

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
REPORT NO:	HCWD/04/14
DATE:	14 January 2014
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor David Griffiths (Health and Social Care)
CONTACT OFFICER:	Dylan Hughes (Tel: 298855)
SUBJECT:	Community Centres
WARD:	All

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update the Board on the review of Community Centres and to seek approval on proposals relating to the future of the centres, including closures.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report explains the prospect for future funding of Community Centres by the Community Councils following a consultation exercise.
- 2.2 The report also describes other measures to ensure the continuation of some community facilities such as potential transfer to schools and voluntary groups.
- 2.3 In the light of the severe financial situation affecting the Council and the discretionary nature of this service, the report concludes that there will be a need to consider the early closure of those community centres that are not fully funded by Community Councils or by some other means.

3 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 The Executive Board is asked to approve the following measures:

- 3.1.1 Where a Community Council agrees to fully fund their local community centre(s) this will take effect as of April 2014**

- 3.1.2 Community centres which are not fully funded by a Community Council or where there is no local group that will take over the immediate running of local centres will be selected for closure as of April 2014 subject to consultation and completing an equalities impact assessment**
- 3.1.3 Where Community Councils agree to fully fund community centres for 12 months during the financial year 2014/15, that this is taken as an opportunity to agree a formal transfer to the Community Council or a voluntary group before March 2015. If this does not occur, then the community centre will be selected for closure as of April 2015**
- 3.1.4 That any agreements with voluntary groups to take over their community centre should be done on the basis of the appropriate legal arrangement; where this is on a lease basis, it should be on a peppercorn rent and that the department will make a contribution towards the legal costs of the voluntary association.**
- 3.1.5 That dual-use community centres should transfer to the relevant school providing that this results in an appropriate budgetary saving (with the level of saving being reported to the Executive Board prior to implementation). If the transfer is not feasible, then these three community centres would be subject to transfer or closure as above.**
- 3.1.6 The co-location of community centres and other local facilities (such as libraries etc.) where this is feasible and where it results in an overall budgetary saving or other discernible benefits. If this is not feasible, then these centres would be subject to transfer or closure as above.**

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) To enable a budget saving in the revenue costs of operating community centres.
- (ii) To allow the transfer of community centres to other bodies which would be prepared to operate them.

4 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Consultation with Community Councils

- 4.1 The Head of Community Wellbeing & Development wrote to all Community Councils on 30 August asking them to consider the following funding and operating options for 2014/15 and beyond:
- a) Direct transfer to the relevant community council to meet the full operating and management costs or the community council to provide a 100% financial contribution with Wrexham Council continuing to manage the facility. Community councils were provided with the revenue costs of operating their local community centre(s) and estimated costs for future building maintenance requirements.
 - b) Direct transfer to a local management committee, voluntary association or community group which would become responsible for the full operating costs. For community centres this would be similar to arrangements for voluntary village halls elsewhere within the County Borough. The role of community councils in identifying and supporting community groups to take on these facilities would be crucial to the success of any transfer.

c) In the event that options a) or b) cannot be achieved or are not viable before April 2014 the Council would need to consult on any remaining options, including the cessation of the service or closure of the facility to remove the majority of costs with subsequent demolition of any buildings, dismantling of equipment and, where appropriate, sale of the site for an alternative use. The Council will also have to give consideration of the staffing implications related to this.

- 4.2 There has been considerable discussion regarding these proposals (and the request that Community Councils consider funding/operating play areas, public conveniences, bowling greens and school crossing patrols). They were discussed at the Town and Community Councils Forum on 3 October, at an open meeting at the Guildhall on 10 October and in a number of Community Council meetings.
- 4.3 Responses by Community Councils vary significantly and there is no coherent picture. The majority have requested further information (e.g. about the condition of the buildings or concerning extant agreements), which has been provided. At the time of writing the report, 8 Community Councils have indicated that they are willing to fund the community centres in their areas (numbering 9 community centres) for 2014/15 although no agreements have yet been signed.
- 4.4 One Community Council has suggested that it would consider providing financial support for 12 months to allow time for the establishment of a local group or trust to take over its community centre or for the local management committee to be supported to do this. This might provide a short-term solution in one instance, it should only be considered in exceptional circumstances to allow time for Community Councils to establish viable local bodies to take over their centre(s) as it would add uncertainty for both users and staff during the 12-month period. The department also lacks capacity to support the establishment of a host of new voluntary trusts/management groups.
- 4.5 A summary of the representations made to date by the Community Councils is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Consultation with Existing Management Committees

- 4.6 The Constitution provides for local management of community centres by management committees. However, in practice these committees generally consist of a few dedicated individuals who take bookings and undertake limited fund-raising. At some centres there are no effective management committees and bookings are taken by the caretaker or centrally by the Community Centres Officer.
- 4.7 Where they exist, management committees have proved supportive in terms of external funding bids for building improvements (e.g. Llay, Pen-y-cae) although the work of submitting bids and managing projects has invariably been carried out by officers of the Council.
- 4.8 The Community Centres Officer, supported by local Members, has attempted to inspire the establishment of new management committees during the past year with some success at centres such as Little Acton and New Broughton.
- 4.9 Informal discussions have been held with existing management committees to

ascertain whether any would wish to take over the operational management and assume responsibility for the costs of their centre. These discussions, whilst raising awareness of the issues, have shown that management committees, although willing and committed, generally lack the capacity and time to take on these responsibilities. A number of committees are waiting to see the outcome of the discussions with Community Councils.

Consultation with Voluntary Groups

- 4.10 There has been some interest from voluntary groups in taking over their local community centre. The most advanced stage of discussion is with Marford Community Centre Group which has expressed an interest in taking over Marford Community Centre. This group have presented a proposal to the Council to take over the centre and officers are supporting them to develop their ideas. A representative committee has been established and consideration given to future governance structures. The proposal will be fully evaluated and discussions will continue with a view to officers being able to recommend that the Council reaches an agreement for the transfer of the centre providing it is made available for use by the full range of community groups and following consideration by the Corporate Land & Buildings Strategy Group and a future meeting of the Executive Board.
- 4.11 There are a small number of groups at other locations at an early stage in considering whether to take this step. It is clear that transfer to a voluntary group or association will take time and officer support to become a reality. Previous experience has shown that this process can be lengthy as voluntary groups take time to gain the confidence to take over the running of a community building, while the continued operation of the centre thereafter depends on a core group of keen individuals. This approach cannot therefore be considered as a viable way forward for the majority of centres although it may work in isolated cases.

Transfer of Community Centres to schools

- 4.12 The transfer of three dual-use community centres at Borrass Park, Holt & Ruabon has been discussed with officers from the Lifelong Learning Department, head teachers and chairs of Governing Bodies. The proposed transfer would be characterised by:
- The school qualifying for an additional LMS budget based on the increased floor area incorporated by the inclusion of the community hall
 - The school absorbing the additional costs of caretaking and cleaning
 - The school having more control over the use of their shared hall, but still required to make the premises available for community bookings
 - If, as a result of the above, there was a net cost to the school, part of the existing community centres budget would be transferred to the school to meet these additional costs
 - Any residual budget being a saving to the community centres budget
- 4.13 The proposal is under active consideration providing certain elements can be resolved:
- NNDR position - in particular, the re-calculated amount of NNDR as this will determine the total savings
 - Staff transfers - whether staff would be employed by Community Wellbeing & Development, the school or some central unit in Assets and Economic Development

- Repairs & maintenance - whether the school would buy into the Council's provision or not
- The residual subsidy that would be required from the community centres budget to support community use of the facility to ensure that there is no additional expense on the school budget
- Calculation of the residual net saving to the community centres budget

Usage Figures and Costs

- 4.14 Community centre usage figures for the past four years are attached as **Appendix 2** which includes a projection for 2013/14 based on bookings during the first 6 months of the current year. The use of community centres remains constant at around 7,000 bookings per annum.
- 4.15 The final expenditure and income figures for 2012/13 are attached as **Appendix 3**.

Implication for Community Centres of the Community Assets Review

- 4.16 The Assets and Economic Development Department have completed a service asset management plan for each community centre as part of the Community Assets Review. The wider review will be reported to the Corporate Land & Buildings Strategy Group in February 2014 prior to consideration by the Executive Board.
- 4.17 The work completed on the centres includes a visual condition survey which, as implied, is not a full intrusive structural survey, the costs of which are prohibitive. A summary of the estimated cost at each community centre is attached as **Appendix 4**. This information was distributed to Community Councils at the special meeting on 10 October and has since been sent to all Community Councils and County Borough Council Members. The costs listed relate to building works required to bring each centre up to a good state of repair, but are not an indication that the centre cannot continue to operate in the short term and would have to be closed as unfit for use. As core samples would need to be taken to ascertain the lifespan of felt roofs, the approach taken has been to provide an estimated cost to replace the entire roof. Essential health and safety repairs are undertaken and periodic regulatory checks (fire, water etc.) are carried out as required. An asset management assessment of the centres is attached as **Appendix 5**.

Conclusion

- 4.18 Given all of the above, the following conclusions have been drawn:
- a) There is no clear agreement with all Community Councils for them to 100% fund the community centres for the foreseeable future or take responsibility for them through an appropriate agreement, although some have indicated that they are willing to work towards this position and, at this point in time, it is understood that 9 community centres will be fully funded by their Community Council for 2014/15.
 - b) Discussions and negotiations have continued with Community Councils and a specific request has been made that they secure 100% financial support for 12 months in their next precepts, in order to allow time for them to support the establishment of a local group or trust to take over the centre or to support the management committee to do so.
 - c) Discussions and negotiations with Marford Community Centre Group should

continue to establish whether this is a viable solution for this centre.

- d) Discussions and negotiations should continue with schools and Governing Bodies to transfer the community provision in the dual use centres to them whilst ensuring that community groups continue to have access to local meeting spaces.
- e) In view of the severe financial constraints facing the Council, if Community Councils have not set a precept to cover the cost of the centres for 2014/15 and no such agreements have been reached with voluntary groups by 31 March 2014 then the Council should proceed to close unfunded centres from April 2014.

- 4.19 **Policy Framework** - The value of the provision of community centres as convenient local meeting spaces for community groups and organisations is recognised by the Council, but this is a non-mandatory function.
- 4.20 **Budget** - This function seeks to provide £136k towards the Council's programme of savings.
- 4.21 **Legal** - It should be noted that the requirement to prepare legal agreements would be dependent on the professional capacity within the legal team. The main considerations will be regarding the TUPE transfer of caretakers to other bodies. Specific agreements will also be required with individual Community Councils.
- 4.22 **Staffing** – Consultation meetings have taken place with community centre caretakers and with Trades Union representatives.
- 4.23 **Equality/Human Rights** - an Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted. The closure of community centres will affect many groups and the highest number of responses indicated that those mostly affected will include older people, disabled persons, young children and carers. As mitigation, alternative venues will be identified although it cannot be certain whether these will meet the exact requirements of all groups.
- 4.24 **Risks** - there may be public opposition, negative press coverage and legal challenge following any decision to close a community centre. Closures may also impact on other aspects of the Council's work and will require alternative provision for polling stations, emergency rest centres and early years entitlement settings.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Local Members with community centres in their wards have been made aware of the full content of this report.
- 5.2 User groups have been consulted on potential closures and 24% of questionnaires have been returned. A third of responses were from groups representing elderly people. A significant proportion of groups (38%) indicated that they would cease to meet if their community centre were to close although the majority (59%) would re-locate to another venue if that were available. Where possible, a full discussion with user groups on the proposed transfer to another venue will be undertaken prior to closure. A fuller summary of the consultation is in **Appendix 6**.

5.3 A formal process of consultation with affected members of staff and the Trades Unions is being followed.

6. EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

6.1 In circumstances where Community Councils agree to 100% funding of their community centre(s), Wrexham CBC could continue to manage and operate the centre as currently and provide management information (usage etc) and financial data (expenditure, income) to the relevant Community Council on a periodic basis.

6.2 If a Community Council wishes to take over the running of a centre, it would need to meet all the annual charges including the repairs and maintenance costs although it would also retain the income from bookings.

6.3 There has been some interest from voluntary groups in taking over their local community centre. In these cases, the appropriate legal agreement would need to be considered and one option could be a full repairing lease at a peppercorn rent.

6.4 The option to carry on funding community centres as before is not considered to be viable given the severe financial constraints facing the Council.

7. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

7.1 The Homes, Environment & Communities Scrutiny Committee has considered three reports reviewing community centres during the past year (HCWD/60/12, October 2012 and HCWD/25/13, June 2013 and HCWD/37/13 in November 2013). These reports included an early review of assets, a summary of the budget position and options for the future. The Scrutiny Committee agreed with the recommendations set out above for approval by the Executive Board.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.
HCWD/60/12 report of 10 October 2012 to HE&C Scrutiny Committee - Community Centres Review	WCBC internet	http://www.wrexham.gov.uk
HCWD/25/13 report of 12 June 2013 to HE&C Scrutiny - Asset Management Review of Community Centres		
HCWD/37/13 report of 13 November to HE&C Scrutiny Committee – Community Centres		

Community Councils: Responses to Letter from Head of Community Wellbeing & Development re Community Centres

Community Council	Community Centres	Estimated amount requested	Date of most recent letter/e-mail	Response	Comments
Abenbury	Abenbury	£817	13 September	Agreed contribution of £817	
	Pentre Gwyn	£3,139		Decided not to contribute towards Pentre Gwyn	
Acton	Borras Park	£12,435	29 November	Acton CC have recommended that the centre is transferred to the school.	Potential transfer to school under discussion with Lifelong Learning
	Little Acton	£7,254		Acton CC have asked that discussions take place with the local playgroup with a view to taking over the centre and have provided funding of £7,500 to support this process during 2014/15	
Broughton	Lodge	£654	18 October	Broughton CC have confirmed funding for New Broughton community centre and 50%, as requested, for Lodge	Land at New Broughton is owned by Broughton CC
	New Broughton	£10,200			
Brymbo	Bwlchgwyn	£19,970	14 October	Brymbo CC has requested further information and have not made a decision as "not enough financial information has been made available".	
	Lodge	£654			
	Tanyfron	£12,193			
Caia Park	Kingsley Circle	£15,712	13 December	The Community Council is not prepared to fund Kingsley Circle Community Centre but have agreed to pay the nett expenditure for Pentre Gwyn Community Centre for the next 12 months. (This will allow for the review of staffing to be undertaken and for the possible formation of a new management committee to take over the running of it as was discussed in the public meeting held on 2nd December).	Land is owned by a trust
	Pentre Gwyn	£3,139			
Gresford	Marford	£14,273	14 October	Gresford CC have asked for more detailed discussions with officers in light of the proposals	

				from Marford Management Group. Marford Management Group have submitted an “in principle” proposal to assume the management of the centre.	
Gwersyllt	Sydallt	£3,591	25 November	Gwersyllt CC has agreed to make funding available to the County Borough Council in the next financial year to enable it to continue to manage Sydallt Community Centre	
Holt	Holt	£12,782	24 September	Queried whether discussions are taking place with the school to take over the running of the community centre	Potential transfer to school under discussion with Lifelong Learning
Llay	Llay	£22,584	11 November	The village/community council are looking at setting up a board of trustees to run the community centre and have requested a draft lease agreement and also an extension of time to implement this.	Discussions taking place re: establishment of a trust
Offa	Maesgwyn	£9,968	11 November	Offa CC have agreed to pay 100% of the requested financial amount to cover the operational costs of both centres on the understanding that WCBC continues to operate the centres and maintains ownership of the buildings meeting all associated outgoings including insurance, employment and management costs. It is requested that a review of operational costs at each centre is carried out during the next twelve months to reduce costs.	
	Parciau	£9,990			
Pen-y-cae	Pen-y-cae	£8,760	10 October	3 letters received and responded to asking for further information but no decision	
Rhosddu	Rhosddu	£11,527	16 October	Rhosddu CC have confirmed their decision to fund the community centre although will wish to look at ways of reducing costs and increasing income	
Rhos	Johnstown	£11,014	09 December	Rhos CC have agreed to fund the running of Johnstown community centre for 12 months.	
Ruabon	Ruabon	£12,719		No response yet	Potential transfer to school under discussion with Lifelong Learning

Community Centres Usage Figures

Appendix 2

Community Centre	Projected Bookings 2013/14	Bookings 2012/13 Children (0-11)	Bookings 2012/13 Youth (11-17)	Bookings 2012/13 Adult (18- 64)	Bookings 2012/13 Elderly (65+)	Total Bookings 2012/13	Total Bookings 2011/12	Total Bookings 2010/11	Total Bookings 2009/10	Av.Per Wk 2012/13	Staffed Weekly Hours
Abenbury	378	0	364	28	0	392	412	281	203	7.5	14
Borras Park	650	303	119	107	79	608	545	598	606	11.7	32.5
Bwlchgwyn	318	123	146	83	13	365	411	411	465	7.0	25
Sydallt	126	0	34	9	47	90	91	81	75	1.7	5
Holt	520	304	0	236	7	547	535	484	566	10.5	21
Johnstown	392	159	148	144	42	493	542	527	455	9.5	24
Kingsley Circle	318	4	41	251	0	296	299	258	351	5.7	21
Little Acton	192	135	0	59	12	206	163	207	218	4.0	9
Llay	372	3	84	181	65	333	329	314	300	6.4	26
Lodge	96	0	96	0	0	96	96	0	129	1.8	Voluntary
Maesgwyn	280	103	54	206	0	363	366	282	303	7.0	17
Marford	758	489	92	63	19	663	631	620	558	12.8	17
New Broughton	272	149	1	145	69	364	314	303	304	7.0	20
Parciau	446	188	0	276	37	501	588	564	566	9.6	21
Pentre Gwyn	302	8	122	96	98	324	337	299	316	6.2	15
Penycae	378	176	12	123	44	355	340	348	409	6.8	15
Rhosddu	376	34	0	320	33	387	219	196	246	7.4	21
Ruabon	586	196	31	327	12	566	525	409	478	10.9	37
Tanyfron	206	109	78	78	2	267	246	215	205	5.1	20
TOTAL	6966	2483	1422	2732	579	7216	6989	6397	6753	138.8	

Expenditure Summary 2012/13

Appendix 3

	Revenue Expenditure 2012/13 incl R&M)	Total Income Including Contributions 2012/13	Community Council Contribution 12/13	Total Income excluding Contributions	NNDR	Net Revenue Expenditure 2012/13	Net Revenue Expenditure without contributions 2012/13	Income as % of Revenue expenditure 2012/13	Total Number of Lettings 2012/13	Average Bookings per week 2012/13	Rev. Cost per booking 2012/13	
Abenbury	£12,155	-£11,863.19	-£525.00	-£11,338.19	£3,466.80	£292.13	£817.13	98%	392	7.5	£0.75	
Borras Park	£19,634	-£8,550.67	-£1,622.00	-£6,928.67	£0.00	£11,083.64	£12,705.64	44%	608	11.7	£18.23	
Bwlchgwyn	£20,814	-£2,623.70	-£1,780.00	-£843.70	£0.00	£18,190.60	£19,970.60	13%	365	7.0	£49.84	
Cefn y Bedd-Sydallt	£6,054	-£3,123.24	-£660.00	-£2,463.24	£695.50	£2,930.75	£3,590.75	52%	90	1.7	£32.56	
Holt	£18,361	-£6,873.24	-£1,294.00	-£5,579.24	£3,680.80	£11,487.79	£12,781.79	37%	547	10.5	£21.00	
Johnstown	£21,002	-£12,023.85	-£2,036.00	-£9,987.85	£3,381.20	£8,977.71	£11,013.71	57%	493	9.5	£18.21	
Kingsley Circle	£21,352	-£7,027.23	-£1,387.00	-£5,640.23	£2,824.80	£14,324.50	£15,711.50	33%	296	5.7	£48.39	
Little Acton	£9,559	-£6,529.48	-£4,224.00	-£2,305.48	£1,177.00	£3,029.63	£7,253.63	68%	206	4.0	£14.71	
Llay	£27,946	-£7,437.76	-£2,076.00	-£5,361.76	£3,081.60	£20,507.95	£22,583.95	27%	333	6.4	£61.59	
Lodge	£1,546	-£356.84	-£118.00	-£238.84	£802.50	£1,189.35	£1,307.35	23%	96	1.8	£12.39	Estimated Bookings
Maesgwyn	£18,149	-£8,181.05	-£2,198.00	-£5,983.05	£2,118.60	£9,967.76	£12,165.76	45%	363	7.0	£27.46	
Marford	£25,375	-£12,073.79	-£972.00	-£11,101.79	£1,712.00	£13,301.45	£14,273.45	48%	663	12.8	£20.06	£11101 R&M
New Broughton	£17,517	-£8,926.90	-£1,610.00	-£7,316.90	£3,424.00	£8,590.26	£10,200.26	51%	364	7.0	£23.60	
Parciau	£17,816	-£13,145.28	-£5,319.00	-£7,826.28	£2,225.60	£4,671.19	£9,990.19	74%	333	6.4	£14.03	£4000 Contribution R&M
Pentre Gwyn	£12,192	-£6,837.44	-£922.00	-£5,915.44	£1,733.40	£5,354.88	£6,276.88	56%	324	6.2	£16.53	
Penycae	£16,068	-£8,094.89	-£787.00	-£7,307.89	£1,690.60	£7,973.52	£8,760.52	50%	355	6.8	£22.46	
Rhosddu	£20,818	-£10,945.14	-£1,654.00	-£9,291.14	£2,910.40	£9,872.42	£11,526.42	53%	387	7.4	£25.51	including Acton Bookings
Ruabon	£24,431	-£12,912.16	-£1,200.00	-£11,712.16	£0.00	£11,519.08	£12,719.08	53%	566	10.9	£20.35	
Tanyfron	£19,268	-£9,043.53	-£1,969.00	-£7,074.53	£3,381.20	£10,224.71	£12,193.71	47%	267	5.1	£38.29	
Total	£330,059	-£156,569.38	-£32,353.00	-£124,216.38	£38,306.00	£173,489.32	£205,842.32	47%	7048	7.1	£24.62	

Summary of Visual Condition Surveys for Community Centres: 2013

Community Centre	Total costs including assumptions where applicable that roofs may require replacement
Abenbury Community Centre	£37,800
Borras Community Centre	£14,650
Bwlchgwyn Community Centre	£8,850
Sydallt / Cefn y Bedd Community Centre	£4,150
Holt Community Centre	£54,500
Johnstown Community Centre	£2,650
Kingsley Circle Community Centre	£57,600
Little Acton Community Centre	£32,800
Llay Community Centre	£11,850
Lodge Community Centre	£15,134
Marford Community Centre	£32,974
Maesgwyn Community Centre	£3,200
New Broughton Community Centre	£83,150
Parciau Community Centre	£9,450
Pentre Gwyn Community Centre	£9,900
Penycae Community Centre	£6,150
Rhosddu Community Centre	£37,850
Ruabon Community Centre	£53,430
Tanyfron Community Centre	£42,675

Property	Floor area Sqm	2013 visual maintenance cost estimates	Building condition	Suitability	Sufficiency	Accessibility (DDA works)	Location	Premises revenue loss	Comments
Abenbury Community Centre	347	£37,800 (Includes £32,000 roof replacement assumption).	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	£1,904 average loss	Sufficiency is shown red as the premises are used for educational purposes and this causes a conflict between education and community centre use
Borras Park	99 – shared hall excl.	£14,650 (includes £11,000 of roof covering replacement)	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	£16,112 average loss	Hall shared with Education and used by community out-of-hours.
Bwlchgwyn Community Centre	342	£8,850	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	£20,246 average loss	Occupied on a groundlease basis. Any option to close the premises may require the building to be demolished.

Property	Floor area Sqm	2013 visual maintenance cost estimates	Building condition	Suitability	Sufficiency	Accessibility (DDA works)	Location	Premises revenue loss	Comments
Holt Community Centre	394	£54,500 (Includes £37,000 roof replacement assumption).	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow £10,000 DDA improvement works	Green	£13,865 average loss	Community Centre is attached to the school and could provided extended school use on top of existing provision.
Johnstown Community Centre	316	£2,650	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	£13,439 average loss	Owain Glyndwr status across wider site restricts development opportunities.

Property	Floor area Sqm	2013 visual maintenance cost estimates	Building condition	Suitability	Sufficiency	Accessibility (DDA works)	Location	Premises revenue loss	Comments
Kingsley Community Centre	275	£57,600 (includes £29,000 roof replacement assumption).	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red £20,500 DDA improvement works	Green	£15,627 average loss	Substantial DDA works identified for toilets.
Little Acton Community Centre	110	£32,800 (Includes £13,000 roof replacement assumption).	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Green	Yellow	£8,400 average loss	Size of premises restricts use with playgroup occupying majority of storage and toilets. Some structural cracking identified to external elevations
Llay	449	£11,850	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red £6,000 DDA improvement works	Yellow	£22,972 average loss	Some structural cracking identified to external elevations. Building is approaching end of expected lifespan
Lodge Community Centre	65	£15,134	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red £7,184 DDA improvement works	Yellow	£1,902 average loss	Size of premises and location restricts use. DDA works identified for toilets and access.

Property	Floor area Sqm	2013 visual maintenance cost estimates	Building condition	Suitability	Sufficiency	Accessibility (DDA works)	Location	Premises revenue loss	Comments
Marford Community Centre	189	£32,974 (includes £22,574 of DDA alteration)	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	£13,765 average loss	Substantial DDA works include replacement ramp and w/c. Recent timber frame repairs but ongoing repair issues.
Maesgwyn Community Centre	193	£3,200	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	£12,331 average loss	Covenant restricts development. Changing rooms remain unused
New Broughton Community Centre	252	£83,150 (Includes £35,000 roof replacement assumption).	Red	Yellow	Red	Red £10,000 DDA improvement works	Yellow	£14,246 average loss	WCBC lease land from Community Council. Premises generally in a poor state of repair and on edge of settlement. DDA works identified to improve access and toilet facilities
Parciau Community Centre	357 total	£9,450 (includes £5,000 for roof recovering)	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	£17,452 average loss	Development of the site is restricted by covenant to supporting the Council's statutory uses.
Pentre Gwyn Community Centre	189	£9,900	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	£8,500 average loss	Occupied on a groundlease basis. Any option to close the premises may require the building to be demolished.

Property	Floor area Sqm	2013 visual maintenance cost estimates	Building condition	Suitability	Sufficiency	Accessibility (DDA works)	Location	Premises revenue loss	Comments
Penycae Community Centre	146	£6,150	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	£16,423 average loss	This aging property remains suitable for the need but is approaching the end of its expected lifespan.
Rhosddu Community Centre	326	£37,850 (including £31,000 roof recovering estimate)	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	£15,168 average loss	The building is generally aging and further repairs could be necessary to the roof structure as well as the internal fixtures and fittings
Ruabon Community Centre	146 With 441 shared	£53,430 (Includes £45,000 roof replacement works including shared hall roof).	Yellow (£1,600 works identified for community centre).	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	£15,469 average loss	Community centre is attached to St Mary's Church Aided School. Shared areas amount to 441sqm include hall, whereby complicated agreement with Diocese existing with percentage split for internal and external costs for shared areas. School provision could benefit from extension above existing shared use areas, subject to agreement with school and Diocese

Property	Floor area Sqm	2013 visual maintenance cost estimates	Building condition	Suitability	Sufficiency	Accessibility (DDA works)	Location	Premises revenue loss	Comments
Sydallt	144	£4,150	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	£6,273 average loss	This centre serves a marginal community, although alternative facilities are available nearby. The building is nearing the end of its expected lifespan.
Tanyfron Community Centre	373	£42,675 (includes £40,000 roof recovering works)	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	£18,165 average loss	This centre is in a marginal location and the nearby school is over-capacity

COMMUNITY CENTRES PROPOSALS CONSULTATION REPORT

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update the Executive Board on public consultation regarding the proposals for Community Centres contained in report HCWD/04/14

2 INFORMATION

- 2.1 A range of methods have been used to obtain public and customer feedback on the proposals including letters & e-mails, questionnaires and other data.
- 2.2 184 questionnaires were distributed to all user groups with 62 responses returned (33.7%). The highest number of forms returned were from groups representing older people's social groups (32.3%). A full list of representations, comments and views are attached below.
- 2.3 The Equality Impact Assessment has been updated to take account of the responses to the consultation.
- 2.4 The general Reshaping Services Consultation on the draft budget proposals for 2014/15 (**Part 1**) included comments on Community Centres as below:
- a) Mixed views with some citing community centres as important focal points for communities that need to be maintained and other suggesting that they could be rationalised based on use
 - b) Some agreed that community centres could be run and managed by communities or volunteers, but others expressed concern about whether they would have the funding and skills to do so
 - c) Others suggested mitigating actions such as reviewing charges and improving promotion and advertising to increase use
- 2.5 The responses for Community Centre on the Council's budget proposals were broadly balanced (45% agreed and 42% disagreed):-

Proposal	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Neither agree/ disagree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Net
Community Centres	19%	26%	13%	23%	19%	2%

- 2.6 There is an online petition in relation to the proposed effects on community centres, play areas and school crossing patrols (57 signatures as at 06 January 2014).
- 2.7 The Leisure & Libraries Manager attended a meeting of the Reshaping Services EIA Support Group co-ordinated by the Community Diversity Manager. This group identified key groups of people most likely to be affected by the proposals and the possible implications (**Part 2**). The Group identified the type of people which would be most affected:-
- a) Adults, children, young people and families (play groups, mother and toddler, Brownies, WI groups etc)
 - b) Young people - as youth centres have also closed
 - c) Older people (lunch clubs, risks to vulnerable people as their support needs are not identified, potentially issues could become critical before they are noticed (Social Services day services have been reduced too)
- 2.8 User groups were asked to describe the protected characteristics of their membership and the responses are summarised in **Part 3**. The responses from Community Council regarding funding will avoid the need for some centres to close.
- 2.9 A small, but not insignificant, number of users groups have said that they would be willing to consider running their community centre alone (20%) or in partnership with others (28%). Accordingly, the opportunity will be given for user groups to further discuss and consider this possibility for those community centres which are not being funded and where there is sufficient interest to warrant a public meeting.
- 2.10 If a community centre were to close, the majority of user groups would prefer to re-locate to another venue although a high proportion (40%) say that their group would cease to meet. This would impact in particular where the Community Council is not funding local centres and the impact on individual groups will be considered in more detail (e.g. at community centres such as Bwlchgwyn, Kingsley Circle etc. where the future position is not secure). Wrexham Council will seek to identify available space at other locations and assist, where possible, in negotiating the re-location of a group to another community venue.
- 2.11 31% of users travel less than 2 miles to their community centre although 38.3% travel between 2 and 5 miles, indicating that a smaller number of conveniently

located community facilities could cover the requirements of a significant number of users.

2.12 The findings of the Community Assets Review will inform the consolidation of facilities in the future with the intention of providing fewer community “hub” locations which are multi-purpose (as per the model already developed at Brynteg, Gwersyllt, Coedpoeth and, latterly, Acton Community Resource Centre).

COMMUNITY COUNCIL COMMENTS ON FUNDING

2.13 A number of community Councils have NOW indicated that they would be willing to fund their local community centre(s) for 2014/15.

2.14 Also, discussions are continuing with various community groups although only one firm in-principle proposal has been received.

2.15 The current overall position is as follows:

Current Position	Names of Community Centres	Number of Centres
Funded by Community Council for 2014/15	Abenbury, Johnstown, Little Acton, Maesgwyn, New Broughton, Parciau, Pentre Gwyn, Rhosddu, Sydallt	9
Local management group proposal	Marford	1
50% funding	Lodge (by Broughton; Brymbo yet to decide)	1
No decision by Community Council	Bwlchgwyn, Llay, Pen-y-Cae, Tanyfron,	4
Under negotiation as part of transfer to schools	Borras Park, Holt, Ruabon	3
Not funded by Community Council and subject to closure unless an alternative management proposal is received	Kingsley Circle	1
Total		19

CONCLUSION

- 2.16 The consultation exercises indicate that the closure of community centres will impact on groups, in particular adults, children young people, families and older people. Obviously, this will be of most significance where an actual closure takes place in April 2014.
- 2.17 In the event of any closures, the mitigation will include:
- a) The identification of potential alternative locations (both Council and owned by other institutions) which will enable groups to re-locate, if they wish. The outcome of the Community Assets Review will also be used to determine whether community “hub” buildings can provide an alternative location.
 - b) Sharing expertise and advice with Community Councils and other management groups which may operate community centres.
 - c) Hold public meetings at centres at risk of closure to seek alternative ways to mitigate the effects such as groups working together to operate their community centre or an “anchor tenant” take responsibility for the building
 - d) Work with user groups and partner organisations in the affected communities.
- 2.18 In terms of the current position, the funding allocated by Community Councils for 2014/15 (together with the potential management agreement at Marford) will enable the retention of community centre provision in at least 10 locations. Work will continue to implement the transfer of the 3 dual-use centres to the host school.
- 2.19 Discussions will continue with the other 3 Community Councils which have not yet reached a decision (Brymbo, Llay and Pen-y-cae) and which affects a further 5 community centres and with any local groups at Kingsley Circle community centre. In the event that no funding solutions are found for these 6 community centres, the first stage will involve an assessment of alternative local venues to which groups can be re-located, should they wish, and closure. Capacity at retained community centres can be used to accommodate some groups from venues which are closed, again if these alternatives are suitable. Public transport routes will be included in this assessment.
- 2.20 There may be a lengthy timescales and significant workloads involved in setting up agreements with Community Councils and other local organisations and in identifying a network of suitable premises to accommodate groups who wish to continue to meet in the event of their current location closing.

Part 1: Reshaping Services Consultation

Community centres should not be closed - they are important meeting points for communities and provide a range of beneficial local activities

Don't close community centres. It would be much harder in future to reinstate them.

Our children have nowhere to go where they can be safe, community centres are safe we know where they are, and we don't want children hanging around the streets causing mayhem.

Community centres are often the only meeting place in the community. If there are not alternatives within a community I do not think they should be closed.

Community Centres have an important part to play in the wellbeing of society, something the Council rarely recognises or uses. To close them (which, in effect, they would be doing) is just showing that the Council are merely trying to tick boxes rather than provide what is needed.

If we want to create sustainable and resilient communities who can respond to each others' needs rather than rely on the local authority to provide everything, it is highly likely that buildings will be needed more rather than less, e.g. lunch clubs, knit and natter groups, fitness classes.

Community Centres. These provide benefits to local people to meet and are often a focal point of the community. Would it not be possible to reduce the Council contribution on the understanding that shortfalls be met by the fundraising of the voluntary groups who use them.

I am concerned that Community centres are at risk as these often provide a range of local facilities including mother and toddler groups, luncheon clubs etc. Removal of these facilities may be of detriment to those groups and may increase isolation. I feel that more work needs to be done with other stakeholders, including community councils and user groups to ensure that local facilities are retained, perhaps involving local fund raising or opening of community cafes within such centres to raise income.

The community centres should not be cut if it means future services will have to increase following breakdowns of social networks for vulnerable people.

I refer to the council's current budget proposals consultation, and note that it is proposed to withdraw funding for the management of a number of community centres across the county borough, which may mean they need to close, unless alternative arrangements are made. I am responding in my capacity as Elections Manager. Several council-managed community centres are currently used as polling stations by the Returning Officer. The next election is on 22nd May 2014, and I attached a list of the council managed Community Centres which it is planned to use at these elections. If the Returning Officer is unable to use these buildings in the future, Election candidates, political parties and others, including the Electoral Commission, may call into question the accessibility of the election. Electors from these areas would inevitably have to travel much longer distances in order to cast their vote, as in some areas there are no alternative buildings available for use. The councils current policy is to request the Returning Officer to avoid the use of schools as polling stations, in order to reduce any impact on education, and the closure of schools on polling day, together with other

health and safety related issues. Booking Letters are due to be despatched to polling stations within the next week

Today the rapidity of changes in societal behaviour makes it difficult to keep matching facilities to needs. Cheap supermarket alcohol supplies contributes to pubs closing; out of town supermarkets cause a crisis on the High Street; social media changes the mode of human conversation and interaction; growing worries about personal safety mean the elderly are more uncomfortable than ever about leaving home in the evening. Many of these factors are responsible for buildings traditionally provided for public meeting places being not now well utilised. Churches remain major users of buildings. In the majority of cases they own these facilities, and often legal ownership documents will prescribe how they can be used. Some churches have found ways of operating out of community buildings they do not own, and in other cases churches have developed or adapted buildings to become new community facilities used by many other community activities. We note the proposed Asset review and recommend that the Council and churches have a dialogue on this issue to consider/examine if there is scope for innovative and cooperative ways forward. However we would be concerned at the removal of facilities which, in a fast changing world, could once again become a much needed asset in the near future.

Community Centres are a lifeline to rural communities. This is where people can congregate and help each other - less cost to the state. Libraries Review -So much for the written word. Not everyone has Kindles. Reduce hours as necessary but do not close any completely - please. Twinning activities - I cannot disagree with this. A great deal of money is wasted on this but to remain in contact is good.

To do this you must ensure that plenty of time is afforded the community councils or organisations to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and structure to take on these roles - this is not just a money issue

I think it's a disgrace that the authority are thinking of closing the heart of the community

Improve efficiency, advertising and promotion of community centres and review hire fees to increase use

Better advertising of the facilities would be better. The new centre in Acton which will already be underused as no opening has been announced to immediate villagers, in fact, you can't get in unless you know when it is open and as there is nothing online about it, how could you find out.

Maybe if you charged less for community centres more people would use them and more money would come in from hiring it out

Perhaps the hire fees could be more flexible and commercial.

The Community centres, libraries and leisure centres should be reviewed so as to make them more efficient. It is too easy to say let's take a facility away without a proper review being carried out. There must be ways of making these facilities more efficient.

I believe WCBC could have managed some of these services more efficiently over the past years i.e. sending out invoices more regularly also the pricing of rooms and staffing hours.

Community centres are valuable resources in communication with local people and so shouldn't be stopped. Maybe utilize buildings more efficiently, use country park visitor centres for evening sessions and other council buildings that are not in use when needed for Community Centre events. Have a list of buildings in each Community that

could be used, WCBC or private and then have an online booking system that can be used by members who have to log in.

Community centres need to be rationalised based on usage and where possible closed and/or sold.

The existing provision of Community Centres and Libraries is excessive particularly in the smaller communities. The levels of usage do not justify the need for these facilities and more should be closed

Where there is more than one Community Centre within a community council area then the one with the highest maintenance cost should be closed the other should remain open. There are many that are used by people and organisations outside the county boundary with little use by local residents, these should operate from their own resources and not be supported by council taxpayers. A check on their bookings would reveal the origin of their income.

Sell the community centres.

Community Centres - agree with proposal

Agree, they are a complete waste of money. Sell them off and plough the money into these savings rather than making cuts in unnecessary areas. I'm amazed you only expect to save £129000. What about the income from the sales? Surely you won't just leave them boarded up?

Where community facilities are concerned, it should be a case of 'use it or lose it' a large number of community centres are underused and should be closed

Where community facilities are subject to closure the usage of them should be taken into account, not just the amount of money that can be made from selling these properties off.

Possibly putting responsibility for funding community centres with their local residents will revitalise them by bringing the community together with a purpose and focus of raising the necessary funds and also voluntary community service.

Community centres should be run and managed by communities/volunteers

If the community are using them, ask the community to fund them?

Most are run down graffiti strewn empty buildings, people only ever complain when the council say they are going to shut them. Give the people that moan what they want, hand over the running to community councils and the few groups that use them.

There are many community buildings that are privately run and supported by the villages they serve, so some model examples could spur community action to maintain and use their services.

Community Centres could be managed by community councils and then people can put their money where their mouths are by agreeing to pay more to their local parish council.

Link community council to monitoring of services in their area, use buddy systems from communities to support locals. Look at more innovated ways of keeping moneys within localities for benefit of said areas.

Communities should take over their own community buildings making cooperatives.

Community Centres should be run by local volunteers.

You can look for volunteers and community councils to run community centres and libraries, you need to do proper impact assessments of what the consequences of closure are, it could cost money.

Community Centres- unfortunately these can be a valuable part of the community but transferring to the local groups is the only way to save money. As I see it, if a community wants to maintain such a facility they need to support this action. All makes sense. The town is full of people with time to spare, if they are that bothered at closures they need to lean in and help out.

Concerns that voluntary groups and community councils may not have the funding or skills needed to manage community centres.

I agree that the voluntary sector could provide more support for community centres but with the third sector also under review, and cuts likely, how would this work?

I don't support community centres being transferred to voluntary groups. This was done near where I live and the centre closed because they did not have any skills to manage it.

How are the CCs to fund additional responsibilities? How are they required to consult their communities? Council should budget for transitional arrangements to support local communities in taking over services such as libraries over next two to three years (tapering).

Is this just going to mean that community councils but up their local precept?

Community centres can be a lifeline for people, community councils are only volunteers so unfair to add burden of a project like this onto them.

Do community councils and community organisations have capacity to do this? Capacity building may be required, how will this be mapped and delivered?

Re-focusing funding on specific and targeted interventions and outcomes at the expense of community focused provision with less specific outcomes and more holistic interventions will only serve to isolate and disenfranchise communities. Holistic community based service provision that is reactive and responsive to need is client centred with broad maintain/sustain/develop remit is often the glue that holds communities together and is the first non-stigmatizing service that people seek support from. Many issues are resolved at this level reducing strain on more specialized services. A functionalist approach to service provision will not work for those that need support on their door step in their communities.

Part 2: Reshaping Services: EIA Support Group

[The purpose of this group is to provide an additional opportunity for council officers to consider potential community impacts that might occur as result of their proposal].

The Community Centre proposals were presented to Group on 22 November 2013.

Community Centres:

Key groups affected:

- Adults, Children, young people and families – play groups, mother and toddler, Brownies, WI groups etc

- Young people because Youth Centres have closed
- Older people – lunch clubs, risks to vulnerable people as their support needs are not identified, potentially issues could become critical before they are noticed – SSD day services have been reduced too

Possible implications:

- Vulnerable people – key point of contact socially and for information e.g. loss of lunch clubs
- Unemployed people – employability skills training, computer skills training
- Health and social inclusion issues – fitness classes
- Limited transport networks mean people cant necessarily access groups in neighbouring areas
- Chariots as an alternative for disabled people – expensive/capacity?
- C+YP – youth centres gone, not necessarily allowed to walk/travel to neighbouring village, parents reluctant to travel to neighbouring village, anti social behaviour increases?
- Key community contacts are often linked to community centres – how will these contacts be replaced?
- Vulnerable residents e.g. to hate crime – reporting is predicated on existing good relationships; reporting will reduce leading to an increase in vulnerability and isolation
- Loss of neutral ground for promoting good relations between groups e.g. intergenerational, different youth groups etc
- Divisive – people who use a current venue will potentially be spilt across a number of alternative venues
- Perceptions of accessibility of alternative venues
- Agencies may use venues for outreach services – loss of community centres could also reduce a range of other statutory and voluntary sector services
- Loss of a local SSD contact centre – families have to travel outside their own area [increased vulnerability for some and expensive]

Mitigation:

- Support to community councils if they take on buildings e.g. sustainability plans but no capacity within WCBC to provide
- Transfer services to other local facilities e.g. churches
- WCBC funded organisations have to be located in WCBC owned buildings
- Community Councils to charge for use of premises to generate income
- Merge libraries and community centres and other community buildings
- Use school buildings more imaginatively – build on good examples e.g. Ruabon. Opportunity to promote understanding between different groups, remove sense of age distinction for buildings and who they are for
- Community Councils linked into a network e.g. one caretaker for a range of community centres
- Planning gain used to support mitigation
- Communities to be involved in the development of local solutions / mitigation

Recommendations [existing research documents, consultation groups, networks, methodology etc]:

Consultation with:

- Economically disadvantaged, unemployed – Communities First, students
- C+YP
- Older People
- BME people including asylum seekers and refugees and migrant workers
- Disabled people – including on cumulative impacts
- Welsh speakers / learners
- Service providers across public, voluntary and community sectors including lunch club providers
- Faith groups

NB:

- Cumulative impacts for some groups e.g. people with a disability more likely to be unemployed and living in poverty, which impacts on confidence
- Consider cumulative impacts from other changes via corporate policies and objectives [potential reductions in other services etc]

Part 3: Comments from Community Centre User Groups

Consultation was carried out with community centre user groups during December 2013. A total of 62 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 33.7%.

When groups were asked whether they consider running their community centre alone or in partnership with others, the responses were:-

- Yes: 20%
- No: 53%
- Yes, in partnership with others: 29%

The majority of user groups would prefer to re-locate to another venue if their community centre were to close although a high proportion(40%) say that their group would cease to meet.

In terms of local community centres, 32% of users travel less than 2 miles although 38.7% travel between 2 and 5 miles, indicating that a smaller number of conveniently located community facilities could cover the requirements of a significant number of users.

User groups were asked to describe the protected characteristics of their membership with the following responses:-

- Older adults [69.3%]
- Disabled people [56.4%]
- Children or young people [50%]
- People who are carers [33.8%]
- Religious or belief groups [17.7%]
- Living in poverty [16.1%]

- Racial or ethnic group [11.2%]
- Persons of different sexual orientation [9.6%]
- Welsh language or culture [8%]
- Pregnancy or maternity [6.4%]
- Persons undergoing gender reassignment [1.6%]

