

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 3 October 2024

Community Centre Strategy

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. Culture and Communities Committee is asked to note:
 - 1.1.1 This update on the actions agreed by Committee in May 2024; and
 - 1.1.2 That Committee will be kept updated on progress of both engagement with community centre management committees on the draft vision and principles of the Community Centre Strategy and on the lease renewal programme.

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Interim Executive Director of Place

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Community Centre Strategy

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on progress in engaging with Community Centre Management Committees following the actions agreed by Committee on 16 May 2024. It also provides an update on the approach to individual lease renewals.

3 Background

- 3.1 On 7 March 2023, Culture and Communities Committee [approved](#) a [report](#) detailing the proposed development of a Community Centre Strategy for the city.
- 3.2 The report noted that there are 35 community centres in Edinburgh where the Council both owns the buildings and provides day to day services (covering areas of Business Support, Facilities Management and Lifelong Learning).
- 3.3 The report noted that the scale of the capital improvements requirement, as well as ongoing pressures on day-to-day repairs and maintenance and other community centre related budgets and suggested that the Council may struggle to sustain current provision across the city. The report stated that a community centre strategy would be developed giving due consideration to what is currently delivered from them for local people. It noted that while building condition is an important factor, service delivery is the single most important consideration.
- 3.4 Running parallel to this strategic development work, UK Shared Prosperity Fund funding was secured for financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25 to carry out a wide-ranging programme of developmental work with community centre management committees.
- 3.5 On 16 May 2024, received an [update](#) on the development of a city-wide Community Centre strategy and agreed:
- 3.5.1 To note the update on the development of a city-wide Community Centre strategy;
 - 3.5.2 To not agree this version of the strategy;
 - 3.5.3 To agree that council officers would undertake further engagement with community centre management committees on the principles of the strategy to ensure that communities could shape the policies that would affect them;

- 3.5.4 To agree that council officers would begin engagement with community centre management committees on individual lease renewal as the report by the Executive Director of Place did not set out a definitive or consistent approach and recognise the urgency with which this must be undertaken;
- 3.5.5 To note the Next Steps outlined in 5.1 of the report;
- 3.5.6 To agree to receive a further report in two cycles, concerning the development of the Community Centre Strategy once the meetings with management committees and discussions around individual programmes of work highlighted in 5.1 of the report had taken place; and
- 3.5.7 To retain oversight of the work proposed within this committee.

4 Main report

- 4.1 Following Committee, engagement with Community Centre Management Committees has commenced.
- 4.1 This engagement has taken the form of a written questionnaire, sent to every committee in the city (Appendix 1), a series of individual meetings with management committees and attendance at the city-wide community centre forum (which was established as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme).
- 4.2 The questionnaire seeks feedback on the proposed vision and principles within the draft strategy and seeks management committee views on the scale of agreement (or otherwise) with these. At time of writing, 14 community centres have submitted written responses to the questionnaire.
- 4.3 So far, individual meetings have taken place with 18 management committees. These discussions have concerned both their views on the proposed vision and principles and early discussions as to how they see their own individual futures. Some committees are at more advanced stages than others in having proactive plans for future use.

Review of Community Centre Leases

- 4.4 Engagement with community centre management committees on individual lease renewals is now beginning, with a range of potential options and lease models being explored to reflect the future governance arrangements with individual centres.
- 4.5 The lease review is being progressed with recognition to the wider financial position of the Council. Specifically with regard to the community centre estate, the review recognises the scale of the capital improvements required (current projections indicate an unfunded pressure of over £20m which does not include the costs of any suitability, accessibility or net zero improvements), on-going pressures on day-to-day repairs and maintenance and other community centre related budgets.
- 4.6 The lease review needs to link to the wider business plan objectives of the Council and associated workstreams (such as the Corporate Property strategy).

- 4.7 In this content, the discussions with individual management committees will include a focus on governance and leasing options which include:
- 4.11.1 Ownership moving to the management committee under Community Asset transfer;
 - 4.11.2 A full insuring/repairing lease where the management committee would take over responsibility for the running of the community centre;
 - 4.8.3 A lease under which the Council would continue to provide services to the community centre with the cost being recovered from the management committee; and
 - 4.8.4 Any other viable options which may be suggested by Committees themselves.
- 4.23 However, officers recognise that for a number of community centres, the management committees may feel that the most appropriate form of lease would be one whereby the Council would continue to carry all obligations and costs relating to the building, including staffing and repairing and maintenance responsibilities. In the current financial climate, this will be challenging and therefore officers will need to explore the potential for alternative arrangements in these circumstances.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Committee will be kept updated on progress with engaging community centre management committees on the proposed vision and principles for a Community Centre Strategy and on the lease renewal programme.
- 5.2 A report on the engagement with community centre management committees (as requested by Committee in May 2024) will be presented to Committee in December 2024.

6 Financial impact

- 6.1 This report provides an update on engagement with community centre management committees on the vision and principles for a Community Centre Strategy.
- 6.2 In addition, engagement is progressing with community centre management committees on individual lease reviews. As noted in the Main Report, this is being progressed in recognition of the Council's wider financial position and specifically recognises the indicative cost of capital improvements required together with the on-going costs for repairs and maintenance.

7 Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There are no equality and poverty impacts arising from this update.

- 7.2 The financial implications for ensuring the community centre estate meets the Council's commitments on accessibility and suitability have not yet been assessed.

8 Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no climate and nature emergency implications arising from this update.
- 8.2 The financial implications for ensuring the community centre estate meets the Council's commitments on net zero have not yet been assessed.

9 Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 There is a risk that the deterioration in the condition of some of the community centres across the city will mean that some will have to close. This will require action to address the re-provision of those services running from any such building.
- 9.2 The following risks have been identified in respect of the current governance arrangements for Community Centres:
- 9.2.1 There is a risk that some management committees do not fully understand or carry out checks in relation to the health and safety aspects for which they are responsible. The consequences of this are a potential for damage to buildings, liability to the management committee and/ or injury to the public.
- 9.2.1.1 Actions to mitigate this risk include ensuring all relevant health and safety information is shared and where appropriate signposting to relevant training is done, a management committee handbook is kept updated and that measures to ensure compliance with health and safety responsibilities are included in new Community Centre leases.
- 9.2.2 There is a risk that Management Committees remain as unincorporated organisations rather than becoming Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIOs), an entity that will give their members more protection. This is especially pertinent if they enter into contracts, sub leases or employ staff. The potential consequences of this risk are that individual trustees may become liable financially should there be poor outcomes in relation to contracts and employment situations.
- 9.2.2.1 Actions to mitigate this risk include ensuring that committees are made aware of the risks and are offered support to become a SCIO via the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Project.
- 9.2.3 There is a risk that Management Committees do not fully understand or carry out their responsibilities in relation to reporting yearly accounts to the regulatory body Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). The potential consequences of this risk are that consistent late reporting could lead to removal of their charity status in line with new OSCR powers and as such the Council becomes liable for rates on the Centre.

9.2.3.1 To mitigate this risk training in relation to Trustee Roles and Responsibilities and Financial Management will be offered via the SPF Project.

9.2.4 There is a risk that Management Committees take on contracts or enter in partnerships or sub leasing arrangements without adequate knowledge of the risks or knowledge of how to ensure they gain maximum benefit for the charity. The consequences of this risk are that this may result in financial losses to the charity and/or an unequal relationship with partners.

9.2.4.1 To mitigate this risk, training and ongoing support will be provided alongside sign posting to relevant bodies via the SPF Programme.

9.2.5 There is a risk that Management Committees cannot recruit new members in order to remain a viable Charity and as a consequence of this their charitable status is threatened.

9.2.5.1 To mitigate this risk support on succession planning will form part of the Year 2 SPF Programme. The Council will also support the establishment of a Community Centre forum which will be able to offer support both from other Centre Management Committee and Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC).

9.2.6 There is a risk that Management Committees are not aware or do not carry out responsibilities in relation to safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults when organising Centre programmes and activities or managing volunteers.

9.2.6.1 To mitigate this risk training and support will be provided through the SPF Programme.

9.3 In addition to the mitigating actions noted above, officers will also ensure that these responsibilities are discussed with management committees when individual meetings are taking place.

9.4 There is a risk that the Council cannot sustain financing of all Centres, particularly those whose core utility and staffing costs are significant, and which do not lend themselves to net zero investment. To mitigate this risk, reprovision of services or activities will be a priority action.

10 Background Reading / External References

10.1 None.

11 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Centre Questionnaire

Appendix 1 - COMMUNITY CENTRE STRATEGY - MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Community Centre Name:	
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Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the Community Centre Principles outlined in the report dated 16th May 2024 to the Culture and Communities Committee.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The management committee of the centre concerned, and local Councillors are involved at an early stage in discussions about any proposed initiative concerning the future of the individual building.					
Where a voluntary management committee decides to fold and/or give up its lease on a building, the Council should give first consideration as to the viability of retaining the centre for community use. This will involve both consideration of the developmental potential for a new voluntary Board and advertising the building for community use on the Council's property website.					
All future change proposals should be considered, including consideration of usage, condition, or management efficacy of the building.					
Should a change of building use be approved, all existing service provisions hosted in the centre, should they still be required, will be re-provisioned by the Council or another provider.					
Should there be the realisation of a surplus capital receipt from the sale of any existing centre then, subject to an appropriate business case being approved by the relevant committee, part or all of the receipt could be invested in local community assets.					
Any refreshed use of a centre should be subject to a leasing agreement based on commercial terms.					
Any change proposals in respect of individual community centres are developed with regard to the wider Council Business Plan and relevant Council strategies.					

Any Comments: