

## Northwood Hills Library: Petition regarding the Annexe

**Cabinet Portfolio**

Finance, Property &amp; Business Services

**Report Author**

Mohamed BHIMANI – Planning Environment &amp; Community Services

**Papers with report**

Petition Submitted &amp; Letter

### HEADLINE INFORMATION

**Purpose of report**

To inform the Cabinet Member that a petition has been submitted to the Council from The Rainbow Healing Centre who have used the Annexe at Northwood Hills Library since 1987. The group have been using the venue to offer alternative healing therapy to local community members and are now concerned that the facility will no longer be available to offer this service once the refurbishment of the library has been completed as the annexe no longer forms part of the agreed proposals.

**Contribution to our plans and strategies**

The request can be considered as part of the Council's objective of improving health and well being. It also forms part of the Libraries Plan which aims to promote newly refurbished libraries as venues where the widest possible use of the buildings can be made.

**Financial Cost**

On average the lettings income from the annexe at Northwood Hills Library is in the region of £2100 per annum and in the case of the Rainbow Healing Centre it equates to around £1300 per year.

**Relevant Policy Overview Committee**

Residents' and Environmental Services

**Ward(s) affected**

Northwood Hills

### RECOMMENDATION

**That the Cabinet Member**

- Notes the petition and discusses with petitioner(s) in detail their concerns and if possible alternative options for relocation in the area.**

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PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

## **INFORMATION**

### **Reasons for recommendation**

To investigate further details of the petitioners.

### **Comments of Policy Overview Committee(s)**

None at this stage

### **Supporting Information**

#### **Background.**

The Libraries refurbishment and enhancement programme is linked to the 2006/2007 customer survey results which identified the need for library sites to be refurbished and as a consequence has become a priority for the Council.

To date nine of the Council's seventeen libraries have been refurbished and the results have proved popular with residents. This has seen numbers of people using these libraries increase by an average of 48%. As a direct response to the success derived from these libraries the Council is keen to 'roll out' the refurbishment and expansion programme across the remaining libraries

This has led to Northwood Hills Library forming part of the phase III 'roll out' of the libraries refurbishment programme for completion by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

#### **Northwood Hills Library Proposals and Issues**

Therefore as part of their refurbishment and enhancement of Northwood Hills Library it will mean the loss of the existing annexe where the Rainbow Healing Centre is located. This space will be used to provide additional social space for library users.

Furthermore the creation of the new entrance to the annexe which faces the roundabout at the top of the high street will give a direct route inside the library to make the venue a focal point to attract additional users.

This has resulted in the petition being submitted. The petition has 30 signatories of which the majority are borough residents in support of the work undertaken by the Rainbow Healing Centre at Northwood Hills Library. Over the past 25 years as a voluntary organisation it has provided a counseling and an alternative faith healing service to 'clients' who wish to retain their well being and to those who suffer from mild to chronic illnesses to regain their health. The healers who are all caring professionals and accredited also provide home or 'in' hospital support to those seeking help.

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PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

Cabinet Member meeting with Petitioners - 17 November 2010

The petition is seeking to influence the Cabinet Member to reinstate a meeting room or to have a dedicated space for this service to continue.

## **Financial Implications**

The financial implication of not including a meeting room and/or a dedicated area which is segregated from the main activities of the library is that an annual rental income of around £2300 will be lost to the library service. However the refurbishment proposals of Northwood library do include the provision a coffee outlet, allowing visitors the opportunity to purchase coffee and biscuits at highly competitive prices. This service has proved hugely popular at the other refurbished libraries and therefore this loss should be compensated by the income generated from coffee sales.

## **EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

### **What will be the effect of the recommendation?**

To allow the Cabinet Member to discuss directly with petitioners their concerns and possible measures to address the issues.

### **Consultation Carried Out or Required**

The refurbishment and enhancement proposals for Northwood Hills Library were subject to a statutory consultation period as part of the planning application process which saw 1 objection being raised which focussed primarily on the safety and security aspects of the redesigned library.

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Legal**

The Council does not have a statutory duty to provide voluntary groups with accommodation to provide their services. However, paragraph 2 (1) of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Council well-being powers to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve, amongst other things, the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area.

In considering the petition decision makers must ensure there is a full consideration of all representations arising including those which do not accord with the officer recommendation.

The decision maker must be satisfied that responses from the public are conscientiously taken into account. If a local authority decides to embark upon a non-statutory process of consultation, following a statutory consultation, the applicable principles are no different from those which apply to statutory consultation.

Officers must ensure there is a full note of the main points discussed at the meeting with the petitioners. If there are new points raised in the period after the statutory consultation period which are likely to make a material difference to the competing considerations then officers ought to consider the need for further statutory consultation.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Petition received 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010

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