

SOUTH SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

BUSINESS CASE

BROADGREEN COMMUNITY CENTRE

DRAFT

Introduction

In November 2016 Swindon Borough Council announced that they were going to close Broadgreen Community Centre and offered the running of the community centre to the Parish Council through the Shadow Parish Council.

The Shadow Parish Council were not happy to make such a decision and felt that this should be considered by the elected Parish Council. In the circumstances Swindon Borough Council agreed to continue to keep the centre open for a further 6 months and would close the building at the end of September.

At the beginning of June 2017 the Parish Council became aware that the 2 members of staff employed by Swindon Borough Council were taking voluntary redundancy and there was an opportunity to take over the centre without having to take staff through TUPE.

At the Parish Council Meeting on 20 June 2017 the Parish Council made the decision to enter into a Licence to Occupy Broadgreen Community Centre for one year from 1 July 2017.

Future of Broadgreen Community Centre

Although figures from Swindon Borough Council have not been clear as they did not include staff costs, from the figures available Broadgreen Community Centre operated at a loss of £30,000 for 2016/17. This amount has been put in the budget of the Parish Council for 2017/18 to cover a similar loss.

During the year period the Parish Council would assess whether the community centre could be operated without making a loss and be sustainable for the future.

The aim of the Parish Council was to run the community centre on the same basis as Christ Church with a number of roles being carried out by volunteers in order to reduce costs.

Day to Day Running

The first task when taking over the running Broadgreen Community Centre was to appoint a Community Centre Manager. This has been completed and Gifty Tawiah was appointed and started on 21 August 2017.

In order to support the new Community Centre Manager and to have a more permanent base, the Parish Office was moved to Broadgreen Community Centre in August 2017. This would then mean that the rent being paid for the office at the Old Reference Library would be paid to Broadgreen Community Centre instead.

A review has been carried out of the local groups and organisations hiring the community centre and what became evident was that there were a lot of groups using the rooms, but not paying. This included hirers like the Police, Swindon Borough Council and the Probation Service.

The Parish Council took the decision at their meeting on 26 September 2017 to no longer allow free use of any letting room in the building. For those groups and organisations that would struggle financially to pay the rent would have the opportunity to apply for a grant from

the Parish Council. The Probation Service were informed that they would have to book and pay for the Activity Room. This has meant additional income of over £4K per annum.

There was no record of who had keys to the building and a number of volunteers had the combination to the Parish Office. There was no option but to install new locks to the building.

Volunteers

When the Parish Council took over the running of Broadgreen Community Centre they were informed by the Community Facilitator that there was a team of volunteers that would help with the running of the centre. This did not turn out to be the case.

The building was not particularly clean and it transpired that volunteers were not prepared to clean parts of the building and could not be relied upon to undertake regular cleaning. There was no option but to use the services of a cleaning company.

A number of volunteers appeared to use the building as a place to visit for a cup of tea and a chat and were not keen to help at the centre. Some of the volunteers were using rooms for activities like sewing, but there was only one or two people attending and this blocked rooms being available for hire.

A group called the Friend of Broadgreen had been operating, but they had not been set up as a constituted group. They were not in any position to take over the running of the centre.

Costings

A draft budget has been attached which indicates the amount to be raised in order to break even for the year. The figures are based on the expenditure stated by Swindon Borough Council for 2016/17. The cost of gas and electric looks high and it may be possible to reduce costs by vigilant control of the heating. It is less clear why the electric costs are high.

The budget shows that income would have to increase considerably.

The income for 2016/17 was stated at £30k per year. With the same level of use, this would mean finding additional income of £23K per year.

The Parish Office rent would be a start at £5K a year. The Probation Service would also add a further £4K a year and a new booking by an orchestra for the Main Hall would bring in £1K a year.

That leaves a further £13K from new bookings to raise for the year.

Plans for sustainable future

The Parish Council needs to encourage more use of Broadgreen Community Centre.

The pricing structure was very complicated and this has been reviewed to make it easier for users with just 2 tiers; one for local groups, organisations and residents and one for commercial.

The website needs to be updated with new photographs. More details of Broadgreen also needs to be included on the Parish Council website.

A new flyer leaflet is planned to be produced and left at libraries and local businesses to make the public aware of the changes at Broadgreen Community Centre.

Current users, like U3A could be encouraged to bring more sections to the community centre. There are currently 3 sections using the community centre, but there used to be several more. They have left mainly due to the service they have received, rather than being unhappy about the facilities being offered.

The income generated from volunteer activities will now go directly to the Parish Council for the community centre. This includes money from the café at the Free Shop, Christmas Fayre etc.

The Community Centre Manager would also like Broadgreen Community Centre to host a big community event next year and is thinking in terms of a Food Festival to showcase all the different cuisines within the local area. It could also include a stage for local groups to perform different types of music. A provisional date would be Saturday 16 June 2018 and all money made from the event could come to the community centre. This would be a lot to think about in terms of organising for the staff, but it would be a fantastic opportunity for the local community.

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