

### Executive Summary

Aberdeen City Council Officers were remitted to undertake a Social Capital Analysis of leased Community Centres by the Education, Culture & Sport Committee. This was in order to allow an objective analysis of the social contribution of each Community Centre to their local community, as perceived by each Centre's Management Committee. This contribution is measured in terms of the key dimensions of social capital:

- groups and networks
- trust
- collective action
- social inclusion
- information and communication

For the purpose of this research, it is both necessary useful to add a further dimension:

- finance and funding

The methodology employed for this research was predominantly focus group, where information was collected via a participative SWOT analysis, facilitated and objectively analysed by the researcher. SWOT analysis is a strategic management tool used to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Focus Groups with leased Community Centres allowed researchers to elicit responses from 84 people.

Overall, in terms of the key dimensions of social capital, the SWOT Analysis undertaken demonstrates that many Leased Community Centres have particular strengths in *social inclusion* (evidenced by programmes of activities), *groups and networks* (evidenced by links with local businesses and Elected Members and *collective action* (evidenced by the overall achievements of each Management Committee and other volunteers).

Particular weaknesses were identified as *trust* (evidenced by comments regards, in particular, perceptions of relationships with Aberdeen City Council as well as, in some cases, reluctance to participate in this research), *finance and funding* (evidenced by comments regarding financial situation) and *collective action* (evidenced by Management Committee training needs identified).

Opportunities identified by Centres mainly concerned *social inclusion* (evidenced by suggestions for appealing to under represented user groups), *information and communication* (evidenced by suggestions for assessing the needs of the local community and improved promotion and marketing) and *collective action* (evidenced by Management Committee training needs identified).

Particular threats identified by Centres were, in the main, *trust* (evidenced by comments regards threat of closure and perceptions of relationships with Aberdeen City Council), *finance and funding* (evidenced by comments regarding loss of financial assistance and rising costs) and *social inclusion* (evidenced by comments regards apathy for Centre by certain groups in the local Community).

Aside from the data collected via the SWOT Analysis, a number of observations were made in terms of:

- Community Centre Management issues
- Building management
- Community Centre relationship with Aberdeen City Council
- Ability to access funding
- Links with the wider community
- Needs of the Community
- Level of Centre activity
- Strategic planning ability
- Centre promotion and marketing

This research concluded by examining the following aspects of social capital, as per the original rationale for the analysis:

- Accountability for the public pound/Best Value (funding being provided by Aberdeen City Council)
- Enables qualitative assessment of value to local community:
  - activity appropriate to need and population base
  - equality of access
  - flexibility to change/ability to adapt to local community needs and requirements
- Enables identification of and informs Centre support needs
- Engagement and involvement/participation in Local Planning Partnership
- Enables maximised use of building

- Identification of delivery to outcomes or support required to achieve this
- Will enable development of a methodology for
  - recording activity
  - route to accessing funding
  - developing activity to meet local need

Recommendations from the research are as follows:

*Recommendation 1*

Appointment of Aberdeen City Council Liaison Officer as first point of contact for advice, support and information.

*Recommendation 2*

Negotiation of lease and constitution documents in order to clarify the role and responsibilities of both parties.

*Recommendation 3*

Development of building maintenance programme.

*Recommendation 4*

Development of a network between leased Centres for sharing of good practice.

*Recommendation 5*

Where practical, development of joint working between Community Centres.

*Recommendation 6*

Reassessment of Community Centre membership fee structure (dependent on local market conditions).

*Recommendation 7*

Building maintenance should continue to be a responsibility of Aberdeen City Council.

*Recommendation 8*

Community Centres should receive feedback from this research.

*Recommendation 9*

Management Committee Training should be provided for accessing grant funding.

### *Recommendation 10*

Management Committee Training should be provided for developing links with the wider business community.

### *Recommendation 11*

Management Committee Training should be provided for developing entrepreneurial activity and assessing feasibility of proposals.

### *Recommendation 12*

Development of Service Level Agreements with leased Community Centres to ensure reporting requirements are clear and Centres are socially inclusive. (i.e. implement a reporting structure that shows clear evidence of the benefits to the Community through the use of "the public pound")

### *Recommendation 13*

Aberdeen City Council is required to provide assistance to Centres when developing policies and procedures.

### *Recommendation 14*

Management Committee Training should be provided for succession planning.

### *Recommendation 15*

Management Committee Training should be provided for marketing and promotion.

### *Recommendation 16*

Management Committee Training should be provided for recruiting, supervising and managing staff and volunteers, including statutory obligations, e.g. Disclosure Scotland and Child Protection.

### *Recommendation 17*

Work should be undertaken by all parties in order to develop a stronger working relationship with service providers as required, particularly Community Learning and Development and the Learning Partnerships.