

**FOR: COMMUNITY, HOUSING AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

**Agenda item: 6**

**Contact officer: Lesley Bovington**

**Telephone: 01543 308170**

**SUBMISSION BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY**

**COMMUNITY HUBS**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1** To provide Members with information about the three community hubs managed by the District Council and how they are utilised, these being the Old Mining College Centre in Chasetown, Jigsaw in Curborough and Mill Lane Link in Fazeley.
- 1.2** To consider the benefits of community hubs to the District Council's community engagement, community development and regeneration work.

**2. WHY HAVE COMMUNITY HUBS?**

- 2.1** The District Council focuses its community development activity on those areas within the district that are considered our most socially disadvantaged: Burntwood, Fazeley and Mile Oak, Armitage with Handsacre and the area generally referred to as "North Lichfield" (Curborough Chadsmead, and parts of Stowe wards). The selection of these areas is based on health, unemployment, income, education, crime and other socioeconomic data, as reflected in the ward profiles developed by the District Council's Research, Consultation & Marketing Officer. (These profiles can be found on the intranet at [Ward profiles](#), accessible from the home page.) They are also priority areas for many of our service delivery partners (such as social housing providers, the health service and voluntary sector organisations).
- 2.2** Local intelligence tells us that residents of our more disadvantaged areas characteristically are likely to be amongst those most in need of services to improve health, employability, etc. but are often least likely to access these, when they are delivered from a central location. Community hubs provide a local base from which outreach services can be delivered, and there are many examples of this: CAB and Credit Union sessions to reduce debt; free training for skills development (delivered by South Staffordshire College); work clubs, for improved employability/access to opportunities for employment; free lifestyle services for improved health (delivered by the Primary Care Trust); services to support individuals battling with addiction to alcohol and other substances (delivered by Addaction).
- 2.3** Community hubs also give local residents the opportunity to become more involved in activities and decisions affecting the place where they live. Jigsaw, for example, has hosted S106 consultations, and involves local

residents as volunteers to offer “front of house” services. Jigsaw volunteers “sign post” local residents to the services that they need and keep a log of enquiries, which is used in planning both for the hub, and for our own and partners’ service delivery. Social activities based at the community hubs typically include groups for children, families, and older people.

- 2.4** It is important that our Community Development Workers are visible and easily accessible within the communities that they serve, and that they engage with residents to ensure that they have the best possible knowledge of local need. Community hubs provide an important base in the heart of our communities for this activity, helping the Community Development Work team to work effectively and efficiently.

### 3. WHAT AND WHERE ARE THE COMMUNITY HUBS?

#### 3.1 The Old Mining College Centre



**Location:** Burntwood (Chasetown)

**Ownership:** Held on a 25 year full repairing (peppercorn) lease from Staffordshire County Council; signed in 1998 (expires 2023)

**Function:** 13 office units, rented by small businesses and voluntary organisations. Meeting rooms, with kitchen access. IT suite, used for community training.

**Performance:** The Old Mining College Centre suffered a reduction in income in 2010/11, dropping from £61,445 in 2009/10 to £50,931 in 2009/10 (a reduction of 17%). This was due to a combination of vacated business units and a reduction in room hire for meetings, etc., due to economic factors outside our control. Our proactive marketing has brought the office units back to 100% occupancy (since June 2011), however room hire continues to struggle in the current climate. Current year income to the end of February 2012 stood at £52,788.

In the region of 30 paid staff and 20 volunteers work for the nine organisations (a mix of small businesses and voluntary organisations) based here. The economic value generated by the nine organisations is estimated at around £690k pa. Local residents’ ability to access services is significantly enhanced not only by ease of contact with these organisations, but also through ad hoc events and outreach services. Footfall to the Old Mining College Centre currently stands at around 22,000 visits per year.

**Future:** We are considering future options for reducing the District Council costs, including the potential of involving voluntary sector organisations in its management. Net direct expenditure is budgeted at £36,350 pa, however this includes the full costs of the Regeneration Projects Manager.

### 3.2 Jigsaw



**Location:** Dimbles Lane, Curborough

**Ownership:** Former shop unit, held on a peppercorn lease from Midland Heart since 2007 (current lease expires in September 2012). The lease is held by Lichfield District Council on behalf of the North Lichfield Initiative.

**Function:** Two rooms, used for community meetings, service outreach and training activity. Reception point staffed by trained volunteers with access to information for signposting to services.

**Performance:** Jigsaw has developed a busy programme of “drop in” activities and room hire, which saw its income increase from £2,288 in 2009/10 to £3,279 in 2010/11, an increase of 43%. This has, however, dipped in 2011/12, with total income to date of only £2, 253 as at the end of February, 2012. This reflects the “knock on” effect of changes in the public sector infrastructure and of voluntary and community groups suffering funding cuts. More positively, it is also due to the success of the Community Development team in developing and supporting new groups, as some have then out grown Jigsaw. The team is actively working to increase venue hire income by working closely with new community groups, promoting Jigsaw through partner networks, and being vigilant to funding opportunities. Jigsaw has a team of six “front of house” volunteers. Over 2,000 hours of volunteering activity takes place there annually.

**Future:** The North Lichfield Initiative (NLI) became a fully independent, self-constituted organisation in April 2011. We are exploring the possibility of transferring Jigsaw to the NLI. Direct expenditure on Jigsaw currently totals £8,870 pa.

### 3.3 Mill Lane Link



**Location:** Fazeley

**Ownership:** Former Local Area Office, fully owned (freehold) by the District Council.

**Function:** One large room with adjoining kitchen, used for community meetings, service outreach and training activity. Adjoining room used as a permanent base by local police.

**Performance:** Capital funding through Staffordshire County Council in 2009 enabled Mill Lane Link to be refurbished as a more “child friendly” venue, developed as a satellite Children’s Centre. Since the demise of Community & Learning Partnerships (2011), the number of activities for children and families at Mill Lane Link has decreased, but it is well used by older people for recreational activity, and new services for families are now

being provided through the Homestart charity, funded by Lichfield District Strategic Partnership. Local residents also very much value having a police presence within their community. Income to Mill Lane Link was £1, 240 in 2010/11, an increase of 10% on the 2009/10 total of £1, 124. Current financial year income to date (as at end February 2012) totalled £2, 946, an increase of £1, 706 (or 137.6%) on the out turn for 2010/11, following an intensive marketing campaign. Staffordshire Police have also committed to contribute £1, 000pa rent for their out post at Mill Lane Link from 2011/12. The District Council invests £4,510 pa (direct expenditure) in Mill Lane Link.

**Future:** Mill Lane Link is reviewed within the Capital Management Programme. Building on the County Council's investment in 2009, discussions are in hand with the Children's Commissioners for Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough concerning their future investment in this community hub, in line with the County's "Families First" programme.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 That Members note the contents of this report.