

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER OF MORETON COMMUNITY CENTRE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks approval for a transfer of the Moreton Community Centre to Moreton Community Centre Limited in accordance with the Council's Asset Transfer Policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Cabinet, at its meeting on 27th November 2009, agreed a report on the Strategic Asset Review. Moreton Community Centre was identified in Appendix 1 of that report for Community Transfer.

2.2 Cabinet, at its meeting on 15th January 2009, approved a report 'Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review [Minute 325 refers] which resolved that "the Strategic Asset Review be agreed, subject to the above amendments and endorsements" [contained in the report].

2.3 Paragraph 20 of Minute 325 agreed that a number of facilities should be transferred to community management, where the community expresses an interest, within a two year period and in line with the Strategic Asset Review recommendations and that finances be identified in the budgetary process to assist communities in making this a viable proposition.

2.4 Cabinet, at its meeting on 19th March 2009, approved the Community Asset Transfer Policy. The policy is used to pass over the ownership and control of assets to community based groups and explains in detail the key principles and bases for transfer. The minute also resolved that Community Centres first be offered to the established and viable Joint Management Committees.

3.0 MORETON COMMUNITY CENTRE

3.1 Moreton Community Centre is located in Maryland Lane in Moreton and is shown on the attached plan.

3.2 The Centre was built in 1991 and for the last 18 years has been successfully operated by a Joint Management Committee which has developed a range of community services including:

- Art Groups;
- Luncheon Clubs;
- Special Needs: Health & Safety Training;
- NHS Drop in Centre;
- Community Rooms;
- Meeting Space.

4.0 TRANSFER PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Joint Management Committee (JMC) of Moreton Community Centre wishes to take a transfer of the community centre building from the Council.
- 4.2 Moreton Community Centre Limited (MCCL) is being formed as a company limited by guarantee to take a transfer of the asset.
- 4.3 The JMC has produced a five year business plan in conjunction with Royds, consultants supporting the Council with its Advancing Assets Programme. The plan has been assessed by the Director of Finance and it is considered to be sustainable following a transitional two year period.
- 4.4 Issues arising from examination of the business plan and the condition survey of the premises are set out in an exempt appendix attached to this report.
- 4.5 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. In light of the business plan and the community benefits described later in this report, the main terms of the proposed lease are as follows:.
- Term: 99 years
 - Rent: Peppercorn
 - Liabilities: The lessee to be responsible for all outgoings and maintenance.
 - User clause: Community Activities
- 4.6 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.

5.0 COMMUNITY BENEFIT

- 5.1 MCCL is very positive about taking a transfer of the community centre building. They have objectives which support community well-being and their proposals will bring additional community benefits.
- 5.2 In addition to continuing the current activities MCCL will develop new activities with young children in partnership with a local primary school; develop new health related activities, provide a local delivery centre for agency programmes such as those run by the NHS; make the rooms available for hire at weekends.
- 5.3 The members of the JMC have previously run the Moreton Community Centre for many years. It is the view of officers who have worked with them as they have developed their proposals that they are very focused and dedicated to their local community.
- 5.4 Members should be aware that Moreton Community Centre is currently used for a number of Local Authority functions including area forums and polling station along with

other public meetings such as police presentations, residents association meetings etc. Post transfer, MCCL would still wish to offer the use of the facility for those functions. However, this will be a community run facility that needs to generate income to cover its costs. Should the various groups, including the Council, wish to continue to use the premises, they will have to pay the commercial rate which is currently set at £10 per hour.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial implications are included in an exempt section of the report.

7.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Staffing implications are included in an exempt section of the report.

8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The new organisation has an Equal Opportunities Policy and wishes to offer open access to all sections of the community.

9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Having a venue for local people and a range of community activities will improve community safety.

10.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

12.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Proposals within the business plan show that Moreton Community Centre Limited seeks to promote social inclusion.

14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 This property is in the Moreton and Saughall Massie Ward.

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 Cabinet reports:

27 November 2008 – Transforming Wirral - Strategic Asset Review

15 January 2009 – Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review

19 March 2009 – Asset Management Update and New Policy Proposals

16.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

16.1 It is recommended that:

- a) a transfer of the Moreton Community Centre to Moreton Community Centre Limited be agreed and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be authorised to negotiate and complete the necessary lease on the terms set out in this report.
- b) a grant be made using monies allocated through the Community Fund to cover the cost of agreed works to the property and transitional costs for the first two years of the business plan.
- c) a six month review of the progress of the business plan for the first two years of its operation, take place to ensure that it is on target to achieve a surplus position by the beginning of Year 3.

Bill Norman
Director of Law, HR & Asset Management