



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Shaftsbury Community/Recreation Centre
Date:	16 January 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officer:	John Nelson Development Services Manager (acting) Yvonne Coyle Community Services Area Manager (South)

Relevant Background Information

Shaftsbury Recreation Centre has been leased by Council to the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum (The Forum) for a period of 10 years commencing October 2000. The lease agreement includes an external sports pitch adjacent to the centre. A Service level agreement forms the basis of a contract between the Forum and Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) under which the Forum grants LORAG use of Shaftsbury to deliver a programme of activities in response to local community needs ensuring a broad base of activities and opportunities for each age group. The development of a sports facility at Shaftsbury will see an investment of £2,395,000 which includes upgrade of the sports pitch to a third generation pitch.

The Development Committee at its meeting on 12 December 2007 considered a request from the Forum to transfer the lease at Shaftsbury to LORAG. Members have requested additional information relating to the request, the key issue being LORAG's governance/management arrangements and how they reflect a South Belfast remit in relation to the proposed sports facility. Furthermore, Members have requested that clarity is sought on the funding position related to the sports facility and how Council's decision on the lease will impact on funding.

Key Issues

1. Funding to the amount of £1,925,000 has been awarded by Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) towards a sports and health facility at Shaftsbury. SNI invests public money to increase participation in sport and improve sporting performances. Funding for the Shaftsbury project was approved given the 'community nature of the project'.

Key considerations for SNI are to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and providing value for money. The need for a lease and sublease, they contend, runs counter to this concept. Given that LORAG will be responsible for all work in relation to the implementation of funding and the efficient and effective operation of the centre, it is SNI's condition of funding that the Lease is directly with LORAG. In addition SNI have provided assurance that LORAG will be required to meet stringent funding targets as evidence of its openness, usage and accountability. LORAG are required to meet a number of project management requirements to ensure that the project is on site by December 2008. This includes lease transfer. SNI have indicated that a delay in this process may result in withdrawal of funding. Correspondence outlining SNI's position is attached as **Appendix 1**.

2. The recently established Inner South Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership is representative of community organisations in the Lower Ormeau. Given the strategic role of the Neighbourhood Partnership it would be the view of the Forum that its role in the area has become less significant, that is, that the Neighbourhood Partnership is better placed strategically to address the issues of the area previously within the remit of the Forum.

The Neighbourhood Partnership has provided details on their strategic role, membership and action plan. Correspondence from the Neighbourhood Partnership is attached as **Appendix 2**.

3. Further discussions have taken place with LORAG and the FORUM. LORAG have provided information pertaining to management board, organisational structure, external representation, business plan, marketing plan, booking and charging policies. LORAG must comply with SNI's funding requirements of openness and accountability; ensuring that all groups can avail of the new sports facility LORAG's Sports Development Strategy is a funding requirement. A copy of the Sports Development strategy action plan is available on request from the Community Services Area Manager (South).

A list of letters of support from community and sports organisations are attached as **Appendix 3**. The funder has undertaken a verification of these letters via 'spot check'.

LORAG have confirmed their intention to establish a Facility Management Committee. Membership will include representation from the funders, the local Neighbourhood Partnership and the Community Sports Development Officer. This group will oversee programme management, operational management, monitoring and evaluation. This will include all policy related to the facility such as booking procedure, pricing policy etc. A Council Officer will also attend meetings of this group and where appropriate meetings of LORAG.

Officers are satisfied that LORAG complies with the essential criteria in the Council's Grant Aid Policy relating to 'A Well Run Community Organisation'. LORAG have provided a report on usage at Shaftesbury which is attached as **Appendix 4**.

This illustrates a wide ranging programme in terms of variety of projects and groups using the centre. LORAG's Board details are attached as **Appendix 5**.

Council officers must ensure that Community Organisations meet the targets for local management of community centres agreed by Council in April 2006 (Community & Leisure Sub Committee 7 March 2006). Community Organisations funded under these arrangements are required as a condition of grant to make arrangements for good governance, based on the Department for Social Development's 'Setting Standards,

Improving Performance – Best Practice in Finance and Governance in the Voluntary and Community Sector’. Performance management reporting and monitoring arrangements have been established with the groups and are to include formal review meetings.

Resource Implications

Financial

- The Community & Leisure Sub Committee of 7 March 2006 agreed a three year cycle of Revenue Funding to seven Community Managed Facilities.
- The Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum were awarded funding of £50,000 per annum (to include an uplift of 3% in years 2 and 3).

The transfer of the lease agreement at Shaftesbury from the Lower Ormeau & Markets Community Forum to the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group will have no financial implications for Council.

Recommendations

That Members consider the application from the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum supported by Sport NI, to surrender the current lease agreement to the Council in consideration of Council granting a new lease in respect of Shaftesbury Recreation Centre to the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) for 25 years.

Key to Abbreviations

LOMCF – Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum

LORAG – Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group

SNI - Sport Northern Ireland

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Correspondence from SNI

Appendix 2 - Correspondence from Inner South Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership

Appendix 3 - Letters of Support – South Belfast Community Organisations

Appendix 4 - Shaftesbury Programme

Appendix 5 - LORAG Board of Directors