



Subject:	Ballymacarrett Community Centre Update
Date:	6 th October 2026
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Provision

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☒

No

☐

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

3

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

X

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1	This report will update members on the actions taken since Ballymacarrett Community Centre was closed in April 2026 and outlines future options in relation to the operation of the centre.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and agree to one of the options outlined in this report with regards to the future operation of Ballymacarrett Community Centre.
3.0	Main report
	Key Issues Ballymacarret Community Centre was closed in April 2026 following a Council decision approving that action. This was based on evidence that the operating organisation, Connswater Community & Leisure Services Ltd (CCLS) had been struck off by Companies House and did not meet the requirements to operate the facility. Following this decision, Council officers secured Ballymacarrett Community Centre and continue to carry out checks on the building to ensure that council is compliant with all health and safety and insurance requirements. The model for independently managed centres is that the operating organisation has full management responsibility for the facility including service delivery and management of independent bookings. Following closure of the building, officers requested a list of contact details for regular bookings/ user groups so that they could be advised of the Council decision to close and to ascertain if Council could accommodate user groups at other Council facilities. However, a full list was not provided and this has made communication with groups difficult. Members will be aware that communication and submission of compliance documentation from CCLS was challenging in the years before the centre's closure. Officers have engaged with those user groups that they are aware of on an ongoing basis and have liaised with them to facilitate access to the facility if they need to gather materials or other equipment. The main user groups, Survivors of Suicide (SoS) advised council staff that they needed an office base to operate from following the closure of Ballymacarrett community centre. The group has been given an office space in Dee Street community centre which they have access to five days a week. Officers met with members of the former organization that ran the centre, Connswater Community & Leisure Services Ltd in May 26 to update them on the council decision and next steps in relation to the operation of the centre. Officers were advised that a new Board had been formed and that they were keen to undertake operation of the centre again. Officers were

advised at that time that the issue with Company's House remains unresolved and a 'strike' is noted on the site in relation to CCLS.

A further meeting was held with community representatives, new Board members, elected members and Chief officers on 8 July 26. It was agreed at that meeting that the community representatives and Board would produce a recovery and business plan which would be submitted to council for their consideration. Council also offered training on roles and responsibilities of board members.

3.6 In mid August a recovery plan was provided but it did not include sufficient detail to be considered by officers and further information was requested. Officers again offered support in developing a robust business and recovery plan. There has been no further communication in relation to plans to operate the centre from the new Board.

3.7 Officers and elected members have received several enquiries in relation to the operation of Ballymacarrett community centre since its closure in April 26, this has included contact from organisations who have expressed an interest in both operating and using the facility as a bookable space. Given the length of time that has passed and level of enquiries received, members are asked to consider the following options on the future operation of the centre;

Options	Pros	Cons
1 . Maintain status quo – centre will remain closed and Council will explore recovery plan when this is provided by new Board of CCLS	Provides an opportunity for continuity of delivery.	Centre is not being used despite interest in accessing the facility. No indication when a robust recovery and business plan will be available and no evidence that new Board of CCLS has been formally established.
2. Council undertakes temporary full management responsibility for the facility. Council would operate the centre on a skeleton staff that would be based on usage and risk assessment. Given that it differs from the standard council operating model it	Council has experience in managing 27 community facilities in the area and could operate the centre effectively.	This approach cannot be entirely accommodated using existing staff resources and overtime/agency use will also be required.

	should be used as a temporary measure.		
	3. Carry out an expression of interest exercise where interested parties are invited to express an interest in operating the centre. The contract to operate the centre would be awarded to the organisation which best meets the suggested criteria listed below this table.	This option would provide an opportunity for suitably experienced community organisations to manage the centre in a more cost effective way than direct council operation. It would also provide continuity in regard to the Council agreed status of Independently managed community centres at Ballymacarret.	This option may create competition between different groups in the area who wish to operate the centre.
3.8	Suggested criteria for Option 3 • Delivery or office base in east Belfast. • Facility management experience to include evidence of developing and implementing relevant procedures including staff management, H&S compliance, budget management and customer focused delivery. • Experience of delivering services which meet local need, this would include evidence of completing needs analysis and delivering quality services which address these identified needs and improve outcomes for local people. • Sound financial and governance history, as demonstrated through financial and governance documents. • Submission of a draft programme which would outline how the centre would operate and meet agreed outputs/outcomes and any partners that would support centre programming. Members may be aware that at August SP&R, it was agreed that officers would continue work to develop a consistent model for funding and leasing agreements across Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCCs) so that there is a standardised approach for all. Any decision in relation to the operation of Ballymacarrett Community Centre would be included within this exercise.		
4.0	Financial and Resource Implications		
4.1	There is budget of £70,800 for this centre in 26/27.		
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment		

3.1	This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/Good Relations and rural needs considerations.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None