

MANAGEMENT OF BLACKFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet agreement to a longer term management agreement for the use of Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre by Totton College and the Children's Centre.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In February 2007 Cabinet received a report on the proposed management arrangements at Blackfield Neighbourhood centre following serious problems with the previous arrangements with the Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre Committee.
- 2.2 Cabinet agreed to the recommendation that the day to day management of the Centre be carried out by Totton College with full responsibility for maintenance and repairs being retained by the Council. This would ensure that the Council protected its asset but at the same time encouraged the community to use the Centre without undue financial pressures. It was envisaged that because of the uncertainty (at that time) surrounding the future funding for Totton College that the agreement would be on a yearly basis.

3 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The Council's Valuer has been approached by Totton College who are suggesting that the Council agree to a longer term arrangement for the use of the Centre. This would give them some certainty for the future and enable them to give a greater commitment to the local community regarding the longer term use of the building. It is understood that Totton College has secured longer term funding for the Children's Centre which is the major user of the building.
- 3.2 The Council's Valuer has agreed Heads of Terms for the occupation of the Centre which clearly sets out responsibilities. In essence the Council will remain responsible for the structure and Totton College would be responsible for all internal decorations.
- 3.3 Primarily the use of the building will be for the established Children's Centre but that Totton College would also be responsible to ensure that community use was encouraged and supported. This will replicate the current position.
- 3.4 In view of the social and community benefits from ensuring the continued use by the Children's Centre and encouragement for more general community use a nil rent is suggested. Any income received by Totton College will be used to pay the

costs of all consumables and utilities together with the on-going costs of internal repairs and redecorations.

- 3.5 The proposals suggested above will secure a sound future for the Centre for the next 6 years and enable the good work being done by Totton College and the Children's Centre to be continued. The community, which is recognised as being one of the most deprived in the New Forest, will be continue to be supported by the Council and the excellent partnership that has been formed with Totton College.
- 3.6 The proposal has been considered by the Council's Corporate Asset Management Group who are responsible for ensuring that the best use is made of all Council assets. In view of the community benefits that the Centre provides the Asset Management Group fully support the proposals. However, the Asset Management Group has suggested that the lease have a "break" clause after 3 years as it is understood that the funding for Totton College is reviewed on a 3 year cycle.

4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Centre is a vitally important local resource and in ensuring it remains open and viable will clearly help to reduce the incidence of crime and disorder in the area.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As previously mentioned the local area is one of very high social need. The Centre provides an important local resource facility to those families living in the immediate area. The proposals will also help to increase general community involvement in the area.

7 HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 7.1 I fully supported the proposals contained in the report to Cabinet in February 2007 and I am very pleased to note that Totton College has secured longer term funding to secure a more certain future for this vitally important facility for the residents of Blackfield. I continue to give this project my wholehearted support.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the proposals for leasing Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre to Totton College for a term of 6 years be agreed with provision for a “break” clause after 3 years..

For further information please contact: Background Papers

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