

## **ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – COMMUNITY CENTRES**

#### **THE REVIEW**

The overall aim of the scrutiny investigation was to undertake a review of both the Council's Community Centres and its Youth and Community Centres. The panel assessed their effectiveness and considered if they were providing value for money. The panel also examined what was being done to support the involvement of the community in the running and management of their local community centres and any areas of good practice.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

- a) The panel were satisfied with the general opening times of the centres however Members did feel that weekend provision should be extended to ensure that there was somewhere for young people could go to on weekends.
- b) The panel welcomed the publicity that the Centres received through their 'in house' magazine and the proposals that were being developed to ensure that the Centres had their own web page on the Council's website.
- c) On the basis that the Council provided funding for the maintenance of buildings and some staff costs and the Centre's management committees funding all other costs, Members considered, given the evidence presented to them, that the Centres were currently providing value for money.
- d) The panel welcomed the Whinney Banks Community Centre move to new premises however they had concerns that the location of the new building would mean that the centre no longer had rooms to rent out and therefore raise funds from.
- e) The panel had concerns about the longevity of management committees and the position that this could put Centres in if they were no longer able to find volunteers.
- f) A drop in attendance at adult education classes had been reported to the panel. The panel therefore had concerns about the impact the increased adult education fees had on elderly people's attendance on courses.
- g) The panel was concerned that within the targets for participation and contact with young people in Youth Centres that there had been a drop off in 2008 for the contact rate. However the panel had been assured that action was being taken to rectify the situation.
- h) The panel wanted to highlight the good work of the volunteers who were often seen as the 'backbone' of centres. There were approximately 54 volunteers who give in total 220 hours per week of time to community centre activities and which equates to a sum of £112,000.

- i) Members were pleased to hear that the operation of the Centres in Middlesbrough was considered to be the best practice locally and that good practice was being shared amongst the Centres.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8. That the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:
  - a) That Centre opening times be adjusted to ensure weekend opening especially for use by young people where there is a demand.
  - b) That the Council's proposals to publicise Community Centres through the Council's website should be completed as soon as possible.
  - c) In view of the importance of Management Committees being able to seek external funding and their reliance on that funding, the Council should ensure that Management Committees are given the support they need in order to be able to seek external funding.
  - d) That the Council ensures a smooth transition for the Whinney Banks Community Centre and ensures that the move does not take place until the new one is built and operational. That the Council also considers the long term funding implications for the centre to ensure its long term viability now that they no longer have the additional income from the rent of rooms.
  - e) Given the importance of management committees who find funding for Centres the panel wanted to ensure that the council would give an assurance that they would intervene should a situation arise where no volunteers could be found for a management committee.
  - f) That the Council reviews the cost of Adult Education fees for older people.
  - g) That the department monitors the drop in the contact rate for young people in Youth & Community centres to ensure that the methods being put in place ensure that the targets are being reached.
  - h) Given the importance of volunteers to Community Centres a campaign to increase volunteers numbers should be undertaken.
  - i) That the good practice that is ongoing in Middlesbrough is continued to be shared between the centres.