

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE

Report No. 20

Date of Meeting	9th November 2006			
Title of Report	Rudloe Community Centre – Outcome of Feasibility Study			
Portfolio	Partnership Working and Planning and Regeneration			
Link to Corporate Priorities	Equality and Diversity – including young people and older people, Buoyant Economy, Healthy Lifestyles, including Sports Development and Arts Development, Cleaner, Safer and Better Streets and Partnership Working			
Key Decision	Yes			
Executive Workplan Ref	B236			
Public Report	YES			
Summary of Report				
<p>The Report seeks to update the Executive Committee on progress on the Feasibility Study approved at the 20th April Executive Committee and the implications for the implementation of its recommendations. The Report also seeks support from the Committee for an application for capital and revenue funding budget growth items for the financial year 2007/8 to address the recommendations.</p>				
Officer Recommendations				
Detailed overleaf.				
Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.				
Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
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Officer Recommendations:

- 1. The existing Rudloe Community Association and Rudloe Social Club management committees be given practical assistance by the Council to explore new models of governance and also to assist the centre management in the preparation of a robust Business Plan for the centre based around a “social enterprise” model as suggested in the feasibility study.**
- 2. Note that a revenue growth bid to enable the technical expertise to be provided by a specialist Development Worker has been put forward for consideration. This could be in partnership with Westlea Housing Association.**
- 3 Support is also given to how the Rudloe Community Centre could be twinned with the smaller centre serving Pockeridge and Potley for the benefit of both centres**
- 4 Note that a capital bid of £75,000 has been put forward for consideration to provide for works to improve the flexibility of the Rudloe Community Centre as recommended in the feasibility study**
- 5 That any financial support, capital or revenue, be added to that which may be forthcoming from other agencies, to represent partnership funding in connection with a bid to the Lottery “Reaching Communities Fund”**
- 6 The existing rent be suspended, or its level reviewed until any Business Plan is prepared, agreed and is capable of being implemented**
- 7 That the recommendations of the feasibility study: changes in governance, adoption of a business model and alterations to premises represents a holistic approach which needs to be implemented in whole to increase the likelihood of the Centre being sustainable in the future.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Feasibility Study Report (FSR) jointly commissioned by the Council and Westlea Housing Association (WHA), following the meeting of the Executive of 20th April 2006.
- 1.2 The FSR is sufficiently comprehensive that it and its appendices are a large document. Accordingly only selected portions will be appended to the hard copy version of this report. A full electronic copy will be available on the MARIS system.
- 1.3 The Executive Summary, recommendations and conclusions have been extracted and are appended at Appendix 5.

2. Options and Options Appraisal

- 2.1 An options appraisal accompanied the 20th April report to Executive. It is appended as Appendix 1. The FSR also contains an options report which is reproduced at Appendix 2. This appraisal has grown out of the researches that have informed the feasibility study and the conclusions drawn from it.
- 2.2 Rightly the FSR notes that there are "...other permutations and degrees of change available to the Council...". One such option considered outside the immediate scope of the FSR is the eventual transfer of the Community Centre to a successful community organisation. This option has recently been highlighted (September 2006) by the announcement of a forthcoming Government White Paper concerned with "Community Ownership and Management". This will review the powers, policies and barriers to make it easier to transfer assets to the local community. There may therefore be advantages to awaiting the outcome of this White Paper before any transfer is considered.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 Rudloe Community Centre was built to replace the Rudloe Social Club building which had fallen into serious disrepair. It was built and entirely funded by this Council, at a cost of £850,000. The purpose of the new building was both to accommodate the bar run by Rudloe Social Club Ltd.(RSCL), and provide community facilities for the local area. The formation of a Community Association and the designation of the new building as a Community Centre only occurred a few months before the building was opened in February 2002.
- 3.2 The facilities provided in the building were designed to reflect those that were present in the original Social Club, the majority of the centre (60%) being dedicated as bar or bar-related accommodation. NWDC lease the building to the Rudloe Community Association (RCA) for an annual rent of £12,000. RCA, via an Occupational Licence, leases the bar and other areas totalling 60% of the Centre to RSCL who pay a proportion of the Centre's shared cost in proportion to their 60% occupancy
- 3.3 The Community Centre itself is not used as was forecast, exacerbating the financial situations for both RSCL and RCA. This may be due in part to the design of the centre reflecting its Social Club predecessor rather than a Community Centre. Accordingly the community rooms are considered too small in comparison to the space given to the bar. A good example is youth facilities: the need for these were identified in the recent Community Regeneration Consultation undertaken by the Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS). The community is very vocal about the need for a youth club or youth facilities. However young people are both discouraged from using and unable to use the

building as there are potential child protection issues surrounding the use of toilet facilities where adults have been or are drinking alcohol.

- 3.4 Westlea Housing Association, who own many of the surrounding houses, are regular users of the Centre and see potential for the centre as a base for a number of community initiatives, many of which would offer pathways to other funding whilst increasing the user base of the centre.
- 3.5 Previously, the split responsibility for the building between RCA and RSCL had led to frictions and possibly missed opportunities. The whole building could be used for larger events such as family functions, but it would mean closing the bar or snooker room for casual use by Social Club members. Any proposals for the retention of the building for community use would need to consider both the management and business models as well as the role of the building's constituent parts.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 Working to the brief appended to the April 20th Executive Committee report, the feasibility study set itself the following goals in seeking to address:
- Feasibility in terms of community engagement, management and commercial viability
 - Feasibility in terms of form, construction and cost
 - The steps that need to be taken to tackle under-use
 - How to turn the centre into a vibrant community resource
- 4.2 To inform the report, research was undertaken by the consultants in conjunction with many local interests:
- Consultations with stakeholders, including the wider community
 - An audit of competitors
 - A local market study involving the public, private and voluntary sectors
 - A focus group to test findings.
- 4.3 The FSR indicates that there are several barriers to the success of the Community Centre, some of which have existed since the Centre was first occupied. The significant investment in the building was not matched by a similar investment in giving the occupants the skills necessary to manage, develop and promote the Centre. The reports cites the example of the Pockeridge and Potley Community Centre which has enjoyed external funding in the past to provide both a Development Worker and Community Worker. Funding has ended, but the sense of community involvement engendered has endured.
- 4.4 The report also concludes that the system of governance at the centre is ineffective. Two streams of management whose early mutual discomfort was not helpful in the formative years of the new building are now operating on enthusiasm rather than expertise. There are few successes and setbacks can be exaggerated which does little for morale. Without an injection of new and talented personnel encouraged and supported by specialist help, there is unlikely to be any long term future.
- 4.5 Raising the skill level is only part of a package that would include looking at the business model. Who are the likely users of the Centre that would be expected to contribute to its success? Is success purely financial or is a busy, thriving centre delivering local services another indicator of success? The FSR introduces the concept of the "Social Enterprise", where entrepreneurial skills as well developed as any necessary to build a successful business are required, but where the objectives are geared to providing access to community facilities and a base for multi-agency service delivery. The report offers several examples of Social Enterprise. There being no "right" model, finding a suitable

vehicle for Rudloe would be another task for a Development Worker in conjunction with assisting in establishing a new management structure.

- 4.6 Research by the Consultants has produced a schedule of examples of the Social and Business opportunities that could be available to the Centre with significantly better marketing. This is appended at Appendix 3.
- 4.7 There is a broad consensus amongst the stakeholders that the internal layout of the building needs to change. Re-designing the internal layout would have a significant impact on the way the building is perceived; increase its appeal to the wider community and open up greater lettings opportunities. Several options were considered and presented to the Focus Group. The widely preferred option (referred in the FSR as Option 2) is attached as Appendix 4. Key elements proposed are:
- Construction of masonry wall to reduce bar size
 - Demolition of wall and replacement by a dividing screen
 - Reduction in size of Bar servery
 - Reduction in size of Snooker Room to form IT Suite
 - Provision of Accessible W.C. and Interview Room

These alterations represent the physical changes that would accompany the management and business model changes necessary to re-vitalise the centre.

- 4.8 The FSR identifies that there are several sources of external funding that could be accessed in order to fund much of the development work. Once properly re-constituted with a strong management structure with a clear business plan, application can be made to such external funders as the Big Lottery "Reaching Communities Fund".
- 4.9 Rudloe and neighbouring Pockeridge and Potley represent the isolated pockets of disadvantage within otherwise relatively affluent areas that the Reaching Communities Fund was intended to serve. The FSR suggests that a combined bid from both centres might be seen as an added value bid.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The proposals can not be implemented without additional funding. Capital and Revenue bids have been made for 2007-08. At this stage it is estimated that the capital cost would be £75k and the revenue implications would be £25k. Some or all of which could be considered as match funding to a lottery bid.
- 5.2 The recommendation to waive the rent of £12k is unfounded. Were it to be agreed it would increase the Council's overspend.
- 5.3 The annual rent level at £12k, is considerably more than the peppercorn rents enjoyed by the smaller community centres of Pockeridge & Potley, Colemans Farm and the Jubilee Hall in Box. If a social enterprise model is adopted, consideration should be given as to whether a rent should ever be anticipated. A review is in order and some consistency should be applied.
- 5.3 Notwithstanding the current position, the intention is to provide a sustainable community centre that does not rely on the District Council. If this means paid officers and a fully repairing lease, earning income to cover these expenses should be the highest priority.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The existing Community Association is a registered charity. Consideration needs to be given to the Charity Commissioner's guidelines when reviewing the most appropriate management model.

7. Community and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The Rudloe Community Centre was built with substantial funds provided by the Council, but clearly fails in its objectives. The purpose of the feasibility study is to determine a way in which the needs of the local community will be better served by the facilities.

8. Human Resource Implications

- 8.1 Specialist support needs to be in place to provide technical assistance and guidance in relation to change management and business planning.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 The FSR shows how the Centre can provide better access to services resulting in significant Equal Opportunities benefits. The effect of any new proposals will be subject to an Impact Assessment once the options are developed.

10. Risk Analysis

- 10.1 The options appraisal extracted from the FSR and reproduced at Appendix 2 contains a risk assessment for each of the suggested options.
- 10.2 The option to "do nothing", is not discussed, as it carries the highest risk of failure with no future beyond the stagnation of the Community Association, continued dependency on the Council to maintain a building that offers little to its local community. An opportunity lost and reputation severely tarnished would be the only outcome from this option.

Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 – Options Appraisal 20.4.06• 2 – Options Appraisal FSR• 3 – Schedule of Social & Business opportunities• 4 - Revised Floor Layout• 5 – Summary, Recommendations and conclusions - FSR
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feasibility Study Report• Previous Committee Reports

Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No 17	Executive 20 April 2006	E226