments.

### **3. Background:**

#### **3.1 Fees and Charges scheme**

The new charging scheme for Community Services was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 to provide a more streamlined, efficient and effective charge scheme for the hire of rooms within the 29 community centres operated across the city. The new scheme simplified the number of charges from 96 to 16 charges. The charges also took account of the introduction of the access control scheme with a 20% discount for fob holders. The new fees and charges for community centres are outlined in appendix 1.

There was extensive consultation leading up to and following the introduction of the new scheme. Each group was written to explaining the charges that would affect the group and in some cases where there was an increase in the charge a transitional arrangement was proposed. The impact of the introduction of the charging scheme on each centre is outlined in appendix 2. There were 5 groups out of a total of 315 groups which opted to move out of a community centre due to the increase in charges. There were also 13 groups which ceased to meet at centres due to various reasons as outlined in appendix 2.

A total of 25 groups contacted the Service to discuss the changes to their room hire charge and their needs were accommodated as far as possible. There had previously been groups and organisations meeting in different centres being charged different

amount for room hire although they provided exactly the same activity. One example was Slimming World at New Parks Community Centre and Eyres Monsell Community Centre who are now charged the same Standard Rate for their sessions. At Belgrave Centre there were a number of groups who were concerned about the new level of charge being levied and following discussions they renegotiated their room hire agreements. The Tai Chi Group moved to an increased Instructor Rate but reduced the session length from two hours to a 90 minute session. This was found to be a reasonable solution.

As part of the Shared Space Policy outlined in 3.2 and proposed by this Scrutiny Commission, one group in the African Caribbean Centre opted to share their session with others in the café/lounge space and they now enjoy a free of charge session which has ensured the sustainability of their group.

The annual income generated by community centre is outlined follows:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14*
Total Income	£280,079	£271,342	£262,816

This shows the hire costs collected for each of the financial years from 2011/12 to the end of January 2014\* for the current financial year 2013/14. The projected total income for 2013/14 is £280,000 which is a slight increase on previous years.

The income generated for each community centre is outlined in appendix 3.

The recent introduction of the *paye.net* system, whereby the customer can pay by debit/credit card, will reduce the arrears that Service has previously experienced. The collection of money for room hire has also been reintroduced for those groups without a bank account that prefer to collect the money and pay on the day of their session. Those groups that have been used to receiving an invoice for room hire now receive these well in advance so that the risk of arrears is significantly reduced.

There have been a number of new groups established since September 2013, for example five new groups at the African Caribbean Centre. With the introduction of the staffing changes as part of the Organisational Review outlined in 3.3, it is anticipated that there will be a further increased usage of centres.

The usage of centres since the introduction of the new fees and charges from September 2013 to January 2014 is outlined in appendix 4. This shows the comparison of usage of community centre for the same period for September 2012 to January 2013. The net reduction of use for the corresponding periods is 6.3%. Some of the reduction can be accounted for by some internal Council services moving out of rented space of community centres.

### **3.2 Shared Space**

Following on from the 'Community Centres Use of Shared Space' report to the Scrutiny Commission on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013, a range of measures have been introduced to encourage the use of the free shared space at certain centres. Centre specific promotional posters have been produced, detailing the spaces and their availability

and an example is attached as appendix 5. Alongside these posters, leaflets are also available enabling centre users and others in the local community to take this information away with them.

The Service is looking at the feasibility of mailing out this type of publicity to past and present groups and service users to keep them informed about new developments. We will also be including this information on the Community Services web pages to promote the scheme to a wider audience. There also is further potential to promote the scheme through Link, a press release on the main LCC webpage and internally via Face magazine and the Interface news pod.

Community Services staff have been briefed to promote these opportunities to both new and existing user groups along with members of the wider community who do not currently use the centre. Officers are specifically targeting groups which, since the new fees and charges were introduced, have expressed concern over room affordability, thereby giving them the opportunity to continue to use the building.

The scheme has given Community Engagement Officers the opportunity to encourage new groups to use the centres as there is no cost involved for the shared space enabling the group to become established, before potentially moving into the exclusive use of a hireable room.

In Community Centres that do not have free shared space, posters are being used to signpost prospective users to nearby centres which are part of the scheme. This process is being repeated in other LCC buildings which are close to centres with free shared space. The Section is working in partnership with the Libraries and Information Service and also NHS through the Healthy Living Centres in the north-west of the city to further encourage the use of free shared space within the community.

### **3.3 Organisational Review**

The Community Services Review has been completed and the remaining posts are being appointed to. A map of the areas of the city is attached as appendix 6.

There are currently 3 Neighbourhood Development Managers in post and assigned to areas of the city. There are 2 vacant posts and the recruitment and selection process is progressing for these. The current arrangements are as follows:

Area of the City	Neighbourhood Development Manager
North-West	Hetha Copland
North-East	Vacant – temporarily covered by Mike Broad
East	Shilen Pattni
South	Vacant – temporarily covered by Steve Goddard
West and Central	Mike Broad

Nine Community Engagement Officer posts have been filled and 2 posts will be re-advertised. These posts are an important part of the new direction of the service in order to deliver a programme of activities and events with other public sector services and, more importantly, with the involvement of local residents.

The Community Centre Operations Officers and the Operations Development Officer are fully engaged in the new arrangements and are supporting the roll out of the access control scheme across the city. The new staffing configuration with the Operations Development Technicians and Community Services Officers is also fully operational.

The service is developing different methods of communicating with community groups and organisations using centres. At the beginning of the year “Meet the Staff” sessions were held at Eyres Monsell and Linwood Centres. The interaction between group leaders, ward councillors and staff was very positive and regular sessions are being organised in future months to enable an exchange of information and develop a closer relationship between the community groups themselves. In Beaumont Leys, the Neighbourhood Development Manager has formed an Officer Group consisting of services which operate in the area to exchange information, coordinate the delivery of services and avoid duplication. The intention is to develop a neighbourhood forum to bring Ward Councillors, interested and active residents together to be supported by relevant officers. The purpose of the forum would be to establish and action an agreed neighbourhood delivery plan.

### **3.4 Access Control Scheme**

In January 2014 Community Services established a new structure following the Organisational Review and a total of eight centres now regularly operate using the Access Control scheme:

1. Coleman Centre
2. Gilmorton Centre
3. Hamilton Library
4. Manor House Centre
5. Rushey Mead Centre
6. St. Matthews Centre
7. Home Farm Centre
8. Cort Crescent Centre

A total of 71 individuals (excluding Community Service staff) have been allocated fobs to access community facilities. This includes 26 group leaders as part of the roll out of the access control scheme. This number will increase through the collaboration of the Community Engagement Officers and Operations Development Technicians as they encourage and support more groups to participate in the scheme.

There are eight internal Council service accessing buildings through the scheme:

1. Youth Support Service
2. Libraries and Information Service
3. Adult Skills and Learning Service
4. Early Prevention Service
5. Housing Services
6. Parks Services
7. Sure Start

## 8. City Cleaning Services

Access fobs have also been assigned to Regent and PPS Security Services and Leicestershire Police.

The following sites have draft Centre induction packs which will be completed by mid-March 2014:

1. Newfoundpool Centre
2. Coleman Lodge Centre
3. Netherhall Centre
4. Ocean Road Centre
5. West End Centre
6. Braunstone Oak Centre
7. Stocking Farm Centre
8. Evington Park House
9. African Caribbean Centre

It is anticipated that these sites will also be added to the access control scheme by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.

### **3.5 Community Centre Opening Hours**

The organisational review has reduced overall staffing in the service in order to meet the budget reduction target while protecting services and improving access to services. It has also focused staffing on community development activity in order to have the most positive impact in communities. Access control, which will be implemented in all centres from 1 April 2014, means that even though staffing levels have reduced overall, communities will have access to community centres from 9 am in the morning until 9pm in the evening, seven days a week an increase on previous levels of access. Transforming Neighbourhood Services is also working to improve the coordination of services in neighbourhoods while seeking to rationalise buildings.

Community Services staff will work in teams to provide cover across all the centres in an area to support the ongoing management and implementing of access control.

### **3.6 Partnership Agreement**

The Scrutiny Commission has received reports on the Partnership Agreements which have been entered into between community organisations and Community Services focussing on the arrangements for the operations of a community centre in their area. A Scrutiny Review of the Partnership Agreements is being organised which will involve Scrutiny Members and Officers meeting with the community organisations to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the agreements. The findings of the Review will be reported to a future Scrutiny Commission meeting.



#### **4. Details of Scrutiny**

The matters set out in this report have been considered at previous meetings of this Scrutiny Commission as set out below:

Community Involvement 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013  
Community Services Charging Scheme 20<sup>th</sup> August 2013  
Community Services Organisational Review Update 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013  
Shared Space 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013  
Community Governance 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014

#### **5. Financial, legal and other implications**

##### 5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 This report suggests that income is remaining broadly stable following the introduction of the new fees and charges scheme, albeit full year data is not yet available as the scheme commenced in September 2013 with a number of transitional provisions. Steps are being taken to drive up usage and hence income, alongside supporting existing users. The organisational review and new centre access and operating arrangements are delivering savings on staff costs, whilst maintaining service availability.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081.

##### 5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1. Council is entitled to revise fees and charges for the use of community facilities, but the adoption of proposed revision is subject to appropriate consultation with service users and the wider community. In respect of use by community organisations, the Council is under a general duty to ensure the safety and accessibility for users of its buildings under the Health and Safety and Equality Acts.

John McIvor, Hayley McDade and Gregory Surtees, Legal Services

##### 5.3 Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 of the report indicates that, for the most part, the proposals have been effective in maintaining, and for one centre, increasing community/community group use of these facilities (the African Caribbean Centre which supports BME community groups). Charges have only negatively affected five community groups in four centres in that they no longer rent space within them, with one group instead using the free shared space at the same centre as a mitigating action. For the centres affected, three are located in areas with a significant BME population – although no profile of users is

available to confirm whether the three groups affected are themselves BME. Two of these centres have relatively large number of groups using their facilities, while the third has a relatively small number of groups using it – varying the proportionate impact of the charges. Ongoing monitoring of the number, and if possible profile, of the groups using centres located across the city will provide a more informed view of the equality implications of these changes.

Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead, ext. 374147

**6. Background information and other papers:**

None

**7. Summary of appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Fees and Charges Scheme

Appendix 2 – Impact of Fees and Charges Scheme as at Jan 2014

Appendix 3 - Income Impact of Fees and Charges Scheme as at Jan 2014

Appendix 4 – Promotional Poster

Appendix 5 – Map of Community Services operational areas

**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