

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY)

WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2015

URGENT QUESTION

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Will the leader of the council and the relevant cabinet member meet urgently with local user groups, Open Door Resource Centre and Cool Tan Arts, to discuss mental health service provision in the borough?

RESPONSE

Councillor Hargrove and the director of public health met Cool Tan Arts on Monday and are happy to meet with them again if they want.

Open Door Resource Centre has not requested a meeting, but if they do, Councillor Hargrove would be happy to meet with them.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Thanks very much Mr Mayor. The reason for the urgency is because Cool Tan and Open Door tried to put in deputations this evening, and I think it is a real shame that they have not been agreed to be heard. The reason is that actually I think there is a serious issue going on in the council at the moment and I am hoping the leader will give his personal attention to it, it feels like mental health is falling between the CCG, public health, adult social care and community engagement. Now I am not saying all the people, all the cabinet members, don't really have the best of intentions but there is something actually slipping and officers themselves had admitted that to me quite recently; that is why I am suggesting the leader of the council personally meet a couple of those groups. I don't think Cool Tan are still here sadly and I know they were really keen and I hope that some of you saw their email, but if the leader of the council could personally commit to visiting them and some of the other groups, I think that would be a really good sign that this issue is being taken seriously.

RESPONSE

Thanks Mr Mayor and thanks to Councillor Al-Samerai for her supplemental question. I saw that there was a deputation request from Cool Tan but I have not seen anything from Open Door so I am not sure that they did put in a deputation request. I saw the email from Michelle and I spoke to Michelle and her colleagues earlier on and I think this is quite important to note that what they came to talk about tonight is a particular project which is not funded by the council and has never been funded by the council. It is funded by other agencies including charities, well it may be falling between the cracks but that will be probably be due to government cuts rather than anything this council is doing and that is the difficulty. What I have said in my answer is that Councillor Hargrove and the

director of public health and Cool Tan met on Monday. Barry is meeting again next Wednesday with Cool Tan and the director of public health and hopefully the director of adult and social care; we will look at what assistance we can give to them to keep the project going until their applications for funding - there is an application for funding to another charity or organisation - is determined. But that is not going to be determined until June because who ever their previous funders were have messed some paper work up, that is no fault of the council but I am very happy to talk to Cool Tan and see what advice and assistance and help we might be able to give because it is quite a modest amount of money that they are requesting. Cool Tan are not slow in coming forward and letting us know about their services and concerns. Michelle and her team do an excellent job of keeping us well aware of there work and the challenges they face; we visited them in the past and I have no doubt we will visit them in the future. But this is a charity which is receiving very clear attention from the council at the moment, and I don't think there is anything we are doing that is allowing them to fall through any gaps that we are responsible for, in fact we are lifting them up, but as I say I think there is an issue of government changes and government funding which needs to be addressed.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Thank you, it was actually a five year charitable trust grant they had and I think one of the problems they told me they have with the council is dealing with different departments, it is great if you could talk to them this evening, please don't be complacent and say they are all being perfectly looked after because they are clearly not, so hopefully something positive will come out of this evening. It does also I think bring up a wider point about how deputation and community evidence are dealt with at this meeting and I noticed some of the people of community evidence said they were invited, I think some of the more vulnerable community groups may find it more difficult to navigate the constitutional system. I just wondered if the leader could tell us whether he thinks the new deputations / community evidence, what ever it is called work now or whether he's got any suggestions to make for groups struggling to navigate the constitutional team, to be a bit more welcome.

RESPONSE

I would point Councillor Al-Samerai back to pre 2010 when deputations were effectively banned, Councillor Morris can shake her head and say that was five years ago; she was a cabinet member then, she was the cabinet member for communities and she did not want to hear from - I am not going to take any lectures from Councillor Adele Morris who we should hear from - you did not want to hear from anybody. Now I cannot hold Councillor Al-Samerai responsible for everything before 2010 even though she was a councillor, what I will say to Councillor Al-Samerai is that I think community evidence is working; we hear things from relevant people with relevant things to say and I don't think it is difficult for people to navigate - I will remind constitutional officers and I am reminding you now, make it as easy as possible for people when they talk about community evidence and deputation. I love the work Cool Tan does but being on the Largactyl Shuffle, I have known them for many years I am sure that Michelle is somebody who can navigate the council's structure. In event of other groups we will always be vigilant but that's part of our job as councillors as well to help point people in the right direction not just our responsibility or my responsibility or council officers responsibility it is all our responsibility.