

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

COUNCIL MEETING – 19 OCTOBER 2011

Question by: Francis Hoar

To the: The Leader

QUESTION

"At least one of the bids received for the Sands End Community Centre proposed a mix of residential units and community facilities. Regardless of whether or not this is the highest bid in purely financial terms, it will undoubtedly add enhanced value to the local area. Has the Council quantified whether any bid enhances: i) the promotion or improvement of economic wellbeing; ii) the promotion or improvement of social well-being; or iii) the promotion or improvement of environmental well-being?"

ANSWER

From the Deputy Leader on behalf of the Leader

"The Council approved the disposal of the Sands End Centre at Cabinet on 7 February 2011 and had already considered the impact of closure of the centre in that decision which led to arranging the relocation of the services provided at the Centre in the Sands End Ward.

The provision of the children's centre activities is being delivered at two venues: the newly established third sector provider, Ray's Playhouse Limited is delivering a range of exciting provision based in the recently refurbished under fives building on Stephendale Road. The recently built Tudor Rose building located on the Fulham Court Estate will house a children's centre hub which will bring an increased offer to residents. It is important to note that the children's centre activities which had been delivered at the community centre was part of a two area model supporting parents both in the Sands End area and the Fulham Broadway area. Parents and children alike will now benefit from not only new or newly refurbished buildings but also outside play space vital for the physical development of young children. The children's centres continue to deliver provision which is based upon three principles; school readiness for children, adult readiness for employment and parenting skills all of which contribute to the early intervention agenda and to economic well being.

The facilities at the Sands End Centre have, as described in the 7 February 2011 Cabinet paper, been under utilised with a low take up from local residents. The library facility at Hurlingham and Chelsea School will be light and airy and offer a larger facility than the current offer at the centre. The facility will provide greater access to students and their families thus attracting a wider age range of local residents.

Energise Gym is modern and offers times that are more accessible for the range of local residents. In addition, the proposed refurbishment of the Hurlingham and Chelsea School sports facilities will offer additional availability for local sport activities. Its proximity to the Parsons Green Club will also benefit local residents who are users of that soon to be improved facility and there is potential therefore for joining these two popular facilities.

The pottery classes based at the Sands End Centre will benefit from a newly created pottery room which is awash with natural daylight and will benefit from new kilns. The school and the Adult Learning and Skills Services already work closely in partnership presenting a wider offer of adult learning activities.

Sands End Ward is primarily a residential ward which now benefits from an increasing number of shops and restaurants. An increase in housing stock in a ward popular with families would be an asset to the local community and would compliment the increased developments of Imperial Wharf and the proposed Sainsbury's development.

The Council's general statutory duty is to obtain best consideration from the sale of its property. The joint bid received from London Property Lettings and Sands End Community Centre was assessed on the financial offer received and the provision of services to be provided. All the services currently located in the Sands End Centre are due to be relocated within the Sands End Ward.

The overall impact therefore on the economic, social and environmental well being of the area is therefore considered to be neutral to positive."

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Question by: Nicholas Waldemar Brown

To the: The Leader

QUESTION

“How did the council assess the value of the London Property Lettings Ltd bid in partnership with the Sands End Community Association? In particular, was the assessment purely financial or were other criteria considered, and if so what were they?”

ANSWER

From the Deputy Leader on behalf of the Leader

“Since the property was placed on the open market the assessment of the bid was considered, as with all other bids, on price and likelihood of the scheme obtaining planning consent.

There were nearly 20 bids received and the price that London Property Lettings Ltd offered was the lowest bid subject to planning consent. The difference between the unrestricted value of the land (or highest bid received) and the consideration offered by LPL was well in excess of £2,000,000 (two million pounds).

The Council also considered the contribution of the community aspect of the bid and found that a majority of the services would be a duplication of the services already being provided by the Council which are being moved from the Sands End Centre to other areas in the Sands End Ward.”

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Question by: Ann Rosenberg

To the: The Leader

QUESTION

“The council has undertaken to re-provide the services of the Sands End Community Centre so the people of Sands End would not lose out. What methodologies has the council used to track the success of this assurance for previous users and could you provide the specific numbers of those who used the gym prior to its closure and their satisfaction at the reprovision, plus is there a process to similarly track the reaction of the library and craft studio users when the Community Centre finally closes at the end of this year.?”

ANSWER

From the Deputy Leader on behalf of the Leader

“In terms of the children’s centre provision, the reach area remains the same and it is already known that families are making good use of the provision at Ray’s Playhouse and have expressed their delight in the opening of the new centre based in the Tutor Rose building. Families are registered on a data base which will continue to provide evidence of use by registered families from the former Fulham South Centre. All new birth data will continue to be provided to the centres so that new families can be added to the existing and growing number of users.

Adult learning students following a course in the craft studio have and will continue to have regular opportunity to feedback on their specific courses by way of a rigorous evaluation process, and more broadly via regular adult learning service wide learner forums.

The number of gym users prior to closure was 79 male members, 44 female members, 24 Agewell members and 68 Lifestyle members.

The Head of Service has received one complaint in terms of the reprovision.

Both Club Energie and Lillie Road Fitness Centre have seen members transfer from Sands End with the greater number transferring to Lillie Road to take advantage of the £19.95 per month GymLondon membership.

Lillie Road has seen an 18% (2,200 visits per month) increase in usage since the closure of the Sands End Gym.

Customer satisfaction at Lillie Road Fitness Centre has consistently exceeded 80%.

With regard to the library re-provision, officers would need to liaise with the school to determine satisfaction with the new facility.”

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Question by: Jon Rowleron

To the: The Leader

QUESTION

“The Sands End Community Centre Association submitted its bid on the understanding of the council’s willingness to match its rhetoric around valuing local residents, and promoting social entrepreneurship within the wider context as set out in the “General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 act

How is the council trying to encourage the Prime Minister’s ‘Big Society’ in Sands End”?

ANSWER

From the Deputy Leader on behalf of the Leader

“By disposing the Sands End Centre, the Council is able to release Capital to reduce its debt commitments thus assisting the Council to use those savings to continue with the provision of essential services for local residents.

A strong example of the Big Society in action is the development of Ray’s Playhouse Ltd by local families and the support offered by the Council in funding for their children’s centre activities and provision of a range of high quality play equipment. Council officers will continue to provide support and guidance to the centre enabling it to develop a full offer of activities for local children and their families.”