

**BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW
YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRES IN GUILDFORD BOROUGH**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 There are currently four Youth & Community Centres in Guildford:
GUILDFORD - (HAYDON PLACE)
BELLFIELDS
STOUGHTON
PARK BARN
- 1.2 All the Centres are owned by Guildford Borough Council and all but Park Barn are jointly funded by Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council.
The Park Barn Centre is now solely funded by Guildford Borough Council as the County Council now focuses its youth provision in the area at King's College (formerly King's Manor School).
- 1.3 As part of Local Government Reorganisation in 1974 many authorities transferred ownership and responsibility for such buildings to the County Council as it became responsible for the Youth Service. This did not happen in Guildford as the Borough Council retained ownership of the buildings and partly funds their maintenance, although there is no formal lease agreement for any of the Centres.

2.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 Each Centre has a Borough Councillor representative on the Management Committee. Currently these are:

GUILDFORD	-	Cllr Tamsy Baker
PARK BARN	-	Cllr John Woodhatch
BELLFIELDS	-	Cllr Sallie Thornberry
STOUGHTON	-	Cllr Pauline Searle

These Members are generally the sole representative from the Borough Council looking after this Council's interests in each Centre.

- 2.2 As the buildings are owned by the Borough Council it is usual for all building repair and maintenance projects to be undertaken through this Council's Property & Estates Section. Agreement is reached with the County Council to ensure that funds are available. The apportionment of costs are as follows:

GUILDFORD	- 2/3 Surrey County Council / 1/3 Guildford Borough Council
BELLFIELDS	- 1/2 Surrey County Council / 1/2 Guildford Borough Council
STOUGHTON	- 1/2 Surrey County Council / 1/2 Guildford Borough Council
PARK BARN	- 100% Guildford Borough Council

- 2.3 Each Centre retains its lettings fees and uses these to pay for its day to day running and equipment costs. The County Council also provides some funding toward these and pays all youth costs.

- 2.4 Day to day health and safety issues are generally dealt with through the Management Committee. There is however a potential issue here as the management/administrative staff who generally have daily or regular contact with the buildings are often County Council employees and yet as the buildings are owned by the Borough Council ultimate responsibility in some areas may not be clear e.g. ensuring precautions against legionella are carried out or fire equipment is regularly serviced and checked. Thus adequate control measures must be put in place.
- 2.5 As previously mentioned, Surrey County Council has specific staff allocated to the three Centres where they have youth involvement. The Borough Council however has very little input into the day to day running of these Centres other than through the single Borough Councillor representative on the Management Committee.
- 2.6 Each of the three jointly funded Centres has a "Constitution and Terms of Reference for the Management Committee" document which deals with accountability and finance. This was drawn up by Surrey County Council. In this document it states that Guildford Borough was involved with drawing up the constitution. I have not however been able to establish who the contact was at the Borough. As the Park Barn Centre has now become disassociated with the County Council a new constitution document has been produced in consultation with the Management Committee and the Borough Council's Clerk & Solicitor.
- 2.7 As previously stated the Centres are run by Management Committees with representatives from the County and Borough Councils and officer input as required.
- 2.8 A review of the Management Committee system was undertaken by the County Council in 1999 and a report taken to the Community Services Committee for consideration.
- 2.9 The overall conclusion of this review was that whilst there are some problems with the current system, especially with regard to some of the Committees financial arrangements, these were not substantial enough to recommend a change to the current system.
- 2.10 It should also be noted that the Centres within the Guildford Borough were generally more efficiently run than some in other parts of the County and therefore change would be less justified.
- 2.11 A further report was taken to Committee in Jan 2000 to clarify certain points but the previous decision to retain the Management Committees was confirmed.
- 2.12 Whilst there is still capacity for additional use in all of the buildings generally, they are in a satisfactory and stable position. Only the Park Barn Centre has suffered reduction in use and ways of addressing this are being considered by the Management Committee.
- 2.13 All of the Centres are in a good financial position and none are run at a deficit, in fact the Guildford Centre currently has a substantial surplus.

- 2.14 In the past, apart from Member representation on the Management Committee and officer involvement with building maintenance the Borough Council has had little direct input into the Centres or liaison with the County Council regarding their aims and objectives. This has now changed with an officer of the Borough Council given the brief to have more direct input into the management of the Centres.
- 2.15 This has led to formal dialogue being set up between the Borough and the County Council and more understanding being reached over each of the authority's aspirations for the management and running of the Centres.
- 2.16 Discussions are still taking place with interested parties to further enhance the understanding of the role of the Centres. From this, ways of improving the service should be identified.
- 2.17 From the Borough Council's point of view there are no national targets or performance indicators for these Centres. Local performance indicators are to be set up jointly with the Borough, County Council and the Management Committees.
- 2.18 The only paid staff at the Centres are the caretaking and secretarial staff who are paid by the Management Committee from income received and the Youth Workers are paid by the County Council. Therefore the officer costs from the Borough Council are minimal.
- 2.19 A meeting was held in October 2000 with Chairs of the 4 Centre Management Committees and representatives from Surrey County and Guildford Borough Councils. Discussion focused on the current intention at each Centre and future considerations.
- 2.20 The main points raised can be summed up as follows:
- It was agreed that priority should be given to Youth work. Even at Park Barn where the formal youth work has been removed they would like to see a return of the youth service, if possible.
 - Community use should be accommodated around the youth requirements to help generate income and make as much use of the buildings, as appropriate.
 - Staffing issues, especially caretaking and cleaning were the main limiting factors to community use. This was more the case at Stoughton but true to some extent at all Centres. The Guildford Centre is also short of Youth workers at present, recruitment being difficult.
 - Potential noise generation was also an issue at Stoughton as the Centre already has a Court Order against it in this respect.
 - The Youth Service would prefer sole use for youth (aged between 11-25) in the Centres where it has input, with a non-smoking and alcohol free environment.

- Most felt repair and maintenance service provided by the Borough Council should be more prompt. Although most urgent works were generally catered for satisfactorily. An example was electrical works required for the Guildford Centre had not progressed after several months.
- SCC were concerned that they were not always given prior warning of capital works to be undertaken at the Centres but then were expected to pay their contribution toward the works.
- For the future it was felt that the following should be considered:
 - a) production of a sheet giving the details of each Centre, contacts for bookings etc. If each Centre had a copy they would refer on bookings that they could not accommodate.
 - b) look at whether surplus funds produced at one Centre could be used to help another Centre within the Borough.
 - c) look at developing work within the Connexions project and young parents schemes within the Centres.

2.21 The proposed actions from this meeting were as follows:

- a) Discuss priorities and use of buildings with Borough Council Members.
- b) Contact the Borough Council maintenance divisions to discuss ways of overcoming repair waiting times and notice required to SCC for capital works.
- c) Obtain information from Centres to provide an information sheet of what is available and who to contact.
- d) Continue liaison with Centres and SCC regarding suggested future uses

In November 2000 a meeting of the 4 Borough Councillors who represent the Council on the Centre Management Committees was held. The main points raised were as follows:

- The Park Barn Centre would benefit from additional use being identified. Bellfields could sustain more use in the afternoons.
- Guildford and Stoughton were suffering from lack of youth workers.
- At Stoughton the local community group felt that not enough community use was being accommodated at the Centre.
- It was felt that the Guildford Centre could provide more of a “drop-in” facility for youth and that the views put forward by the youngsters were not always promoted by the Youth Service.

- Members would welcome more Borough Council Officer time being devoted to the Centres.
- It was felt that energy conservation could be enhanced within the Centres.

Proposed actions from the meeting:

- a) Endeavour to promote additional use for the Centres where possible.
- b) Speak to SCC regarding youth worker situation and possible “drop-in” facility for the Guildford Centre.
- c) Convene a meeting with relevant parties to overcome the lack of Community use at Stoughton.
- d) The Boroughs Leisure Strategy Officer to act as general contact regarding Centre issues and attend all Centre AGMs.
- e) Raise the matter of energy conservation with the Councils Energy Group.

3 FINANCE/FUNDING

- 3.1 The Centres are in a stable financial position with a reasonable surplus evident for each building.

Within the constitution the Centre Management Committees are responsible for ensuring all funds raised are used to promote the aims of the Centre. Thus all income is “ring-fenced” for use by the Centres.

- 3.2 At this stage it is worthwhile highlighting two points:

- a) The Guildford Centre currently has a substantial financial surplus. It should be noted however that much of this surplus was due to the income received from GACC (Guildford Action for Community Care) who hire the Centre on a regular basis. Should the current difficulties with GACC not be resolved amicably the loss of this income could have serious consequences.
- b) The Park Barn Centre receives a substantial part of its income from the rental from the adjoining social club. Should this situation change due to failure of the Club or any requirement of the Borough Council it would leave the Centre in a difficult financial situation.

4 ESTABLISHING A NEED

- 4.1 The Youth and Community Centres are provided in heavily populated areas of Guildford or, in the case of the Guildford Centre, in a location with good transport links for access.
- 4.2 Each of these areas has a youth contingent of which some have limited access to funds and transport. Thus it is important to have youth facilities within easy reach of users. Also with the Centres providing for community uses, local users can be easily catered for thus helping to prevent incidents of social exclusion and saving the need to travel unnecessarily.

- 4.3 The buildings can be used for any appropriate youth and community uses. Priority is given to youth work and local community groups however they are available for anybody to hire.
- 4.4 As previously stated there is Borough Council Member and Surrey County Council representation (with the exception of Park Barn) on each of the Management Committees. The remainder of the Committee membership is from the local community and users. Thus there is input at all times with all sectors involved with the Centres and community.
- 4.5 With this type of management there is regular scrutiny from all sectors and therefore any proposals for change or improvement are continually being looked at.
- 4.6 There have been no significant changes in recent years at any of the Centres with the exception of the Park Barn Centre now having the youth element removed by the County Council and placed at a local school.
- 4.7 The role of the Management Committees was the subject of a review by Surrey County Council but the result of this determined that although there were some drawbacks with the current system it was still the most appropriate way to manage the Centres.
- 4.8 No other agency has been established that would provide such facilities in the urban environment, require less resources and be as responsive to the public and existing users. In rural locations some Parish Councils do provide a similar function within village halls.
- 4.9 The Councils Strategic Objectives were stated in section 2 and the Youth and Community Centres respond to these priorities in a number of ways:
- Providing Centres for a diverse range of activities which would provide for people of all ages and of differing social and cultural backgrounds.
 - The hiring costs of the Centres is such that it makes them readily accessible, especially with the involvement of charitable organisations.
 - They provide a safe environment for all age groups and types of hirers.
 - They provide facilities close to large local communities to avoid the cost and inconvenience/difficulty of travelling long distances. The central location of the Guildford Centre makes it readily accessible for a large cross section of the public.
 - The Centres add to the diversity of facilities available to the people of the Guildford Borough.
 - The make up of the Management Committee and the accessibility to meetings and discussions with the Committee Members allow the Centres to respond to the needs of the customers, residents and other stakeholders.
 - With the types of building and the facilities provided they can cater for the possible wide diversity within the community.

- 4.10 Thus it can be seen that many of the Council's aims are met through the Centres. These aims can easily be adapted as required through the Management Committees as needs of the Councils and local people change.
- 4.11 Currently at the Guildford Centre there is a conflict of use between the Youth Service and the Voluntary Sector community use within the building. Ways of overcoming this conflict are currently being considered as the Borough and the County Council would wish to see both these aims satisfied.

5 ACTION PLAN

- 5.1 Having discussed the running of the four Centres with all parties it would appear that currently there are few significant issues to address.
- 5.2 The cost involved to the Borough Council in the running of the Centres seems minimal for the type and extent of the service provided to the public.
- 5.3 I am still awaiting data from the County Council regarding the detailed use of the Centres and how this compares with their other Centres throughout Surrey. When this information has been obtained more detailed targets and performance indicators can be set.
- 5.4 With the above in mind my proposed Action Plan is as follows:

Action	Key Organisations	Achieved by
1. Set up Regular formal dialogue with Surrey County Council	GBC SCC	Achieved
2. Consult with those running the centres to identify issues	GBC SCC Management Cttees	Achieved
3. Provide a single Borough Council contact for all Centres issues	GBC	Achieved
4. Provide faster response times for minor building repairs and maintenance	GBC	Ongoing
5. Highlight and resolve problem regarding procurement of capital monies for works	GBC SCC	Ongoing
6. Resolve problems regarding GACC's use of the Guildford Centre	GBC SCC GACC	Ongoing
7. Meet with all interested parties to produce a way forward regarding maximising community use at the Stoughton Centre	GBC SCC Management Cttees Community Assocs	Achieved

8. Produce an information sheet regarding what facilities are available at each Centre and how to book	GBC Management Cttees	Ongoing
9. Input into review of the Constitutions of the Centre	GBC SCC Management Cttees	Ongoing
11. Look at energy conservation issues at each Centre	GBC	March 2002
12. Set up performance indicators and targets for each Centre	GBC SCC Management Cttees	Dec 2001
13. Continue to address issues as they arise	GBC SCC Management Cttees	Ongoing