Community Buildings Strategy Version 2

for Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
January 2017

Basingstoke and Deane

Contents

1. Foreword – Portfolio Holder for Partnerships

2. Introduction
   - What is a community building?
   - Why have community buildings?
   - Why do we need a Strategy?

3. Our vision and objectives for community buildings

4. Turning objectives into reality

   Objective A: To have a network of community buildings that are in the right place

   Objective B: To achieve appropriate provision of community buildings that are fit for purpose and provide value for money for their community

   Objective C: To enable buildings to be developed and managed by the community for the community

5. Delivering the plan

6. Policy Context
   - National Policy
   - Council Plans and Strategies
   - Local Plans

7. Supporting documents

Foreword

People make communities, but people need places to go. In most thriving communities there is a building that provides a focus for activity, information and social interaction.

This strategy recognises the importance of such places and will help the council and other providers of community buildings to ensure that investment in our community infrastructure is based on sound principles. We know that many existing buildings are of an age and condition where decisions need to be made about how or indeed whether, they can continue to fulfil the needs of their community. We also know that over the coming few years the population of the borough will increase and the demographics of the borough will change. Planning for the long term future needs of the borough is essential and this strategy will help to guide investment decisions to generate the best outcomes.

Our community buildings are used by a wide selection of the population and are run by hundreds of volunteers, happy to give their time to make sure the people of their community have somewhere to go. We want communities to continue to have such places, providing the sorts of activities and services they value and which are so vital to many.

Portfolio Holder- Partnerships

<div align="center">

Introduction

</div>

What is a community building?

A community building is a building that is open to the whole community, run for public benefit, and is a focus for neighbourhood activity and involvement. These buildings provide a range of locally based social, recreational, cultural and educational activities as well as volunteering opportunities.

The scope of community buildings for the purpose of this strategy covers:

- community centres
- village and parish halls
- community schools
- church halls

Basingstoke and Deane is currently served by 92 facilities that meet the definition and scope of community buildings. Twenty five buildings are community centres owned by the council and leased to community associations. The number of visits to these centres alone is over 715,000 per year; it is reasonable to assume that visits to all community buildings in the borough easily exceed 1million.

Circumstances which may lead to consideration of new community buildings include where existing facilities are beyond economic repair or fail to meet legislative safety and quality standards, where opportunities exist for neighbourhood regeneration and where significant new housing development generates a need based on the increase in the local population.

This strategy does not consider sport and leisure facilities or pavilions used solely for sports use, since these are considered in the Strategic Plan for Sport and Recreation in Basingstoke and Deane, adopted by the council in 2011. However it does recognise that there are often opportunities for the co-location of community and sports provision, and where appropriate this will be encouraged.

Why have community buildings?

The value of community buildings is widely recognised by the council. The council plan 2013-17 has one of its priorities as 'Supporting active, healthy and involved communities' and there is a commitment that we will work to deliver improved access to community facilities where needed.

The activities and services hosted in our community buildings are varied and include:

- Pre-school provision
- Youth clubs
- Older people's clubs /activities
- Adult and community learning
- Health clinics

- Social gatherings such as coffee mornings
- Community meetings and events
- Provision for special interest and faith groups

This range of services not only provides specific support for residents with particular needs and interests but offers opportunities for volunteering, both through involvement in running the community centre and in supporting the diverse range of activities provided from it. For those who choose not to participate in activities from the centre, community buildings are nevertheless generally highly valued for the contribution they make to the life of many residents.

Why do we need a Strategy?

This strategy provides a framework to guide decisions on whether new facilities should be provided or what the priority for investment in existing facilities should be. As the borough's population grows and the community infrastructure needs to change, it is essential to take a strategic view that ensures the right facilities are in the right locations to meet community need, and that they offer value for money for their relevant community. There also needs to be an appropriate level of support and advice to those organisations managing buildings for the benefit of their local communities.

Whilst this strategy focuses in the main on community assets owned by the borough council, a holistic approach has been taken which will consider the mapping of assets owned by other public bodies as well as the voluntary/community sector, and the community services they provide.

This strategy examines the need for community facilities and reviews the current provision in relation to this need. It sets out principles to inform decisions about investment in community buildings and in the services and activities they can accommodate, so they can meet community needs, achieve optimum use of the resources and deliver value for money.

1.

Vision and objectives for community buildings

Vision

Our vision is to have an enhanced community infrastructure across the borough and a strong network of people that supports the delivery of services and activities to meet community needs and contribute to wider community outcomes.

Community buildings should aim to provide services that meet the needs of local people across all ages, abilities and interests and should be available to as many residents as reasonably possible. This means being accessible in terms of:

• the building's distance relative to where people live and how they travel;
• the physical location within the community and the design of the building;
• the ability to offer a programme of community activity that appeals to as many local people as possible.

These aspirations are presented as three objectives:

Objectives

1. To have a network of community buildings that are in the right place
2. To achieve appropriate provision of community buildings that are fit for purpose and provide value for money for their community
3. To enable buildings to be developed and managed by the community for the community.

The underpinning principles for each objective are set out in the following chapter.

Turning objectives into reality

Objective A
To have a network of community buildings that are in the right place.

Where are we now?

The current spatial distribution of community buildings is very varied. There is at least one community building in each ward, and many communities in urban and rural areas have more than one local facility available for community use. Some have a number of buildings in close proximity to each other.

New community provision is generally generated by new housing development. New development may shift the distribution and characteristics of the local population meaning existing facilities are no longer in the best location or cannot serve the changing needs of the community. Regeneration schemes may have a similar impact.

Where do we want to be? Our policy principles are:

A1	Everyone in the borough should live within 15 minutes of a community building; in the urban areas and larger rural settlements this should be a 15 minutes' walk, in rural areas this should be an 15 minutes' drive.
A2	Any decision by the council relating to the provision of community buildings arising from housing growth, regeneration schemes or potential rationalisation of provision, should be taken following an options appraisal. This would consider amongst other things whether refurbishing or extending an existing facility is worthwhile, or a new larger building may be more advantageous to a wider community than the existing provision within the relevant catchment area (where land to build such a facility exists or can be obtained).
A3	Consideration should be given to enabling no/low cost travel options for people to reach community buildings through the provision of safe footpaths and cycle ways and easy access to bus routes.
A4	All new community buildings should be situated close to other community amenities where possible (shops, recreation areas etc.) to form part of a hub for community activity and social interaction and minimise disruption to residents.
A5	Funding sources such as S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy should be secured and allocated towards the infrastructure needs arising from new housing and devolved where possible to local decision making bodies.

How are we going to get there?

1. Map existing facilities to identify the catchment of each facility (15 minute radius) and identify areas of potential over and under supply in order to identify short, medium and long term issues for the borough.

2. Identify areas with a specific facility or number of small and ageing facilities which require significant investment and review whether it would be more beneficial to build a new community building in a more suitable location and that is flexible enough to accommodate a wider range of activity.

3. Prioritise resources (officer time, finance) to develop proposals for community buildings, where regeneration schemes are proposed or where a building's poor condition means that a strategic options appraisal is required.

4. Work with community planning groups, community associations and community decision making representatives (parish and town councils, ward members, neighbourhood partnerships etc.) to seek views on their local community buildings when developing their community plans.

5. Ensure options and implications for community buildings are considered at early stages of regeneration projects and that consultation is built in at relevant intervals.

6. Encourage collaborative working between different sectors so that new community buildings are developed as part of community hubs where possible, linking with other services i.e. sports facilities, libraries, health etc.

7. Seek to secure the provision of safe footpaths, cycle ways, and easy access to bus routes when new facilities are developed and encourage all agencies involved in planning for new developments to recognise the importance of such links.

8. Extend the principle of devolving funding for local community infrastructure to the distribution of funds secured through CIL and New Homes Bonus where appropriate.

Case study
Objective A: To have a network of buildings that are in the right place.

The Policy Principles under this Objective focus on how community buildings relate to the people they are intended to serve. It is important to know the geographic spread of facilities and the catchment from which people come to use the facilities. It is also helpful to understand the characteristics of people using the buildings in order to help inform decision making about whether community buildings are in the right place. This case study highlights one way of gathering such information.

Case study - Developing community buildings user profiles

Project details

Over a period of one month in 2011, surveys were undertaken in eight venues in various parts of Basingstoke town and in three venues in the larger rural settlements. At each venue, the postcodes of all users were recorded, grouped by the broad time of day / week and the activity in which they were taking part – a total of more than 4,800 postcodes throughout the 11 venues.

Where they were located within Hampshire, these postcodes were used to cross-relate to each of the 15 demographic Mosaic Groups (a system for classification of UK households) that were most prolific with each postcode. This enables not only the geographic distribution of the users to be mapped in relation to the facility, but also provides the number (and percentage) of users who can be expected to fall within each Mosaic Group. From the geographic distribution, the walking and/or drive time to the facility can be ascertained, cross-related to the most prolific Mosaic Group within each recorded postcode.

This work is ongoing and will eventually be available for all community buildings surveyed, but one which has been analysed so far is Popley Fields Community Centre. Postcodes were collected from a total of 648 users. The characteristic Mosaic Groups from each postcode were recorded and compared to the ward and borough profiles; the most prevalent groups were:

Group	Group description	% Users of Popley Fields	% in Popley East Ward	% in Borough
Group K	Residents with sufficient incomes in right to buy council houses	22.1%	44.5%	10.1%
Group J	Owner occupiers in older style housing in ex-industrial areas	12.5%	18.4%	6.6%
Group I	Lower income workers in urban terraces in often diverse areas	11.7%	8.3%	2.0%

From this table, it can be seen that compared with the Mosaic distribution within the borough as a whole, Popley Fields Community Centre attracts a relatively high proportion of residents from Group K households, whereas compared with the local area of Popley East Ward, Group K users represent only half the share that might be expected.

With Group J, the position is similar, but to a slightly lesser extent. Group I, on the other hand, displays a level of representation which is higher than might be expected in both ward and borough.

The attached map extract (Appendix 1) clearly shows the relatively high proportion of users of Popley Fields Community Centre who are residents of Popley East Ward, most of whom are living in postcodes where the majority of households fall within Mosaic Groups I, J and K. This detail can be used to assist marketing and programming of the centre as well as informing decisions about investment in the building based on evidence of where people come from to use the centre.

<u>Outcomes</u>

The use of profiling techniques will help the council to consider whether community facilities are in the right place and the programme of activities serve their local population. This data will assist any options appraisals to be carried out when considering opportunities for providing new or improving existing buildings.

Objective B

To achieve appropriate provision of community buildings that are fit for purpose and provide value for money for their communities.

Where are we now?

There is a wide variance in the age and condition of existing buildings. Many of the older buildings, particularly in rural areas, do not have the benefits of modern construction methods and building systems, which not only affects the comfort for the users but also has a financial impact on the cost of running the building, particularly with regard to heating. A recent self-assessment from the organisations running the facilities showed that 71% regarded the external condition of their facilities as being good or excellent condition, 27 % as satisfactory and 2% as poor. Internal condition was rated by 75% of organisations as being good or excellent, 20% as satisfactory and 5% as poor. Therefore the priority for maintenance in the short term should be on those facilities deemed poor and also give attention to those buildings deemed satisfactory to ensure that they don't decline to a poor condition.

The majority of buildings are less than 500sq m in size and typically consist of a main hall, kitchen area, toilets, and a small meeting room. The 14 community centres larger than 500sq m have additional spaces such as social areas (some with bars), nurseries, dedicated youth rooms and offices. The larger centres generally have more scope to accommodate different activities and therefore are better able to meet a wider range of community needs and be financially sustainable.

When considering new, extended or replacement facilities, the exact mix of accommodation would need to be determined by what is driving the need, such as population growth and what other provision is already within the catchment area.

As decisions are made about how best to invest in the facilities in the borough, the primary consideration has to be whether existing buildings can continue to meet the needs of the local community and whether they are, or can be, economically and environmentally sustainable in the longer term. These factors will influence

whether it is most advantageous to maintain and improve existing buildings, to consider alternative new provision, or to enhance a nearby facility with no direct replacement (providing community needs can still be met in accordance with accessibility principles).

The fundamental aim is that buildings are fit for purpose and can effectively serve the community in its catchment area. A value for money judgement would have to be based on the relative importance of that facility in the community it serves.

The council has made funding available to support the provision or improvement of community buildings. These include the Leisure Facilities and Community Building Capital Grants Scheme (applications up to a maximum of £25,000), Section 106 funds available for facilities in the areas of new housing development and council capital funds for major enhancements or new build projects. Other streams of funding include the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and New Homes Bonus.

Where do we want to be? Our policy principles are:

B1	All new community buildings should be specified with the highest appropriate energy efficiency measures; management committees of existing buildings should be encouraged to improve energy efficiency where possible, with funding sought from all available grant sources.
B2	A standard specification for key building systems and common fixtures and fittings should be developed for all new council owned community facilities to improve efficiency of maintenance and long term asset management.
B3	Management committees of community buildings assessed as being in poor or satisfactory condition should be encouraged to review options with appropriate stakeholders for investment, relocation or other intervention to avoid the need for decisions made in a crisis.
B4	All existing community buildings should be as accessible to people with disabilities as reasonably possible and all new buildings must be designed to meet all appropriate access standards.
B5	New community buildings should be designed so that internal reconfiguration or expansion could be achieved with relative ease to meet changing demands in the future wherever possible.
B6	New community buildings should be designed with adequate storage as well as flexible and multi-functional to facilitate as wide a range of activities as possible.
B7	The potential inclusion of integrated youth facilities should be investigated for all new community buildings and, where the evidence supports such provision, youth facilities must be included; priority should also be given to extending existing community buildings to accommodate youth facilities where evidence supports such provision.

B8	Community halls should not generally be required to accommodate sports such as badminton, volleyball or football as these are best suited to purpose built sports halls, however halls suitable for martial arts, short mat bowls, table tennis, dance, fitness sessions and similar activities should be considered during feasibility.
B9	Capital grants from the council for existing facilities should be prioritised to schemes that increase accessibility and that improve environmental sustainability, with appropriate consideration given to value for money in relation to the particular facility and its catchment community.
B10	New community buildings will not usually include permanent bar facilities for use as trading arms (i.e. Social Clubs)', which, for the avoidance of doubt means: • existing facilities currently with permanent bars trading as social clubs would continue to operate within their agreed governance arrangements • existing community buildings without permanent bars would not be able to introduce permanent bar facilities to trade as social clubs. • all existing and new community facilities would be able to provide bar facilities for the sale of alcohol for events and associated activities, as long as a premises license is in place.

How are we going to get there?

1. Identify opportunities at council owned community buildings for investment in energy saving measures.

2. Develop a standard specification for key building systems and common fixtures and fittings for all new council owned community buildings.

3. Support management committees to develop maintenance strategies within their business plans through training as appropriate.

4. Ensure key principles relating to energy performance, access, flexibility, youth requirements and other essential provisions are included in the architect's brief at the appointment stage to ensure they are a fundamental requirement of the building specification.

5. Review the criteria and decision making process for the council's capital grants to ensure priority is given to those facilities that seek to increase accessibility and improve environmental sustainability.

6. Identify opportunities for integrated youth facilities and where appropriate these should be developed.

Case Study

Objective B: To achieve appropriate provision of community buildings that are fit for purpose and provide value for money for their communities.

One of the key principles in this Strategy (Policy Principle B1) is to encourage energy efficiency, which is one indicator of whether a building is fit for purpose and providing value for money. This example shows how one centre has reaped benefit from its energy saving measures.

Case study – Improving energy efficiency at Westside Community Centre

Project details

The need to reduce energy usage and costs was high on the agenda at Westside Community Centre in South Ham. With support from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Hampshire County Council, together with additional fundraising, the community centre installed double glazed windows, upgraded the heating system by converting from oil to gas and replaced the lighting to energy efficient lighting. These new measures were projected to save over £43,000 over five years, which will enable the association to embark on new long term sustainable community projects.

Direct benefits:
- Reduced overhead costs to the community association;
- Reduced pressure to increase room hire charge, meaning the centre can be more competitive in the market;
- Reinvestment of funds that would have otherwise been spent on energy or utilities; and
- Reduced carbon dioxide emissions

Indirect benefits:
- Demonstrates visible action to the general public, leading to interest in energy saving measures; and
- Changes people's thought pattern through practical action.

Westside Community Centre has also adopted other practical energy saving measures and promote energy efficiency through an awareness campaign involving user groups. Opportunities include:
- Turning off lighting when not required;
- Keeping windows and doors shut during the heating season;
- Turning off equipment as soon as not required (e.g. ovens, computers);
- Draw curtains at dusk to reduce heat loss through the windows, installing curtains or blinds on all the windows and re-hanging curtains in the social club so as to cover the whole window area and fall behind the radiator vents;
- Finding (or installing if necessary) and using room thermostats; and

- Using thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) to ensure all rooms are at a comfortable temperature appropriate to the activity/room use.

Outcomes

Evidence elsewhere has shown that in many instances where organisations have been monitoring energy costs and consumption, savings of between 5-10% have been achieved. In the first year following the improvements to Westside Community Centre, the Association has achieved savings of £5,612, which is in line with forecasts for the period.

This project demonstrates the benefits of investing in energy saving measures in community buildings.

Objective C
To enable buildings to be developed and managed by the community for the community.

Where are we now?

In Basingstoke and Deane there is a long tradition of communities being involved in identifying the need for a local facility, influencing the design and taking responsibility for the day to day management of the building.

Village halls are managed either by independent trusts or parish councils. Church halls generally operate under the direction of the church diocese and community facilities in community schools are managed by community management committees, a sub group of the school's governing body. Community centres tend to be managed by community associations.

For those buildings owned by the council, management responsibility is transferred via a lease, with shared maintenance liabilities. As at 2013, those without a bar facility enjoy a peppercorn rent, while those with bars (Rucstall, Irish Centre and Oakridge West) receive 75% rent subsidy unless they meet criteria to entitle them to a 100% subsidy (Westside and Fieldgate).

Many of the leases have been in place a long time and it is suggested a programme of review be implemented in consultation with the management committees (tenants) to ensure the terms achieve the best outcomes for the council as well as ensuring the safeguards and support needed by the communities to run the buildings effectively.

All community buildings rely on the involvement of volunteers as trustees and in various operational roles, with some supported by paid staff to carry out functions such as administration, cleaning, caretaking and youth work. In a few centres, centre managers are employed by the management organisation, whose primary role is to support community development activity from the building and within the community.

In order to assist local communities manage their community buildings and develop their programmes of community activity it is important that relevant advice and support is available. There are various sources of information, including the Charities Commission and national community sector organisations to county and local level voluntary services advisors.

The council, through its community development team, is also a primary source of support for the borough's community organisations, with advice covering issues such as governance, safeguarding, health and safety, training opportunities, community consultation, external funding, and linking with different agencies and providers. For example, the introduction of a new governance model designed specifically for small community organisations, regulated by the Charities Commission would appear to offer a more advantageous arrangement for organisations running community buildings, and it is considered that existing groups should be advised to consider a transfer to this model. However, this cannot be achieved without making information available and providing training for those interested, which is a role currently fulfilled by the council in partnership with the Basingstoke Learning Partnership. With increasing focus on Localism and local level decision making, it is anticipated the need for this type of support will continue.

Other revenue budgets supporting community development activities and projects from community buildings are available and reviewed annually in line with the council budget process. For council owned facilities, provision is made within annual revenue budgets via the asset management plan to fulfil the council's obligations under the lease for its building maintenance responsibilities.

Local involvement and management of facilities is seen as an important characteristic of communities in the borough.

Where do we want to be? Our policy principles are:

C1	The community should be involved at the earliest opportunity to influence and inform proposals for improvements to existing community buildings or for new community provision, with consultation carried out at key stages of development.
C2	Council owned community buildings should continue to be locally managed under part-repairing lease arrangements, with the council retaining responsibility for the building structure; the council will continue not to directly operate or manage community buildings
C3	Leases should generally be for a minimum of 21 years to enable management organisations to seek external funding and plan for the long term benefits to their community, with exceptions made where there are specific issues relating to the building structure; the council will continue not to directly operate or manage community buildings.
C4	Current leases granted by the council should be reviewed with community associations to explore, where possible, reducing the council's liabilities while maintaining safeguards for community organisations managing the buildings.
C5	It is recommended that management organisations set up for new community buildings should be established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, regulated by the Charities Commission; existing community associations should be encouraged to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

C6	All organisations responsible for community buildings should be supported to obtain relevant information and advice to assist their governance, management arrangements and business planning; such support is currently available through newsletters, websites, training programmes and community networks coordinated by the council's Community Development Team.
C7	Management organisations should be encouraged to ensure they are representative of the communities they serve and have ways of engaging with local residents and interest groups to help inform the activities and services provided from their community buildings.
C8	The concept of community clusters should be developed, where a number of close local facilities are encouraged to coordinate their programmes, avoid duplication and share resources where appropriate.
C9	The council should facilitate the development of opportunities that bring different funding partners together to enable the employment of staff (eg youth workers) or enhance services that meet local need.
C10	Funding for community schools should be limited to those that evidence community development outcomes and be monitored and reviewed annually
C11	In situations where there is clear evidence that staffing will enhance development activity and improve the long term financial viability of the centre, Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy money should be used or other revenue funding sought as pump priming funds to support the employment of a centre manager and other staff.
C12	Opportunities to provide joint services or meet the accommodation needs of other agencies delivering local services (e.g. health care, children's centres, pre-schools) should be explored as part of the feasibility work relating to new community buildings.

How are we going to get there?

1. Ensure there is a plan to consult and engage with communities about improvement to existing facilities and designing new facilities as an integral part of project development.

2. Develop a programme of review of leases in consultation with community associations to ensure the leases are up to date and that the provisions of the lease ensure the buildings are maintained effectively and efficiently.

3. Support management committees to review their governance arrangements to ensure they are the most appropriate for their circumstances.

4. Provide specific training in areas of governance, health & safety, employment of staff, business planning etc. through the Basingstoke Learning Partnership.

5.   Encourage management committees to engage with local residents in order to gain a better understanding of the activities and services required by the local community e.g. as evidenced in community led plans.

6.   Investigate / develop where appropriate community clusters to coordinate community programmes and share resources to avoid duplication and extend reach.

7.   Identify centres that would benefit from pump priming to employ staff to enhance development activity and improve the long term financial viability.

8.   Where potential new community facilities have been identified, ensure opportunities for joint accommodation and services are explored with other agencies at the earliest stage of feasibility.

Case Study
Objective C: To enable buildings to be developed and managed by the community for the community.

Policy Principles C9 and C11 advocate the use of different funding sources to support the employment of staff (eg Youth workers) and centre managers. The following 2 case studies show where this has already been successfully achieved in the borough.

Case study C(a) – Collaborative working to employ a youth projects leader

Project details

In 2012 a partnership was formed between three community organisations: Popley Fields Community Association in Popley, Sherfield Park Community Association in Chineham and Clift Meadow Trust in Bramley. The purpose of this partnership was to share resources in order to employ a youth projects leader who would work across the three organisations and, working closely with the Council's Community Development Officer, develop youth provision in the three communities.

The shared funds enabled the partnership to create a more substantial post than any one of the organisations could support on their own, which led to a high calibre youth professional being recruited who had the skills necessary to develop the three projects across disparate communities.

Outcomes

Activities for young people across the three areas developed significantly over the first 12 months of the Youth Projects Leader being in post. The creation of the post also attracted £19,500 of external funding.

At the end of the 12 month pilot period all three organisations had found the partnership to be of great benefit and the pilot was hailed a success. A new agreement was entered into for a further year, with Bramley Parish Council taking over from the Clift Meadow Trust as the partner organisation for Bramley. All three community organisations are working together well and there is scope to further expand the partnership.

Case Study C(b) - Pilot Centre Manager Initiative - Westside Community Association

Project Details

In January 2009, a decision was taken to pilot a scheme whereby the council provided funding for the employment of a centre manager (full time) at Westside Community Centre.

Funding towards the cost of employing a centre manager was made available as follows:

Year 1   100% funding up to a maximum of £21,550

Year 2   66% funding up to a maximum of £14,650

Year 3   33% funding up to a maximum of £7,550

Year 4   Fully funded by community association through increased income from lettings due to extra services and activities being provided through the work of the centre manager

The following criteria were used to assess the development of the centres during this pilot:

- Financial turnover – (profitability)
- Use of the centre - footfall through the door & the range of services and activities being provided
- Number of trustees and volunteers
- New skills gained by trustees, volunteers and staff
- Numbers participating in adult education
- Use by black, minority and ethnic groups
- Growth in number of partnerships

Outcomes

There is evidence that the employment of a centre manager has generated significant benefit:

- During the pilot scheme, working alongside the committee, the centre manager at Westside Community Centre was able to substantially increase the usage of the centre. Within the first six months, the usage increased from 11% to 47% (defined as hours occupied Mon - Fri 9am to 9pm). On completion of the three year scheme the centre was operating with an average usage of 78%. The centres with 70% or more of programmed activities and services during weekdays are generally considered to be running around capacity.

- In the period prior to the employment of a centre manager (2008/09) Westside Community Association made a loss of approximately £1,500 a year. However, since beginning the pilot scheme and the introduction

of financial controls, the association has made an increasing surplus year on year and their turnover has increased by over 200%.

- Running effectively, making efficiencies where needed and maintaining their existing regular hirers, the association is able to support the role of a Centre Manager without further grant funding and became self-financing at the end of the three year pilot project.

- Membership to the association increased by approximately 5% as part of a membership campaign.

- The number of volunteers and Community trustees has increased by 66 people (4 new Trustees and 62 new volunteers)

- Since the introduction of the centre manager, Westside Community Centre has become more of a 'hub' of the community; offering a broad range of activities and services to local residents. These include:

  - ➢ Operating a Snow Crisis Line
  - ➢ Coordinating aand production of the South Ham Newsletter,
  - ➢ Managing the Westside Seniors Club /Befriending Service.

Delivering the plan

How will it be delivered?

The council in partnership with management committees of the community buildings and other key stakeholders as relevant are responsible for delivering the plan. The plan will be widely circulated to all key partners and those responsible for managing community buildings across the borough. Management committees will be encouraged to support the delivery of the plan to meet current and future needs. The council will lead on advocating the use of the plan as a key reference document for any group or organisation looking to develop existing facilities or develop new facilities.

The plan is accompanied by an action plan setting out the work activities required to progress key elements on a three year rolling programme.

Policy Context

This strategy has been informed by a range of policies that have helped shaped the vision, objectives and key policy principles.

National Policy

There are a range of policies influencing the way in which our community facilities are provided and managed. The Government has called upon the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and small private sector enterprises to play an increasing

role in the delivery of public services, as their objectives for 'Big Society' and plans for a reduction in state provision progress.

The main policies impacting on the role and future of the VCS and affecting the council's relationship with the sector are:

- Big Society – this is the outcome the government aims to achieve by enabling local councils and neighbourhoods to take decisions about their area, by encouraging local charities, social enterprises and VCS organisations to deliver public services and by encouraging local people to play a more active role in society by volunteering and philanthropic giving.

- Open Public Services White Paper (July 2011)[1] – this paper sets out how the government intends to reduce public sector service delivery by reforming the planning and delivery of what it defines as 'individual services', 'neighbourhood services' and large scale 'commissioned services' by encouraging local councils, local charities or social enterprises to take control.

- Localism – the new Localism Act (November 2011)[2] provides the legislative foundations for decentralising power to the lowest possible level, including individuals,
neighbourhoods, communities and other local institutions. It has far reaching implications for how services are shaped, delivered and managed. This Act includes the Community Right to Bid which provides an opportunity for community organisations to bid to take over facilities that are important to them and the Community Right to Challenge which offers communities and the bodies that represent them the opportunity to express an interest in running services on behalf of the local authority.

- Best Value Guidance - Guidance on the new Best Value Duty sets out some expectations of the way authorities should work with voluntary and community groups and small businesses when facing difficult funding decisions. It gives a new, clear prominence to requirements on dealing with the voluntary and community sector and small businesses and aims to reduce the barriers that can prevent voluntary organisations competing for local authority contracts. Government policy regarding community buildings and facilities, promoted by both the previous and present Governments, has been to encourage Asset Transfer[3]. Successful transfers are seen as a means for more innovative use of facilities and an opportunity to open up new funding opportunities.

---

[1] http://files.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/OpenPublicServices-WhitePaper.pdf

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf

[3] Asset Transfer is defined as the transfer of the interest/ownership in buildings or land from the public sector to a locally accountable community organisation. The transfer can be a lease (but a substantial one) or freehold. The Local Government Act 1972 General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 allows local authorities to transfer land and buildings at less than market value, whether on a lease or freehold basis, where this 'would help to secure the promotion of improvements of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area'.

Council Plans and Strategies

The strategy considers the wider aims and priorities of the council in the context of:

- The Council Plan
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Local Plan
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Environmental Sustainability
- Asset Management Plan

This strategy will ensure that the council's portfolio of community buildings supports the services required by residents and community groups in the long term, as well as remaining cost effective and fit for purpose.

The importance of community buildings is also recognised in the Local Plan through policy statements that seek to ensure the impact on community infrastructure is addressed appropriately when considering new developments.

Community & Neighbourhood Plans

Many communities have developed their own community plans, setting out the vision and aspirations for their own areas. Some also have a neighbourhood plan, which focusses on the planning issues and identifies the type of development they wish to see in their area. This strategy recognises the value of these locally led plans.

Supporting documents

A range of supporting information has informed this Strategy.

The following schedules are available on the council's website:

> Demographic Information
> Summary of consultation findings on the principles
> Condition audit of community buildings
> Community Plans
> List of community buildings

Appendix 1 – Popley Field Community centre – user survey summary
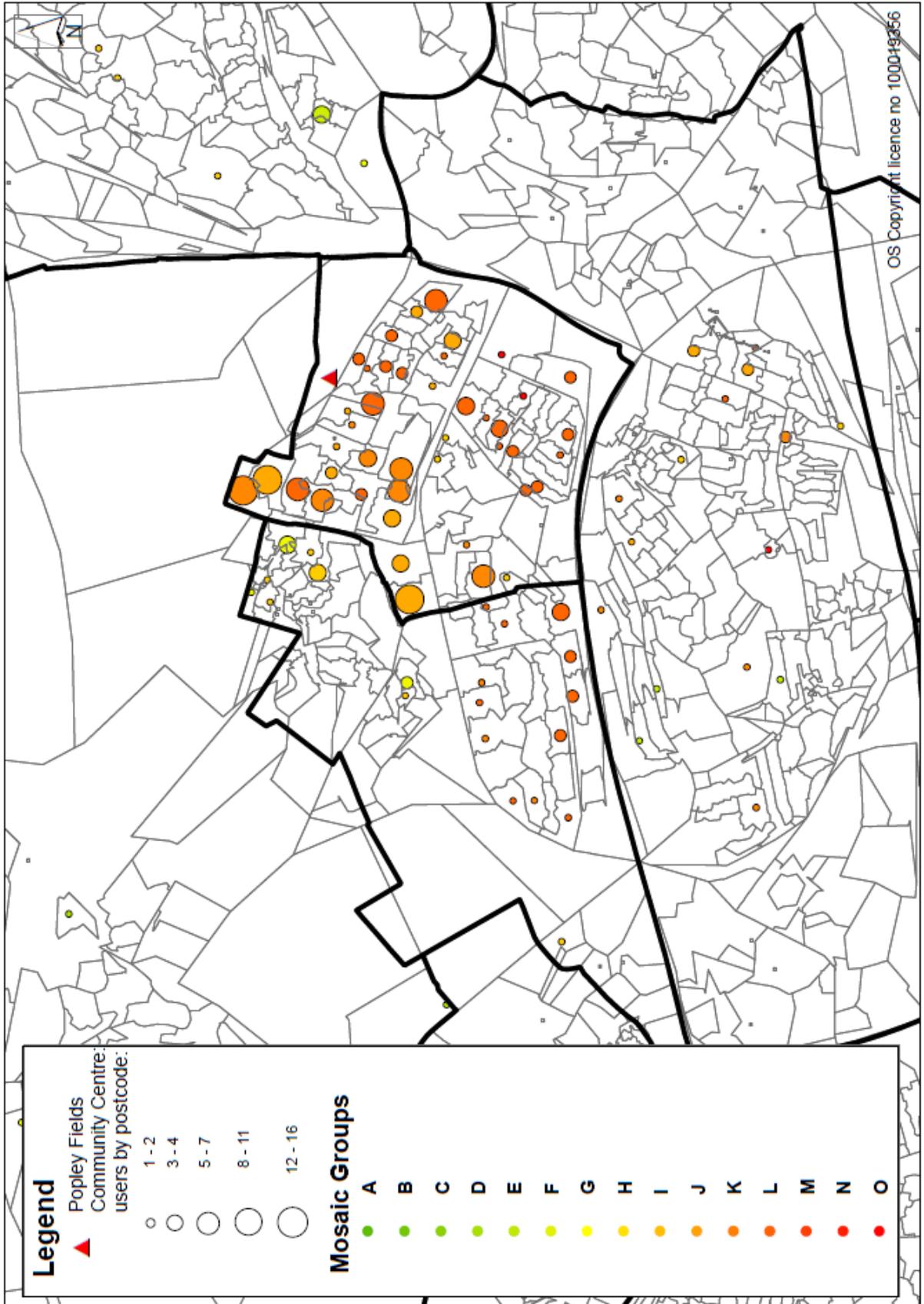
www.basingstoke.gov.uk | 01256 844844

customer.service@basingstoke.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter: BasingstokeGov

If you need this information in a different format, for example large print, CD or braille, please contact the council.

recycle

XXXXX_0116