

LIFELONG LEARNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PREMISES REVIEW UPDATE

The Corporate Director of Education and Lifelong Learning submitted a report which set out the current progress on the Lifelong Learning and Community Development Premises Review, and provided the details for consultation with interested parties.

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution (4E, Rule 7b), the Committee invited Matt Follett and Samira Admani of Highfields Youth and Community Association to speak to provide information to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

The Chair stated that the Premises Review and Lifelong Learning and Community Development Division Organisational Review were very closely linked and therefore should be discussed together.

Mr Follett expressed the feelings of the local community particularly in relation to the inclusion of Highfields Youth and Community Centre in the premises review, and the staff redundancies as a result of the organisational review.

He informed the Committee that the joint trade unions had opposed the divisional organisational review, and also that the association had been highlighted as an example of good practice. It was stated that the local Community Learning Manager had been instrumental in the success of the association, and his redundancy was a shock to the community and external organisations who had worked with the Youth and Community Association, and as a result on such organisation had sent a letter to the association expressing their support and commending the work of the Community Learning Manager.

Ms Admani explained that often several of families had used the centre and expressed concern that decisions were being taken outside of the community that would affect a large number of people without consideration for those who would no longer be able to benefit from the services, including people from vulnerable groups in the community.

Mr Follett drew attention to research that had been undertaken in the community which supported the current management style of the Youth and Community Centre and the community development approach. The research also showed that the majority of respondents had not been consulted by the City Council with regard to the future management, staffing and function of Highfields Youth and Community Centre, and indicated that staffing should remain the same. He expressed the opinion that the Community Learning Manager should be reinstated with immediate effect. Public meetings had also been held which supported this view.

Mr Follett stated that no prior indication had been given that the service provision at Highfields Youth and Community Centre was not acceptable, no indication was given

of the likely impact of the review, and no assurances were given that services would be continued through other management structures.

Members stated that the Highfields Youth and Community Association had undertaken groundbreaking work in the area to bring the communities together and provide a wide range of services, led by the Community Learning Manager. It was felt that the association had succeeded in developing an identity in a multi-cultural area, and in bringing all communities together, and the view was expressed that it was a model of excellence and community cohesion. Mr Follett stated that about 1500 people per week used the centre, and in the past year, 2800 people had used the advice services provided at the centre which would not now be accessible locally.

Concern was expressed that despite having passed motions and recommendations to Cabinet at previous meetings of the Committee to ask that the divisional organisational review be halted, the review had continued. It was suggested that in 2001 the Cabinet had agreed to work with the Highfields Youth and Community Centre and had agreed that governance and management arrangements should be through the Timiti Report and not subject to divisional organisational reviews, and this had not been formally rescinded therefore the association should not be part of this review.

Concerns were expressed that the lack of consultation and an equalities impact assessment, and it was also questioned why redundancies had been made in the summer when there were no scrutiny meetings scheduled.

It was stated that there were other community facilities that were experiencing the same problems, so all of these should be taken into consideration.

Councillor Waddington, seconded by Councillor Sood, moved the following suggested resolution:

- "1. That the Cabinet be asked to stop the Premises review and divisional organisational review with immediate effect
2. That Cabinet be requested to reinstate those made redundant;
3. That a report be brought back to the Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 7 October detailing the impact of the review on staff and service users at all centres;

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried. It was requested that it be noted that all of those present had supported the motion.

It was suggested that in future reviews premises and staffing issues must be considered together.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Cabinet be asked to stop the Premises review and divisional organisational review with immediate effect and to reinstate those made redundant;
2. That a report be brought back to the meeting on 7 October outlining the impact of the reviews on staff and service users;
3. That the whole issue of the premises and organisational reviews be considered together.