Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Thursday, 9 July 2020

Community Centres Re-opening

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

1.1 The Policy and Sustainability Committee is asked to;

1.1.1 Note the challenges involved in reopening community centres

1.1.2 Approve the activity that seeks to engage with community centre Management Committees

1.1.3 Note the requirement for some community centres to be utilised as alternative accommodation for the contingency plan for the 50% model for schools returning in August.

1.1.4 Approve that further details on the reopening of community centres are included in the wider action plans which will emerge from the Adaptation and Renewal workstream on Operations and Services

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Report

Community Centres reopening

2.   Executive Summary

2.1   The report outlines some of the significant resource challenges to be considered in reopening community centres, in the context of competing pressures to reopen (and maintain the opening) of other buildings such as schools.

2.2   It proposes next steps: Council officers to engage with management committees to explore the developing assurance framework, including Health and Safety risk management and identify likely levels of financial and other resourcing (such as facilities management) required, to reopen and maintain the opening of centres.

2.3   That further details on the reopening of community centres are included in the wider action plans which will emerge from the Adaptation and Renewal workstream on Operations and Services

3.   Background

3.1   The Council has 30 community centres offering a wide range of community learning and leisure opportunities which are highly valued by individuals and community groups across the city.

The buildings are leased by the Council to volunteer management committees who manage the facility. The Council retains some financial commitment to maintain these facilities and has a responsibility to provide facilities management services. There is a relationship between management committees and Lifelong Learning Service Officers who provide additional programming and support; some centres have dedicated Business Support.

3.2   In response to the Covid - 19 pandemic, the Council took the decision to close all community centres from 19th March 2020. This decision was taken after careful consideration and was influenced by factors such as public heath advice, the Council's responsibility for safe use of the premises, the requirement for facilities management support which had to be prioritised for other essential services such as Key Worker Childcare Hubs and Critical Resilience Centres. A further consideration was that any visual sign of the building being open could heighten the

risk to the public in their visiting the centre, at a time when the public message was and still is 'stay home, protect the NHS and save lives'.

3.3   Since that decision there have been some requests to reopen which have been considered at Council Leadership Team. The factors taken into consideration in not approving these requests include: fulfilment of health and safety processes and procedures would require input from facilities management which remains fully committed to supporting schools and other critical buildings; the Council and voluntary sector were already mobilised around the distribution of food and alternative sites were available; the Council would have to accept full responsibility for the use of any community centre, requiring officer deployment which is not compliant with key worker guidance and working from home for non-essential staff.

3.4   A previous community centres report on March 2020 to <u>Finance and Resources</u> Committee highlighted that 'the current condition of community centres represents an increasing health and safety risk to the Council, as their condition will continue to degrade given the previous low levels of capital investment'.

4.   Main report

4.1   Although not specifically named in the Scottish Government *Scotland's <u>Route</u> Map through and out of the crisis,* the reopening of community centres is generally assumed to be possible as part of Phase 3.

4.2   The reopening of any Council buildings and their continued, ongoing safe use will require a significant level of support from facilities management and some investment in safety equipment. The Council has prioritised the reopening of schools and to that end facilities management resources are concentrated on pre-opening preparation and ongoing schools support after opening.

4.3   Communities and Families is working with facilities management to plan for the 50% contingency arrangement for schools should that need arise. This model would see in school class teaching for 50% of the pupil timetable, complemented by home learning and an element of class teaching delivered in other Council buildings. The 50% model requires the use of 47 other CEC buildings which include libraries and community centres.

4.4   Although the Council expects to have clarity towards the end of July from the Scottish Government, on the need for the 50% contingency, it must be borne in mind that such contingency measures could arise after the schools return in August, as part of public health measures, should there be a sudden increase in virus transmission.

4.5   Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Council Officers had been working alongside management committees to develop an Assurance Framework (based on that adopted by Schools) to assist in the management of risk including health and safety, using Council documentation/ templates/ Risk Assessments. This work builds on the Community Centre Handbook (July 2018) which was developed to support all

building users to manage and control risk, in the complex operational context of community centres having many different user groups including volunteers, members of the public and Council staff.

4.6   Officers could now resume these discussions with management committees, in light of the newly developed Covid-19 risk management processes for other council buildings, in order to explore what measures and resources need to be in place to ensure safe use of the centres. There will be an expectation that Council officers e.g. Communities and Families staff will be required to dedicate time to work with Community Centre Management Committees. Management Committee will need information and support to properly plan for reopening and safe access to volunteers, staff and members of the public in the context of the Covid 19 Guidance for non-healthcare settings. Lifelong Learning Service Officers are currently heavily committed to staffing the critical workers support hubs and do not have the capacity to support Community Centre Management Committees. The opportunity to do that work would only arise after the summer

4.7   Community Centres reopening will be considered alongside a range of other priorities within the Adaptation and Renewal workstream under Operations and Services and all work to support the reopening of centres would be located within that programme.

5.   Next Steps

5.1   Council Officers to resume Assurance Framework discussion with management committees to consider what resources would be required and possible next steps to reopen centres.

5.2   That further details on the reopening of community centres are included in the wider action plans which will emerge from the Adaptation and Renewal workstream on Operations and Services

6.   Financial impact

6.1   Currently the Council is facing a challenge in terms of prioritising FM resources to support the reopening of schools and has a working assumption that there a lack of resource and there will be a need to move resources from other CEC buildings e.g. Community Centres and Libraries to support schools. To accommodate any reopening of Community Centre will result in an additional budget pressure

6.2   If budget could be identified for additional FM staff to support reopening of Community centres and other buildings there is concern about the recruitment and availability of people as a significant challenge already exists resulting in an estimated shortfall of 200 in the required workforce for schools to reopen

6.3 Some additional capital costs may be required in some centres to accommodate changes in the layout and signage.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1 Engagement with community centre management committees took place in October 2019 on the development of the Assurance Framework and more recently in February 2020 with North West Locality management committees, covering a wide range of matters including health and safety. Although this work was paused it could be resumed to develop a Covid 19 related assurance framework. This work would involve management committees, facilities management, business support, health and safety, fire safety and lifelong learning service staff.

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 Scottish Government *Scotland's Route Map through and out of the crisis*

8.2 Community Centres - Condition Review and Corstorphine Community Centre (Finance and Resources Committee 5 March 2020)

8.3 Covid – 19 Guidance for non-heathcare settings

9. Appendices

None