

## COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2014

### JOINT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS AND THE HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES

#### THE HUB – MELTON COUNTRY PARK

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For Members to approve the basis of agreement for the Hub to continue to occupy the Visitors' Centre in the Country Park and to grant delegated powers to enter into a new arrangement.

##### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members grant delegated powers to the Head of Central Services in consultation with the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods to enter into an appropriate agreement to enable The Hub to continue to occupy the building on the basis of any of the options set out in para 3.3.**

##### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

##### 3.1 The Hub

The Hub meets several of the Council's stated priorities; it provides catering/cafe service training at the Visitors' Centre to disadvantaged young people and is helping those young people to enter adult life with foundation skills and confidence. It is run by a dedicated team of people. The cafe is open to the public at reasonable advertised times and provides a customer facility to the visitors of the Country Park.

Officers have previously been provided with a draft Business Plan and cashflow forecast for a 12 month period which clearly sets out the aims of the operation in relation to income and cost and how they are going to achieve them.

Based on that information members of this committee at their meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013 approved:

- 1) *Members grant delegated powers to the Head of Central Services to enter into an appropriate agreement to enable the Hub to continue to occupy the building on the basis of principles that £100 be paid per calendar month with review on an annual basis. With the current charge totalling £1,200, a total of £1,800 out of the paid £3,000 will be refunded to the Hub.*

The manager of the Melton Learning Hub has recently contacted officers of the council to advise that the Hub is currently making a loss from operating at the Country Park Café and have provided officers with cash flow predictions that show a potential £8K loss for the year. This is even with the reduced rent of £100 per month, as they still need to pay for the running costs of the facility.

The takings at the Café are extremely weather dependant. Therefore, regardless of service,

a week or month or rain can have significant impact on the takings. A sustainable use of the function room that generates income would make the Café a sustainable business. Currently the Melton Learning Hub has three proposals to make better use of the function room:

### 3.2 The Proposals

Officers met with the Manager of the Hub and their finance officer to discuss possible ways of developing a sustainable solution. The meeting was very productive and 3 proposals were identified that could provide a sustainable solution.

#### **Option 1:**

To move Voluntary Action Melton into the function room to act as their new office location. Currently VAM are located at Phoenix House but their contract expires at the end of March. At this point they need to be relocated. Voluntary Action Melton are currently merging with the Hub so moving them to the Country Park will avoid the cost of renting a new office as it will be able to home the Transport Scheme, gardening project and administration.

#### **Option 2**

To turn the Café and Visitors centre into an alternative education provision for key stage 3 (years 8 and 9). There is currently demand for this service from the Pupil Referral Unit and Leicestershire Schools. The intention would be to add a dividing wall to the function room. One room created would be a practical workshop and the second would be a classroom for the delivery of functional skills. The Café would continue to be used to teach cookery and catering. We would be able to teach 10 young people per day and the Café would continue to function as normal.

#### **Option 3:**

To sub-let the Function Room to ASD Learning (Midlands). These are a partner agency who already works alongside the Hub. ASD Learning work with young people on the Autistic Spectrum and those with Asperger's Syndrome. They would convert the function room into four one to one classrooms, where 4 tutors would work alongside 4 students. They would benefit from educational activity around the Park and vocational subjects at the Hub.

Members are advised that under all 3 options the room at the back of the visitor centre will not be open for the public to view various material [albeit dated] relating to the country park.

However, under all 3 options the facility will continue to be run as a café offering the services it currently does and certainly during the weekends visitors will notice 'no change'.

### 4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This proposal, if approved by Members, has a number of links to the Council's priorities due to the type of social enterprise the HUB is:

- Support people and businesses through the economic downturn
- Improving the well-being of vulnerable people
- Encourage people to take an active role in their communities
- Improve quality of life for people living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods

### 5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Members are asked to note the following financial implications:

Option 1- the current rent of £100 per month would be unaffordable to the Hub and members would be asked to approve a £1 per month rent amount. However, as the Council also provide a grant to VAM which includes expenditure for rent, the level of grant funding to VAM will have to be reviewed to take into account their new 'rent free' location.

Option 2- Neural effect from recommendations members made at their committee meeting of 20 March 2013

Option3- Neural effect from recommendations members made at their committee meeting of 20 March 2013

As any agreement needs to be approved by corporate property although services are provided by a social enterprise, Members are asked to grant delegated powers to the Head of Central Services in Consultation with the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods to agree an agreement based on one of the above options.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 The property team have already started to develop relevant head of terms based on the options above, should members approved the recommendations identified in this report.

Legal services will be instructed to develop the appropriate agreements, which will be for a 5 year period with an Annual review.

## **7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 The proposal does have links to community safety as the project creates opportunities for young people to develop their confidence and skills, the lack of which can contribute to offending.

## **8.0 EQUALITIES**

8.1 None as a direct consequence of this report.

## **9.0 RISKS**

9.1 The Hub operation may fail and if the Council are unable to agree a sustainable solution then, the Hub may withdraw from the Country Park facility.

## **10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 None as a consequence of this report.

## **11.0 CONSULTATION**

11.1 Officers continue to work closely with the Hub.

## **12.0 WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 The Visitors Centre is in Melton Country Park and as a borough wide facility all wards are affected to some extent

Date: 10 January 2014

Appendices : None

Background Papers: None

Reference : X:C'tee, Council & Sub-C'tees/CSA/2013-14/220114/The Hub – Melton Country Park