



CHESTERFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

*Community, Customer and
Organisational Scrutiny Committee*

Scrutiny Project Group

report on

Community Rooms



Date agreed by CC&OSC:

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1.0 Introduction and reasons for the review

1.1 The Council has six community rooms which are part of the Council's housing stock and are available to hire for a variety of uses, with an emphasis on groups that benefit the local community and combat social isolation. Users pay an hourly rate for hire, subject to exceptions, with the remaining running costs met by the Housing Revenue Account. Usage for the rooms is low, largely due to their poor condition and lack of promotion, resulting in reduced income levels which do not cover the costs of maintaining the rooms.



Inside Wimborne Crescent

1.2 Since 2016, the Careline and Support Service has provided the administration and management for the rooms, and an appraisal and refurbishment programme was commenced in July 2017 to improve the standard and attractiveness to potential hirers. The hire charges for the rooms are low, with reduced rates for local users, making them a valuable asset to the community particularly in areas where there is deprivation, vulnerable people and hard to reach groups.

1.3 In 2009/10, the Council decided to close some of the community rooms. This decision was met with concerns from some residents

who were particularly worried about the effect this would have on the community; as a result six of the community rooms were maintained.

- 1.4 An important part of overview and scrutiny's role is to listen to the concerns of residents and hold the executive to account. Scrutiny's involvement will take into consideration the views of the residents when evaluating options for the rooms and will challenge current practices and procedures to suggest new ways to improve the marketing, promotion and accessibility of the rooms.

2.0 **Link to priorities and review aims**

- 2.1 In order to add value, overview and scrutiny aligns its work with the activities and aims of the Council Plan. This scrutiny review contributes towards two of the priorities identified in the plan:

- a) to improve the quality of life for local people;
- b) to provide value for money services.

- 2.2 Within these priorities, the project group focussed on two objectives:

- a) to increase the quality of public space for which the council has responsibility through targeted improvement programmes;
- b) to become financially self-sufficient so we can continue to deliver the services our communities need.

- 2.3 The project group devised a project start report, setting out the review aims and objectives, and expected outcomes. As part of this process, the group produced a list of areas for investigation and possible outcomes which included:

- identifying any changes that are required to enhance the offer and accessibility of the community rooms, improving the quality of the space for users;

- identifying ways to make the rooms financially self-sufficient including better promotion to increase usage and bring in more income;
- providing solutions to improve the booking process by identifying the main contacts, how to access the rooms, application process and facility procedures.

2.4 A number of changes had also occurred which could have a positive impact on the usage of the community rooms. An additional post was created to focus on publicity and marketing within the housing service, together with a post that has focussed on social inclusion. These would form key sources of information for the project and posed questions such as how were the rooms being promoted, who is the target audience and what the booking process is.

2.5 It was also identified during the scoping process that one of the community rooms had a “friends of” group, *Friends of Wimborne Crescent*, which was set up in early 2017. This room was refurbished in 2017 in consultation with the *Friends of* group, and its usage was promoted by the *Friends of* group. The project group felt that it was important to engage with the group to understand if their efforts were having an impact and if this was a model to consider replicating elsewhere.

2.6 The income and expenditure for the rooms underlines all these areas. With the Council’s funding constantly reducing, we need to find new and innovative ways of balancing the books and driving income. Initial information viewed by the project group highlighted a big difference between the income from the room hire and the outgoings, such as utilities and maintenance, which needed addressing.

3.0 **Review approach**

3.1 The following steps were carried out to initiate the review:

- The Careline and Support Service Manager was consulted to provide initial information on the rooms such as the number of rooms in use, progress of the refurbishment programme, charging policy, terms and conditions of hire and responsibilities.
- The project group held their first meeting and, using the information received, produced an initial list of questions to put to the Careline and Support Service Manager. The outcomes were then used to identify areas for further investigation.
- A project start report was produced which set out the aims and objectives of the review; the Careline & Support Service Manager and Cabinet Member for Homes and Customers were consulted on scope of the project and their comments were taken on board.

4.0 **Current situation**

4.1 The six community rooms owned and maintained by the Housing Service are:

- a) Winster Court, Newland Dale
- b) Wimborne Crescent, Newbold
- c) Edensor Court, Middlecroft
- d) Bonsall Court, Newbold
- e) Monkwood Road, Dunston
- f) Burns Close, Grangewood



Edensor Court Community Room

4.2 At the start of 2016/17, all of the rooms were in a poor state of repair and usage was low. Two of the rooms were refurbished during 2017/18: Winster Court and Wimborne Crescent. A further room, Edensor Court, was undergoing refurbishment work at the start of the review; this was completed in January 2019.

4.3 Before continuing with the refurbishment programme on the remaining rooms, an options appraisal would be carried out to determine whether it was the most appropriate course of action.

Currently Bonsall Court and Burns Close are still in use however Monkwood Road has not been available to hire since the start of 2018/19.

4.4 The scrutiny project group identified the following areas to explore during the review, further details will be found throughout the report:

- Usage
- Facilities and access
- Booking process
- Income
- Promotion

5.0 **Review findings**

Usage

5.1 To create a picture of the viability of the community rooms, the project group looked at the usage of each of the six rooms. Two months were taken as a sample, June and July 2018, and a spreadsheet was created which provided details of all the bookings (Appendix A).

5.2 The usage showed that all of the rooms, with the exception of Monkwood Road, had regular usage; however some rooms had a greater variety of users than others. Bonsall Court, Burns Close and Wimborne Crescent had the biggest variety of users, with at least five different groups using the rooms over the two month period. Winster Court and Edensor Court both had just two users hiring the rooms, though they were regular users.

5.3 Whilst this information gives a statistical view of how often the rooms are used, it does not necessarily translate to financial viability or a positive impact on the community who live near the facility.

5.4 Winster Court is one of the rooms that has been refurbished. When it was re-opened, there was a large publicity drive and open day to encourage the community to get involved. A number of activities were started to encourage the local use of the room including:

- a) an event in May 2018 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the estate being built, there was a poor turn out with only 12-15 people turning up;
- b) a weekly coffee morning and chair based exercise class ran for 10 weeks but with no attendees;
- c) consultations handed out to local residents to see what activities they would like to see at the room, these had an extremely low return rate (4 out of 500).



5.5 The Social Inclusion Officer advised that there is a group for chair based exercises which meets in New Whittington Social Club. The group has a regular attendance of between 15 to 20 participants. This demonstrates that there is an interest and need for these activities and the community rooms need to access this demand whether by promotion of the rooms to make residents aware of the activities taking place locally, or by targeting new groups.

5.6 The events are largely, and historically, geared towards older residents with few activities aimed at younger people or families. Having an emphasis on care and support services for older people could also be having a negative impact on attracting new users.

5.7 The project group investigated whose responsibility it was to arrange activities for the community rooms. The Social Inclusion Officer does arrange activities in the community rooms, however this was just part of their role which also includes organising, facilitating and coordinating activities across the Council's seven

sheltered schemes. The Social Inclusion Officer advised that they can offer help, such as applying for funding, to members within the community to enable them to set up groups and run activities in the community rooms. This would also bring a level of community ownership to the rooms which could help to increase usage and knowledge of the facility.

5.8 To see the value groups set up by members of the public have on the rooms, the group looked into the impact the *Friends of Wimborne Crescent* had on the usage of Wimborne Crescent



community room. The room was one of the better used facilities, with the *Friends of* group holding regular sessions in the room every Tuesday for local tenants and pensioners which have a good attendance. The objectives set out in the terms of reference for the *Friends of* group included:

1. improving the community room in order to ensure it is an attractive facility;
2. advertising and promoting the community room;
3. organising inclusive community events;
4. providing a degree of responsible community oversight of the facility

5.9 The *Friends of* group undertook a vast amount of marketing activity with limited success. They were, however, successful in attracting some new hirers to the room such as the Elm Foundation. Since the project group started their review, the *Friends of Wimborne Crescent* decided it had fulfilled the objectives set out in its terms of reference and disbanded.

5.10 Winster Court community room is used regularly but by few different hirers. When the project group looked further into the types of users they found that the room was hired 4 days a week by Chesterfield Care Group from 8:30 to 15:30. Due to a long

standing agreement with Derbyshire County Council (DCC), the Care Group does not pay for hire of the room.

5.11 The project group carried out research to understand what services the Chesterfield Care Group offered and how they benefitted the community. The Care Group aims to reduce the isolation of older people, provide respite for carers and enable older people to stay in their own homes for longer. Referrals are made through DCC Social Care or directly to the Care Group.



Winster Court Community Room

5.12 Sessions are currently run at their main centre on Tontine Road and from 5 locations across Chesterfield: Winster Court, Burns Close, Edensor Court, Harehill Court and Brimington Methodist Church. Users pay a daily charge for the day care sessions and



can ask for an assessment to see if they are eligible for funding. The Care Group also receives local authority and business funding, and carry out fundraising events.

5.13 The services offered at Burns Close and Winster Court include support for people with dementia and lunch, refreshments and activities are provided during the day.

5.14 Historically, there was a contribution from the Council's General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account to allow DCC to use the rooms for statutory or voluntary organisations which provided services linked to the County Council; this contribution ended in March 2016 following a review of the General Fund.

5.15 A report approved by Cabinet on 24 January, 2017 agreed a new booking structure which split each day into 4-hour time slots that were available to book at a fixed price. The charge for a time slot

for groups which support vulnerable or disadvantaged people and are non-profit making would be £8 per slot. Based on the group using the room 4 days a week, the community rooms are losing out on an income of £64 per week and the loss is greater when the usage at the other rooms is taken into account.

- 5.16 The Care Group uses Winster Court from 8:30 to 15:30 which overlaps two time slots. This means that, other than in the evenings, the room is not available for other users most days of the week. The group have indicated that they would be open to adjusting times if the rooms were required for other users.
- 5.17 As previously mentioned, Winster Court, Wimborne Crescent and Edensor Court have been refurbished. Bonsall Court has wide range of groups hiring the room for activities such as art and crafts, stamp enthusiasts and senior groups. The decision was taken during the project that Bonsall Court would also be refurbished during the financial year 2019/20, the project group supported this decision. Provision has been made within the 2019/20 capital improvement programme for this work to be carried out.
- 5.18 The two remaining rooms, Burns Close and Monkwood Road, also require refurbishment however different options have been considered for the future use of these two rooms.
- 5.19 Burns Close at Grangewood is the only community room located in the south of Chesterfield Borough and serves an area that is in the top 10% most deprived in England. During 2019, a group called the Umbrellas Cosy Hub registered interest in leasing the room. The Group signed an agreement on 2 September, 2019 to lease the building for a period of five years, taking responsibility for all repairs, maintenance and improvements to the building, and managing future bookings.
- 5.20 Part of the agreement gives provision for the three existing groups using the room to continue to be able to do so.

5.21 Detailed below is a document produced by Umbrellas Cosy Hub outlining the activities they propose to deliver at Burns Close, for the benefit of residents in the Grangewood and surrounding areas:

What is the project? – Umbrellas Cosy Hub

- To set up a hub to serve residents in Grangewood and surrounding areas, a place of building relationships and a place of safety, security and love; where everyone feels welcomed and supported.
- Has a dedicated play area for under 5's.
- It will be the centre for life and wholeness within the Rother area, catering for people of all ages and from all walks of life.



How will it work and who is involved?

- The hub will provide food and drinks – accepting donations to cover the costs.
- A place where people feel comfortable coming in to, a place of familiarity.
- It will be staffed by volunteers from the local area and local churches.

Why is it needed?

Statistics for Rother Ward, Chesterfield:

- 42.21% households don't have a car or van.
- 8.12% households with dependent children have no adults in employment (National Average 4.18%).
- The immediate area is ranked 291 out of 32,844 in the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation figures, based on the 2011 census.
- For income deprivation and education it is in the bottom 1% nationally, and for health and employment it is lower than 1%.¹
- This area is a place rife with drugs, alcohol related problems, people suffering from depression and unemployment.

- The immediate community will benefit from establishing the coffee house as somewhere they can come to for refreshment - body, mind and spirit.

Information from 2011 census – www.chesterfieldcab.co.uk and www.uklocalarea.com/rother (Chesterfield013D)

What will be happening in Umbrellas Cosy Hub?

- Umbrellas Cosy Hub will supply coffee, tea, cakes, light lunches etc – quality food, locally sourced wherever possible.
- There will a dedicated play area for under 5's with a range of resources such as a wooden kitchen area, a reading area, a whiteboard, mark making facilities.
- We will run small sessions for parents, carers and children offering activities like story telling; music and singing times; simple cooking with toddlers; messy play; craft activities etc.
- Umbrellas will also work with the large number of older people who live on the estate, providing activities that are specifically designed to meet the needs of older folk, from 'tea parties' with guest speakers, to memory café sessions, supporting those with dementia.
- The building will be adapted to offer facilities for local organisations to hire rooms to run small groups there.

5.22 The Group will be paying a nominal annual rent to the Council, though the Council will not be responsible for any costs or services relating to the building during the period of the lease.

5.23 Monkwood Road has not been well used by the community and, over the past year, had not been available to hire. This has presented an opportunity to use the room for a different purpose and conversations around the viability of using it as a dementia hub have begun. The room retains some old features which would lend themselves to creating a safe space for people with dementia, however sensitive refurbishment would be required as well as funding to carry out the works.

Recommendations:

- 5.24 **Recommendation 1: That the Cabinet Member for Housing initiates conversations with the Chesterfield Care Group regarding the hiring of community rooms.**
- 5.25 The Care Group is benefitting residents by offering valuable day care services to older, vulnerable people that are accessible in their community. However, the subsidy from the General Fund to support the free hire of the rooms to the care group has ended, meaning that the viability of offering the rooms free of charge needs to be reconsidered.
- 5.26 The Care Group also receive payment from users to access their services which, based on the charges agreed by Cabinet in 2017, places them in a category where the charge for room hire is £8 per 4 hour time slot. Therefore, the conversations between the Borough Council and Chesterfield Care Group need to come to a new agreement for usage of the rooms based on current rates for hire and time slots to ensure fairness and transparency.
- 5.27 **Recommendation 2: The project group recommends the following future plans for the six community rooms:**
- a) **That the refurbishment and retention of Bonsall Court and Monkwood Road as community rooms be supported.**
 - b) **That the arrangements to lease Burns Close to the Umbrellas Cosy Group on a five year lease be noted and endorse.**
 - c) **That alternative uses be explored for Monkwood Road in line with the Council's health and wellbeing priorities.**
- 5.28 As detailed in paragraphs 5.17, Bonsall Court is used by a variety of different groups on a regular basis and, following refurbishment, has the capacity to continue to attract new users.

5.29 Burns Close is in an area of high deprivation where there are limited other facilities available for community use. Ensuring the continuation of a room for community use by agreeing a lease with Umbrellas Cosy Hub will guarantee the continuation of resources that will benefit the local community.

5.30 Monkwood Road was an under used facility that, without funding to bring it up to hiring standard, would continue to be a financial burden for the Council. Exploring the potential for using the room to support the Council's health and wellbeing priorities, such as hosting a dementia hub, would bring the room back into regular use, support the need for refurbishment of the room and introduce a new resource not just to the immediate community but also to residents across the borough who are living with dementia.

Booking process

CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Home Council services Explore Pay Report Request

Housing > Council tenants > Properties > Room hire

Room hire

This section: **Properties**

- Bungalows
- Houses
- Flats
- Maisonettes
- Sheltered schemes
- Garages and garage sites
- Room hire**

Chesterfield Borough Council's Housing Service has a number of community rooms that are available for hire. Maps to each room can be downloaded below.

- Bonsall Court, Newbold, Chesterfield, S41 8AW
- Burns Close, Grangewood, Chesterfield, S40 2SW
- Edensor Court, Middlecroft, Chesterfield, S43 3NW
- Monkwood Road, Dunston, Chesterfield, S41 8DG
- Wimborne Crescent, Pevensey, Chesterfield, S41 8PT
- Winster Court, Newland Dale, Stonegravels, Chesterfield, S41 7QJ

Each room has its own kitchen facilities, tables and chairs, can be rearranged to suit your needs.

The rooms are ideal for meetings but may also be suitable for other types of events. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

The rooms are available at an hourly rate of £5.50 plus VAT.

Contact Liz Meakin 01246 345604 or email liz.meakin@chesterfield.gov.uk

Bonsall Court Community Room Map	(pdf 83 KB)
Burns Close Community Room Map	(pdf 74 KB)
Edensor Court Community Room Map	(pdf 61 KB)
Monkwood Road Community Room Map	(pdf 72 KB)
Wimborne Crescent Community Room Map	(pdf 84 KB)
Winster Court Community Room Map	(pdf 84 KB)

CONTACT

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Email enquiries@chesterfield.gov.uk

Phone or text
Tel: 01246 345 345
Text: 07960 910 264

In person
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85 New Square
Chesterfield
S40 1AH

Mon - 8.30am to 5pm
Tue - 8.30am to 5pm
Wed - 10am to 5pm
Thu - 8.30am to 5pm
Fri - 8.30am to 4.30pm
Sat for payments - 9am to midday

By post
Chesterfield Borough Council

Community Room information on Council website

5.31 The scrutiny project group investigated how accessible information on booking the community rooms, including the facilities that are on offer, was to potential hirers and discovered

difficulties in finding information. The rooms are listed on the Council's website under the Housing section whereas the rest of the rooms for hire owned by the Council are listed under separate parts of the website and do not provide links or details of the other rooms. If a member of the public searched "room hire" on the Council website, the top 7 results direct you to 7 different webpages with information about hiring different rooms.

- 5.32 The Council could be losing out on bookings for the community rooms because potential hirers cannot find the information they need and customers looking for smaller, less formal rooms may not be aware of the breadth of venues available to hire.
- 5.33 Currently all bookings go through the Administration Officer for the Careline and Support Service and the contact number listed on the terms and conditions for hiring the rooms is the main Careline office number. The scrutiny project group acknowledged the high volume of calls that the Careline service deals with, and that the service needs to prioritise potentially emergency response calls, which could have an impact on the ability to take calls relating to community rooms. The scrutiny project group would therefore recommend setting up an alternative phone number based in the Careline office, where potential users could leave a message if the phone lines are busy.

Recommendations:

- 5.34 **Recommendation 3: That the website be updated and amended to include a central location for finding room hire information for all venues across the Council including the Community Rooms.**
- 5.35 Establishing a new section on the website that incorporates all the rooms available to hire will improve customer satisfaction by bringing all the information together in a central location that is easy to find.

- 5.36 **Recommendation 4: That a dedicated phone line for community room enquiries be established within the Careline and Support Service with a voicemail facility.**
- 5.37 Creating a dedicated phone line specifically for community room enquiries will enable the Careline and Response Service staff to prioritise calls for assistance as the calls for community room enquiries will come through to a separate number. The dedicated phone line will also introduce a voicemail facility so that the enquirer is not waiting a long time for an answer, but can leave a message which the Careline staff can respond to as soon as they are able which will increase customer satisfaction.
- 5.38 **Recommendation 5: That the call centre staff at the Council's contact centre be provided with up to date information on the hire of community rooms.**
- 5.39 Establishing a new contact number and webpage for community room bookings can be used as a good opportunity to remind staff in front line services of these facilities so that they can direct enquiries to the appropriate service and provide information on the rooms. This will also help to increase customer satisfaction and support the "One Council, One Team" value.

Income

- 5.40 Currently, the community rooms receive a budget from the Housing Revenue Account of £40,320 per year and the hire charges are the only income offsetting the costs associated with maintaining the budget.
- 5.41 The current pricing structure for room hire was approved by Cabinet in 2017 and is detailed below:

Type of Group	Comments	Proposed Charge
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		per Slot
Tenant and Resident Group (including Neighbourhood Watch) Meetings	Groups which work on behalf of members of the community	0.00
Councillor Surgeries	Surgeries run by Chesterfield Borough Council or Derbyshire County Council Members	0.00
Activities which are for the benefit of vulnerable people, and for which funding is not available	For example, preparation for distribution of food hampers to vulnerable people	0.00
Activities for the benefit of local people	Activities where a charge can be made for the activity	8.00
Charitable Organisations	Organisations which have a Charitable Status and registration number	8.00
Support Groups	Groups which support vulnerable or disadvantaged people, and which are non-profit making	8.00
Other, non-commercial groups/organisations		12.00
Commercial organisations	Other organisations including statutory organisations who use the premises e.g. use of polling stations	20.00

5.42 The project group agreed that the current hire charges were appropriate provided they are properly applied as they ensure the community rooms are still affordable for their intended use by the community but also secure usage for longer periods of time by having a minimum 4 hour booking slot.

Promotion

5.43 The Council has spent significant funds on refurbishing the community rooms and now has venues of a high standard which are available for hire at small costs. They provide a positive image for the Council, showing a commitment to improving the quality of life for people across Chesterfield Borough, particularly those

in some of the most deprived areas. The rooms need to be promoted and marketed so that they can be used regularly, benefitting the community by having an increased range of activities on offer and driving income to cover the costs of maintaining the rooms.

- 5.44 The project groups' recommendation to improve the website to make the booking process clearer will also have an impact on improving the promotion of the community rooms. Additionally, better use needs to be made of other publicity channels such as the noticeboards outside the rooms and local newsletters.
- 5.45 From looking at activities that take place at other non-council venues, there are numerous different types of organisations holding activities across the Borough that could make use of the rooms. Researching new customers and targeting groups and organisations, such as slimming groups, local charities and toddler groups, to market the rooms will attract different types of activities to those that are already on offer, increasing the variety of community events in the neighbourhoods and bringing in new income.
- 5.46 The Careline and Support Service had a Publicity and Marketing Officer whose responsibilities included producing publicity and marketing material for the community rooms. Since the project group began their review, the Publicity and Marketing Officer has left the authority. The new post holder will be integrated within the corporate communications team however will still provide PR support for the Housing service. This is a valuable resource and could be used to prepare targeted campaigns to new user groups and work together with the Council's Communications and Marketing team on designing new promotional activities using the Council's website and social media channels.

Recommendations:

5.47 **Recommendation 6: That the promotion of community rooms on the Council's website be improved, making the rooms more obvious to potential hirers.**

5.48 As explained in paragraph 5.31 and 5.32, the webpages for the community rooms not only need to be improved to include the up to date information on booking the rooms, but also to promote the venues on offer, particularly the rooms that have been refurbished. Examples of the types of activities that could be held in the rooms and details of the facilities need to be included to showcase the versatility of the spaces.

5.49 **Recommendation 7: That a new leaflet be produced that includes details on all the community rooms.**

5.50 Currently, there have been leaflets produced for the two refurbished rooms which focussed on the transformation that had taken place. As these will soon become outdated, the project group proposes creating a new leaflet which provides details of all the community rooms and contact details for hiring the rooms. These can then be placed in venues around the Borough such as the community rooms themselves, visitor information centre, housing reception and customer service centre. This will make Council officers more aware of the rooms and therefore able to promote them, and reach a new and wider audience.



5.51 **Recommendation 8: That a promotional drive take place to coincide with the completion of the work to the sheltered schemes.**

5.52 Currently, work is being undertaken at the sheltered schemes to bring them up to a modern standard of living. The Careline and Support Service Manager proposed that a promotional drive should coincide with the completion of work at the sheltered schemes. The project group felt that this would be a valuable opportunity as it would reduce officer time by working on joint promotional material and press releases, and increase the media coverage by linking the two announcements together.

Facilities and access

5.53 As part of the project, the group reviewed the terms and conditions for hiring a community room and the information that hirers receive about the facilities. As part of the refurbishment, access to Wimborne Crescent and Winster Court is now via a buzzer which was monitored and activated by Careline. This had alleviated issues with people accessing the rooms without a booking, a problem that was happening at Bonsall Court which had door code entry system. However, the project group had concerns that it placed extra pressure on Careline staff to respond to the buzzers, though noted that staffing changes currently being implemented within the Careline service should reduce any such impact. In addition, access through the newly installed systems had occasionally resulted in access not being gained. The project group also noted that there had been a number of initial problems with access to the rooms following the installation of the two door entry mechanisms, and though there had not been any issues over the past twelve months, was keen to ensure that systems were regularly reviewed to eliminate any further problems.

5.54 The project group had concerns about the qualifications of people running support or care services out of the community rooms and, in particular, the repercussions on the Council if accidents were to happen. The terms and conditions clearly state that the hirer should take out adequate insurance to cover their

activities and carry out risk assessments if necessary, however there needs to be a system in place to record these documents.

- 5.55 In addition, there had been issues with regular users of the rooms storing equipment in them between sessions which raises concerns with liability and makes the rooms less usable to other groups. The terms for storage of equipment is set out in the terms of conditions for hire and therefore needs to be properly enforced.

Recommendations:

- 5.56 **Recommendation 9: That a booklet be produced that incorporates terms and conditions for the community rooms along with how to use the facilities in the rooms.**

- 5.57 To improve the user experience and reduce the reliance on calls to Careline for assistance, the project group felt that up to date information on how to use the different facilities should be included in a booklet along with the terms and conditions for hire. The booklet should cover instructions for using equipment such as how to turn on the heating, using the kitchen facilities and operating the AV equipment.

- 5.58 Once a revised document has been produced, this could be distributed to all current users as a reminder of the terms and conditions of their hire of the rooms. This will help to alleviate problems such as the storage of equipment.

- 5.59 **Recommendation 10: That the door entry system that has been installed to Wimborne Crescent and Winster Court be kept under review to understand if this is the most effective way for hirers to gain access.**

- 5.60 As detailed in paragraph 5.53, the project group discovered that there had been initial issues with hirers unable to gain access to the rooms which have a buzzer entry system. The project group

was keen to ensure that systems were regularly reviewed to eliminate any further problems, and if there were persistent issues, alternative entry systems could be considered and provided, such as a system using a code that was changed regularly.

6.0 **Summary of Recommendations**

Details of the recommendations and reasoning behind them can be found throughout the report. The recommendations of the scrutiny project group are:

- 6.1 Recommendation 1: That the Cabinet Member for Housing initiates conversations with the Chesterfield Care Group regarding the hiring of community rooms.
- 6.2 Recommendation 2: The project group recommends the following future plans for the six community rooms:
 - a) That the refurbishment and retention of Bonsall Court and Monkwood Road as community rooms be supported.
 - b) That the arrangements to lease Burns Close to the Umbrellas Cosy Group on a five year lease be noted and endorse.
 - c) That alternative uses be explored for Monkwood Road in line with the Council's health and wellbeing priorities.
- 6.3 Recommendation 3: That the website be updated and amended to include a central location for finding room hire information for all venues across the Council including the Community Rooms.
- 6.4 Recommendation 4: That a dedicated phone line for community room enquiries be established within the Careline and Support Service with a voicemail facility.
- 6.5 Recommendation 5: That the call centre staff be provided with up to date information on the hire of community rooms.

- 6.6 Recommendation 6: That the promotion of community rooms on the Council's website be improved, making the rooms more obvious to potential hirers.
- 6.7 Recommendation 7: That a new leaflet be produced that includes details on all the community rooms.
- 6.8 Recommendation 8: That a promotional drive take place to coincide with the completion of the work to the sheltered schemes.
- 6.9 Recommendation 9: That a booklet be produced that incorporates terms and conditions for the community rooms along with how to use the facilities in the rooms.
- 6.10 Recommendation 10: That the door entry system that has been installed to Wimborne Crescent and Winster Court be kept under review to understand if this is the most effective way for hirers to gain access.

7.0 **Review conclusions**

- 7.1 The Council has demonstrated its commitment to supporting communities within the Borough by continuing to fund the community rooms and commence a refurbishment programme to ensure they will be fit for purpose for future generations. The scrutiny project has identified that there are regular users and members of the community that benefit from the rooms however they are still very underused despite the work that has taken place to promote usage.
- 7.2 Whilst the officers in the Careline and Support Service have run promotional drives, talked to residents about what they would like to see at the rooms and arranged activities, a cross-Council approach is now needed to improve awareness of the rooms, reach new potential hirers and consolidate information on all the Council's venues for hire into a central place.

7.3 The processes for managing the rooms need tightening up to ensure fairness and transparency, making sure that all users are using the rooms under the same terms and conditions and that the accounts show a true reflection of the income and expenditure costs.

8.0 **Considerations**

8.1 A preliminary equality impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out to understand any positive or negative impacts of implementing the recommendations. No negative impacts were identified and it is expected that the review will have a positive impact on vulnerable groups such as the elderly or disabled due to the continued offer of care and support services at the rooms. More details can be found in the EIA attached at Appendix B.

8.2 Officers have been consulted on the proposals and the project group have been mindful to develop recommendations that support the Council Plan's priorities and can be delivered within existing resources across the Council.

Appendices

Appendix A – Bookings from June and July 2018

Appendix B – Preliminary Equalities Impact Assessment

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