

Report for: Crouch End, Hornsey and Stroud Green Area Forum

Date of meeting: 5 March 2015

Item: Area Forum Item

Report Title: Community Buildings Review update – for information

Wards Affected: All

This briefing note provides an update on the progress of the Council's Community Building Review, (the Review) outlining the ongoing review process, emerging findings and next steps.

In 2011, Haringey Council published its first Voluntary Sector Strategy 2011-16. This Strategy set out how the Council would work with the Voluntary Sector to address and meet the challenges and opportunities that were emerging from fundamental changes to the public sector. The aim of the Strategy was to establish mechanisms to enable the Council and its partners to deliver effective services in areas of highest need and to address local inequalities to achieve improved outcomes for residents. Outcome 5 of the Voluntary Sector Strategy was to create fairer access to assets and community spaces.

In 2012, in response to the Strategy, Haringey Council agreed to review and refocus its community buildings portfolio in order to make better use of the portfolio, improve the quality of the buildings and make them more widely accessible to Haringey's diverse voluntary and community sector by aligning usage to community needs and Council priorities.

In a December 2012 Cabinet report, the Council endorsed overarching principles for the ongoing Review. The following was agreed:

1. That the following key principles being applied to the Community Building's policy and strategic framework, to achieve improvements in the suitability, condition and sustainability of buildings and to widen access for Haringey's diverse communities by aligning these to community needs and Council priorities, be approved:
 - a. Community building tenure based on an assessment of community use benefit and tenant sustainability, with formal periodic reviews be carried out at least every two years
 - b. Tenant sustainability and community use benefits assessed against Council priorities and criteria aligned with the Voluntary Sector Strategy and a process linked to the Investment Fund criteria
 - c. Lease conditions to include enforceable requirements for widening community access and promoting shared use of facilities
2. That the principle that the Council community buildings that are surplus to community use and present opportunities for leveraging wider regeneration and community benefits should be prioritised for redevelopment, alternative use or wider land assembly, be approved.

3. That the following reforms of circular grant funding for rent, to achieve increased community benefits from the use of available funding and to achieve fairness and transparency – a key principle in the Voluntary Sector Strategy, be approved:
 - a. The allocation of rent subsidy to be assessed against Council priorities and the Voluntary Sector Strategy with the process aligned to the Investment Fund criteria
 - b. That all circular grant funding for rent be subject to formal periodic reviews every two years

The strategic review of all the properties defined as being within the Community Buildings portfolio is comprehensive and considers a range of alternative options for each asset with input from colleagues and external professional advice. The review has been carried out as a corporate piece of work and alongside the assessment of each property, including information on the lease and tenancy information and the condition of the stock, an assessment of the type of organisations operating from the building and what they deliver to local communities, has also been undertaken.

Following the initial review findings, an interdepartmental Community Building Working Group has been established to consider proposals for each community building asset. All options are being considered against key regeneration programmes and the Corporate Plan priorities and a robust evaluation and scoring process used to determine the optimum future strategy for each asset.

Whilst the original focus was to consider the portfolio of community buildings from a property and asset management perspective, during the course of the Review and in consultations with residents, the Corporate Plan priorities, cross-cutting themes and transformation programmes have been developed. It is now evident that the starting point for such a review is the people, activities and outcomes which the use of community buildings can generate.

The Community Buildings Review is therefore being taken forward as part of the development of a wider community approach, the principles of which will be co-produced with local residents, communities and organisations to strengthen local capacity and resilience and to ensure community assets, such as buildings, are used to the maximum benefit of local communities.

It has been agreed that the findings and recommendations from the Review are brought forward to Cabinet in the summer of 2015.