

Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

2 November 2022

Present: Councillor J Cruddas (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, D Drummond, L Ferasin,
J Kirwin, G Madden, L Marshall and J Shaw

C&L12/22 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

C&L13/22 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

C&L14/22 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 October 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C&L15/22 Community Hubs in North Tyneside

Consideration was given to a report and presentation by the Head of Sport, Leisure and Libraries, and the Customer Service and Digital Strategy Manager, which provided an overview of proposals for a new Community Hubs Strategy.

Cabinet had agreed to the development of Community Hubs in May 2019 and again in February 2021 as part of the wider customer services programme. The idea of a hub was a one stop shop for the community offering not only advice and information, but services and activities that met the needs of locals.

The Authority had four Customer First buildings and two further large community centres across our borough. The pandemic had shifted the way people used these buildings and why they used them. The Authority needed to change and adapt to ensure these buildings were still relevant and still met local needs. In addition, in Our North Tyneside Plan, the Authority had made a commitment to be “value for money” and to ensure that the way it worked offered best value.

The presentation covered where the Authority was currently in the development of Community Hubs; the Authority’s vision of what a Community Hub should be; what the Authority had done so far, and what it planned to do next.

In terms of the planned framework for Community Hubs, there would be six main physical access points across the borough for connecting people with community assets and services (advice, information, and signposting), providing services, coordinating and connecting with other ‘spoke’ hubs.

The intention was to support the ambitions of the ‘Our North Tyneside Plan’ by increasing individual economic prosperity, improving digital skills and access, increasing reading and literacy, increasing social networks/community activity, increasing participation within the local community, promoting community cohesion, and being visible and consistent. The proposed Community Hubs were:

- North Shields Customer First Centre
- Whitley Bay Customer First Centre
- Wallsend Customer First Centre
- Killingworth Customer First Centre (White Swan Centre)
- John Willie Sams Centre
- Oxford Centre

The community hubs model and design principles were based on being Inclusive; A trusted, recognised offer, adding social value, strategically aligned, value for money, and collectively owned & produced.

In creating a new community hubs strategy, some key changes to consider included a dedicated team focussed on that hub and its community, looking at where and how people worked, integrated welcome and help points, increased access to key services at all 6 sites, making every contact count, visible and connected, considering a specialism for each hub, and an enhanced digital offer.

With regard to the timetable for engagement on the new Community Hubs Strategy, this was taking place during October and November 2022 with Elected Members, Trade Union colleagues, Library and Customer First Centre customer service teams, and Partners State of the Area Event (cost of Living). Development of the Strategy would continue between November 2022 and March 2023 thereafter, submitted to Cabinet for consideration and approval. Beyond that, work with teams and partners would continue to create and implement structures. Changes would take time and should be fluid at each Hub.

During discussions on the emerging plans for the proposed new Community Hub Strategy, Members made reference to the drop off in numbers during recent times, but were keen on the idea that Customer First Centres (CFC) were linked to libraries where possible, as a joined-up facility for promoting reading, digital use in employment searches and community use.

Reference was also made to the importance of increasing footfall and efficient use of CFCs across the borough, by promoting the many and varied services available to people who may not be aware of these in their area. It was explained that work was underway on promoting the visibility and branding of the centres in liaison with the Authority's Communications Team.

Clarification was sought on the options for the unoccupied spaces in CFCs and libraries which could potentially be used for the arts, classes, community groups, jobs markets etc., also charging and funding policies for rented spaces. It was explained that individual teams would manage each centre, with a balance between usage, funding and charging policies to suit the needs at each of the centres, and community partnership-wise, 'A social contract'.

Members commented that if the six CFCs were heavily specialising then people would potentially still travel to other areas in the borough for specific facilities or information. It was explained that the centres would provide core offer services in each case and in order to provide a successful offer that a mapping exercise should address this.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and presentation.

It was **agreed** that the report and presentation on Community Hubs for North Tyneside be noted.

C&L16/22 Date and Time Next Meeting

6pm on Tuesday 17 January 2023.