

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	6 November 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Visit to Cairncry Community Centre
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/292
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Michelle Crombie
REPORT AUTHOR	Michelle Crombie, Community Planning Manager
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.3 and 1.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with a report following the visit to Aberdeen Cairncry Community Centre on 28 August 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the report and the actions identified during the visit to Cairncry Community Centre; and
- 2.2 Thanks all those at Cairncry Community Centre, including the many staff and volunteers, who welcomed the Committee and provided an informative and interesting visit.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Cairncry Community Centre

- 3.1.1 Cairncry is a voluntary-run Centre that serves the local community of Cornhill, Stockethill, and other nearby areas. The centre opened in 1995 and was originally used for carpet bowls, line dancing, exercise classes, and parent and toddler groups. The centre offers a variety of groups and services to support the wellbeing of the community. It is managed by a committee of local residents and supported by a full time Centre Manager. The Committee meets monthly to discuss development ideas and service provision for all ages. The area's diversity has changed over time, bringing new challenges. The centre serves a population that includes single parents, people dealing with drugs and alcohol, people with mental health issues, and the elderly.
- 3.1.2 Further to a suggestion from [ABZ Works](#), the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee visited Cairncry Community Centre on 28 August 2024 to find out about the work the Centre is doing for and with the local community. This is part of a wider programme of visits the Committee is making to organisations supporting people in poverty across the City.

Cairncry Community Centre 28 August 2024



3.2 **Issues Raised and Actions Required**

3.2.1 During the visit, Committee members received a presentation from staff about Cairncry Community Centre which was followed by discussion.

3.2.2 A number of issues were raised during the visit and a follow-up session with the Committee took place on 3 September 2024 to discuss actions . The following actions have been undertaken or are planned as a result of the visit and follow-up session:

3.2.3 **Awareness of Cost of Living Support**

The visit highlighted the need to increase awareness of the support that is currently available from the Council and partner organisations with the cost of living crisis. Centre staff did not feel confident that they knew where to go to find out what support is available.

Actions

- Completed - Signposting to information on [Cost of Living Support](#) available through the Council and partner organisations has been shared directly with the Centre and across community networks via email and social media.
- Completed - [Empower Aberdeen](#) Event arranged by SCARF in partnership with the Poverty Alliance and Community Planning Aberdeen on 7 October as part of Challenge Poverty Week to raise awareness of support available to people across the City.
- Planned – Ongoing awareness raising by the [Anti-Poverty Group](#) will be coordinated through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) [Stretch Outcome 1](#) improvement projects.

3.2.4 Community Outreach

Whilst signposting to resources and services is essential to help people access the support they need, it is understood that many of the people attending the Cairncry Community Centre are vulnerable with complex needs. Online information can be less accessible to them. Outreach support services can help people that do not have access to digital devices, lacking in digital skills or need help to understand the information.

Actions

- Completed – A schedule of regular visits to Cairncry Community Centre have now been arranged by the Council's Financial Inclusion Team, CFine's SAFE Team and SCARF to support income maximisation.
- Planned – [The Anti-Poverty Group](#) will take forward improvements through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan Stretch Outcome 1 to ensure outreach support for the City's most vulnerable communities is effectively coordinated across partners and communicated to the public.
- Planned – An idea to be tested as part of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan [Stretch Outcome 1](#) improvement projects is the provision of training to community centre staff and community groups on use of the benefits calculator and helping to signpost people to other support.

3.2.5 Access to Funding

Cairncry Community Centre has benefitted from funding from the Council towards the Triple C Café and kitchen refurbishment as well as for the foodbank and cooking courses. The centre shared its ambitions for the future but stressed the challenges in applying for funding.

Actions

- Completed – The Community Planning Aberdeen [Funding Tracker](#) is regularly updated and shared across community networks which now includes Cairncry Community Centre.
- Completed – Contact details provided for the Council's [External Funding](#) Team and [ACVO's Funding Officer](#) who are available to support third sector organisations with making funding applications.
- Planned – [The Community Empowerment Group](#) is working together to take forward improvements through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan [Stretch Outcome 16](#) to join up efforts across partner organisations to ensure support is available to community groups to access external funding. This will include publishing digital resources, for example top tips for community groups, as well as offering more one to one support.

3.2.6 Support Dealing with Challenging Behaviour

The visit revealed the vulnerabilities of many people in the local community and how this can trigger challenging behaviour that centre staff and volunteers do not always feel equipped to handle.

Actions

- Completed – Community safety concerns raised with Aberdeen Community Safety Partnership and Community Centre Liaison Officer is engaging with the Centre to consider options.
- Planned – Options being explored for Council and partners to provide courses in [mental health first aid training](#) for community groups and centres.

3.2.7 See Appendix 1 for full overview of the visit.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	None	None	L	Yes
Compliance	None	None	L	Yes
Operational	None	None	L	Yes
Financial	None	None	L	Yes
Reputational	None	None	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	None	None	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no proposal in this report
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	There is no proposal in this report
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	There is no proposal in this report

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Overview of Visit to Cairncry Community Centre

Appendix 2 Cairncry Community Centre Presentation Slides

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee

Visit to Cairncry Community Centre



Cairncry Community Centre
Cornhill Shopping Arcade, Foresterhill Rd, Aberdeen AB16 5HL

Date: 28 August 2024

Attending:

Councillor Allard
Councillor Bouse
Councillor Brooks
Michelle Crombie, Aberdeen City Council
Kerry Gavin, External Adviser
Marj Johnston, External Adviser
Edward Obi, External Adviser
Karen Orchard, Aberdeen City Council
Susan Thoms, Aberdeen City Council

Time	Description
12.30pm	<p>Welcome and Lunch</p> <p>Committee members were invited to have lunch in the café where they were able to see how recent funding secured from the Prosperity fund/Common Good fund and fundraising has been used to refurbish the Triple C Café. This was a chance for Committee members to chat with the community and find out about their experience of the cafe.</p>
1.30pm	<p>Presentation and Discussion</p> <p>The Committee received a presentation on the Cairncry Community Centre from:</p> <p>Joanne Currie, Chair Person has been on the Committee for 25 years and has seen the transition in the area over that time.</p> <p>Sarah Beattie, the new Centre Manager, has 20 years experience of working with communities on community centre committees and as a youth worker.</p> <p>Craig Morrice, Community Support Worker has been working with the centre for 3 months and is enjoying new challenges.</p> <p>About the Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Community Centre Committee has ten members and meets monthly to plan ahead and makes decisions.• The Centre has many volunteers that are also centre users. Without the volunteers, the Centre couldn't continue.• The Centre was built at the same time as the shopping centre, which was a condition of the development.• Launched in 1995, there have been lots of changes since then. Centre users were once affluent, retired groups, enjoying activities such as line dancing.• Over the years the diversity of the area has changed and poverty has increased. For that reason the Centre has not increased fees. If the centre doesn't keep costs low, then local communities suffer.• COVID had a severe impact on the community so services changed in response. It started with the free café which received funding through the Mental Health and Wellbeing fund.

Services Provided

Food Bank

- Open Monday, Tuesday and Friday but will open any time if someone is in crisis and says they don't have food.
- Volunteers run the food bank, with food provided by Food Poverty Action Aberdeen. Before becoming a member of FPAA the Centre would have to cover the cost of food from own funds.
- One volunteer goes round every coop and picks up their surplus food. The volunteer came to the centre as very vulnerable person that was socially isolated. They started cleaning tables and built their confidence. They are a totally different person today.
- Majority of people that access the food bank are regulars but through word of mouth community members will attend. Don't widely advertise it because can't cope with the demand.
- One of the biggest decisions the centre made was not to apply conditions to accessing the food bank. There are families in work that just have their head above water.
- No stigma to the food bank because there are no conditions to being able to access it, including staff.
- Saving money on a shopping bill means someone can keep their house warm.
- Ladies that attend for exercise will access the free ingredients because they know how to use it in their cooking but they will give a donation.

Triple C Café and Confidence to Cook

- The café opens up on Mondays and Tuesdays and includes a food bank. Free breakfast and free lunch provided for visitors to the Café.
- Food Poverty Action Aberdeen provides food is used to prepare meals for the community café. Left over meals go into the food bank to provide a healthy 'micro meal'.
- As of June this year the kitchen was almost 30 years old. The Centre did a crowd fund and applied for funding from Common Good and Prosperity Fund for an upgrade.
- Centre volunteers have been able to undertake a 10 week confidence to cook course through ABZ Works and funding has enabled the Centre to purchase cooking hobs.
- Cooking classes are giving centre users transformative life skills. One participant could only make a sandwich at the beginning of the course. Now they cook with fresh ingredients like peppers and learning skills which can be passed down.
- Centre users have learned about nutrition and level two hygiene. After the class, people sit together and eat the food they made.
- The course uses the foodbank food as much as possible. But participants also get given £5 to go over to Aldi learn to buy food which teaches them how to budget for a meal.

Exercise

- Swedish exercise/ pilates.
- Bowls

Parents and Toddlers Classes

- Parents don't pay for Parents and Toddlers class until the child is 6 months to encourage connection, advice sharing with other parents and to support child development.
- Classes have remained £1.50 since the day doors opened so the Centre can support children to have the best start in life.
- All toys are as educational as possible. Trying to encourage traditional activities and not focus on devices.
- Free, healthy snacks provided.
- The childminders have a key role in helping to manage the centre which also helps them in their work. It is an excellent example of how forging partnerships with local community groups can have mutual benefits. With support from the wider community the centre is able to open at the weekend and evenings.

Working in Partnership

- The Centre receives support from local businesses including the Coop, Murdos Bar, and Croft and Cairns. For example, last year they helped fund a free Christmas meal for local people that included a free give. Due to the success there was another funded lunch between Xmas and new year.
- Argos in Inverurie donated equipment to the refurbished kitchen.
- The Centre is grateful for the funding the Anti-Poverty & Inequality Committee provided to FPAA as it is helping Cairncry Community Centre and many organisations across the City.
- ABZ Works has provided funding for courses and have been very supportive which has helped run classes.
- Stockethill Church, the local Church of Scotland hire the hall for Sunday service on a Sunday as there is no church in the area anymore.
- The Ashgrove and Stockethill Community Council hold meetings at the Centre monthly for free.
- The Centre also provides the Council's Community Development Officer with office space.

Community Cohesion

- The centre attracts people through volunteering which helps remove some of the stigma of receiving support.
- Helps reach people in poverty that wouldn't want to admit it.
- Centre users come to the centre to access support with cost of living but it is not widely known what support and advice is available from beyond the centre.
- Events held to encourage communities to access the centre. E.g. Gala. Future events planned include beetle drive, line dancing, disco, fancy dress.
- Don't have to live in the local community. All welcome. One man that has been moved to Torry will come back and use the food bank every time it is on. To make connections.

- People visiting the centre for exercise class will also sit and have a cup of tea with the vulnerable people that come in.
- Vulnerable people that want company can act out when trying to communicate.
- But staff are not trained social workers and there can be challenges. Centre staff link with support workers from Cornhill for advice on handling difficult situations.
- No judgement at the centre. Everyone works together. No stripes on shoulders.
- Diverse people – older generations, parent and toddlers, vulnerable – all sit together. Feel so comfortable. No judgement. Confident.
- Older people who may have been nervous about being around younger people with challenges in the community. But the centre creates a family. Older people and younger generations look out for each other.

Issues Raised

- Not widely known what support and advice is available for people with the cost of living crisis outwith what is provided by the centre.
- Time spent on funding applications is time spent that could be used better helping the community.
- Need a bigger building but don't have the funds. The Centre is exploring opportunities such as applying for national lottery community funding.
- Centre needs two full time members of staff but don't have the funds. Rely on volunteers.
- Vulnerable people that want company can act out when trying to communicate. But staff are not trained social workers and there can be challenges.
- Community safety. Recent incidents in nearby flats have increased concerns for safety as there is no CCTV.