

## London Borough of Waltham Forest

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Report Title	Reference from Health and Adult Social Care (ASC) Scrutiny Committee: Learning Disabilities Day Opportunities Review
Meeting / Date	Cabinet 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2024
Directorate	Resources
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Wards affected	All
Public access	Open

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The report outlines recommendations made by the Health and Adult Social Care Committee to Cabinet following the committee meeting which took place in October 2024. During the Scrutiny meeting the Committee considered a report on the summary of findings from the public consultation (which took place from 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024 until the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2024) in relation to the Markhouse Centre. The Centre provides day opportunities for those with learning disabilities. The report also covers the consultation approach, key themes which arose, and the alternative provision proposals if the Markhouse Centre was to close.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Health and Adult Social Care Committee received the draft Cabinet report, heard from public participants, and asked questions of officers. The Committee request Cabinet consider the below recommendations when making a final decision on the future of the Markhouse Centre Day service in December 2024.

#### 2.2. It recommends:

##### 2.2.1. Recommendation 1:

Service to provide the full cost of alternative proposals ahead of December Cabinet.

##### 2.2.2. Recommendation 2:

Service to implement measures to mitigate the disproportionate impact on service users who are of Asian heritage.

##### 2.2.3. Recommendation 3:

Service to bring a report to a future Health and ASC Scrutiny Committee reviewing the transition to alternative providers, if the decision is to close the Markhouse Centre.

#### 2.2.4. Recommendation 4:

Service to provide assurances to Cabinet that all reasonable steps are taken so the friendship groups of the 23 vulnerable users of the Markhouse Centre are kept together.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. This report was taken to Scrutiny ahead of a final decision on the future of the Markhouse Centre Day Service being made by Cabinet in December 2024. On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 Cabinet agreed a decision to consult on the proposal to close the Markhouse Centre, a Council owned day opportunities service for people with learning disabilities. The Council proposed a closure of the Markhouse Centre due to the following rationale:
  - 3.1.1. The Councils vision for person-centred day opportunities provision, ensuring access to modern community-based provision.
  - 3.1.2. The quality of the building is poor.
  - 3.1.3. Alternative provision would offer better value for money and allow for a firm financial footing.
- 3.2. The Committee asked several questions in respect to the report. Members sought assurances that the outcome of the consultation will not be ignored. They discussed the outcome of the independent building survey and asked for this to be shared, if it did not breach commercial sensitivity, to analyse the cost breakdown of building maintenance and repairs. The Committee listened to four public participants who shared their experiences of the Markhouse Centre and their opinions regarding what they would like to see done next.
- 3.3. The Committee questioned officers on whether it was possible to have a cost breakdown of the proposed alternative provisions for service users. Officers assured that this would be done when there had been a decision on the Centre as an accurate estimate would not be possible until allocations of alternative provisions are known, but an approximate cost could be calculated ahead of a decision being made. Members highlighted the importance of being certain of the proposed savings when faced with the difficult decision regarding the future of the Markhouse Centre.
- 3.4. The Committee heard that the EQIA assessment had revealed individuals with Asian Heritage make up a high percentage of users, members questioned what could be done to ensure certain communities would not be disproportionately affected by the potential closure of the Centre.
- 3.5. The Committee expressed concern about vulnerable users of the centre being separated from their friends and uprooting their routine, which could be very distressing. The Committee sought assurances from officers that keeping friendship groups together was a consideration if Cabinet decide to close the Markhouse Centre, to promote a smooth transition for the service users to their alternative provision.

- 3.6. If Cabinet makes the decision to close the Markhouse Centre, the Committee stated they are committed to ensuring that services are considering users best interests during their transition to alternative provisions.
- 3.7. In accordance with paragraphs 6.1.1. and 7 of the Constitution, the Committee has asked for its views to be referred to the Cabinet.

#### 4. Service Response

4.1. The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny recommendations and service responses are below:

4.2. Recommendation 1: Service to provide the full cost of alternative proposals ahead of December Cabinet.

4.2.1 Amend: Officers have sought to provide the full of cost alternative proposals. However the proposals received through the public consultation were not sufficiently detailed proposals in order for officers to cost them, and in some instances the proposals were not sufficiently viable provide the full cost of alternative proposals. As such it is proposed that this recommendation is amended to: The alternative proposals are fully costed by officers where possible ahead of December Cabinet.

4.3. Recommendation 2: Service to implement measures to mitigate the disproportionate impact on service users who are of Asian heritage

4.3.1. Accept: Through the implementation of closing the Markhouse Centre, it is important that the Council takes account seeks to mitigate any disproportionate impact on service users, including those who are of Asian heritage. Within the equalities impact assessment developed by officers and as set out in the Cabinet report, measures are in place to mitigate the disproportionate impact on service users of Asian heritage. All services users will receive a person-centred re-assessment of their needs, including any specific cultural needs that need to be taken into account, to inform any service that they may be supported to access that will meet their needs.

4.4. Recommendation 3: Service to bring a report to a future Health and ASC Scrutiny Committee reviewing the transition to alternative providers, if the decision is to close the Markhouse Centre.

4.4.1. Accept: The recommendation for the Committee to review the transition to alternative providers is accepted, and officers can consider when would be the opportunity for the Committee to review progress of transition.

4.5. Recommendation 4: Service to provide assurances to Cabinet that all reasonable steps are taken so the friendship groups of the 23 vulnerable users of the Markhouse Centre are kept together.

- 4.5.1. Amend: The closure of the Markhouse Centre will have a significant impact on families and service users that currently attend the Centre, and officers note that includes all service users. During the public consultation residents that responded highlighted the importance of the friendships that residents that attend the Centre had developed over the time that they had attended the centre. As such, should the decision be taken to close the Centre, a key factor that will be taken into account when undertaking assessment and supporting residents to access alternative provision will be where existing friendships exist and seeking to support and enable these friendships to continue. It is noted however that when assessments are undertaken of individual residents any provision will need to be based on their own needs. It is proposed that the recommendation is amended to:
- Service to provide assurances to Cabinet that all reasonable steps are taken so that service users have the opportunity to maintain the friendships that they have made at Markhouse.

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

No reports which require listing were used in the preparation of this reference.

