

Committee: Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee	Date: 26/03/2019
Subject: Community Centres Policy	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Decision
Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management	

Summary

The City of London's Housing Service has seven community centres on its housing estates. As part of a review of how these centres are managed on a day to day basis, a Community Centres Policy has been drafted. The Policy covers operational issues such as the setting of charges for hires, the administration of bookings and the standardisation of terms and conditions of use.

An internal audit of community centre revenue management was carried out in 2018, which highlighted ways in which our current procedures could be improved. Many changes have already been made. This new policy addresses several of the audit's recommendations and will help bring consistency to how our community centres are managed.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the Community Centres Policy for use by the Housing Service

Main Report

Background

1. There are seven community centres located on City of London housing estates. These centres range in size from single rooms to larger, multi-room facilities.
2. The facilities are managed by our estate teams, except for Golden Lane Community Centre, which has a dedicated Centre Manager. In response to some of the new ways of working introduced at Golden Lane, as well as the recommendations of an internal audit carried out in mid-2018, we are changing the how we manage our community centres.

3. The Community Centres Policy covers general operational considerations and is designed to bring some uniformity to how the Housing Service runs its community centres.
4. We are developing a Community Centres Strategy, which will form the basis for our management of the centres over the next five years, with an emphasis on enhancing the benefit they bring to our residents and their communities.

Current Position

5. The seven community centres managed by the Housing Service are:
 - Avondale Square Community Centre
 - Dron House Community Centre
 - Golden Lane Community Centre
 - Holloway Community Centre
 - Lammas Green Community Hall
 - Windsor House Community Centre
 - York Way Community Hall
6. The facilities range from small, single-room spaces to larger, multi-purpose buildings with more extensive facilities. Apart from Golden Lane Community Centre, which has a Centre Manager, these facilities are managed by our estate staff.
7. Traditionally, we have managed the centres on quite an informal basis, with little promotion of the facilities beyond the estates and the majority of bookings being one-off hires by residents. There was no service-wide strategy for managing the community centres and ensuring that they were used to their full potential.
8. While there are well-established procedures for revenue management, other processes, such as bookings and hiring terms and conditions, were formulated locally. This approach resulted in multiple ways of working and an internal audit in 2018 identified ways in which our management of the facilities could improve.
9. The Community Centres Policy is intended to bring consistency to the management of the Housing Service's community centres. We are introducing standard documents and processes, and the policy will support their implementation and assist us in improving the way we manage our community centres.
10. We are formulating a strategy for the management of our community centres. This document will contain detail about how we intend to use our community centres, linking in with the aims of the Corporate Plan for 2018-2023. It will also provide clear direction about income generation and management, by examining opportunities for increasing revenue from the use and hire of our facilities or the use of long-term arrangements with third parties where appropriate.

11. Our community centres are valuable assets with great potential to bring opportunities for engagement and involvement to residents of our estates. Ultimately, the planned strategy is intended to support the Housing Service in enhancing the value of community centres to our residents and their broader communities.

Conclusion

12. The Community Centres Policy addresses operational issues including charges for use and hire, the administration of bookings and the standardisation of terms and conditions of use.
13. The new policy will help bring consistency to the management of our community centres and address the recommendations of an internal audit carried out in 2018.
14. This policy will be followed by a Community Centres Strategy, which will inform decision-making about these resources, with a view to increasing their use and enhancing the value they provide to local communities.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Community Centres Policy
- Appendix 2 – Feedback and responses from the consultation

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