

Committee: Scrutiny

Agenda Item

Date: 28 September 2010

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Title: Day Centres

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Item for decision

Summary

1. The review of Uttlesford day centres has been the subject of research by officers and a small member reference group. At its last meeting, this Committee also had the benefit of input from representatives of each of the centres in question – Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Takeley, Thaxted and Stansted.
2. Whilst there are some similarities in the issues facing the centres (such as maintaining the required levels of volunteer support), it is apparent that individual solutions should be sought, in the light of local need.
3. At its last meeting the Committee requested that the feasibility of providing an enhanced co-ordinating resource for day centres be explored and that a comparative analysis of management agreements be undertaken.
4. That work has been completed and it is now appropriate to refer the findings from this review to the Community & Housing Committee, as the policy committee responsible for day centres.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that the Community & Housing Committee be apprised of the outcomes of the review and invited to consider the most appropriate way forward, bearing in mind the following broad comments from the Scrutiny Committee
 - Appropriate District Council support should continue to be given to the provision of the day centres, which the Council recognises as a valued service.
 - Individual solutions for each day centre are sought in the light of local need and partnerships that can be developed.
 - The implications of the changing national picture (including Central Government's initiatives around localism, and the spending review exercise) should be fully taken into account in any longer term considerations.
 - a review of the agreements between the council and the Management Committees that have responsibility for the day centres is undertaken

on the basis that the requirement to provide UDC with 50% of surpluses is removed.

- Management Committees are encouraged to rebrand the outdated term of “Day Centres”, collaborate with each other on the funds released by 50% to purchase the assistance of paid staff to develop their service, seek partnerships and funding streams.
- Assistance should be offered to day centres who bring forward innovative solutions to their development and secure their sustainability.
- Open discussions be held with Stansted Parish Council about the way forward with their facility.

Financial Implications

At this stage there are no cost implications for the Council.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Previous minutes of Scrutiny Committee; research; benchmarking and reports prepared by Research Officers.

Impact

- 7.

Communication/Consultation	Meetings have been held with members of the Day Centre Management Committees and the Day Centre Review Group and relevant council officers.
Community Safety	Day centres support the wellbeing of their users.
Equalities	None.
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None

Ward-specific impacts	There are five wards in which the day centres are located: Great Dunmow Day Centre (Dunmow South ward); Saffron Walden Day Centre (Saffron Walden Audley ward); Stansted Day Centre (Stansted North ward); Takeley Day Centre (Takeley and the Canfields ward); Thaxted Day Centre (Thaxted ward).
Workforce/Workplace	Adjustments to some roles possible at a later stage.

Situation

8. The key information can be summarised as:

Day centre buildings (with the exception of Stansted) are owned by this council and upkeep of the buildings is undertaken by UDC including utilities costs.

Contents are the responsibility of the Management Committees.

Management agreements are in place (but require review). These agreements give the use of the buildings to Management Committees for them to run as a business without charge and in return for 50% of any surpluses generated.

The management agreement gives responsibility to the Management Committees for the running of these facilities. A comparative analysis of the management agreements between the day centre committees and the council show that there are some inconsistencies. In any event, it is highly unlikely that 'one size fits all'. A review of the agreements would be beneficial, with an acceptance that individual solutions will be needed.

The Management Committees are volunteers but they are concerned that the recruitment of volunteers is becoming increasingly difficult; that the burden of regulation has become onerous and that the day to day attention needed to provide services to hirers is also onerous.

Each Management Committee has varying degrees of these problems and seeks to find a solution from UDC.

UDC is clear that it wants to see the valued service the day centres provide continuing but recognises that the situation that Management Committees now find themselves in must be addressed.

Partners

Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden day centres are the locations for heating of hot meals for the Meals on Wheels service run commercially by the WRVS. Takeley day centre has a hire arrangement with ECC for two days a week. These arrangements offset costs and make the facilities better used. Facility sharing can create pressures.

Stansted Pilot

A pilot scheme had been undertaken at Stansted Day Centre to allow the Management Committee to retain the 50% due to UDC in return for them employing a Manager for the business. This pilot is anecdotally viewed as a success by current performance. The pilot has not been brought to a conclusion as managers have not stayed long enough in post to assess if it was beneficial.

The way forward

On the question of a possible enhanced coordinating role, work undertaken to date suggests that additional funding of around £27,000 per annum could be needed in order to provide a full time co-ordinator to provide support across the district. There could be a number of options for meeting this cost, although some of the cost would be likely to fall on the District Council.

However, since the review commenced the national picture has changed. Government has put many new challenges and concepts forward that would influence the way forward for us. Localism, Big Society and spending reviews all need to be fully considered in the context of Day Centres on a centre by centre basis. Some or all of these are likely to have some bearing on the way forward and should be taken into account.

The requirement for day centres to provide 50% of their income from lettings acts as a disincentive to be creative and make greater use of their facilities. It is appreciated that the greater the level of use the greater the cost to the council in maintaining these buildings in terms of utilities and maintenance. The 50% funding was possibly established to reclaim some of these costs but this mechanism is failing currently.

Two of the facilities, Saffron Walden and Dunmow, are in prime locations in the towns and have the greatest capacity to operate commercially. They are well equipped to provide an extended catering arrangement outside of the hours that they provide the valued lunch provision for the over 50s.

Takeley is located in a building with a limited life but has an established partner in ECC and is currently coping well with the provision and volunteers they have.

Thaxted is a new, low maintenance facility with a good local community feel. The Management Committee may feel it is in a prime position to explore the theme of localism.

Stansted is confirmed to be in ownership of the Parish Council and any proposals would need to be taken forward through them and with the Management Committees.

This scrutiny review has undoubtedly been a useful exercise and has highlighted the need for action. It is now appropriate to refer the conclusions to the appropriate policy committee i.e. Community & Housing.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Stakeholder expectations are raised.	2 A notional expectation that the Council may be able to do more.	2 The Council needs to operate within an approved budget.	Continuing action through the processing of recommendations in this report.

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.