

Committees:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services	13/09/2019
Housing Management and Almshouse Sub-Committee	16/09/2019
Subject:	Public
New Portsoken Community Centre update	
Report of:	For Information
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Report author:	
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Summary

A new community centre to replace the existing Portsoken Health and Community Centre (the Green Box) is currently being built as part of The Minories development in Aldgate.

To inform the fit-out of the space, consultations have been carried out by City of London officers and commissioned space planners, Studio Partington. To inform design options, Studio Partington staff undertook stakeholder engagement to refine and clarify themes emerging from the earlier consultation. They also investigated other local facilities to avoid unnecessary and damaging duplication. Four public consultation meetings were held (including two with Youth Group members and organisers) to which all Mansell Street and Middlesex Street residents were invited, along with other stakeholders. The main theme that emerged from all meetings was that the space needs to be flexible, suitable for a variety of uses and as future-proof as possible. A summary of the four consultations is provided in Appendix 1, and their final design is attached in Appendix 2.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. A new community centre to replace the existing Portsoken Health and Community Centre (the Green Box) is currently being built as part of The Minories development in Aldgate. The Green Box opened in 2007 and was always intended to be a temporary site. There are now numerous problems with the structure of the existing building, and a permanent replacement is required.

Current Position

2. The Green Box provides a range of activities for local residents and City workers, including table tennis, martial arts, youth groups, a Muslim women's group, a gardening club, creative sewing classes, and health and advice sessions. It is anticipated that the new community centre would provide for these and other activities.

3. At 300m², the new site is much larger than the current community centre and will be spread over three floors: the basement; the ground floor; and a mezzanine floor of the new hotel. The basement space will contain toilet facilities and storage space.
4. In 2018, a consultation exercise was carried out to inform the fit-out of the space. Questionnaires were distributed to all homes on the Mansell Street and Middlesex Street Estates, given to current hirers of the Green Box, and made available at Artizan Street Library. A link to a Survey Monkey version of the questionnaire was widely publicised and Spanish and Sylheti translations were also made available.
5. The survey ran for most of December 2018 and closed on 7 January 2019. The survey results cannot be claimed as representative because, in total, only 31 completed questionnaires were received: 23 paper versions and eight submitted online.
6. At the request of Mansell Street residents, we offered residents the opportunity to attend an afternoon or evening workshop held in the Iveagh Room on the Mansell Street estate. Unfortunately, only one resident and one Member took part.
7. At the same time as the consultation was taking place, a campaign for a 'quality community kitchen' was initiated by a local ward member who also delivered a petition signed by 50 people.
8. In early 2019, design consultants, Studio Partington, were appointed to assess user need and provide a design for the fit-out of the space.
9. Four public consultation sessions were organised. Invitations were delivered to every household on the Mansell Street and Middlesex Street estates. Two of these sessions specifically targeted the needs of local youth and included organisers and members of youth groups. Two further meetings were attended by Portsoken residents and stakeholders such as representatives of Toynbee Hall and Age UK. In total, 21 people attended these consultations.
10. People attending the meetings made a number of suggestions regarding how they would like the space to be used. More detail is provided in Appendix 1 attached. Overall, most user groups were agreed on a single large open space that is flexible and/or can be divided into smaller spaces via a movable, noise-controlled acoustic wall. They also requested the provision of smaller ancillary spaces for more private and/or confidential activities.
11. Since the original S106 agreement underpinning the delivery of the community centre, St Botolph's Church has announced the delivery of a community centre at Aldgate Square. To avoid unnecessary and damaging duplication, a meeting to investigate the scope and nature of that resource took place in January this year.
12. Based on the consultations, their understanding of need and their expertise in this field, Studio Partington has now produced a design for the fit-out (see Appendix 2).

13. All residents on the two Portsoken estates have been informed of the consultation results in writing and invited to view the plans at Artizan Street Library and Community Centre or the Portsoken Health and Community Centre. The designs will be available for people to see until the end of October 2019.

The indicative timeline (subject to confirmation) is for the fit-out to start after building work is completed at the end of September/early October 2020.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. The provision of community centres addresses the following Corporate Plan outcomes:

Contribute to a flourishing society:

- People are safe and feel safe
- People enjoy good health and wellbeing
- People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential
- Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

Implications

15. Fitting out the space will require Community Infrastructure Levy funding.

Conclusion

16. Design consultants from Studio Partington were engaged to carry out user consultations and produce designs that will make best use of the available space. Most user groups agreed on having spaces that are flexible and that can be divided into smaller spaces via movable, acoustic walls along with smaller ancillary spaces for more private and/or confidential activities.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Consolidation of Consultations 01–04
- Appendix 2 – Design Proposal Presentation Boards

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