

**West Area Committee Meeting – January 2009**  
**Community Development Report – bullet point updates**  
**Responsible Unit Development Manager – Heather James**

- **Partnership Working** – staff at both Hockwell Ring and Lewsey Community Centres have been involved in numerous multi-agency initiatives which try to address local issues and help people in their neighbourhoods. Examples are given below.

In Hockwell, a group led by Community Development and comprising Police, Integrated Youth Service, Community Safety, Parks Department and specialist engineering contractors have responded to extensive consultation (primarily from young people) to secure the future of the basketball court at the centre. Basketball has long been associated with the area and young people see it as a major part of their identity. £40 000 has been allocated from the Youth Capital Fund for the structural works needed to resurface and improve court, whilst £10 000 has been secured from the Co-operative chain to provide a sustainable programme of coaching, mentoring, art and music associated with the project. Young people themselves have offered their views and will be forming a committee to steer the development and to look into other youth issues, whilst local adults who were previously involved in the sport and the '3 on 3' tournaments in particular, have shown an interest in offering their support too. It is envisaged that work may start early this year.

In Lewsey staff continue to work very closely with the Police, Library Service and Adult and Family Learning to facilitate improvements both socially and in terms of education. Community Development staff have, for example, joined forces with staff from the Social Behaviour Unit, Neighbourhood Safety Team and local PCSO's to inform and liaise with families by supporting initiatives led by the family workers at Chantry School. A recent meeting held at the school gave parents opportunities to understand the services that are available to them to help them to support their youngsters at difficult times in their lives.

- **Halloween Activities** – as Hockwell Ring Community Centre was due to receive major refurbishment at the end of October, staff decided to take a large group of children, with the help of play volunteers, to Gullivers Land in Milton Keynes during the half term break. Although there was still snow on the ground, everyone wrapped up well and a great day was had by all. The event was subsidised by funds previously raised at other events.

Lewsey Community Centre staff ran a whole day of events, starting with a 'Tots' session co-ordinated in conjunction with the 'Young, Gifted and Loud' group. This involved offering (slightly) scary stories, read by staff from Library Services, ghoulish biscuit decorating, Halloween crafts and lots of bouncing on a bouncy castle. The event was financed by the Community Development Service and was offered free of charge, attracting more than 50 parents/carers

and their children. In the afternoon, playscheme-age children were treated to a traditional disco, with apple-bobbing, hot dogs etc and catered for 72 youngsters, whilst in the evening, with the support of Balistic Zone and Integrated Youth Service staff, and community volunteers, the centre hosted a disco for the older youth. Staff were extremely pleased to welcome young people through the doors who have, in the past, been reluctant to get involved.

- **Christmas Activities** – both centres staged very successful and popular Children’s Christmas Parties – plenty of jelly and ice cream, presents, party games etc for all - and Lewsey facilitated a well attended Christmas Fayre, giving local organisations an opportunity to raise much-needed funds. At Hockwell, Community Development subsidised a wonderful afternoon for the older residents in the area, including a hot meal, Christmas carols and professional entertainment. All of these events make a huge difference to peoples’ lives and help to keep community spirit alive and well.
- **Building Improvements** – both community centres have benefited from minor works, including redecoration and improved security. In an attempt to try to lift the image of Lewsey Centre, new lighting, entrance hall carpeting, signage, outdoor notice board, block paving and a much improved sloping access to the main entrance will be carried out in the very near future. Funds have also been allocated to plasterboard and put in new lighting to the upstairs access and the ‘Tots’ store room at Lewsey.

At Hockwell a new door will be put into the reception area enabling access to the garden. IBC and centre staff are working together to make the garden area much more user-friendly and attractive. User groups will also be involved in the project and members of the community are encouraged to help out if they feel able to give their time too.

- **Community Consultation** – between September and December, more than two thousand residents were involved in an extensive piece of consultation work delivered by Community Development staff. All current users of community centres were asked to give their opinions on the range and quality of the services provided for them, and street-based surveying took place in all words of the town to try to engage with people who don’t currently use our centres to find out why, and to establish what their priorities are for their neighbourhoods. Community Development also asked for feedback from partner agencies and services, as well as conducting an internal consultation across our own staff team. Results from the User and Non-User sections of the consultation will be available from the end of January 2009 and will provide a borough-wide overview as well as ward-level data.
- **Neighbourhood Governance** – the West area (Lewsey, Challney and Legrave) will benefit from a pilot scheme in which local people will have greater opportunities to be involved in the decisions made about the provision of services in their neighbourhood. Community Development teams will begin working on planning this project early in the new year.

- **Community Development Changes** – a re-shuffle of staffing and area working within the department has led to the town being divided into only four designated areas now, where there were previously five. Two Unit Development Managers – Heather James and Sultan Khan, changed to a job sharing arrangement from 1<sup>st</sup> January and are now covering the north of the town. Shamsuz Zaman has moved to the West area. Two other significant and very positive changes have been the introduction of 18.5 hours from Community Development staff to Chaul End Centre, and the addition of 18.5 hours to the 'West' area in general. It is expected that improved area working will promote greater flexibility and improved services.