

HARROW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Community Premises

7th December 2011

Introduction

The Board will recall that during the recent bidding for LAA funding, there were two projects for community premises which were thought to be for capital funding. The Board reserved £60,000 of capital funding and asked that officers work with the two applicants to see if they could develop a joint project.

A meeting with both applicants has been held which revealed that the application for £125,000 from RAFT was for revenue funding. This was not apparent as the applicants had not used the application form. The scoring of schemes carried out by Harrow Chief Executives awarded the Raft project 5 points while the scheme s recommended for funding received between 13 and 15 points so the mistake regarding the nature of funding requested did not adversely impact on the scheme's prospects.

The RAFT proposal was innovative and interesting but the elements of the project for which funding had been requested could not be supported with capital funds. No alternative or updated proposal to use capital funding has been received which means that only the proposal from CARRAMEA is eligible for consideration.

A revised proposal from CARRAMEA is attached to this report. In essence, it relates to transferring management of the Community Premises at Northolt Road to the Voluntary and Community Sector in the form of a committee drawn from existing premises users and to modify the offer at the building to be more flexible, business-orientated and affordable which would enable more groups to be accommodated at reduced unit costs.

The Community Premises have been the subject of various studies and proposals over the years as it no longer fulfils its original brief as a centre to accommodate newly formed community groups while they find their own permanent accommodation. The turnover rate has declined to almost zero and the Council has found that efforts to revitalise the building have been frustrated by the concerns of existing tenants that their occupancy might be compromised. The proposal from CARRAMEA has the unique advantage of being proposed by existing building users which appears to overcome previous difficulties.

The proposal seeks to reduce the unit costs of existing building users and to increase occupancy to support new and small voluntary and community organisations. It champions the sort of flexible working that reflects the reality of voluntary and community sector activity and utilises the fixed asset to much more intensive degree. The proposal would also, at some stage in the near future, save the Council the costs of the existing subsidy.

The applicants have demonstrated a energetic approach to seeking additional

development funds from a variety of sources as well as funds for new projects to be run in conjunction with premises management.

Proposed Action

It is proposed that the £60,000 of capital funding reserved for a community premises proposal be allocated to CARRAMEA to support their revised proposal.

What are you asking the Partnership Board to do

Approve the allocation of capital funds to CARRAMEA