



Co-operative Compact Community Centres and Associations

I. Introduction

The review of community centres started in 2017, sponsored through the council's Co-operative Neighbourhood Management Programme.

This initial review built upon previous reviews undertaken in 2003 and 2008. The review explored current operations across all sites and utilised Stevenage Community Association Network meetings to better understand some of the joint challenges and future opportunities. Community Associations were also invited to complete a questionnaire on current operations. This was combined with desk-based research via Companies House and the Charity Commission. Based on this feedback and direct engagement with Community Centres via the community development team strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were captured to help summarise the findings.

Summary of Analysis

The review clearly identified the need to ensure stronger less reliant community centres while improving the ability of centres to adapt and change to community needs in their neighbourhoods. The review highlighted the social value community associations bring to the town, and the importance of community centred delivery. The review also highlighted the potential reliance on more commercial activities as opposed to community functions in order to maintain income levels. The review gave clear consideration to the co-location of alcohol related venues on community centre sites and the need for community centres to be bastions of community health and wellbeing as well as community activities.

The review clearly identified the need to ensure more sustainable community centres, less reliant on council support whilst improving the ability of centres to adapt and change to meet community needs across neighbourhoods. The review gave clear consideration to the conflict between permanent bars within some centres and broader community, health and wellbeing objectives, particularly in relation to the commitments contained within the Healthy Stevenage Strategy.

The review also highlighted a lack of engagement and innovation across centres in involving young people in centre service design and delivery, often leading to young people feeling isolated in local community centre delivery.

The review highlighted some of the current innovation and good practice within community centres and associations, reflecting on the following themes from across the community centre estate:

1. There are good examples of where community coffee shops and cafes have been introduced to bolster income and provide informal meeting spaces to local community, increasing diversity, footfall and access to other groups and services
2. In some locations new community buildings or extensions supported by the council have provided associations with opportunities to reconfigure the community offer and provide a wider variety of engagement opportunities
3. Governance across some community associations has been strengthened by partnership working in areas such as GDPR, HR and finance
4. Several community centres have busy and vibrant programmes of activity led by the local community, this model enables the centres to fully understand and adapt to community needs

The review considered learning from elsewhere and explored existing delivery models, that may be considered in the Stevenage context;

1. Community hubs – as neighbourhood service delivery points for a range of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and public services, such as health care and housing support
2. Community ownership – Community Asset Transfer of sites to individual groups
3. VCS infrastructure – The development of an overarching trust for the management and operation of all community buildings
4. Cooperative models – Partnership models between local authorities and community organisations to drive effective operational models and social dividend for local communities

As part of the review process a Policy Advisory Session was held with members chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety and Equalities.

- The session highlighted the need to consult with the town's residents on their needs and aspirations for 21st century community buildings in Stevenage. This is deemed essential to set the vision.
- The feedback reflected the need to develop a cooperative approach to engaging with existing community associations in the consultation and development of new models for community centre delivery and the need to address some of the operational challenges presented as part of this exercise.
- The feedback highlighted the importance of community based buildings in Stevenage in achieving social cohesion, cultural development and access to specialist services, highlighting the commitment of Stevenage as a cooperative council in building stronger communities.
- The Community Centre Review has focussed primarily on current governance and operations. This work informs the Locality Reviews as part of the Asset Management Strategy. Locality Reviews will help to determine a longer-term approach to the provision and management of council owned assets across the town. The reviews will inform the council's capital programme moving forwards.
- The review created an opportunity to engage with the Cooperative Council

Innovation Network in exploring potential models for Stevenage based on learning and delivery in other councils where changes to community centre delivery models have or are in the process of being made.

The Co-operative Compact

In response to the review the co-operative compact is a partnership deal between community associations and Stevenage Borough Council tied to final year grant payments allowing full and detailed co-operation on the future models for community centre delivery alongside wider community consultation.

Aims

1. To enable co-operative working between Stevenage Borough Council and Community Associations managing community venues
2. To define clear expectations for the resolution of any difficulties in consultation on the future structure and delivery of community centre services
3. To provide a mechanism to enable the Co-operative Compact Group to respond formally to the review of community centre services

Scope

Exploring and developing possible solutions acceptable to both parties can improve understanding and help build stronger relationships. The co-operative compact partnership will work together to identify recommendations acceptable to both parties on the future delivery, management and structure of community centre services. As part of the compact it is important that there is an effective way to reach joint decisions on future structures and possible implementation methods. By committing to it, organisations are agreeing to work together for the benefit of communities in Stevenage in a constructive manner.

As with any process that deals with change, the aim will always be to ensure efficient resolution, preferably informally, for all parties concerned. The process should be comprehensive enough to respond to all aspects of community consultation without being burdensome for partners. The process should be focused on improving outcomes for the communities as a whole.

Commitments 2019

Stevenage Borough Council commitment for 2019:

- Provide Community Development support
- Continue to provide a final year of rent exemption
- Continue to pay compliance costs
- Continue to pay R&M costs
- Give a final delivery grant

In return Community Associations will:

- Participate as active members of the CCP
- Work with us to develop the future vision for community centres
- Ensure that they meet their governance and legal obligations
- Limit the sale of alcohol on premises to private bookings not totalling more than 20% of weekly community usage

II. Partnership approach



Working together to achieve results

- The partnership will be reasonable, understanding it takes time for all partners to adapt the way they work to make sure they meet the Compact requirements.
- The partnership will be realistic as well as identifying problems, the partnership will think about possible solutions that are SMART based.
- The partnership will bear in mind that compact partners may start from different positions in relation to an end result, and will give time and space for partners to explore solutions, understanding the importance of diversity within the group
- The partnership understand that final year grant payments will be allocated based on the involvement in the compact group
- The partnership expect that not all partners may wish to take part in compact discussions and negotiations, but that final models or recommendations may still have a direct effect on these partners

Dealing with disagreement or conflict

As with all partnership work that deals with change, we will aim as a collective to ensure all voices are listened to within the compact process; however it is also understood that disagreements may take place. The compact partnership will aim to deal with disagreements in professional and supportive manner, listening to alternate views and accepting that final recommendations may not fully suit every compact member.

At the end of the process a final vote will take place on the recommendations moving forward, this vote will be a majority agreement vote. Where compact members disagree with the final vote they will have a right to reply in the form of a letter attached to the final report.

Wider community consultation and focus groups

***See consultation scoping document**

III. Compact Process

Stage One - Co-operative Compact Partnership

- The Co-operative Compact Partnership (CCP) will replace the current SCAN group
- The CCP will meet quarterly during the compact year for 4 special consultation and planning workshops (Jan, March, June and October 2019), each lasting from 9.30am – 1.00pm.
- Co-operative Compact Partnership sessions will be structured around achieving agreement on future direction of services; understanding that results may not deliver a one size fits all solution. The partnership will reflect upon wider community consultation taking place, but will not seek to influence consultation outcomes or solutions
- The CCP understand that the status quo in the delivery of community centre services is not an option moving forward and that innovative thinking and realistic responses will be required to achieve recommendations alongside wider community consultation.

Stage two – Co-operative compact final report

- The CCP with the support of Stevenage Borough Council will produce a final report of recommendations to inform decision making on future delivery, structure and operations within the area of community centre management
- The CCP understand that final report production must be SMART and realistic to potential achievements in the area of community centre delivery
- The CCP understand that the final report will work alongside wider community consultation data
- The CCP understand that final recommendations will be subject to scrutiny in the process of agreeing final resolutions.

CCP flow chart

Stage One



Partners agree to Co-operative Compact



Compact Initiation



CCP Group formed alongside final year grant payments



CCP Planning and Consultation Meetings
1 year fixed compact working alongside wider
community consultation and focus groups



Stage Two



Final Recommendations and
Report

Compact next steps and
evaluation

*AGREEMENT FORM WILL BE ATTACHED HERE