

Highfields Community Association (HCA) / Highfields Centre (HC)

1.0 Introduction:

- 1.1 Presentation - Priya Thamotheram (Head of Centre) & Furzana Khalifa (HCA GB part time staff rep.)
- 1.2 Thanks to the sponsors of the call-in for the opportunity for this matter to be considered at NCSI.
- 1.3 Regrettable that positive discussions with officers about the renewal contract have been negated over last 18 months.
- 1.4 Decision to not provide any LCC funding for Arts, Sports, Advice and Community services at HC and to remove excellent and well-established pre-school and adult learning from HC is already having seriously detrimental impact on both service users and service delivery staff.

2.0 Issues raised by LCC

- 2.1 Financial Independence within 3 years but no formal/informal agreement
- 2.2 No Business Plan (BP) but 4 year BP was provided in April 2014 & updated BP delayed due to LCC's failure to provide information and car park license termination, funding & room hire decisions.
- 2.3 Funding Contractual Clauses not agreed but HCA agreed this in January 2015, albeit under duress as these contractual conditions were not being required of other equivalent agencies the Council funded.
- 2.4 No Comparable Pension provided but given projected 42% cut, subsequently actualised to 80% cut, HCA staff unanimously agreed new pension scheme.
- 2.5 Pension Deficit Payment – HCA's initial settlement agreement with Local Government Pension Scheme not agreed by LCC, so HCA agreed new settlement with LGPS which removed LCC's guarantor role.
- 2.6 Excessive room hire charges – meeting finally arranged to discuss new rental agreement cancelled at short notice and instead, less than a week given for HCA to provide an offer and less than 24 hours given for HCA to reconsider that offer!
- 2.7 High level of reserves - HCA's reserves is largely designated, with £250,000 for Asset Replacement Fund, £40,000 for programme support work and the balance providing the recommended six months operational costs.

3.0 HCA Service Highlights (2011 – 2014)

- 3.1 Turnover has increased by 360% & LCC's share of HCA's income has reduced from 95% to 48%
- 3.2 Expenditure has increased by 494 % (inclusive of a one-off pension deficit payment)
- 3.3 Staff team has increased by 40%
- 3.4 Over 400,000 users in 4 years (2011 – 2014) & exceeded all contractual targets
- 3.5 Open to the public 7 days per week over 326 days per year
- 3.6 Provided 5000 activity sessions in 2014, averaging 16 people per session
- 3.7 Member of 5 successful, externally funded service consortiums and raised over £600,000 in last 4 years from European Union and Big Lottery for new and additional services
- 3.8 Highfields Centre's pioneering community cohesion work resulted in it championing 'Celebrating Diversity and Unity in the Community' long before it became common parlance in both local and national discourse and reflected in both its staffing and usage figures, with HCA staff comprising last year of 59% Asian, 21% African/Caribbean, 12% White and 8% Other and reflected in its people usage pattern, with 73% Asian, 16% African/Caribbean, 4% White and 7% Other
- 3.9 91% of our users said HCA's services were excellent to good
- 3.10 98% of our users said they would continue to use HCA's services
- 3.11 97% of our users said they'd recommend our services to their friends, family, etc
- 3.12 Gained national accreditation through the achievement of the Social Enterprise Mark, Investors in People, Matrix, Advice Quality Standard and other national kite marks
- 3.13 Successful lead applicant for Highfields Our Place

4.0 In Lieu of a Conclusion

- 4.1 Just a fraction of the above service highlights would suggest a remarkable set of achievements to be celebrated & utilised as a benchmark for equivalent developments to be effected elsewhere in this city
- 4.2 It's been said that a week is a long time in politics and as for the last year, it's taken up much of our creative energies to ward off LCC's determined and unmerited attacks on our Centre.
- 4.3 In a blatant quest to bankrupt Highfields Community Association, the increasingly disadvantaged and predominantly racial minority communities in Highfields are being victimised through LCC's actions on several service related developments