

Address by Colin Aldridge

Good evening all

Last time I raised the issue of our removal from east oxford community centre management which I feel was not resolved to my satisfaction, but I am here today to ask you to listen to the people of this beautiful city. This is only one item of concern for me. You have been given a petition to ask that East Oxford Community Centre be given back to the local people to manage.

The fears of a local authority any centre are : raised costs which have already started by lock up fee and added security costs, lack of late night events, raised room hire and rent increases when reviewed for April, as it costs the council more to run the centre.

Since the council took over there have been some improvements. The majority of these were previously asked for by the association and we told no for a variety of reasons. Since then we and others have experienced rudeness and an attitude of belittlement almost of being junior employees of the council. "Consultation" seems to be that the council decide what is best, then goes to public consultation, then do what they have already decided. They don't consider the views of the community.

EOCA have worked tirelessly and voluntary for 4 decades which if put into financial terms would have cost the council millions of pounds. We have been offered absolutely nothing to acknowledge this work done by past volunteers. The only offer is 100 free hours for fixtures, fittings and equipment (material things)

In recent years EOCA have had some challenges which have now been put behind us without help although council officers were asked. These improvements have been ignored. When met with council officers we were told and I quote "the dye was cast some 2 years ago" It does not make any difference how we improve as the council will carry on regardless.

I fear this has set a trend for other community centres in Oxford. Once you lose the support of the local people the centres will become irrelevant to the people they are for. What happens when the centres are not used? Are they turned into flats?

As you the councillors have been elected to your office, you are given the privilege and responsibility of governing this city. Please listen to the people who have elected you. Instruct your employees, the council officers, to right the wrong and put the management of EOCC back in the hands of the community and help us improve the centre.

Thank you for listening.