

BROMBOROUGH SOCIAL CENTRE, FORWOOD ROAD, BROMBOROUGH

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for a transfer by lease of the Bromborough Social Centre to Age Concern Wirral following an application under the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cabinet, at its meeting of 15th January 2009, made decisions on a number of its assets as part of the Strategic Asset Review. In the case of Bromborough Social Centre, Members resolved that it be transferred to community management, where the community expresses an interest, within a two year period.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 19th March 2009, Cabinet approved a Community Asset Transfer Policy to ensure that transfers are approached on a consistent basis. This requires interested parties to submit initial expressions of interest in a standard format so they can be appraised and a recommendation made as to which applicant(s) should proceed to a second stage. The second stage would require a much more detailed response to be submitted including a business plan.
- 2.3 In accordance with the policy, Bromborough Social Centre was advertised in the local press which resulted in one expression of interest being received from Age Concern Wirral (AGE CONCERN WIRRAL). The organisation's proposals were considered by a panel and Cabinet on 24 September 2009 endorsed the recommendation that Age Concern Wirral be invited to proceed to the second stage.

3.0 BROMBOROUGH SOCIAL CENTRE

- 3.1 Bromborough Social Centre is a single storey purpose built Community building and is identified on the attached plan. The property has been little used for the last few years with only a few groups occasionally using the premises on an informal basis.

4.0 AGE CONCERN WIRRAL

- 4.1 Age Concern Wirral is a local registered charity and a member of the Age Concern Federation, a network of independent registered charitable organisations which, together, form the largest provider in the country of services for older people. Age Concern Wirral employs 90 paid staff and 376 Voluntary Staff, and its primary objective is to promote the wellbeing of older people throughout Wirral.

- 4.2 Age Concern Wirral currently operates from a number of buildings across the Wirral. It seeks to respond to the needs of over 20,000 older people in the borough by providing a range of services in five main areas:

Care Services:

Day Care for people with dementia
Day Care for physically frail / socially isolated people
Lunch Clubs – 10 around Wirral
Phone Link telephone befriending service
Home Support Respite Sitting Service
Support of Carers – emotional & practical
Carers Club

Support Services:

Information & Advice
Welfare Benefits Advice
Advocacy
Facilitation of Wirral Older Persons Parliament
Senior Citizens Forum
PEACE Project – Elder Abuse Awareness
Mid Life Interventions – Pre-retirement courses
Campaigning

Active Ageing:

Physical activity groups – dancing, exercise, yoga etc
Social and educational groups – computers, bridge etc
Healthy eating café and demonstrations
Health promotion and education
Allotment project
Holiday and travel club

Income Generation:

Charity Shops – 9 around Wirral
Insurance and related products

Operational Development:

Fund-raising
Volunteer Support & Development
Bereavement Support Service
Befriending Service

5.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 Age Concern Wirral has submitted a proposal which seeks to use the Bromborough Social Centre for its services currently delivered from Bramwell Court, Rock Ferry from which it has been required to surrender its tenancy by the landlord. Age Concern Wirral identified Bromborough Social Centre as suitable for re-provision of its services, prior to the Strategic Asset Review and has maintained its interest in Bromborough Social Centre throughout the Community Asset Transfer process. Bromborough Social Centre is slightly larger than Bramwell Court and will enable Age Concern Wirral to provide additional services. These would include new activities within the Active Age Programme for the 50+ age group which may include arts &

crafts, IT classes, bridge, dancing, physical exercise, smoking cessation and health information sessions etc. Additionally a lunch club or healthy eating café could be provided.

5.2 Age Concern Wirral also proposes that the facilities at Bromborough will be used to develop some new areas of activity which have been requested by local older people and / or key strategic partners:

- Expert patient groups – Age Concern Wirral will seek to work with a range of partners to provide opportunities for patient groups (i.e. condition related – diabetes, stroke etc) to meet to provide peer support, share information and access a range of relevant services and activities.
- Social opportunities for minority groups – research undertaken with Black & Racial Minority Groups and older members of Wirral’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered community has indicated the need for opportunities for socialising. The organisation will work to support the development of relevant social opportunities at Forwood Road in conjunction with older people from these groups.
- Intergenerational activity – in response to needs identified by both Wirral Older People’s Parliament and feedback from existing service users, work will be undertaken to secure funding to develop intergenerational activity, including expanding the Life Diaries Project.
- The facility will be made available to local community groups in evenings / weekends for community use.

5.3 The Director of Adult Social Services supports the proposal. Adult Social Care, along with partners, NHS Wirral, is following a locality model of service delivery in which most operational services are split into localities, and which are integrated as far as possible. Each locality is developing a local focus. The proposal for the centre by Age Concern Wirral will tie into this by delivering a service in this area of the Borough which is not available at present. There are older person’s day services in Birkenhead and in Wallasey. As an organisation, Age Concern Wirral has a high profile, both locally in Wirral, and nationally, and is where many older people will go to for services, advice and information. Although the proposal is for a day service, there will be many other benefits for older people having this organisation in their own locality.

5.4 The Council’s Department of Adult Social Services funds a significant number of services through ACW, including: Care, Information services, carer support, dementia and direct services provided at Bramwell Court and the Devonshire Centre. The funding for Bramwell Court reflects the costs of cost of providing the support as detailed in a service level agreement. An element of this figure relates to the cost of the premises which accounts for ACW’s existing rent for Bramwell Court.

6.0 COMMUNITY BENEFITS

6.1 The activities of Age Concern Wirral by their very nature, have clear benefits to the Community, in particular older people, and the nature of its organisation means that it includes and engages the community both in its governance and activities.

Specifically, Age Concern Wirral has offered the following community benefits within its proposals:

- This proposal will ensure the reuse a former facility for older people.
- The project will maintain a local single access gateway to information and a range of services (both those provided by Age Concern Wirral and by other local statutory and third sector providers) for older people and their carers living in the local area. Age Concern Wirral's approach to service development ensures that local older people are empowered to influence the programme of activity. Specific efforts will be made to ensure that the programme of activity follows a person centred planning model, reflecting the organisation's commitment to Personalisation. Furthermore, the proposed programme will create new opportunities for volunteers to engage in the charity's work.
- This project supports key Local Area Agreement priorities, including supporting older people to maintain their independence and preventing the need for more intensive support and care later in life. Specific health promotion activity will contribute to key targets and indicators concerned with improving men's health. Through having an established base in this area, the organisation will be able to seek new funding to support further activity development.

6.2 In addition, Age Concern Wirral intends to make the facility available to a number of community groups during the evenings and weekends, something which it already does at its facility at the Devonshire Resource Centre. This would enable the existing users to continue to use the facility along with other groups.

7.0 TRANSFER PROPOSAL

7.1 The Community Asset Transfer policy advises that the Council will not normally seek payment from community based groups, unless substantial commercial use of buildings generates large profits in excess of the running costs of the property. However, the Council will normally expect community based groups to be responsible for the running costs of the building, including repairs, maintenance and all insurance.

7.2 Age Concern Wirral's proposal centres around two primary needs which are to relocate from Bramwell Court and to continue to deliver and enhance its current activities. The stage two submission reflects this in its business plan and the responses to the specific stage two questions mostly reflect its wider area of business and activities across the borough. There are a number of benefits described in the report relating to specific proposals for this building. It is also clear that Age Concern Wirral has the ability and experience to operate the premises and have not requested any financial support in developing its business activities at the centre.

7.3 Age Concern Wirral's current capital resources are committed to a major new building project to construct a specialist wing at its Devonshire Resource Centre to provide services for younger people with dementia; as such, the organisation has already brought significant new investment into the Borough for the Dementia project and advises that it is not in a position fund immediate investment in Forwood Road. The existing rent paid by Age Concern Wirral for its current premises in Bramwell Court is recouped from the Council within a service level agreement (SLA). The SLA between DASS and Age Concern Wirral will be affected by the level of rent paid on behalf of

Age Concern Wirral by the Department of Adult Social Services: however, at this stage there may not be an overall reduction in the contract price as a full review of the service is planned for 2010, which should reflect the current level of use of the service and the costs incurred for such. Should Age Concern Wirral occupy the premises on the terms described below, it will be reflected in terms of the SLA.

7.4 In light of the benefits to both the community and the Council it is proposed that the transfer takes place in line with the Community Asset Transfer policy on the terms outlined as follows:

- Term: 99 years
- Rent: Peppercorn
- Liabilities: The lessee to be responsible for all outgoing and maintenance.
- User clause: In accordance with the primary objectives of Age Concern.

7.5 Members will be aware of the Council's obligation to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable on the disposal of its land and property. However, under the General Consent, the Council does have the power to restrict the value of land by imposing restrictions as to its use on the grounds that to do so is in the interest of the economic and / or environmental and / or social well being of the inhabitants of the Borough and provided also that any such restriction in value does not exceed two million pounds, per transaction. Members should be aware that Bromborough Social Centre, if offered for sale without restrictions would produce a capital receipt.

7.6 Age Concern Wirral was the only organisation to submit an expression of interest and no other organisation has approached the Council in the mean time. Should the property not be transferred to Age Concern Wirral, it would be recommended that it is sold on the open market.

8.0 COMMUNITY AUDIT

8.1 In 2009 the Council undertook an audit of community facilities across the Borough. The audit identified 42 facilities within the Bromborough Ward of which 20 facilities offer space for use by community groups for hire charges at varying rates. Both Age Concern Wirral and the Department of Adult Social Services are clear that there is a need for this facility in the Bromborough Area.

9.0 Financial implications

9.1 The Community Asset Transfer Policy advises that the Council will, subject to the availability of funding and the anticipated economic life of the building, carry out essential repairs to the main elements of the building. Such repairs are identified through an independent condition survey.

9.2 Age Concern was satisfied that the Council's in-house survey was sufficient to identify the main elements in the building which require attention. The works identified total £35,000 with the main items being a boiler replacement and electrical rewire. These works would be undertaken prior to transfer and funded from the Community Fund.

9.3 The transfer of this asset on the terms described will result in savings relating to running costs of approximately £10,375.50 per annum, although there is no specific budget for this property.

- 9.4 Backlog maintenance of up to £35,000 will be addressed through use of the Community Fund.
- 9.5 Future life cycle maintenance costs are estimated at £182,000 over the next 10 years. The Council will no longer have responsibility to meet these costs after transfer.
- 9.6 If the Council were to sell the property it could achieve a significant capital receipt. The actual amount would be determined by a marketing exercise, but would not be expected to be less than £100,000.

10.0 Staffing implications

- 10.1 There are no staff currently employed to look after these premises, therefore there are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

11.0 Equal Opportunities implications/Equality Impact Implications

- 11.1 The proposal has benefits for older people in the locality as described in the report.
- 11.2 An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in respect of the wider Community Asset Transfer process. With regard to this facility, the proposal allows for existing users to be accommodated in the refurbished centre. The proposals for the centre previously described in the report demonstrate the inclusive proposals of Age Concern Wirral.

12.0 Community Safety implications

- 12.1 The occupation of this property will assist in maintaining security of the premises which could otherwise potentially attract anti social behaviour. Reducing the isolation of older people will maintain their presence in the community and enhance their safety.

13.0 Local Agenda 21 implications

- 13.1 None arising directly from this report.

14.0 Planning implications

- 14.1 The property is identified on the Proposals Map with the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as being a Primarily Residential Area, where provision is made for community facilities. Any future planning application in connection with the proposed use would be subject to UDP Policies HS15 and RE10, which contain criteria to protect residential amenity.

15.0 Anti-poverty implications

- 15.1 The provision of advice and information services via Age Concern will enable more people to take up benefits and other services for which they may be eligible and therefore reduce the risk of poverty.

16.0 Human Rights implications

16.1 None arising directly from this report

17.0 Social Inclusion implications

17.1 The transfer of the asset will enable older people to maintain their independence in the community.

18.0 Local Member Support implications

18.1 The property is located within the Bromborough Ward.

19.0 Background Papers

19.1 Cabinet reports:

27 November 2008 – Strategic Asset Review

15 January 2009 – Transforming Wirral

24 September 2009 – Bromborough Social Centre, Forwood Road, Bromborough

20.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

20.1 That a transfer by lease of the Bromborough Social Centre to Age Concern Wirral be agreed and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be authorised to complete the necessary lease on the terms set out in this report.

20.2 That the agreed works to the property be funded from the Community Fund.

Bill Norman

Director of Law HR & Asset Management