

STRATEGY 2011-2014

Introduction

Our mission is to support and help develop activities and groups which are open to all our community; to provide affordable and welcoming venues and to work with other local services in order to contribute to a community in Eltham which feels connected, is culturally vibrant and generation friendly.

We increase community involvement by giving on-going support to existing groups and by encouraging the creation of new groups which engage local people in educational, leisure, health and well-being and social welfare activities. Halls are also available for private hire, including family events such as wedding receptions, parties and life celebrations, and for use by local businesses, the voluntary and public sector for meetings or training events. In addition we support local democracy by providing accommodation for MP and local Councillor surgeries and community consultations.

We manage 5 venues which are available for hire to the community and others. These are located in Eltham West, North, South and Kidbrooke and Hornfair wards: –

- St Mary's Community Centre, 180 Eltham High Street, SE9 1BJ
- Anstridge Hall, Anstridge Road, SE9 2LL
- Flintmill Hall, Flintmill Crescent, SE3 8LU
- Lionel Road Hall, 540 Westhorpe Avenue, SE9 6DH
- Progress Hall, Admiral Seymour Road, SE9 1SL

We operate a fair charging policy which provides affordable space and equipment for our Affiliated groups and a higher scale of charges for private functions and commercial activities.

We are currently working towards achieving the VISIBLE standards for community organisations and expect to receive accreditation by the end of March 2011.

How we have decided what we need to do in 2011-2014

We have looked at those things which might have an impact on St Mary's (possible funding cuts, the "Big Society") and considered the feedback given by users earlier this year. We have also taken into account what is required by Greenwich Council who make us a grant each year.

This shows us that St Mary's is a well established centre which attracts a wide range of users, with a growing reputation locally, led by a volunteer Board with strong community links and with open and accountable systems, However, there are still things which we need to do. These include a need for more regular internal and external maintenance and the need to upgrade some facilities in order maintain acceptability; meet the requirements of health & safety laws and to attract new user groups (see Strategic Goals 1+2).

Our staff are our strength and are committed and flexible in their work. Basic personnel systems are in place, including recruitment and induction processes which have recently been reviewed. Regular staff meetings are held and staff are able to discuss changes and new initiatives which are

taking place. However there are no formal system in place for staff to discuss their individual progress and development. We therefore will implement a performance appraisal and development review system for all staff (see Strategic Goal 4).

A significant proportion of our users are white, over 55 and female. Whilst we have reasonable levels of contact with younger children through pre-school play groups, beavers, cubs, scouts and guides, our relationships with older children and young adults is very limited. In addition whilst we have some excellent groups from minority communities, we wish to further encourage these groups to use our facilities(See Strategic Goal 3).

The economic situation and the “Big Society” programme are challenges which need to be addressed. Our Affiliated groups rareour key area of activity and must be protected, but they provide only a small amount of our total income. In order to keep supporting Affiliated Groups whilst increasing our income, St Mary’s will to develop other areas of activity which will help local people (see Strategic Goal 2). Activity identified under Strategic Goals 2 and 3 will increase community involvement and contribute to local control and decision-making.

Strategic Goals for April 2011-March 2014

To ensure that St Mary's provides the best possible service during the next three years, we see the following as the four most important aspects of our work for 2011-2014:

1. To provide safe, secure, attractive and well-maintained venues for local activities

Key actions:

- Carry out annual health and safety assessments in each venue
- Ensure fire equipment tests are carried out annually and that fire notices are accurate and prominently displayed in all venues, and brought to the attention of all users .
- Carry out practice evacuations in each venue periodically
- Develop and implement a maintenance and decoration schedule for each venue
- Work with Greenwich Council to ensure that external maintenance is carried out as and when required

2. To ensure a sound financial base by:

a) Increasing our profile as an affordable venue for weddings, life celebrations and family parties

Key actions:

- Work with relevant local businesses and users to identify needs
- Upgrade selected venues to accommodate private hire events
- Develop and implement a publicity programme
- Increase bookings by 30% over the three year period

b) Being seen as a competitive training and meetings venue for local businesses and the voluntary and statutory sectors

Key actions:

- Identify most suitable venues
- Purchase presentation equipment
- Re-decorate and equip rooms
- Develop and implement publicity programme
- Generate 15 bookings over the three year period

3. To develop community engagement , in particular by encouraging involvement of young people and minority groups

Key actions:

- Identify and establish contact with minority community group leaders
- Encourage integration of individuals from diverse backgrounds into existing groups
- Support establishment of 6 new groups for those from minority backgrounds over the three year period
- Scope the range of youth activities available in Eltham
- Support the development of potential young leaders to set up 2 new groups
- Encourage young people to join existing groups

4. To be a responsible and caring employer, with skilled and engaged staff

Key actions:

- Develop and implement an annual performance review process for all staff
- Identify training and development needs and means of achieving them
- Review and consolidate role descriptions and conditions for Community Assistants
- Continue to hold regular staff meetings to brief staff, to seek their views and to implement new procedures
- Develop opportunities for staff to contribute to senior management and Board decision-making

How we will do this

We will work with partners, including Greenwich Council, UKOnline, Greenwich & Bexley PCT, Age Concern and SureStart. More partnerships will be developed during the life of this Strategy. St Mary's staff already contribute to improving Eltham through membership of other local groups e.g. South Greenwich Forum, Eltham Town Centre Partnership, Association of Commerce in Eltham and the Eltham Safer Neighbourhood Teams. St Mary's is an active member of the Federation of Greenwich Community Centres.

We will encourage involvement and volunteering in the local area. In addition to our Board members, there are currently (July 2010) 62 affiliated groups each of which has a volunteer leader and many have a volunteer treasurer; volunteers staff our Pop-In service, lunch clubs and Media Resources service. We support local people in setting up new groups and we are working towards further volunteer engagement through the Friends of St Mary's and through including local people in planning Open Days at each Hall.

Outcomes/Impact

If the following outcomes are achieved, we will consider we have been successful:

- Increased numbers of local residents are taking part in social and other activities which take place in our venues
- Increased the number of local residents are volunteering their time and making a contribution to the local neighbourhood
- Increased opportunities for active citizenship in the area, through involving local people in decision making roles and shaping of services
- Increased the local awareness of the facilities and services available from the community centre and other local partners
- Improved accessibility of the facilities and information for local third sector organisations
- Increased number of young people and minority groups are involved in St Mary's activities

August 2010