

Heartlands Ward Forum Meeting
Tuesday 31st January 2023
6.00pm – 7.30pm
Saltley Wellbeing Centre
120 Broadway Avenue

Meeting Notes

Councillor:

Shafique Shah

Officers in Attendance

Beverly Edmead – Community Governance Manager

James Goss – Principal Housing Development Officer, Housing Development Team

Number of Attendees - 7

Cllr Shafique Shah in the Chair

1. Welcome and Introductions

Following introductions, Cllr Shah welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Notice of Recording

Residents were advised that members of the press and/or public may record and/or take photographs of the meeting.

3. The POD Community Hub Update

Cllr Shah welcomed James Goss, Principal Housing Development Officer, who was invited to the meeting to give the latest information update on the POD Community Hub, which had been closed for over 3 years.

James Goss explained that plans to reopen the POD had been significantly delayed due to unforeseen circumstances regarding regaining full vacant possession of the premises from the previous tenants.

Vacant possession had been secured since 6 October 2022, however there were several health and safety checks that had to be carried out before the premises could be available for re-let – these included Fire Risk Assessment and asbestos checks. Checks also needed to be carried out to the skateboard park to ensure it was fit for use/purpose.

Mr Goss further explained that the premises was part owned by the Housing Department and, as

such, part funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which would make a full Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process unsuitable.

However, it was intended that the CAT procedure would be followed for the future use of the building which would be marketed on the BCC's Property Services website; a commercial rent would be asked for and would not necessarily be ring-fenced to local community groups.

An Expression of Interest would need to be submitted by interested organisations including community groups, along with details of their Business Plan and financial accounts.

A selection panel would be set up to sift through the applications.

Concerns were expressed by Cllr Shah and residents that community groups could lose out to commercial organisations who had the financial backing but no interest in working with and/or engaging the local community or allowing community use.

Conditions must be written into the lease agreement that full community use must be allowed by the successful applicant. Consideration should also be given by officers to allow enough time for community groups or a consortium of community groups to work together to submit their Expression of Interest and to pool their financial resources together.

Concerns were also expressed that the CAT procedure would be followed for the re-tendering and reletting of the POD, even though the terms of agreement were different -another process should be considered which was better suited to the aims and needs of the premises and community.

Cllr Shah added that residents were very keen to see the POD return to community use and available for everyone and must be considered when selecting the next tenant, which was not the case with the last occupants.

Responding to the comments and concerns expressed, James Goss explained that surveyors involved with the inspection and marketing of the premises had been advised that local interest was high, and to keep in mind that community groups may not necessarily have the funds that a commercial outlet would; consideration to the inclusion of a 'peppercorn rent' had been requested. The Selection Panel would be made up of representatives from Bham Youth Service, WMP and himself. An Open Day would also be arranged for all interested applications – details were still to be finalised.

Mr Goss added that conditions could be added to the 5-year licensing agreement once the successful applicant had been agreed. If a Consortium was successful, the licence would need to be made out to the 'lead/chosen' group, but the letting arrangements and agreements would need to reflect that the other groups in the Consortium also had full /same access to usage.

Following a request from Cllr Shah, James Goss agreed to provide details to him prior to the POD being placed on the Bham Property Services website.

Cllr Shah suggested that a POD Steering Group/Committee made up of partner agencies (Housing, Police, Bham Youth Services) and representatives from Community Groups (if a Consortium of Community Groups was the successful applicant) to oversee the running of the

POD would be in the best interests of everyone.

Concluding the update, Mr Goss advised that timescales were still to be determined, but would like to see the POD reopened by the Summer. He would continue to keep Cllr Shah informed.

Cllr Shah and residents thanked James Goss for his attendance and update.

4. Local News/Updates

There were no other issues raised.

5. Date of the Next Meeting

To be confirmed and residents advised accordingly.

Cllr Shah thanked residents for their attendance.

The Meeting closed at 7.00pm