

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel

Date: 06 October 2020

Report of: Director of Leisure and Community

Subject: COMMUNITY BUILDINGS - COVID-19 IMPACT

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to highlight the challenges faced by the Borough's community facilities in adapting to the restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19). Most importantly, it details the support that continues to be provided by the Council to its community buildings through these difficult and challenging times.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel note the contents of the report.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on every aspect of life and society within our Borough, and it has led to logistical challenges, created financial difficulties and promoted community wide concerns around health and well-being.
2. Restrictions to our movement, limitations regarding who we are able to mix with and the necessity for protective measures when we are in contact with others have all been introduced to prevent the spread of this virus.
3. The impact of these measures on our community facilities has been huge. As hubs for people to gather, to share interests or provide support, the community buildings have had to change their practices in response to the latest Government guidance.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

4. The community centres' journey through the Covid-19 restrictions during 2020 is detailed below;
 - **23rd March** - all community centres are forced to close to the community;
 - **1st June** - pre-schools and nurseries are able to operate from community centres but other activities still not permitted;
 - **4th July** - community centres can reopen with protective measures in place to prevent the virus from spreading. As sporting and fitness activities are still not permitted, none of the Borough's centres receive enough income to justify reopening at this point.
 - **29th July** – the ban on sporting activities is lifted, the larger community centres reopen, with some of the smaller ones deciding to not reopen until September.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

5. At this current time, each of the Council owned community centres is open to a greater or lesser degree. Several, such as Portchester and Crofton Community Centres, are seeing a high demand for their facilities, whereas others such as Fareham North West are taking a more cautious approach. This is largely influenced by the size of the facility.
6. Despite some restrictions being lifted, the protective measures that are required to keep everyone safe in these public buildings means that this has not heralded a return to 'business as usual'.
7. The community centres and each of their hirers are required to complete thorough risk assessments of the facility and the activities taking place within them. Measures such as providing hand sanitiser, ensuring adequate cleaning regimes, introducing one-way flow for people entering and exiting the building and ensuring adequate ventilation must all be considered.
8. In addition, the centres must be confident that social distancing is maintained throughout their building. The Government guidance of 14th September spelled out the

community centres' responsibility to disallow any activity that has the potential of enabling social mixing. They must also be assured that masks are being worn (unless it is of significant detriment to do so) and that contact details of all attendees have been kept, to enable Test and Trace to operate in the event that a case of Covid-19 is confirmed for an individual who has visited the centre.

9. To add to the challenges faced, the enforced period of closure has drastically reduced the income received by the community centres. This has not been matched by the same reduction in outgoings as insurances, standing charges and rents still need to be paid. As such, many of the Associations have needed to use their reserves.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

10. To help the Community Associations and youth facilities overcome these challenges, they have received support from many Council services and One Community, the organisation funded by the Council to support the community and voluntary sector across the Borough.

11. Each Council-owned community facility has and will continue to receive help and support from;

- The Leisure and Community Team, with regular updates and details of the latest Government guidance, clarifying expectations and links to the varied support that is available;
- Environmental Health with risk assessments and advice;
- The Council's Communications Team with templates of the public safety posters and directional signage;
- Exchequer Services facilitating a payment holiday on rent and;
- Finance promoting the opportunity to access a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) grant of between £10,000 and £25,000 to stabilise the Associations' finances.

12. The table below illustrates the amount of RHL grant each community building has received. It is also important to note, that should officers be made aware of any other grant opportunities available to community organisations, details will be shared with all community associations.

Community Association	RHL grant received
Abshot Community Association	£10,000
Burridge Village Hall	£10,000
Crofton Community Association	£25,000
Crofton Youth Project	£10,000
Fareham North West Community Centre	£10,000

Genesis Youth Centre	£2,500 (Discretionary Grant)
Lockwood Sports and Community Association	£10,000
Portchester Community Centre	£25,000
Priory Park Community Association	£10,000
Ranvilles Community Association	£10,000
Titchfield Community Association	£25,000
Oasis Youth Club	£10,000
Whiteley Community Association	£10,000

In addition, One Community held two, very successful 'Virtual' Community Buildings Network meetings. At these meetings, trustees and community centre managers were able to access expert advice on Covid-19 measures and share best practice.

13. In response to a suggestion at one of these meetings, One Community is now coordinating the sharing of details of hirers who haven't been able to be accommodated, to offer other centres the opportunity to fill this gap locally.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

14. Considering the unprecedented circumstances, the community facilities across Fareham are working very hard to make sure that their visitors are safe and that the demand for their facilities continues to be met, as much as current restrictions allow.
15. However, the Covid-19 journey has not yet ended. The finances of Community Associations remain a concern. Income is lower than usual due to increased gaps between hires (to allow for cleaning) and shaken public confidence following the extreme Lockdown measures is resulting in a number of users being cautious to return to their usual activities. Any prolonged extension to the necessary measures, or an enforced return to Lockdown, has the potential to be disastrous for our community centres.
16. The Council continues to find ways to support the Community Associations. At the September Executive meeting, the establishment of a Community Lottery for Fareham was approved. This will provide all Fareham's Community Associations with the opportunity to raise additional funds for their community centre, by asking their supporters to nominate their Association as the primary recipient of the profit raised from the ticket sales.
17. In addition, in October the Executive will be considering the development of a Covid-19 special community fund, from which local charities can apply for a one-off award of up to £250 to cover their reduced income or increased costs as a result of the pandemic.

18. Although Community Associations will not be able to apply for these funds themselves, having already received the previously mentioned RHL grant, local groups using their facilities are likely to meet the criteria and will therefore be able to use the funds to pay for the hire of the community centre venues, thereby ensuring their ultimate benefit.
19. Finally, a significant project identifying the capital investment required to maintain our community buildings has been underway since the end of 2019. Whilst the remit of the final recommendations is likely to be more limited than initially envisaged as a direct impact of Covid-19, it will demonstrate the Council's commitment to providing safe and useful community facilities that are fit for purpose. The outcomes of this review will be presented to the Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel at a future meeting.

RISK ASSESSMENT

20. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

21. The Covid-19 pandemic has created many challenges for the community facilities across the Borough. They have responded well and are ensuring that their practices prioritise the safety of all users of and visitors to their centres.
22. Fareham Borough Council has provided varied and consistent support to the Community Associations and will continue to develop further ways to guide them through the challenges and difficulties ahead.

Reference Papers:

September 2020 - Executive Report– Community Recovery Plan

September 2020 – Executive Report – Fareham Community Lottery

Enquiries:

For further information regarding this report please contact Claire Benfield. (Ext. 4495) or Emma Watts, Leisure and Community Manager (Ext. 4440)