

Meeting	Executive
Portfolio Areas	Communities, Community Safety & Equalities and Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Working
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COMMUNITY CENTRE REVIEW – A FUTURE MODEL FOR THE PROVISION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN STEVENAGE

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report summarises stage two of the review of council-owned community centres operating across Stevenage. It highlights the findings of the town wide consultation activities as well as in depth research into all community centres in order to form the basis of a proposed future operating model.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the findings of the stage two review of community centres, specifically the highlighted development themes and their individual targets be noted.
- 2.2 That the adoption of a Hub & Spoke Model in relation to both current and the development of future community centres, ensuring there are Community Hubs in the North, Central and South of Stevenage be approved.

- 2.3 That it be agreed that the findings of the Community Centre Review should inform future consideration on the provision of Community Facilities throughout Stevenage as part of redevelopment opportunities.
- 2.4 That delegated authority be given to Strategic Director TP having consulted the Portfolio Holders for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities and Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Working to negotiate new Leases and related contractual agreements with Community Associations.
- 2.5 That the Co-operative Compact Partnership continues as a mechanism through which the model and social value framework can be further developed, building upon the collaborative working relationship between the council and community associations.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 The challenges and opportunities for both Community Associations and the Council present a number of options for delivery going forwards. These models, along with the current 'status quo' have been explored in both stage one and stage two of the review.
- 3.3 Stage one of the review highlighted a clear need for stronger less reliant community centres that can better adapt to both change and community needs, whilst also recognising the social value community associations bring to the town, and the importance of community centred delivery.
- 3.4 The report recommended several key points that were to be carried on into stage two of the Community Centre Review. These were:
- The undertaking of a wider Community Consultation to highlight the needs of Stevenage residents.
 - The implementation of a Co-operative Compact Agreement to form a partnership working group with the community.
- 3.5 The wider consultation, Co-operative Compact Partnership and background research carried out as part of the review, form the evidential basis for the recommendations including the proposed future model of delivery.

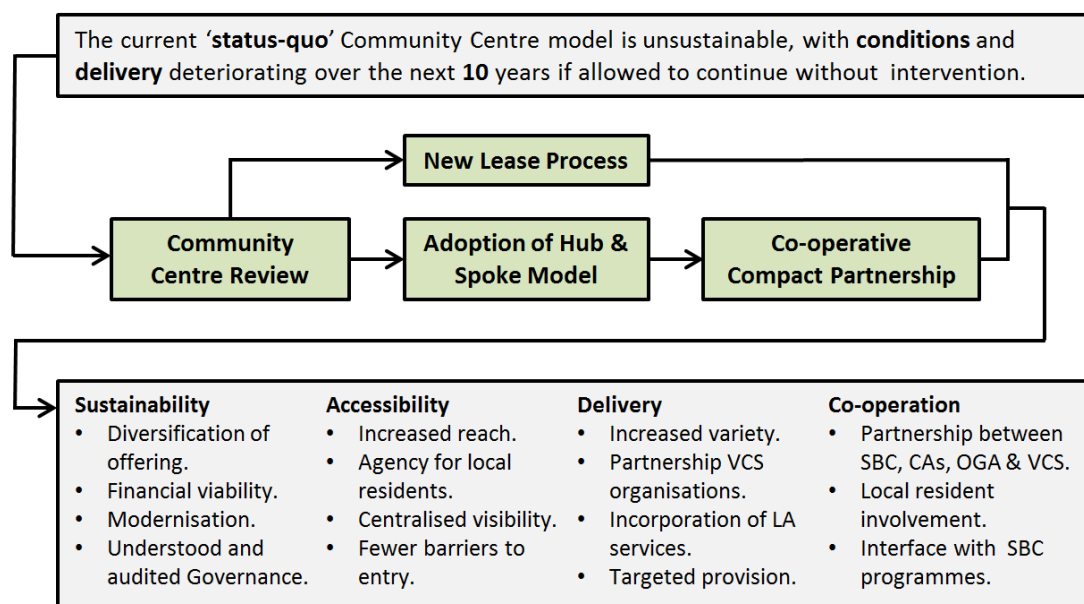
4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Summary of Analysis

- 4.1 Community centres are good at meeting to the needs of their current user base, with many users visiting multiple centres for various classes several times a week, but struggle to expand this base especially to new age, ethnic or faith groups.

- 4.2 On average, community centres provide 9.4 hours of timetabled activities per day, which equates to a daily utilisation of 78.29% or 28.58% when accounting for all available rooms. It proves very difficult to completely fill the building at all times during the day, largely because of the narrow scope of activities that are able to be delivered from the current facilities. Further detail can be found in the Background Documentation.
- 4.3 Financial and governance pressures on centres, through difficulties diversifying income streams as well as the council through maintenance costs of buildings are apparent.
- 4.4 Modernisation in regards to offering, presence & governance is urgently required, with all centres having unique individual needs.
- 4.5 Partnership working between the council and community associations needs specific, focused and continued development in order to facilitate the recommendations set out in this review.
- 4.6 These key threads highlighted the unsustainability of the current status quo and the need for the adoption of a new model for community provision throughout Stevenage. The proposed new model is detailed below.

Community Centre Review – Model Overview



Hub & Spoke Model

- 4.7 A Community Hub in this model would be positioned as a neighbourhood service delivery point that incorporates a range of additional services, such as council, advice, wellbeing and healthcare provision. These buildings would need to host a number of services which could provide further rental income whilst continuing to deliver community activities. Provision of hub services would ideally be targeted at areas of greatest need to work alongside the councils Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) approach allowing for more balanced access to services throughout the town. Considering the distribution of facilities in the North, Central and South of

Stevenage, these will be able to act as service delivery points to help facilitate the approach. This will assist in ensuring continued development between the council and all community stakeholders, adding significant value to the existing provision as well as contributing to the broader CNM approach and the councils wider Co-operative Principles.

- 4.8 By contrast, a Spoke would provide a more traditional offering that would not contain the same range of third party services as a hub, but would still act as a local outreach point for their communities. This could be through current community centres or as part of a flexible space that could be used for community activities and events. It is important to note that not every community building needs to be a hub. In fact, oversaturation is a crucial issue that can be addressed by diversifying the offering of Hubs and Spokes.
- 4.9 A community hub allows for a significant amount more flexibility in its design and delivery than a traditional community centre. This diversification of income streams helps greatly with financial stability. Rather than focusing solely on room hire, these hubs can subsidise activities with significant community benefit through more diverse income streams, especially on days and times where current occupation is lower. This is further assisted through modernisations such as centralised timetabling and booking services delivered not only through web applications but also on mobile platforms, utilising current digital technologies to greatly extend reach and further augment delivery
- 4.10 Whilst not all current facilities may presently have the scope to integrate all hub activities, opportunities to renew provision through redevelopment schemes or the upgrading of existing provision should aim to incorporate aspects of hub delivery that are not currently achievable given the current assets. The council must account for not just the current delivery from these buildings, but also how it expects to utilise them in the future. The traditional offering of a small number of function rooms combined with several meeting rooms only caters for a small number of activities. Incorporating a hub model allows current delivery to continue, but also vastly increases the opportunities for partnership to deliver a broader offer than is currently available.
- 4.11 The building of new provision through redevelopment also assists with the council's climate change agenda. There is a significant cost and challenge associated with retrofitting older buildings, including all current community centres in order to meet these targets. Further increasing the burden on capital maintenance costs.
- 4.12 The idea of a hub responds to trends seen in the retail sector specifically in supermarkets and online market places, but also elsewhere in the public sector for more efficient delivery of services. By including a number of services such as healthcare, advice and other VCS services together these organisations are able to benefit from the increased footfall that they provide. For example: A resident may attend a healthcare appointment and see other activities they may want to engage with. This helps combat difficulties attracting new users whilst also contributing to preventative agendas such as social prescribing.

Leases

- 4.13 All the community centre leases are historical, most having been issued 50+ years ago, some have expired and there are other centres that have never had a lease in place. It is proposed to enter into new leases for all the centres.
- 4.14 Not all Community Centres have become incorporated but it is proposed that a new lease is offered to Community Associations, with those not agreeing the new arrangements being offered a Tenancy at Will.
- 4.15 There is a general consensus from both the consultation and member feedback that the current arrangement regarding social clubs should come to an end. It is proposed that where commercial activities are being undertaken, a commercial rent is charged by the Council.

Co-operative Compact Partnership

- 4.16 In order to facilitate the continued co-operative working relationship between the council and community associations, identified Development Themes will be further explored as part of collaborative partnership working. This co-operative partnership will allow all sides to learn from the sharing of knowledge and work together in order to iteratively improve the town wide community offering.
- 4.17 As part of this process the Communities and Neighbourhoods team should work in conjunction with Community Associations to develop suitable metrics (avoiding arbitrary monitoring such as KPI) that measure the social value provided by community centres over a period of time. This will provide continued measurable and evidenced developmental criteria that can be used to demonstrate the good work provided to communities, as well as identifying and updating areas for improvement.
- 4.18 The subsequent development themes listed below are a number of areas in which the consultation and research activities have highlighted a need for focus in a number of areas in order to most effectively utilise all community centres. Each area has associated targets that are listed below, with further analysis included as part of Appendix A.
- 4.19 Governance
 - 1. Clear and understood responsibilities for both SBC and community associations, addressing both safeguarding and compliance, specifically set out as part of the lease process.
 - 2. SBC to maintain oversight over community association building responsibilities related to the Corporate Landlord function.
 - 3. Community associations to be offered community development support with governance issues in order to promote sustainability.
- 4.20 Presence
 - 1. Establish a baseline requirement for all community association websites.
 - 2. Support the upskilling of community associations with regards to website curation and social media interaction.

3. Explore the potential of a new centralised community centre section of the new SBC website curated by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team. Potentially including a timetabling and booking solution in the medium to long term.

4.21 Offering

1. Encourage and support community centres to actively pursue a more diverse portfolio of delivery for a broader subset of Stevenage residents.
2. Greater focus on addressing under-representation in regards to demographics and inclusion, specifically targeting times and activities that appeal to these different groups.

4.22 Exception Planning

1. Exception plans to be created and maintained for every community building.
2. Encourage and support community associations to create and update their own business continuity plans to ensure sustainability.
3. Plans should be tied into the Asset Management Strategy. To ensure the utilisation of underused SBC assets.

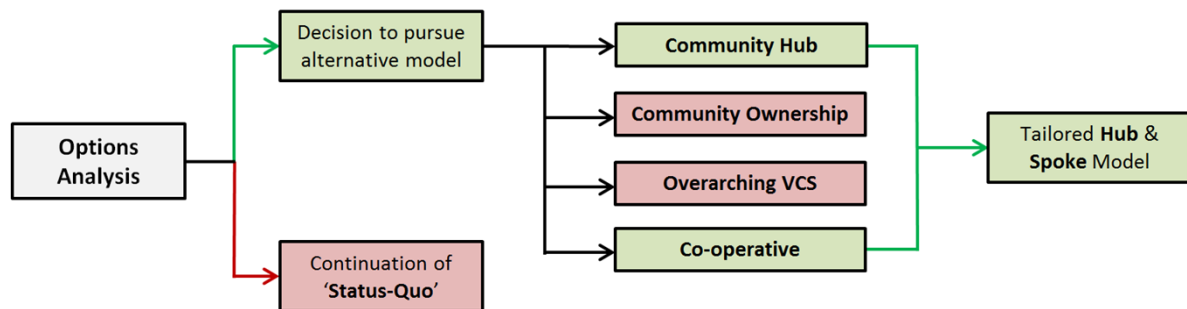
4.23 All of this analysis relates directly to the recommendations at the start of this document. The background consultation and research activities detailed in Appendix A and the Background Documentation have informed this direction and as such directly inform each of the points.

Other Options

4.24 As part of the stage one process, several alternate models were identified. These are:

- Community hubs
 - The idea that a community provision should act as a neighbourhood level service delivery point for a multitude of services that is more accessible to residents.
- Community ownership
 - Often called asset transfer is the legal transfer of the freehold of an asset to a Voluntary or Community Sector (VCS) entity for a nominal fee rather than granting a traditional lease.
- VCS infrastructure
 - The consolidation of a number of smaller VCS entities should result in a more robust single entity merging all community facilities throughout the town.
- Cooperative models.
 - A modernisation of the current model in which the partnership between community associations and the local authority is developed beyond the provision of financial support.

Options Analysis Overview



- 4.25 It was determined that neither the community associations nor the council would benefit from the community ownership or asset transfer model, as the negatives far outweigh the potential benefits. This is primarily due to the lack of sustainable funds required to take on maintenance of the buildings in addition to current liabilities as well as a lack of desire from Community Associations to pursue this route. Both of these are large determinant success factor in all asset transfer schemes.
- 4.26 It was also clear that creating an overarching VCS infrastructure was impractical. The best examples of this are charities and services operating in a small geographic area such as a park or a village, often where there is a clearly dominant body that is willing to amalgamate the smaller entities.
- 4.27 Community hubs offer a much more plausible potential delivery model. There are a large number of promising examples of community hubs throughout the UK. However, it is also clear that not every community building in Stevenage needs to be a hub as oversaturation would diminish the potential benefits.
- 4.28 The co-operative model is similar to the current model, but requires a more active partnership between community associations and the council. Traditionally the council has provided mostly financial support. Both the council and community associations will need to adjust to this new way of working.
- 4.29 As a result, this means that a joint community hub and co-operative model stood out as the strongest option. Combining the positive aspects of the current model of delivery in Stevenage, whilst also taking steps to modernise and move forward.
- 4.30 Stage one of the review process highlighted that the current status quo was unsustainable. Subsequent discussions with community associations highlighted that they felt they were operating with a heavy focus placed on commercial lets with limited social value, necessitated by financial pressures.
- 4.31 Exploring the potential of redeveloping community facilities should reduce the pressure on the capital maintenance costs going forward. These costs are likely to continue to increase, especially as large essential works are required. These maintenance costs are currently addressing only urgent health and safety issues, focusing only keeping community centres operational.

- 4.32 As a result it is crucial that all avenues for the delivery of future provision are explored, with the Hub and Spoke model identified in this report serving as a template for the redevelopment of provision. Primarily due to the advantages in terms of diversification and modernisation as well as sustainability through a reduction in maintenance costs that would result from this approach.

Stakeholders Consulted

- 4.33 Focus Groups (July 24th – September 26th)
- 5 focus groups have been undertaken reaching a total of 42 residents.
 - 4 with residents and users of community centres (28 individuals).
 - 1 with the Stevenage Youth Council (16 core members)
- 4.34 Survey (July 9th – September 30th)
- 342 total responses both digital and in-person. Made up of:
 - 54 Responses at Stevenage Day Launch
 - 140 Responses via SBC Social Media
 - Remainder collected via targeted distribution throughout Stevenage from the 9th July 2019 to the 30th September 2019.
- 4.35 Members
- Portfolio Holders Working Group consisting of Executive members for:
 - Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Working
 - Communities, Community Safety and Equalities
 - Resources
 - Housing, Health and Older People
 - Portfolio Holder Advisory Group met subsequently to provide further member feedback.
- 4.36 Community Associations
- Community Associations have been consulted throughout. As part of the Co-operative Compact Partnership each centre had an individual meeting to sign-up to the partnership.
 - Following on from this 4 Co-operative Compact Meetings have been held.
 - Community Associations provided users for Focus Groups.
- 4.37 Internal
- Officers from Estates, Stevenage Direct Services and Housing Development have had visibility of the findings and progress of the Community Centre Review.
 - Further internal interface has been required in order to piece together maintenance, compliance costs, safeguarding and health and safety information.

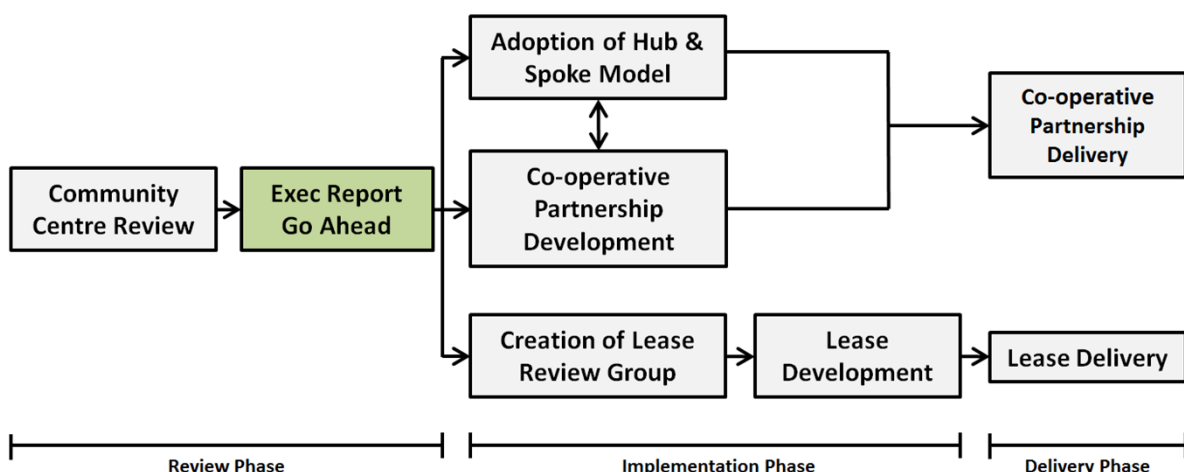
Recommended Course

- 4.38 The proposed solution is an amalgamation of a revision of the current model and the integration of new Community Hubs. This should allow for diversification and growth of the current community offering, whilst acknowledging that certain aspects do not require a complete rebuild.
- 4.39 It is clear, that the other options that are presented are unsuitable for the specific situation in Stevenage, with many likely to cause more problems than solutions in the short, medium and long terms.
- 4.40 It is also clear that the current situation represents an unsustainable model for both community needs and financial sustainability with problems escalating in the medium and long term.
- 4.41 This report highlights the need for the adoption of a new model of delivery, proposing a concrete direction of travel in the short term, and providing a template for the provision of community facilities as part of future development opportunities.

Next Steps

- 4.42 Following the completion of the Community Centre Review Executive report development activities for the integration of the new model and the Co-operative Compact Partnership can begin. This will result in a development programme for the enhanced partnership between the council and community associations developed alongside the wider Communities and Neighbourhoods team. Alongside this a Lease Review Group should be formed in order to manage the lease renewal process. This should contain both member and officer representation.
- 4.43 Following on from these activities the delivery phase will commence. This will transition the Co-operative partnership from development into deployment. With an aim to start collecting and measuring social value, whilst actively providing collective and individual support to centres in order to add value to the developmental themes and areas of improvement. In the background to this, leases should begin to be issued, once the conditions and legal requirements have been fulfilled.

Next Steps Overview



5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The grant allocation paid to Community Associations ends in 2019/20. This was an agreement of the original Co-operative Compact Partnership, set out in stage one of the review, and should remain in place going forward.
- 5.2 We can look at the actual and predicted future spending of the current model to provide a comparison between previous spending (over the last 5 years) and anticipated spending (over the next 10 years), to gauge how the levels of investment are likely to progress going forward. The financial implications associated with the current model are one of several key factors that call for the adoption of a new model. The following information represents the case as it currently stands if no action is taken. A key aim of the community centre review and the new operating model for community centres has been to identify a workable future model that will provide sustainability with regards to capital funding, whilst maintaining a commitment to excellent community facilities and the social value they provide throughout Stevenage.

Total Actual & Future Capital Spend per Community Centre

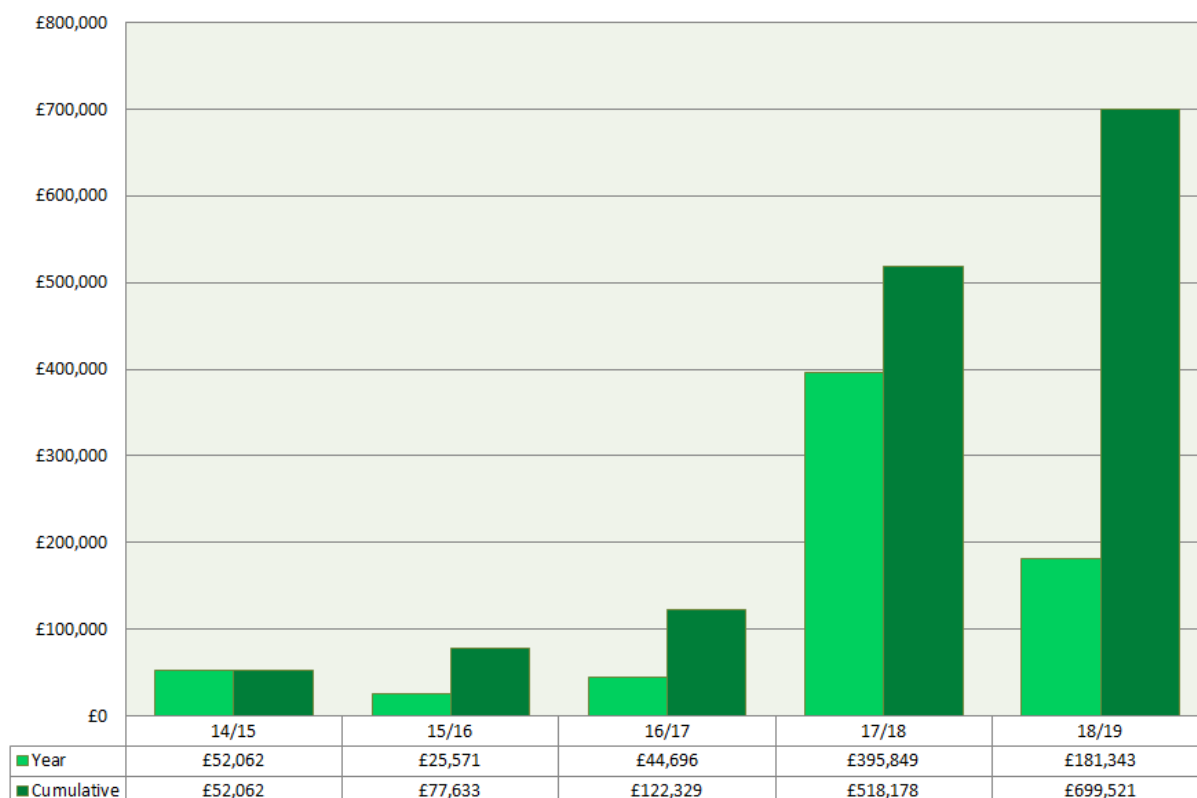
Community Centre	Actual Spend 14/15 - 18/19	Future Spend 19/20 - 23/24	Future Spend 24/25 - 28/29	Future Spend 10 Year Total
Hampson Park CC	£6,765	£25,500	£0	£25,500
Bedwell CC	£57,372	£54,120	£231,550	£285,670
Shephall CC	£54,783	£173,700	£16,225	£189,925
Chells Manor CC	£8,198	£19,900	£52,000	£71,900
The Oval CC	£316,272	£135,200	£184,200	£319,400
St Nicholas CC	£21,908	£94,400	£197,800	£292,200
Springfield House CC	£140,614	£118,085	£136,235	£254,320
Symonds Green CC	£46,709	£6,600	£74,800	£81,400
Timebridge CC	£37,340	£14,100	£107,700	£121,800
Douglas Drive SCC	£9,561	£21,500	£5,800	£27,300
Total	£699,521	£663,105	£1,006,310	£1,669,415
Compliance	£137,925	£137,925	£137,925	£275,850
Cost / Year	£167,489	£160,206	£228,847	£194,527
Cost / CC	£16,749	£16,021	£22,885	£19,453

- 5.3 Figures vary from building to building as a result of the differing ages and conditions of the corresponding facilities, with larger and older buildings naturally requiring greater investment. In addition to a planned maintenance schedule, urgent health and safety issues are remedied as they surface.
- 5.4 Ultimately we can see that there is likely to be an increased level of spending required over the next 10 years compared to the previous five, with spending

between 2024/25 and 2028/29 estimated to be a significant increase on previous levels of spending.

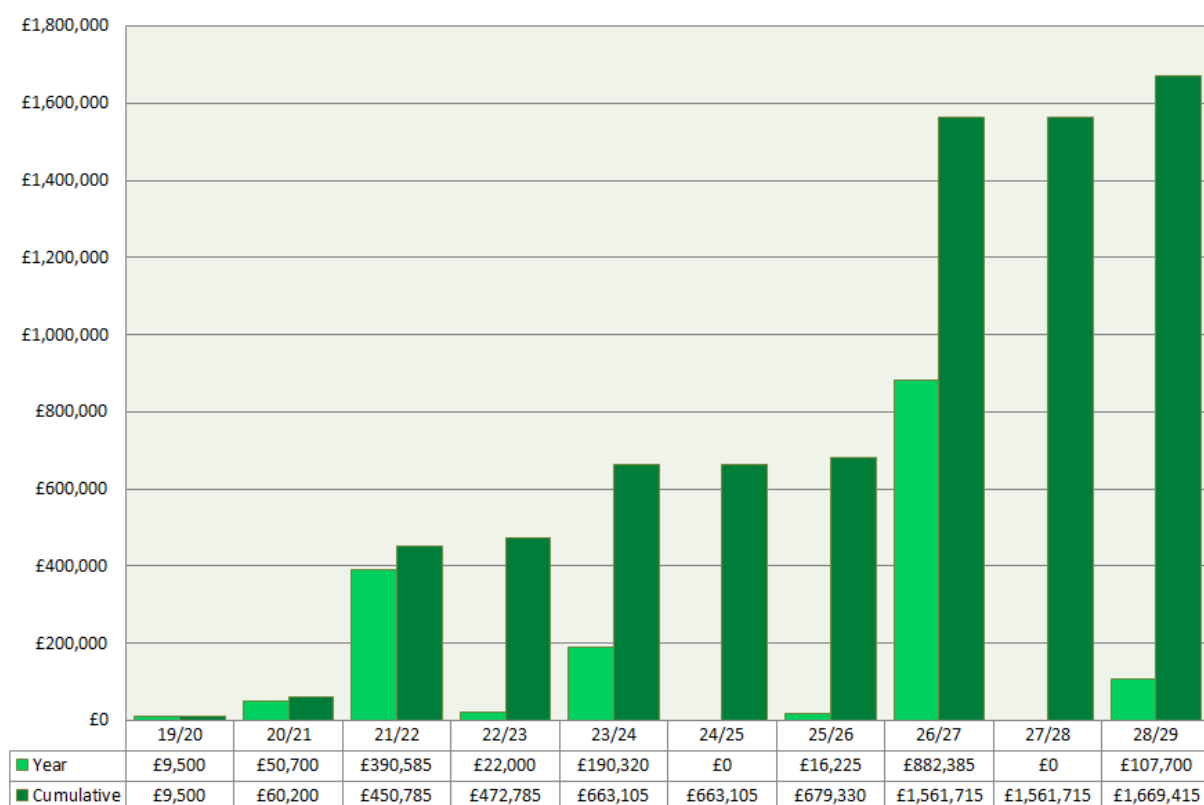
- 5.5 Despite these high and escalating costs, it is clear that without continued support from the council in regards to maintenance costs that a majority of Community Associations in Stevenage would be unable to continue. This should be taken into account when issuing new leases.

Cumulative Actual Spending – 2014/15-2018/19



- 5.6 Spending over the last five years has been solely focused on remedying crucial health and safety issues, with emphasis on keeping the buildings habitable, rather than ensuring they remain in good working order by providing enhancements to the current facilities. This has been necessitated by funding constraints as well as a commitment through the Asset Management Strategy to further reduce spending throughout the estate in order to relieve pressure on the capital fund.
- 5.7 The level of investment needed in order to enhance buildings in addition to keeping them running is significantly higher than the current levels of spending or the amount budgeted over the next 10 years.

Cumulative Urgent Predicted Spending – 2019/20-2028/29



- 5.8 When we look at the predicted spending for the next 10 years we can see that the average spending per community centre per year increases from the previous actual spending. Whilst the first five year period (2019/20 – 2023/24) shows a very similar spend to previous figures, this escalates drastically between 2024/25 and 2028/29. This increase is largely a result of the aging community facilities throughout Stevenage. This predicted spending does not take into account urgent unforeseeable issues that force a decision between further increases to spending or the reprioritisation of less urgent issues in order to remain within allocated budgets.
- 5.9 Again, as with spending throughout 2014/15 to 2018/19, this predicted spending focuses primarily on addressing key health and safety works, with very little room for enhancements to current community buildings.
- 5.10 These figures do not include estimates for the retrofitting of all current community facilities to meet the councils 2030 climate change targets. This will noticeably increase spending over the next 10 years and is not currently assessed as part of the 2018 Stock Condition Survey. Further highlighting the unsustainable and growing financial pressures associated with the current model.
- 5.11 It is apparent that these financial implications do not represent a sustainable position for the current delivery model. Moreover, these costs will increase further over the next 10 years due to climate change and other unpredictable costs, resulting in additional financial pressures or a reduction in the

maintenance standard of facilities if work is deferred due to more urgent priorities. This directly ties into the recommendations of this review as exploring the feasibility of building new community facilities in order to help to relieve these pressures on the council whilst sustaining community provision represents a key drive, in adopting a new model.

- 5.12 Future redevelopment opportunities should consider the findings of the Community Centre Review, especially the integration of the Hub & Spoke model for the provision of community facilities. The financial case for exploring redevelopment opportunities are primarily that construction costs would not be funded through the capital fund, that climate change and other future proofing can be built in rather than retrofitted and as we see with Hampson Park Community Centre that newer facilities have significantly lower maintenance costs than the current stock. All of which would help to substantially reduce the funding gap, whilst committing to updating and modernising community provision throughout Stevenage.

Legal Implications

- 5.13 It is important that Community Associations' occupation of the Community Centres is regularised by the completion of new Leases.
- 5.14 Where the Council grants a lease for a period of more than 7 years it is required to obtain the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained or obtain the Secretary of State's consent to dispose at an undervalue. That consent is however deemed where the undervalue is less than £2m and the Council is satisfied that the purpose for which the land is disposed is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area.
- 5.15 Specific consideration will need to be given to the future of the Social Clubs at Timebridge Community Centre and Shephall Community Centre.
- 5.16 The council continues to maintain ultimate legal responsibility for leasehold property; this includes all current community centres. This is tied into the review of the management of properties and the council's Corporate Landlord responsibilities.

Risk Implications

- 5.17 Community centres continue to face risks to financial stability as a result of the current model. A core aim of the Co-operative Compact Partnership will be to continue to provide support on sustainability and adaptability for all Community Associations in the current charitable sector.
- 5.18 The ultimate responsibility for community facilities falls on the council as landlord. This is tied directly into the Corporate Landlord function, which will aim to develop the robustness of compliance and health and safety requirements across all council owned property.
- 5.19 In circumstances where community associations decide to cease operations, the council will employ exception plans in order to ensure that community uses are protected and supported in the same or alternative neighbourhood venues.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.20 The council is committed to ensuring community buildings and assets further community cohesion and building stronger communities across the town. Equality and diversity have had a central role in the delivery of community consultation activities.
- 5.21 As a key part of the Co-operative Compact Partnership both Stevenage Borough Council and all Community Associations have and will continue to give due consideration to how community centres will also serve the following protected characteristic groupings, by being safe, equitable and welcoming environments.
- Age
 - Gender
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Gender Identity
 - Race
 - Maternity and Paternity
 - Disability
 - Religion and Belief
- 5.22 Stevenage Borough Council and all Community Associations have and will continue to give due consideration to the provision of community buildings and socio-economic needs, ensuring that the community offer from the council's community buildings is as accessible as possible.
- 5.23 There are significant positives regarding the preferred approach in this area. All consultation activities have been conducted taking into account the need for representation for all Stevenage residents, with participants coming from a wide range of backgrounds and being inclusive of all protected characteristics groupings.
- 5.24 Moreover, the hub model allows for far greater inclusion of groups not currently engaged with community provision in Stevenage. With the Co-operative Compact Partnership serving as the mechanism to facilitate engagement with a wider range of service users, backed up by detailed demographic data from ward profiles in order to better understand the diverse communities that community centres serve.

Service Delivery Implications

- 5.25 Service delivery implications have been considered. The proposed continuation of the Co-operative Compact Partnership has been developed as an enabling mechanism to continue the working partnership between the council and community associations developed in stage two of the review.
- 5.26 Community Associations will need to judge how the findings of the review impact their current delivery, and how a continuation and expansion of the Co-operative Compact Partnership will impact service delivery.
- 5.27 If additional operational support for community buildings is required the Communities and Neighbourhood team will need to respond and allocate the

existing business support function accordingly. The impact of these measures will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Safeguarding Children Implications

- 5.28 Safeguarding implications throughout stage two of the community centre reviews such as activities with the Youth Council and young people, in particular, have been fully considered.
- 5.29 It is clear that council oversight of safeguarding within community centres would benefit from a more focused approach. Community Centres have safeguarding policies as part of their requirements as a charity, but they have not been included in the Contract Managers Toolkit, unlike other similar contractual arrangements.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Background Documentation – Community Centres Overview

APPENDICES

- A Appendix A – Consultation Overview