Petition to protect the services at risk by the closure of Oakley Neighbourhood Project

Interim Report

Accountable member: Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Clucas
Accountable officer: Head of Paid Service, Pat Pratley
Ward(s) affected: All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary: The following petition was received by Council on 17 October 2016.

“Petition to protect the services at risk by the closure of Oakley Neighbourhood Project.

The Services at risk include Job Club, Food Bank, Client Support/Advice, English and Maths Classes, activities for children and teenagers, counselling services for under 25’s, support dealing with addictive behaviours, access to computers, help with IT, social activities.”

As the petition had in excess of 750 signatures it is entitled to a debate at Council.

Recommendations: Council are asked to note the outcomes of work undertaken to date in connection with the petition and to request a further update to come back to its next meeting in February 2017.

Financial implications: None arising from this report.

Contact officer: @cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242

Legal implications: The petition must be considered in accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme made pursuant to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The petition will be considered in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules varied in so far as necessary to comply with the attached Process.

Contact officer: Peter Lewis, Head of Law

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1. Background to the Petition Scheme

1.1 The petition provisions in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 aim to address the perception nationally, as revealed in the results of the Place survey, that the community is unable to influence local decisions.

1.2 The Council's Petition Scheme (based on the national model scheme) is designed to ensure that the public has easy access to information about how to petition their local authority and they will know what to expect from their local authority in response. Included within the Scheme is the requirement to have a full Council debate should a certain number of signatures be achieved. Cheltenham Borough Council has set that threshold lower than that recommended by the legislation at 750 signatures.

1.3 The legislation also recommends a 15 minute maximum period for the debate and recognises that the issue may be referred to another committee where the matter is not one reserved for full Council. The purpose of the requirement for Council debate therefore, is not to ensure that the final decision relating to the petition issue is made at that Council meeting but to increase the transparency of the decision making process, ensuring that debates on significant petitions are publicised with sufficient notice to enable the petition organiser and public to attend. It also ensures that local people know that their views have been listened to and they have the opportunity to hear their local representative debate their concerns. The outcome of debates will depend on the subject matter of the petition.

2. The petition

2.1 The Council received a petition at its meeting on Monday 17 October 2016. The wording of the petition is set out in the Executive Summary of this report.

2.2 Councillor Colin Hay has been nominated as the petition organiser.

2.3 The Council is therefore required to debate the petition for a maximum of 15 minutes in accordance with the Petitions Scheme approved by Council on the 13 May 2010. A process for dealing with a petition was produced by officers and is attached as Appendix 1 as a process to be followed for the debate at this meeting. The debate should conclude with one or more decisions taken pursuant to the Petition Scheme as follows
• taking the action requested in the petition (provided the matter is reserved to full Council for decision)
• referring the matter to Cabinet or an Appropriate Cabinet Member or Committee (including Overview and Scrutiny) for further consideration
• holding an inquiry into the matter
• undertaking research into the matter
• holding a public meeting
• holding a consultation
• holding a meeting with petitioners
• calling a referendum
• writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
• taking no further action on the matter

3. Officer comments

3.1 Background
3.2 Elected members and officers from the Council have been involved in a range of activities to protect the local community from the closure of the Oakley Neighbourhood Project, which took place on Monday 31st October 2016. This report considers two key areas, the management of the Oakley Resource Centre and the delivery of activities from the building, and wider discussions with partners about the future strategy for service delivery.

3.3 Oakley Resource Centre
3.4 Cheltenham Borough Council owns the freehold of the Oakley Resource Centre. The building was leased out in its entirety to Oakley Regeneration Partnership (ORP), who then sub-let the building to Oakley Neighbourhood Project (ONP) who in turn sub-let it to Cheltenham Borough Homes and Gloucestershire Care Services. Cabinet on 28th October agreed to the early surrender of the lease between the Council and Oakley Regeneration Partnership to enable the Council to assume operational responsibility of the building from 1st November.

3.5 To support the council with its operational responsibility for the building, a post of “building supervisor” was created and recruited to. The on-site presence of the supervisor enables a range of community activities to take place in the building.

3.6 Although the management arrangements have only been in place for a month, they appear to be working well. There are 10 activity sessions taking place in the resource centre being delivered by a range of providers. In terms of the specific activities mentioned in the petition, the current delivery arrangements are as follows:
• Job Club- Yes provided by CBH
• Food Bank – Yes provided by P3
• Client Support/Advice – Yes provided by CHAC, P3 and CBH
• English and Maths Classes – Yes provided by volunteers
• Activities for children and teenagers – No, agreed not to continue due to building management arrangements being currently unsuitable for hosting children and young people
• counselling services for under 25’s – Yes provided by Share counselling
• support dealing with addictive behaviours – Yes provided by Smart recovery
• access to computers, help with IT – yes provided by CBH and local volunteers
• social activities – No

3.7 The council is mindful that there is more work to be done, both in securing a longer-term future for the building, and to ensure that the building is able to cover its costs.
3.8 A future strategy for service delivery in the Oakley area

3.9 To support CBC and CBH devise a strategy for future service delivery in the area, a meeting with a range of partners and stakeholders was held on Monday 21 November. Representatives from 15 partners, plus the Oakley Residents Association attended the meeting that was chaired by Cllr. Colin Hay.

3.10 CBH presented information relating to community needs, challenges and opportunities (attached). The key messages from this are:

- Oakley is an area of multiple deprivation
- A higher proportion of children are living in poverty
- A higher proportion of adults have no qualifications
- There are a comparatively high number of crimes and ASB incidents
- A third of CBH tenants have some kind of disability

3.11 There are some opportunities as well:

- The number of volunteers active in the community
- The residents association
- Good quality services delivered by local partners (school, children’s centre etc)
- The number of community buildings
- Access to open space.

Following a discussion, the group agreed the following gaps and areas of risk:

3.12 Educational attainment / skills: Although Oakwood School performs very well in raising the level of education attainment; their challenge is that 90% of their reception starters are below where they should be. In addition, the proportion of adults with qualifications is low.

3.13 Working with those who are most vulnerable: collective view that there are many local residents with multiple issues that are not able to engage with services or even leave the house – so one-to-one support work is really important.

3.14 Changing arrangements for local service delivery: a sense that the way in which local services are provided (eg youth support, children’s centre, policing, alcohol and drug treatment) are changing and that there is a risk that the ability to form effective working partnerships may reduce. In addition, a risk that vulnerable people drop off the radar when new service providers are introduced.

3.15 Increase in risks to vulnerable young people: a view that criminal gangs are influencing local young people and that there is insufficient resource to intervene early in their lives.

3.16 Crime and ASB: linked to the above, there is a sense that ASB has increased in the area and there is a risk that some of this is related to private-rented housing where there is little opportunity to work with pro-actively with tenants and a particular supported-housing scheme. In addition, there is a view that the area has a higher rate of domestic abuse.

3.17 Lack of resources: There is a view that there is no new resources on the table to support Oakley; instead it is critical that partner agencies make the best use of existing resources and support residents to be active partners in devising longer-term solutions.

3.18 In terms of actions moving forward, the group agreed the following:

3.19 Understanding the issues:

- Use CBH figures as a base to develop a full community audit to include information on health and wellbeing, deprivation, crime and ASB, disability, skills gaps, substance misuse, social care, unemployment and educational attainment
- Mapping local support networks
- Undertake a mapping exercise to try and identify those that don’t engage.
3.20 Clarifying what the key needs are and what needs to be done:
- Gain collective agreement to needs and outcomes
- Explore ways of enabling local residents to be placed at the forefront of providing support and advice using existing programmes and approaches wherever possible.
- To support this, develop programmes that empower, train and enthuse local residents.
- Explore the role of CBH and other housing providers in providing support for their tenants
- Sustain and grow local job clubs and make sure that local residents are able to attend
- Explore funding to support additional investment into youth work – both centre-based and detached youth work.
- Explore potential with the Clinical Commissioning Group for a mini-commissioning project to support residents to build up their own health and wellbeing skills and resilience.
- Explore opportunities with community safety partners to develop a community-led crime reduction and community safety programme.

3.21 The group also agreed to meet again in January to progress these discussions.

3.22 Council are invited to reflect on the progress made to date and to decide an appropriate course of action as required by the Petition Scheme.

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<tr>
<th>Report author</th>
<th>Contact officer: @cheltenham.gov.uk, Tel: 01242 26</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>01242 235354</td>
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## Risk Assessment

### Appendix 1

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<tr>
<th>Risk ref.</th>
<th>Risk description</th>
<th>Risk Owner</th>
<th>Date raised</th>
<th>Impact 1-5</th>
<th>Likelihood 1-6</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Responsible officer</th>
<th>Transferred to risk register</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the council does not determine an effective longer-term future for the building, there is a risk that the building is unable to cover its costs and requires additional revenue funding to keep open.</td>
<td>Richard Gibson</td>
<td>25.11.16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reduce</td>
<td>Work with partners to identify additional opportunities to rent out the building, ensure that running costs are kept as low as possible and maintain effective working relationships with existing tenants</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Richard Gibson</td>
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<td>If the council does not work with partners devise a strategy for future service delivery in the area, there is a risk that living conditions in the area might deteriorate.</td>
<td>Richard Gibson</td>
<td>25.11.16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reduce</td>
<td>Work with partners and local residents through the stakeholder group to identify and agree a future strategy</td>
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### Explanatory notes

**Impact** – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)

**Likelihood** – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6

(1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)

**Control** - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close
Appendix 2

Process for dealing with petitions at Council

The following is the recommended process to be followed for the debate of a petition at the Council meeting in accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme. The Council Procedure Rules shall be suspended in so far as necessary to facilitate this process.

1. The Mayor will remind members of the procedure to be followed

2. Statement by the petition organiser
The Mayor will invite the petitioner organiser or their representative to come to the microphone and speak for up to 5 minutes on the petition.

There will be no questions and the petition organiser/their representative will take no further part in the proceedings.

3. Clarification on the background information in the officer’s report
Members will be invited to ask any questions for clarification as to the facts in the officer’s report.

4. Statement by the relevant Cabinet Member
The Cabinet Member whose portfolio is most relevant to the petition will be invited by the Mayor to speak for a maximum of 5 minutes on the subject of the petition. They may wish to refer to the background report from officers circulated with the papers for the meeting.

They may also wish to propose a motion at this point; if so, the motion must be seconded.

5. Debate by members
Where a member has proposed a motion (which is seconded), the usual Rules of Debate (Rule 13) will apply.

If there is no motion, the Mayor will invite any member who wishes to speak on the petition to address Council for up to a maximum of 3 minutes.

When the 15 minutes set aside for the debate (as laid down in the Council’s Petition Scheme) is up, the Mayor may decide to extend the time allowed for the debate but will bring it to a close when they feel sufficient time has been allowed.

6. Conclusion of Debate
The debate should conclude with one or more decisions taken pursuant to the Petition Scheme as follows:

- taking the action requested in the petition (provided the matter is reserved to full council for decision)
- referring the matter to Cabinet or an Appropriate Cabinet Member or Committee (including Overview and Scrutiny) for further consideration
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
- taking no further action on the matter