

**REPORT FROM: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MANAGER**

**TO: EXECUTIVE**

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## **WATERSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To explore the options for the future ownership and use of the Waterside Community Centre.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) transfer the responsibility and running costs of the building to Positive Action in the Community to extend their current service provision, and to explore the scope to work with Lancashire Sport Partnership Ltd (CSI).
- (2) grant delegated authority, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to the Chief Executive to negotiate the terms on which the building is transferred to Positive Action in the Community, and
- (3) agree that should the negotiations conclude with a proposal that the building be disposed of at a discount that the matter be referred back to the Executive for confirmation.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1), (2) To ensure the future use of the building as an asset to benefit the community.
- (3) To comply with Contract Procedure Rules.

### **BACKGROUND**

South Valley Children's Action Group (SVCAG) took ownership of the Waterside Centre in 1987.

In 2007/08 Colne Area Committee allocated £4,000 to develop a new business plan for a new youth & community facility in Waterside on the existing youth Centre site. As the main provider of youth activity in the South Valley, Groundwork Pennine Lancashire was asked to develop the

business plan. Happy with the plan SVCAG approved the transfer of ownership of the building to Groundwork for them to run and in turn develop the Centre.

The Waterside Youth Centre stood on the land owned by Lancashire county Council who leased the land to Pendle Borough Council. To allow Groundwork long term tenancy of the land to allow them to pursue the business plan proposals including pursuing funding to build a new facility the Council agreed to investigate the transfer and extension of the lease of the land on which the building stood.

Between 2012 and 2017 the Centre was refurbished with support from Pendle council and the private sector, including ASDA, and run by SVCAG and Newground. After an initial good start, it became increasingly difficult for the group to sustain the work within the centre and it became clear that an alternative approach was needed

Discussions took place with Newground who indicated that they would like to take an annual licence of the building from the Council to continue their current activities, but on the basis that the Council would take responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the building. Following a survey of the building by Liberata Property Services Colne Area Committee agreed in January 2016 to grant Newground a licence and for Liberata Property Services to negotiate and agree the terms of the licence.

In order to be able to grant a licence, the ownership of the site of the building needed to be transferred from Lancashire County Council to Pendle Council. The acquisition was completed in November 2016.

Over the course of 2016/17 activity at the Centre diminished; SVCAG were not doing anything (due to lack of volunteers). The building was being used as a base for Newground staff and delivery of activity was only once a week to due staffing issues. At the same time Newground were looking to increase their activities from North Valley Community Centre and Hodge House (Nelson). By October 2017 Newground has ceased their activities from Waterside and no longer wished to pursue the licence. The SVCAG trustees agreed to wind up the Charity and the Charities Commission was duly notified.

## **ISSUE**

As a result of the building being empty there have been reports of increased vandalism and antisocial behaviour. Concerns have been raised at the Colne Community Safety Partnership meeting.

As a valuable community asset it is important that we explore options for its future use. We have, through the Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale Council for Voluntary Service, encouraged groups/organisations to submit initial Expressions of Interest to take on the responsibility and running of the building. This will be a 'whole transfer' and organisations would be taking on the full running costs of the building and/or providing any services.

Following receipt of six initial Expressions of Interest we asked those organisations for more detail on their intended use for the building.

Further information was received from only two organisations:

- Positive Action in the Community
- Lancashire Sport Partnership Ltd (CSI)

Based on the information received from the two organisations the proposal from Positive Action in the Community (PAC) offered the most realistic prospects for a sustainable future for the centre.

PAC has a trusted track record in delivering services for the community and their proposal reflected a clear understanding of how a resource of this type could be run.

Their proposal would extend their current programme of support for vulnerable people and include term time youth club and youth based activities at the site.

PAC has also indicated that they would like to explore the potential of allowing other groups where appropriate to use space within the centre.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:** There are no policy implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

**Financial:** Councillors are advised that local authorities are generally under an obligation to dispose of land for the best consideration possible (as per s123 of the Local Government Act 1972). However, the General Disposal Consent (Circular 06/03 – Local Government Act 1972 General Disposal Consent (England) 2003) does permit a local authority to dispose of land/property at less than the best consideration (i.e. at an undervalue) where doing so will help secure the promotion or improvement in the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its areas. This applies to undervalues up to a maximum of £2m.

The building is listed on the Council's asset register in the current year with a value of £48,134. The land is valued separately at £2,260.

The Council's Contract Procedure Rules permit the disposal of land/property at a discount subject to the approval of the Executive following consideration of a report which sets out the unrestricted and restricted values of the property together with the level of discount and reasons for the discount being granted.

At this stage the likely terms and basis of transfer are not known so to comply with the above (if applicable) would require a further report to the Executive.

**Legal:** There are no legal implications arising directly from the contents of this report. Should Councillors agree to dispose of the site, the necessary legal steps will be taken to transfer the premises to Positive Action in the Community.

**Risk Management:** There are no risk management implications arising directly from the contents of this report

**Health and Safety:** There are no health and safety implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

**Sustainability:** there are no implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

**Community Safety:** There are no community safety issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

**Equality and Diversity:** there are no equality and diversity issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

**APPENDICES:**

- Proposal from Positive Action in the Community
- Proposal from Lancashire Sport Partnership Ltd (CSI)

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:** None