

THE ASSEMBLY

10 JANUARY 2006

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

Title: Petition: Request for a New Community Centre	For Decision
<p>Summary:</p> <p>This report set out the contents of a petition received by the Council in August 2005 from Punjabi Welfare Association for additional community facilities for the Punjabi community on the site of The Lintons and suggesting that a commemorative statue of Elizabeth Fry be erected in the Quaker's burial ground.</p> <p>It also outlines the work to be undertaken with the Punjabi Community to define their requirements in more detail and sets out the next steps in being able to take forward the potential provision of community space in the redevelopment of The Lintons site.</p> <p>It also proposes that discussion be held with the Religious Society of Friends and the community as to an appropriate way of commemorating Elizabeth Fry.</p> <p>Wards Affected: Abbey</p>	
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Until the detail of the proposal is finalised it is not possible to quantify the financial impact. Any provision of additional community facilities on The Lintons site will have a financial impact on the council as it could potentially reduce any capital receipt and/or any on-going income stream.</p> <p>Legal:</p> <p>The Council's Divisional Director of Legal Services will advise upon the legal documentation required for any proposed community facilities.</p> <p>Risk Management:</p> <p>There are a number of risks associated with the project. The main risk is that the community cannot find the funds to develop and run the space. This risk will be managed through the development of a comprehensive business plan with the Punjabi community; no lease will be grant to a group unless they can demonstrate that they are able to financially support and efficiently manage the property.</p> <p>Social Inclusion and Diversity:</p> <p>The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a requirement on local authorities to make an assessment of the impact of new and revised policies in terms of race equality. Existing policies have already been subjected to impact assessments. This Authority has adopted an approach of extending the impact to cover gender, disability, sexuality, faith, age and community cohesion.</p>	

A Policy Proofing process has been introduced to assess such impacts and the outcome insofar as this report is concerned is there will be no adverse impacts.

Extensive consultation and work will take place with the Punjabi community to ensure that any facility developed will be fully utilised by all members of the community and to ensure that there are opportunities to ensure that the wider population can benefit from the facility.

Crime and Disorder:

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a responsibility on local authorities to consider the crime and disorder implications of any proposals. In relation to this report there are no specific implications from this report, however the advice of the community safety teams and the crime prevention officer will be obtained at the design stage for any new development.

Options Appraisal:

The option of not considering the community's request was considered, however, this would not assist in meeting the community's needs.

A further option of considering provision of the additional community space, not on The Lintons site was rejected on the grounds that this would mean the centre would be divorced from existing provision, potentially more costly to run and would not be used by the target community. Also at present there are no other available sites in Barking Town Centre.

Recommendation(s)

The Assembly is asked to agree:

1. That officers will continue to work with the Punjabi community to assist them with preparing a business case and the identification of possible funding from both their own resources and externally;
2. Subject to an agreed business case showing that a community group can resource the project that a further report be presented to the Executive to consider disposal of land or lease of a property to a community group on terms to be agreed; and
3. That discussion be held with the Religious Society of Friends and the community as to an appropriate way of commemorating Elizabeth Fry and for a further report to be made to the Executive.

Reason(s)

To meet Council's Community Priorities of Raising general pride in the borough, Promoting equal opportunities and celebrating diversity; Developing rights and responsibilities with the local community; Improving health, housing and social care and Providing better education and learning for all.

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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 In August 2005 a petition was received by the Council from the Punjabi Welfare Association requesting that provision for additional community space is made for them during the regeneration of The Lintons and suggesting that a commemorative statue of Elizabeth Fry be erected in the Quaker's burial ground. In November 2005 a request was received from the Gurdwara Singh Sabha London East also requesting the provision of a centre to provide: meeting and office space, training facilities, space for children's activities and indoor games as part of the regeneration of The Lintons area in Barking. After initial correspondence, following a request from the lead petitioner, the petition was held in abeyance

2. Existing Facilities

2.1 The existing facilities at the Gurdwara include:

- Sikh Temple
- Dining Hall
- Old People Centre
- Library facilities

2.2 Different classes are held at the site including: Punjabi language classes, arts and music classes (open to all), library facilities (open to all), and a women's yoga class.

3. The Petition

3.1 A workshop was held with representatives of the Management Board of the Gurdwara and the Barking and Dagenham Punjabi Welfare Association in July 2006, which identified that the community had two requirements: one related to the need to provide more office, educational and meeting space at the Gurdwara that could be included as a requirement in the brief for the redevelopment of The Lintons. The community outlined that there is a need to split religious and community activities and due to the limited space available the facilities are overcrowded with approximately 400 children and 200 older people using the facilities. This means that they cannot expand the services provided. The proposal is to have additional classes, English for Speakers of Other Language classes, an advice surgery and more services for the elderly.

3.2 The other need was for a larger hall facility to be a major venue for sports activities and celebrations, principally weddings. This would need to be able to accommodate 700 – 1,000 people. The feasibility and impact of a facility of this size would need to be examined in more detail, before any commitment could be made; however, it is unlikely that The Lintons site would be a suitable location for a development of a facility of this size, which could potentially be run as a commercial operation.

- 3.3 With regard to a memorial to Elizabeth Fry, the Religious Society of Friends would need to be contacted about how they would wish Elizabeth Fry to be commemorated. It is proposed that, after consultation, an appropriate form of memorial is pursued subject to funding being available. There is funding from an existing Town Planning Section 106 Agreement relating to the development of a nearby site specifically for improvements to the Quaker Burial Ground that could be used to facilitate this work.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 In August 2004 the Council agreed to bring forward the redevelopment of The Lintons site. It is currently proposed that the site would be redeveloped as a predominantly housing site with the potential to include a new Local Enterprise Growth Initiative – Enterprise Centre. Officers of the Council are preparing documentation to take forward the appointment of a development partner.
- 4.2 The provision of community space in any redevelopment of The Lintons may have financial implications for the Council since there is likely to be an opportunity cost involved in any transfer of land for these less valuable purposes. This could result in a reduced receipt to the Council from the sale of the site. It is not possible to quantify how large this reduction might be at present as issues relating to the size, fit out, rental, service charges and ownership of the centre have not been finalised. A business plan would be required from any community group to ensure that they have the capacity to sustain a new facility and pay any costs involved in its development.
- 4.2 A report outlining the financial implications of the disposal including requirements for any community facility would be presented to the Council prior to any development agreement being signed.

5. Consultees

- 5.1 The following were consulted in the preparation of this report:

Councillor S Kallar
Councillor R Little
Councillor J Alexander
Councillor G Bramley
Councillor M Fani
Mohammad Saleem, Solicitor to the Council
Robin Hanton, Group Manager - Corporate Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Alex Anderson, Group Manager - Regeneration and Customer Services Finance
Julian Stanyer, Project Manager - Land Disposal / Acquisitions
Philip Baldwin, Group Manager – Community Development

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- Petition
- Minute 93 of Assembly held on 1 March 2006