

## Report to Cabinet

21 June 2023

<b>Subject:</b>	Asset transfer of Charlemont Community Centre, Beaconview Road, West Bromwich
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Built Environment Cllr Laura Rollins
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Housing Gillian Douglas
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nick Garratt Grants Officer – Grants Officer (Housing) <a href="mailto:nick_garratt@sandwell.gov.uk">nick_garratt@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Stefan Hemmings Strategic Lead – Assets and Land (Commercial) <a href="mailto:stefan_hemmings@sandwell.gov.uk">stefan_hemmings@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to authorise the Director of Housing to undertake the asset transfer of Charlemont Community Centre, Beaconview Road, West Bromwich, B71 3PJ to Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation (SACMHF) based on a full repairing lease for 99 years with a rental of £1 per annum for a multi-purpose community facility and office space.



1.2 That, in relation to 1.1, approval be given to authorise the Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to enter into or execute under seal if necessary, a formal lease for Charlemont Community Centre.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 Since June 2022, the Housing Directorate has been actively exploring long-term options to secure the future of three of its community centres.

2.2 As part of this process Asset Transfer of sites has been considered as an option that has the potential to deliver both stability and future investment in facilities. Since the Local Authorities current Asset Transfer Policy has been in place (2011), a successful asset transfer of Brasshouse Community Centre has already taken place and 2 further asset transfers were agreed by Cabinet in 2022/23.

2.3 Following an extensive consultation and negotiation period with local voluntary organisations and all relevant stakeholders, the authority has identified Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation (SACMHF) as a preferred partner for Charlemont Community Centre.

2.4 Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation (SACMHF) is a charity, founded in 1994 based in West Bromwich, which provides a range of culturally sensitive mental health services for Sandwell residents recovering from functional mental illness, their carers, families, and the wider community.

The asset transfer would enable SACMF to expand current provision and create new services in Charlemont an area of Sandwell with little community infrastructure.

2.5 SACMHF is currently leased to the Kuumba Centre, West Bromwich, from NHS Property services. However, SACMF require larger premises to enable the organisation to grow and expand services. The organisation has developed a comprehensive finance and fundraising strategy which supports the need for a larger premise with development potential. Current restrictions at the KUUMBA Centre mean this expansion cannot be realised.

2.6 SACMHF receive the following grants from the council:



£135,460 Adult Social Care





SACMHF will use the rent saving to deliver services at Charlemont and will also continue to seek external grants to improve the facilities and develop new initiatives to meet local need and diversify their income.

- 2.7 The Council's Asset Management Strategy sets the strategic framework within which the property asset portfolio will be managed. It is intended to guide future decisions concerning the acquisition, use and disposal of property assets. It is intended to respond to the corporate planning process, providing property solutions that support each of the Council's service areas in the delivery of their service plans.
- 2.8 The proposed asset transfer accords with the principles set out in the strategy where Strategic Assets & Land will proactively lead discussions with community groups about the possibility of undertaking Community Asset Transfers. Transfers will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's policy on Community Asset Transfers. They will only happen if officers are satisfied that a clear sustainable plan is in place to maintain the asset and that further calls on the Council for support are unlikely.
- 2.9 The application will be considered by the council's Investing in the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategic Group. The group will consider a detailed report about SACMHF and agreed to support SACMHF's application for asset transfer of the premises.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</p> <p>SACMHF offer service for young people who have mental illness or wellbeing issues between the ages of 11-25 in and around the Sandwell region. This service works in partnership with both schools and local employers.</p>
	<p>People Live Well and Age Well</p> <p>Much of SACMHF core services cater for vulnerable people. Mental health is at the core of the organisation philosophy, this will continue to be the core of the service offer at Charlemont.</p>



	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b></p> <p>SACMHF will create a safe space at Charlemont Community Centre, giving all residents a place where they can access activities, will be supported and not judged. We will work with local Police to develop initiatives to educate and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.</p>
	<p><b>Quality Homes and Thriving Neighbourhoods</b></p> <p>This part of West Bromwich has very little local voluntary sector infrastructure. SACMHF will help create a real sense of 'local community' in the area. Using Charlemont as an affective Community Asset looking to support the development of small grassroots organisations and groups to develop a real sense of community action and community life.</p>

## 4 Context and Key Issues

### 4.1 Background:

The council currently manage 22 community centres in partnership with a range of community organisations. As part of a review of neighbourhood services three centres were identified as community buildings which could benefit from new management arrangements. The opportunity for asset transfer was advertised on the understanding that there would be no council funding available to run the centre. In the case of Charlemont Community Centre, three expressions of interest were received and SACMHF were assessed as the applicant that best met the criteria. SACMF were subsequently invited to submit a business case.

### 4.2 SACMHF has a track record of responding to residents needs with innovative solutions.

Examples include:

#### Care for You Sandwell Carer's Support

A service designed to encourage Carers to seek support to manage their own wellbeing, increase their level of awareness of community services as a source of support and to create an environment where they can



widen their social networks to create a degree of interdependence between carers.

### Outreach Client & Family Support

One to one home visits or meetings held within a community setting to work on objectives set within a recovery planning framework. Social, practical, and emotional support needs are assessed in this service and documented in a recovery plan.

### Ujima (User Forum)

A user-led service which is underpinned by volunteering, mentoring and peer support.

### Bereaved Carer Support

Bereaved Carers supported by receiving bespoke one to one support from a Social Navigator to assess their needs, offer support and refer to other services as required.

### Tech Connect

User led Peer Support to reduce digital exclusion by using peer mentoring to develop the IT skills of their peers and tablets on loan to support their IT development.

### iMatter Youth Service

This service is available for young people who have mental illness or wellbeing issues between the ages of 11-25 in and around the Sandwell region. This service works with schools and colleges and includes a partnership has been set up with Job Centre plus where young people looking for work are supported to manage their mental health issues.

### Man ii Man

A men's group which enables men to come together and open up to discuss their shared issues and to employ early help seeking behaviours and to understand their mental health diagnosis through peer support.

Co-production meetings commitment. Encourage user engagement and participation in organisational reviews and existing services



## 4.1 Refurbishment work Required:

The Council commissioned Baily Garner to carry out a comprehensive conditions survey. The building was found to be in sound condition, but fixtures and fittings would require upgrading. Based on a thirty-year plan it was considered that the heating system along with improved lighting and glazing is required.

A cost assessment of £225,000 was identified for potential works. In addition to this repair will be required to the shared access road to the site, this has an estimated cost of £35,000.

## 4.2 SACMHF future plans for the building:

SACMHF intend to move all organisational operations from their current site in West Bromwich to Charlemont Community Centre.

They are currently working with an experienced architect to develop a comprehensive long term vision for the site. This will incorporate a full re-modelling of the site with potential for expansion.

Continue to work with the current nursery provision and established management committee on site to develop new services and increase income streams.

Upgrade interior space including areas highlighted by SMBC's Conditions Report 2022.

Develop outdoor space of the site – this will not only include improvements to the garden space but also working with Bustlehome Youth Football Club to develop activity on the adjacent fields.

Using networks, social media and community engagement encourage residents/young people/families to be part of the centres development by providing activities, community fun days, MP surgeries, pop up vaccination clinics; training opportunities and signpost where necessary to ensure all residents local to the Centre have access to the best support and services available.





Work with stakeholders across the council to develop doorstep services for individuals and families who may be difficult to reach and seen as vulnerable and need additional support.

## 5 Risk Management

- 5.1 The Council recognises that with any asset transfer there is an element of risk both to the Local Authority and the voluntary sector organisation taking on the asset. As such the council has followed a stringent selection and assessment process. This will be supplemented by a regular monitoring agreement that will ensure that all objectives are still being met.
- 5.2 Initial selection of the organisation was based on agreed criteria that included governance arrangements, organisations previous track record and viability of future plans. This process was supported by Sandwell's CVO.
- 5.3 Following initial selection a further assessment of SACMHF proposed business case has been undertaken, this includes assessing the organisations current financial position their ability to attract resources and the potential social value to the local community. In addition, SACMHF business plan will also be approved by the Investing in the Voluntary Sector Group which incorporates officers from across council.
- 5.4 On-going monitoring of the lease is managed under the terms of an Agreed Statement which sets out criteria, including up to date accounts business plan, governance and usage details, that the management organisation must adhere to, to maintain the terms of the lease. The Agreed Statement is reviewed on an annual basis by the Council's Voluntary Sector Support Team. The Council maintains the right to terminate the lease if agreed outcomes are not met.
- 5.5 To mitigate risk to the management organisation the Local Authority will ensure a rolling tenant only break is included in the lease, this will



ensure SACMHF have an exit opportunity should they encounter financial difficulty in future.

5.5 The Local Authority views Asset Transfer as a potential tool to secure the long-term future of community-based assets. Transfer of assets is not viewed as a tool to dispose of property but a way to develop meaningful and long-term relationships with the local voluntary sector for the benefit of all residents. Following a lease agreement the local authority will continue to work in partnership with SAFS to mitigate future risks and ensure success of Charlemont Community Centre.

## 6 Alternative Options

6.1 Retain SMBC operational management – The site requires significant investment which will potentially be a financial pressure on Asset Management. Revenue budgets would also have to be identified for SMBC to operationally manage the site

This would not signal to the wider voluntary and community sector that we value their contribution as partners and want to use asset transfer as a positive tool for enabling the development of enterprising and sustainable organisations with a long-term stake in the area.

## 7 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>Capital investment required to site £225,000.          Estimated over 30 years          Current market rental is £7,300pa.          Current annual SMBC operational budget for the site £39,600          Average annual SMBC Property Maintenance £5,100 (3 years).</p> <p><b>Total estimated savings to the Local Authority (Housing and Property Maintenance - £44,700)</b></p> <p>In addition to annual revenue savings SACMHF will also be responsible for all property insurances – In the</p>
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	<p>event of significant loss or damage the council will no longer be liable</p> <p>Any potential future investment plans or the site can now be re-directed.</p> <p>The lease does not contain any element of additional grant funding for the management organisation. No further Grant Aid payments will be made by the Local Authority to maintain or support building or operational costs.</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits a principal Council to dispose of land in any way it wishes, except that it shall not (without the Secretary of State's consent) dispose of land for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained.</p> <p>The Secretary of State has issued a General Disposal Consent in 2003 (Circular 06/03) which states that specific consent is not required for the disposal of any interest in land which the authority considers will help it to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. Where applicable, authorities should also have regard to their community strategy. Any disposal must not have an undervalue of more than £2M</p> <p>Section 5 of the council's policy on Land and Premises for the Voluntary and Community Sector (2012) sets out the council's approach which will usually be through a 99-year lease at a reduced rental.</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>SACMHF has a proven track record in securing funding for capital and revenue projects. They understand the costs of running the building and its income generating potential. They have gained considerable experience in site in building and lease management through the Kuumba Centre. The organisation conforms with Charity Commission financial guidelines and currently hold a reserve of £100,000. See Section 5 Risk Management for detail. See Section 5 Risk Management for detail.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	<p>A focus of the work of SACMHF is support for people with mental health issues.</p>



<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	Many of the services provided by SACMHF improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable residents – from domiciliary care and therapy sessions to young people’s activity and nursery provision.
<b>Social Value:</b>	As a community anchor organisation, SACMHF employ’s many local people. They provide staff and volunteers with opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge and build their confidence. Attracting funding from external sources helps to support Sandwell’s local economy.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	A recently commissioned energy report has made several recommendations to improve performance. SACMHF intend to use this information to improve the building. Improved usage and access to green space surrounding the building.
<b>Corporate Parenting</b>	Helping looked after children and care leavers to gain access and make best use of local services. Opportunity to listen to young people to give a voice to their opinions. Development of new local services that meet the needs of young people.

**8. Appendices**

None

**9. Background Papers**

None

