**Title:** Transferred Community Halls

**Report of:** Anne Bristow, Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open</th>
<th>For Information</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wards Affected: All</td>
<td>Key Decision: no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Report Author:**
Ray Descombes,
Senior Community Development Officer

**Contact Details:**
Tel: 020 8227 2032
E-mail: ray.descombes@lbbd.gov.uk

**Accountable Divisional Director:**
Karen Ahmed, Divisional Director Adult Commissioning

**Accountable Director:**
Anne Bristow, Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services

**Summary:**
A report was provided to this committee on 21 March 2012 detailing the transfer of community halls to Community Associations and the overall cost to the Council. The committee requested that Officers should report back to the Committee in six months with a progress update.

This report provides this update.

**Recommendation(s)**

The Committee is requested to note

(i) The success of the Community Associations in managing their Community Halls to date

(ii) The potential procedure to seek alternative management arrangements should any of these fail in the future

**Reason(s)**
This report seeks to confirm the implementation of the policy of providing self-managing self-financing community centres throughout the borough.
1. Introduction and Background

1.1 From 1988 onwards council owned community centres in the Borough had been managed by local committees elected annually by local residents. In 2007 the Quirk review recommended transferring such assets from council control to the control of the local community. The Council decided to implement their recommendations and offered to legally transfer community centres to local Community Associations.

1.2 On 5 October 2011 the control of the first Community Hall was transferred followed on 9 December 2011 by 7 more. The Community Halls control of the day to day running and responsibility for up-keep was effected by the use of 30 year full repairing and insuring leases to local Community Associations registered as charities. This report details the present situation with regards to these 8 centres.

2. Present situation and issues

2.1 The eight community associations have now been managing their buildings under the provisions of the negotiated leases for a period of 9 months.

2.2 The associations have functioned effectively in managing community centres for the benefit of their local neighbourhood. The associations have managed to fulfil their financial and managerial responsibilities and continue to provide venues for a wide range of community activities.

2.3 A continuing issue for all of the centres has been a limited number of volunteers. In some cases the associations have face challenges caused by the ill-health and the sad demise of committee members. Despite these tragedies the associations continue as before and show no sign of failing. The following table indicates the present situation for each centre:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hall</th>
<th>Principal Contact</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbey</td>
<td>Katy Peters</td>
<td>The association is functioning well despite the serious illness of the previous chair. A newly imposed Controlled Parking Zone is threatening to adversely affect the operation of a community centre. This matter is being investigated by the Group Manager Community Sports and Arts to seek to mitigate the effect on the centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatfield</td>
<td>Tony Forsyth</td>
<td>Functioning well - no issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath Park</td>
<td>Fred Green</td>
<td>Functioning well - no issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Ball</td>
<td>Pauline O'Grady</td>
<td>Functioning well - no issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Rita Giles</td>
<td>A stalwart of the association has recently died however the association continues to function well and reports no issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thames View</td>
<td>Ray Owen</td>
<td>This association has reported no issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thames Green</td>
<td>Michael Okojie</td>
<td>Functioning well - no issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wantz</td>
<td>Len Bird</td>
<td>The association has installed CCTV, renewed the intruder alarm and decorated the centre. They report no issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Of the eight community associations three have taken advantage of the offer of advice and support from the local Council for Voluntary Services.

2.5 Five of the associations have been meeting as a local support group exchanging information on the effective management of their centre.

2.6 In one case the imposition of a Controlled Parking Zone is threatening to adversely affect the operation of a community centre. This matter is being investigated by the Group Manager Community Sports and Arts to seek to mitigate the effect on the centre.

3. Potential Issues

3.1 It is possible that a community association could face such problems that they would find themselves unable to continue to discharge their responsibilities under the lease. Break clauses have been inserted in the leases to ensure the leases can be terminated by either party in such circumstances. Clearly it is the intention of both parties that this should be avoided if possible.

3.2 Should this occur then consideration will have to be given to finding an alternative organisation to manage the building. A procedure for inviting alternative providers to take responsibility for a community building was put in place in late autumn of 2011.

3.3 Tenders were invited from interested organisations to manage a local community centre for the benefit of the local community. Expressions of interest were invited and at that time a number of organisations responded positively. This indicates that it is very likely that an alternative leaseholder could be invited to take over responsibility for the centre on the same terms as at present.

3.4 This approach could be adopted to ensure the continued provision of local community centres should the present arrangement fail in any instance. In such a case there should not be any adverse financial implications for the Council.

3.5 A case in point is presented by the situation that arose when on 13 July 2012 the Scratton’s Sports and Social Club relinquished the lease on the community hall in Morrison Road after 40 years. The local community have been speedily consulted and, although the situation has been complicated by damage caused by an arson attack which is now the subject of an insurance claim, plans are being developed to identify a new leaseholder to take responsibility for the building for the benefit of the local community. A steering group made up of local residents and supported by Council officers and officers from a local Third Sector organisation has begun to meet to develop a robust plan for the future of this building.

4. Options Appraisal

4.1 This paper is not seeking approval but responds to a request for an update on the present position.

5. Consultation
5.1 To establish the present situation community associations have been approached and comments from Culture and Sport Division have been received and incorporated in this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The Halls have been transferred to the Community Associations so there is no financial impact at the present time on the Council.

6.2 If the Community Associations choose to relinquish their leases, the buildings would transfer back to the Council. Due to financial constraints we would have to manage within the budgets and funding we already have as there would be no additional capacity available to fund the running of these Halls.

7 Health Implications

7.1 Evidence suggests that Community Centres/Halls can provide a useful focal point to community based health improvement. The benefits cited include:

- Provision of Community Health Information Points to enable residents to information and in control of tracking and managing their health;
- Enabling patients to be more informed and aware by promoting other channels to access health information on line;
- Supporting independent living and the empowerment of carers and the cared for.

The community and voluntary sector will act as intermediaries, to engage those less likely to be motivated and signpost to more formal learning and behavioural change opportunities

8. Community Safety Implications

8.1 Thriving community associations often rely on joint communal space. The opportunities for people to come together to celebrate shared activities help build communities and neighbourliness. Where such cohesion exists opportunities for crime and disorder tend to diminish and communities work together to keep each other safe. It is not anticipated that there would be adverse impact from this approach in terms of crime and disorder implications.