

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

19 MARCH 2024

From Mamuna Naz

Increase Community Activities at Dee Space Community Centre

We, the residents of Norcot ward and Dee Park, express our concern about the lack of activities at the new Dee Space Community Centre. This centre was built with a vision to serve as a hub for community engagement and development.

We urge Reading Borough Council to hold urgent discussions with Peabody Housing Association at the highest level. When the Dee Park regeneration was first developed, funding was agreed to support and build necessary community activities. Please sign this petition if you agree that more needs to happen in our community centre!

RESPONSE by Councillor Emberson (Lead Councillor for Housing):

Thank you for your views and for your engagement.

As indicated in the petition, the delivery and running of the Dee Space Community Centre is the responsibility of Peabody Housing Association as part of the regeneration of Dee Park. The Council is the freeholder of the land but a 999-year lease is being finalised which transfers the land and assets, including the Community Centre, to Peabody.

The Centre was opened in August 2023 and now includes the Ranikhet Children's Centre. In one part of the building. In the other parts of the building set aside for Peabody to deliver community engagement there are only limited activities at present.

Monthly housing advice surgeries are held for Peabody's tenants across the estate. The local youth club Grassrootz has also recently opened every Thursday night for 11 to 16 year olds.

It is disappointing that since the completion of this fantastic facility Peabody have failed to deliver more fully on their obligations to provide a range of activities for all members of the local community. The regeneration of Dee Park has always been about more than just the delivery of new homes, and Peabody's lack of progress towards delivering activities is of concern.

In light of this officers have instructed the Regeneration lawyer to write to Peabody. The letter was sent on 20 February 2024 asking them to set out how they intend to fulfil their obligations to the community, and to confirm the following:

- What progress has been made on developing a policy framework in connection with the use of the Centre for the benefit of all residents
- How the £250,000 allocated to them to deliver activities at the Community Centre is being spent

The Housing Regeneration team is also working closely with Peabody to hold a Community Day in the summer which will showcase the Centre as a vital community hub.

We will also be ensuring that as the plans for the Centre move forward there will be opportunities for residents to make their views known, and to get involved in shaping the programme for the future'.