

A horizontal row of ten small, square portraits of diverse individuals, including men and women of various ethnicities and ages.

MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

DUNDRY VIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP

12th December 2016

Title: Hareclive Youth Centre concerns
Report from: David Cousins LPW

Officer presenting report: Emily Smith

Recommendation:

To **note** the contents of the report and to **decide** on a way to proceed.

LPW Hareclive Update – October 2016

1. The partnership will be aware there have been historical issues with Hareclive Youth Centre for a long time (relationship with school, not purpose built youth space) which I will not go into in this report. Whilst at times it was a difficult space to use, LPW were committed to running four sessions per week from the centre and also used the centre as a base for Big P during the holidays. The adaptation of the building by Kids Company for educational use made over half of the building unavailable for use for youth sessions.
2. Following the departure of Kids Company, the building was left unmaintained by the council for over 8 months with no cleaning, no maintenance and no building management. Much of the building was inaccessible as Kids Company had changed the locks and the council did not have any keys. During this period, I was copied into emails sent from the BYL Senior Practitioner (Pete de Boer) and the Neighbourhood Partnership Manager (Heather Williams) to the building manager (Nicola Davies) expressing concern at the state of the building and requesting repairs and cleaning. Local residents and young people expressed similar concerns to us. We continued to use the space and our staff cleaned and maintained the building as best we could during this period to keep a service for children and young people running.

3. In mid-February of this year, 8 months after Kids Company vacated the first cleaning was carried out in Hareclive. On 29th February as we were about to open the youth centre, one of our staff luckily ran into the Caretaker from Hareclive Academy who informed us that the building had been deemed unsafe for use by a surveyor. We had received no notification from the council that this was the case and would have put the safety of children and young people at risk if it was not for this chance meeting.
4. Whilst, there was a cleaning service from February this year many of the other general maintenance tasks (repairing fences, grounds maintenance, fire safety checks, removal of Kids Company items, bin collection) were not carried out. We continued to use the building and invested time in creating a sensory room in the space as well as working towards improving internet access in the centre.
5. Other repairs took a long time to carry out and took a huge amount of our resource in consistently raising issues and taking time to be onsite to let tradespeople access the building. The Building Manager made a request for our staff not to use the building outside the hours we were renting the space (the four sessions per week) but also wanted us to coordinate repairs. We would have to cancel sessions at late notice as we could not access the building due to the door being broken.
6. In early July, vandalism to the building meant the level of repairs increased as did our requests for repairs. We would frequently arrive at the youth centre when it was not in a fit state to use (broken glass inside and out, lights broken etc.). Our staff, were taking up an increasing amount of time coordinating repairs, whilst at the same time unable to use the building for any positive purpose longer term.
7. On 9th August, after numerous requests for repairs and the day before Big P, we received an email from Nicola's team stating that, "*Nicola has taken the decision that it will be necessary to close the building until it can be made safe. Any use of the building will therefore need to be cancelled.*"
8. We requested a further update on the progress of these repairs on 31st August and when we would be able to access the centre again but received no communication. When planning our programme from September we reluctantly made the decision that the future and current management of Hareclive was too great a risk to our service to children and young people to continue.

9. We recently received an email from John Bos, Property Partner at BCC, to say that the management of Hareclive would be transferring from Nicola and her team to the council's property department. The option to rent the building on an hourly basis will no longer be available to us or other users. It is expected that the management of the building will transfer to a school or similar educational institution.
10. Overall, we feel there have been significant issues with the management of the building, particularly in the past year and a half. This has denied local children and young people the opportunity to use a space that was designated for them. The building still sits in a state of disrepair. At a time when resources are scarce and there are many social issues in the local area it seems a huge waste of valuable community resource.

Suggestions

The neighbourhood partnership may want to:

- question whether there was ever an application for change of use during the period when Kids Company were resident and whether there will be if the Education department take on the building
- request information as to how much has been spent on repairs over the past three and a half years and how much was recuperated in rent from Kids Company and other users
- question as to why there was no community use of the building for so much of the past three and a half years, whilst the council was paying costs
- if the building is transferred to education use how will the community (and particularly children and young people) be compensated for the loss of an asset

Note from NP coordinator

I contacted Nicola Davies and asked her for a response I am still waiting for a full response but this is what she emailed me on 26th October 2016

Thank you for this report, I will get a response back to you as the content is not quite a true reflection of what has happened in Hareclive. The building has been closed recently due to the Health & Safety concerns put to me by LPW and unfortunately we have had no contractors who were able to put the building right in the short timescales, therefore I had no choice to close. LPW

were also utilising the building without consent of the Council, making the Council and me personally liable if anything had happened, we have numerous emails asking for signed paperwork to which they refused to send back and also refused to pay running costs. LPW know this and meetings with their Chief Ex etc has taken place.

Please can you bear with me a little longer to gather the facts.

Many thanks

Nicola Davies