

STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
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Report of the Head of Housing & Health Improvement

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COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFERS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report describes the development of Peterborough’s community asset transfer strategy, and sets out how this has been applied to date. The report then outlines how the strategy will inform and direct the community centre asset review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To scrutinise the report, and request regular briefing notes from the lead officer as the community centre asset review progresses throughout the year. Additionally, for the committee to scrutinise the outcomes of the review prior to its implementation.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy aims to deliver a bigger and better Peterborough, through improving the quality of life for all. The principles of the Community Asset Transfer Strategy supports the aspirations of the whole Sustainable Community Strategy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As part of Peterborough’s response to the Localism Act we aim to develop a proactive work programme on community asset transfer (CAT) over the next 5 years where it brings benefits and added value to communities, whilst contributing to the council’s aims and priorities.
- 4.2 The key drivers for this approach are developing community capacity and the council’s commitment to maximising and improving services.
- 4.3 The council sees community asset transfer as a positive opportunity to encourage and strengthen long term partnerships with the voluntary and community sector that will contribute towards enhancing communities and their involvement in Peterborough.
- 4.4 Peterborough City Council’s Asset Transfer Strategy 2013 - 2017 was adopted by full council in September 2013 and provides a transparent and fair process to how community assets are assessed and managed (see appendix 1). The outcomes which the strategy aims to deliver include:
- Community empowerment and benefits to the wider local community
 - Capacity building through the use of local skills, experience, knowledge and time
 - Retaining valued local provision
 - Improving local services in times of austerity
 - Contributing to savings
 - Delivering local services that address local needs through community led and community controlled assets

- Extending the use of a building or land
- Value for money and the ability to draw in other sources of funding not available to the council
- Social enterprise and social well-being, including community cohesion
- Financial viability, long term sustainability and external investment
- Delivery of council objectives through other partners
- A stimulus to partnership working

4.5 Using the strategy as the framework the Community Capacity team has developed an asset transfer process which has been used to support the asset transfer of the former play centres. Those that have completed the process so far include Thistle Drive Community Centre and The Chestnuts Community Centre.

4.6 As part of the process, a bespoke lease and management agreement have been created taking into account the principles set out in the strategy. This has been designed to enable a sense of security for the community groups and a clear line of accountability for all parties involved.

5. FORMER PLAY CENTRES

5.1 7 of the 8 decommissioned play centres have remained open, and are going through or have concluded the asset transfer process. Each are beginning to thrive in their own right and have been re-designated as community centres that offer a wide range of activities and services to their local communities.

- **Thistle Drive, Stanground** –The Centre was advertised as available for community asset transfer in September 2014 and the opportunity to take on the long term lease was awarded to Stanground Community Centre Space CIC. There are two sub-tenants occupying the property who deliver sports and preschool services to the community. The group are being supported by Compare the Market who are assisting them with setting up a community café which will be opening shortly.
- **The Charteris Centre, Welland** – Families First, a charitable organisation who provide free access play and support to excluded children will be taking on the lease, working in partnership with the community led group, the Dogsthorpe and Welland Neighbourhood Partnership. The group have been successful in securing a considerable amount of year two funding to make improvements and upgrades to the property enabling a new preschool to open in September 2015. They have employed a part time community development worker to assist with developing their programme of activities for the centre. The centre has been sponsored by Compare the Market who have fully redecorated the inside of the building and will be carrying out works on the garden in the upcoming months.
- **The Chestnuts Centre, Eastfield** – The Saxon Road Community Association were successful in their application to manage the centre. They are working with Peterborough City Council on a local regeneration programme in Eastfield (funded through Section 106) via which the centre will benefit from enhancement to the facilities. They have various community activities taking place in the centre including open access play
- **Crofts Corner, Bretton** – Families First have been occupying the premises on a temporary basis and have been providing open access play to over 60 children per week. They are now in discussions with the Corporate Property Officer regarding taking the premises on full time as a base for their work with excluded children. The National Citizenship Programme will be helping the centre with decorating the premises within the next two months.
- **Paston Farm, Paston** – The long term lease was completed in September 2014. The centre is up to maximum capacity and has a community café, community cinema, craft classes, police boxing club in residence and is used as a base for the Voyager school to work with pupils who would have been permanently excluded. The community capacity team are supporting the group with a bid to bring the outdoor adventure equipment back into use.
- **The Spinney, Westwood** – is being occupied by the 'Little Miracles' charity and officers are working with them to finalise the community offer.
- **The Tunnel, Orton Goldhay** – This building has been demolished to build an extension for Phoenix School. There is to be community space within the extension and discussion needs to continue with the schools team to ensure this space is available for public use.

- **Copeland, Bretton** – As the former play centre is attached to a community centre, the building has been re-designated as one community centre and the building is to be included in the community centre asset review.

6. COMMUNITY CENTRE ASSET REVIEW 2015/2016

- 6.1 Peterborough currently benefits from 52 community centres, the largest number of community buildings for a City this size in the UK. 33 of these centres are council-owned or leased premises, and are run by volunteer community associations:
1. Bedford Hall
 2. Belsize Community Centre
 3. Bluebell Community Centre
 4. Copeland Community Centre
 5. Dogsthorpe Community Centre
 6. East Community Centre
 7. Eye Community Centre
 8. Fleet
 9. Gladstone Park Community Centre
 10. Glinton Village Hall
 11. Hampton Community Room
 12. Hampton Vale Community Centre
 13. Herlington Community Centre
 14. Hodgson Community Centre
 15. Loxley Community Centre
 16. Matley Community Centre
 17. Millennium Centre
 18. New England Complex
 19. Newborough Village Hall
 20. Orton Goldhay Community Centre
 21. Orton Wistow Community Centre
 22. Parnwell Community Centre
 23. Paston & Gunthorpe Community Centre
 24. Pyramid Centre
 25. Riverside Pavilion
 26. St John's Hall
 27. Saxon Community Centre
 28. South Grove Community Centre
 29. Southfields Community Centre
 30. Stafford Hall
 31. Stanground Community Centre
 32. Walton Community Centre
 33. Werrington Village Centre
- 6.2 As the city's communities have changed and the way we connect with each other has developed, it is important to make sure that community buildings are well used, modern facilities that work for the whole community. The outcomes of an initial consultation on the use of centres have been previously reported to the Scrutiny Committee. 5100 responses were received and provided an evidence base of how people use, or would want to use, their local community facilities.
- 6.3 The community capacity team are working closely with a range of local partners to provide business/enterprising support for community groups / Parish Councils who wish to explore community asset transfer. Groups will be supported to develop financially sustainable business plans for managing the centre, including responsibilities for full maintenance and repair of the facility, understanding and applying effective financial management, and evidencing and responding to the direct needs of the community.

- 6.4 The council, in partnership with Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service, has been successful in securing the support of the Department for Communities and Local Government's Community Ownership and Management of Assets programme (COMA). This programme supports partnerships between local public bodies (such as local authorities) and community groups (including parish councils) to develop multiple asset transfer or single, ground breaking asset projects. In addition the COMA programme will support work to measure the social value of community assets, and help us examine alternative ownership models including trusts. COMA will act as our critical friend and honest broker throughout the review process. We are one of only 50 areas nationally to be awarded COMA status which gives us an opportunity to raise our profile at a national level.
- 6.5 The review of community centres will be carried out in close partnership with Community Associations/Groups currently running our centres and Community Action Peterborough (CAP), the partnership that represents community associations. We wish to co-produce the outcomes of the review with CAP to ensure the best interests of our communities are represented and to make sure that the right decisions about each of the centres is made. This includes taking the opportunity to review and develop a local offer of exciting, tailored and relevant services and facilities within our communities.
- 6.6 The review will also provide the opportunity to ensure that community associations and council departments work collaboratively and supportively, which we recognise hasn't always been the case and has caused some confusion and frustration amongst community associations.
- 6.7 Attached at appendix 2 is the provisional flowchart indicating the process to be undertaken for the review. It should be noted that the dates are subject to change as this has not yet been discussed or agreed with CAP.

7. IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 That the review of community centres will be completed using the principles of co-production, and a new community centre 'offer' for the communities of Peterborough is developed, agreed and implemented.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The council will continue to work with Community Associations and Groups, Community Action Peterborough, PCVS and the Future Business Centre to engage with and support the local community groups involved with the community centres.

9. NEXT STEPS

- 9.1
- To finalise the due diligence (asset) fact finding process.
 - To commence the assessment of asset viability and social value of each centre.
 - To implement outcomes of assessments.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS.

- 10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

11.1 There are two appendices to this report:

- Appendix 1 – Community Asset Transfer Strategy
- Appendix 2 – Community Centre review flowchart.

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