



**Glasgow City Council**

**Cultural and Leisure Services Committee**

**Report by Director of Cultural and Leisure Services**

**Contact Billy Garrett ext 78949**

## CHIRNSYDE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

### Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the recent history of this project and the current problems faced by Cultural and Leisure Services and the Council in continuing to support the project.

### Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and agree to the continued support for the management committee of Chirnsyde Community Initiative.

Ward No(s).

Citywide

Local member(s)

advised

yes

no

consulted

yes

no

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Glasgow City Council has historically been responsible for either directly providing or indirectly supporting a large number of community facilities across the city. These facilities are open to the public, groups and organisations for the purposes of meetings, leisure, recreation and other activities and also provide a focus for the delivery of a range of Council-led programmes, services and objectives. These facilities were previously supported by a range of Council Services; Cultural and Leisure Services, Development and Regeneration Services, Community Education Services, Social Work Services, Housing Services and the Chief Executive's Office.
- 1.2 Associated with the re-organisation of Glasgow City Council and as a result of various Best Value Reviews, it was agreed that there was a need to consolidate the future management of community facilities into one Council Service, Cultural and Leisure Services.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Chirnside Community Initiative was constituted on 5 August 1999 and received grant funding from the Community Education Service within Education Services. Prior to this the project was funded by Urban Aid from 1995 for four years. The facility is now one of thirty-seven grant aided community organisations monitored by Cultural and Leisure Services.
- 2.2 Chirnside Sports Hall was originally an Education Services building which provided indoor and outdoor activities and changing facilities. Education Services ceased using the building in 1990. Between 1990-1995 the building was run by Milton Youth Initiative, the forerunner to the present day Chirnside Community Initiative.
- 2.3 The building was run by volunteers and was open seven evenings per week between 5.00 pm and 10.00 pm. The building consists of a large games hall, two offices, changing rooms, kitchen/canteen, multi gym, sunbed, steam room and computer room. Recently Cultural and Leisure Services built a fully floodlit, all weather multi-purpose games area for local young people adjacent to the building.

## **3.0 CONTEXT OF COUNCIL SUPPORT**

- 3.1 Glasgow City Council recognises the work of voluntary and community organisations in enabling individuals to contribute to the development of their communities. By doing so they promote active citizenship, help maintain a sense of community and make a crucial contribution to the shared aims of a just and inclusive society.
- 3.2 The support given by the Council ensures that individuals and communities have the opportunity to contribute to the development of social capital – community capacity, skills, confidence, networks and resources to take advantage of and increase the opportunities open to them. In considering support for voluntary managed community facilities Cultural and Leisure Services take into account the following:
- Applications which address the key objectives of Glasgow City Council
  - Effective use of previous funding
  - Open, democratic and effective organisational structures
  - Accountable financial structures
  - Quality of work
  - Local impact of activities
  - Evidence of support from other sources
  - The organisation's aims and objectives

## **4.0 FUNDING SUPPORT**

- 4.1 Chirnside received funding of £77,000 in 2004-2005 and £80,000 in 2005-2006. It is incumbent on the organisation to generate additional income to meet its total expenditure. Income is generated from hall hire, fitness suite, sauna and steam room, membership, boxing club, martial arts classes, functions, tuck shop and donations averages £40k per annum.
- 4.2 The Initiative also successfully secured a grant of £27,000 in 2004/2005 from the local SIP.

## **5.0 STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL**

- 5.1 As previously noted, the Initiative was constituted in 1999 and is an independent legal entity. Its employees report to the management committee with Glasgow City Council having no responsibility for them. As stated, the Initiative is community based and meets the criteria laid down by the City Council in its 'Conditions of Grant' document.
- 5.2 Amongst other things the Conditions of Grant state that the committee must be properly constituted, be open and democratic and comply with various employment, Child Protection and Equal Opportunities policies. It is also a requirement that all organisations in receipt of funding comply with Part V of the Police Act 1997. This makes it a statutory responsibility of the voluntary organisation to undertake disclosure checks on all staff and volunteers.
- 5.3 To this end Chirnside Community Initiative registered with the Central Registered Body for Scotland (CRBS) on 4 March 2004. Information held by Cultural and Leisure Services indicates that all relevant personnel at Chirnside have been disclosure checked at enhanced level.

## **6.0 THE SERVICE PROVISION**

- 6.1 The Initiative provides a service specifically for young people, the unemployed, people with disabilities and the general community of Milton.
- 6.2 The Centre has, and does, host the following activities and projects:  
Scottish West Special Olympics Squat Netball, Northern Rock Festival Group, IT classes, Drums and Keyboard classes, Community Learning, First Aid Classes, Holiday Programmes, North Glasgow Community Health Project, Health Promotion Events, Sports Skills Sessions and Possil Stress Centre.
- 6.3 The current membership of the Centre is 80 adults waged, 265 unwaged and 267 junior members. The weekly attendance at the Centre for all categories is approximately 900. This translates into annual throughput of approximately 45,000.

## **7.0 THE ISSUE**

- 7.1 Over the past five years there has been a campaign of serious complaints and allegations made against Chirnside Community Initiative and one of its employees; the co-ordinator.
- 7.2 Over the years the allegations have expanded to include officers of Cultural and Leisure Services, Policemen, SIP staff and the Director of Cultural and Leisure Services. The allegations can be summarised as follows:
- That children who attend the project are being 'put at risk' by their close proximity to the co-ordinator as he may be a target of violence.
- 7.3 The same allegations have been constantly repeated in correspondence and telephone conversations stretching back years with various council services, politicians, newspapers,

ombudsmen, funders, the police and any organisation which innocently engages with Chirnsyde Community Initiative. Organisations who have been affected include: Audit Scotland, The Charities Commission, Celtic Football Club, various MPs and MSPs and the local SIP.

- 7.4 The allegations have also been mentioned in some national newspapers, where Chirnsyde Community Initiative and its co-ordinator are linked to lurid stories about drug wars and serious violence. The articles make it clear that the co-ordinator is related to a notorious criminal family who operate in the Milton area.
- 7.5 It should be noted that throughout this campaign, stretching over five years, there have only ever been four regular complainants who have generated this massive volume of correspondence with Council Services and other agencies.
- 7.6 It should also be noted that no parent or user of Chirnsyde has ever made a complaint to Cultural and Leisure Services about inappropriate or criminal activity witnessed at the Centre. Cultural and Leisure Services will continue to monitor Chirnsyde to ensure its compliance with the Conditions of Grant and other relevant City Council requirements.

## **8.0 THE INVESTIGATIONS**

- 8.1 All agencies have treated all the allegations seriously and have been scrupulous in passing on allegations to the appropriate authorities or investigating where appropriate. In other words allegations of criminal behaviour and involvement in drug related violence are passed to the police for investigation.
- 8.2 As a result of the endless allegations a number of agencies have carried out investigations into various aspects of Chirnsyde Community Initiative. These include:
- Glasgow City Council Internal Audit Section
  - Audit Scotland
  - Charities Commission
  - Strathclyde Police
- 8.3 No investigations by any of these agencies has uncovered any evidence of criminal activity, misuse of funds or any wrongdoing on the part of either the management committee or any of the staff.

## **9.0 THE POLICE RESPONSE**

- 9.1 Strathclyde Police clearly have a major role to play in the formulation of a response to the allegations and Cultural and Leisure Services have maintained close and regular contact with the Police service on this issue. When it comes to the allegations, Cultural and Leisure Services and the Council in general are acting on the basis of the most up-to-date police advice.
- 9.2 The advice received from the Police has been absolutely consistent for a number of years and forms the basis for the current Council approach to this issue. Their advice is that:
- There is currently no evidence of any criminal activity or wrongdoing at Chirnsyde Community Initiative or on the part of any member of staff.

All allegations made to the Police or passed on to them by other agencies are investigated thoroughly and yet, to date, no allegations have been found to have any substance. This includes the most recent allegations concerning the Chirnsyde Minibus where it was alleged that the Minibus was used in an attempt to run over a local child.

## **10.0 FUTURE ACTION**

- 10.1 As a facility which delivers key services to a community which desperately needs them, Cultural and Leisure Services would like to continue to work with this organisation in order to develop and expand the services on offer. Plans to construct a new full-size synthetic football pitch on the site are being developed and there are ambitions to expand and improve in other areas.
- 10.2 There is no question, however, that the campaign being waged against Chirnsyde is currently having an effect on service developments and has the potential to negatively influence future plans.
- 10.3 The management committee are concerned that the campaign is having an impact on current and future funding decisions.
- 10.4 The relentless pressure is also having an effect on the morale of the committee, made up of local volunteers, and indeed Council staff who have to deal with the often repeated allegations.
- 10.5 A meeting was organised by the Director of Cultural and Leisure Services, at the request of two of the four individuals who have been responsible for the vast majority of the allegations. This meeting was also to be attended by representatives of the Police service, Glasgow Alliance and members of the management committee of the Initiative. The meeting was intended to provide an opportunity for all the allegations to be aired and responded to and help to create a more positive agenda around Chirnsyde. This goal was not achieved as the two regular complainants declined to attend.

## **11.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 11.1 By all of the measures available to Cultural and Leisure Services, Chirnsyde Community Initiative is a successful community facility delivering quality services within an area of multiple deprivation. As a result of the litany of allegations and complaints made against it the facility has been subject to a much greater degree of scrutiny than any other facility funded by Cultural and Leisure Services.
- 11.2 It has demonstrated, through numerous investigations, that it meets all of the current conditions required of it by the Council and that there is no evidence to support any of the allegations. It is also a facility with an active committee who have aspirations to enhance the current service provision for their community.
- 11.3 And yet there is a very real danger that this facility will fail to develop. This could happen either as a result of the negative impact that the constantly repeated allegations, however unsubstantiated, are having currently and could have on future decision makers or through fatigue on the part of agencies who currently support the facility.
- 11.4 It is therefore important for the Council to consider all the issues and determine whether it wishes to continue to support the development of Chirnsyde Community Initiative as a valuable community resource.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and agree to the continued support for the management committee of Chirnsyde Community Initiative.