

CABINET – 10 MARCH 2016

PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM 4)

Under Rule 16 of the Executive Procedure Rules, members of the public may question the Executive and Portfolio Holders at meetings. There is a time limit of 15 minutes for the asking and answering of public questions.

1.

Questioner: Raksha Pandya, Mind in Harrow

Asked of: Councillor David Perry, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Corporate Leadership

Question: “In view of the thirty million capital infrastructure commitments which the Leader presented at the full Council meeting (on 25th February 2016), as a cornerstone of Harrow Council’s innovative future corporate plan, how much of this investment will directly benefit local and voluntary sector organisations, which face closure if the council cuts funding to this sector next year?”

2.

Questioner: David Phelops

Asked of: Councillor Anne Whitehead, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People

Question: “In light of the public statements by David Perry that the final decision to close the Bridge has not been taken, despite the cut to funding having been signed off in Cabinet on 18th February and approved in the council meeting of 25th February, despite services being run down on a daily basis, despite the lack of a hot meal due to staff shortages, despite Bridge clients being “moved on”, I would like to ask what contingency plans have been made to keep the services at the Bridge running, or, reinstate services, if the EqIA and Bridge consultation finds in favour of retaining the Bridge service.”

3.

Questioner: Ann Freeman

Asked of: Councillor David Perry, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Corporate Leadership

Question: “Could you please help those of us who would be affected by the closure of The Bridge, by elaborating on the quoted reasons?

“ ...Harrow is rethinking and redesigning the delivery of day

service provision....

...the service is partly a duplication, in the sense that the Council's Wiseworks service supports eligible people {under the Care Act 2014} with mental health problems in a similar way to the services provided at The Bridge...

... the location has no long term future due to proposed regeneration and redevelopment on and around the site...

...purchase more flexible day opportunities and take part in some of the exciting activities going on in the borough”.

4.

Questioner: Tazeem Moledina

Asked of: Councillor David Perry, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Corporate Leadership

Question: “In September 2013 a weekly art group was set up at The Bridge, costing £5 for a 2.5 hour session on Thursday mornings. Many clients who had never done art before found that the group was highly beneficial for encouraging therapeutic self-expression, breaking social isolation and developing new skills and confidence. The group quickly grew in popularity and extended its hours to accommodate this. Currently there are 4 sessions per week (Thursdays from 10am till 12.30pm, and 1.30pm - 6pm, Fridays 1-4pm and Mondays 1-4pm) in total offering **13 HOURS of session time.**

The maximum cost to each client is £13 PER WEEK or **£676 for the whole year**, averaging at **£1 per hour of support**. The group is split roughly 50:50 between those who get a Personal Budget and those who don't. There are 15-20+ of us that take part in Bridge art sessions every week, and this activity is ESSENTIAL for maintaining our wellness, for the reasons mentioned above.

From May onwards the Council offer of activities at Wiseworks, as a replacement for services provided at the Bridge, **does not include any art.**

Additionally, the costs for the limited range of services it will be offering, even for those of us with a Personal Budget, are prohibitive.

For example, attending one Wiseworks Photography session per week of 2.5hours at £24 per session over 52 weeks will cost **£1248 per client per year. For just one morning of support.**

Attending 1 IT session plus 1 gardening session per week for a year will cost **£2496 per client ~ for only 5 hours of support per week**, none of which is actually delivered by a trained mental health professional. For a client who wishes to access **10 hours worth of activities** per week at Wiseworks, the costs

double again to **£4992 per client per year**.

This is shockingly high when compared with the average **£32 per client per week** that it costs to keep the Bridge running, or **£1682 per client per year**, for open access and holistic, specialised support.

How does the Council intend to re-provide low-cost and accessible art sessions for those of us who require regular art activity in a mental-health supportive environment in order to stabilise and maintain our mental health conditions?"