

Community Audit and Study

for the rearrangement of the community facilities in St Agnes' church
in Longsight / Manchester . September 2010

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

St Agnes church is a grade 2 listed church in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood in Longsight / Manchester.

It is the wish of the parish to improve their links with the wider community and to work in partnership with other community organisations in Longsight. Over the last three years the parish has undertaken a series of workshops and community consultation to identify key areas for community work, which will help to improve the lives of local people. This goes together with various initiatives to secure the appropriate funding.

This community audit was undertaken between March and September 2010. Its intention was to provide an overview about existing community initiatives and provision, to identify existing service needs and to make recommendation for future development of St Agnes' community facilities.

FINDINGS

Despite the fact that a number of successful, both established and new projects are already active in the area further gaps and needs for community work were identified. This is partly due to changing demographics or the locality and capacity of existing provisions and offers.

This study has concentrated on the Hamilton Road area, which is surrounding St Agnes' church and for which the church building provides a focus point, although some activities might attract people from neighbouring areas.

The following needs were identified:

- Youth provision in the evening and at weekends
- Informal activities for older people
- Additional training facilities as existing facilities working to full capacity
- Safe and accessible green space for relaxation

RECOMMENDATION

Considering the capacity of St Agnes' parish, both in terms of available space and also in terms of people who would most likely get involved in setting up and running community activities we would recommend to concentrate on three main activities:

Community Garden: St Agnes' church is surrounded by the only green space in the neighbourhood, which has the potential to be developed into a safe and accessible community garden. As this will provide a welcoming touch to the whole building the church and the community centre will also benefit from the new garden.

Community Café: Providing an informal space for local people to meet, to share information and to relax will help to develop St Agnes as a neighbourhood oasis.

This activity can be started in a small capacity with may be two regular opening days per week and can be expanded in line with demand and available volunteers.

But even if the community café would start in a limited capacity extra care should be taken to make it welcoming and friendly but not looking provisional. Good and inviting information on

the street is seen as crucial.

The existing kitchen and toilet facilities will need some improvement before starting the community café but other community activities will also benefit from this makeover.

Training facility: St Agnes community hall provides an excellent facility for training and education. This should be done in partnership with existing training providers in the area which wish to expand their programme or seek to find a facility in a different locality to reach out to people in the community. In cooperation with training providers the hall might need some investment, for instance to provide IT equipment and Internet access.

Neighbourhood link: Recently the Hamilton Road Neighbourhood Association became rather defunct. This leaves both a gap for a strong neighbourhood voice but also for an access into the community. While developing the community facilities St Agnes community hall could become instrumental for setting up a new neighbourhood association but also could provide an information sharing point within the neighbourhood.