

HORLEY TOWN COUNCIL

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Isabel Wootton

RBBC Community Partnerships

Sent by Email: communitypartnerships@reigate-banstead.gov.uk

18 March 2021

Dear Isabel

Reigate & Banstead Community Centres Consultation – Closing Date: 22 March 2021

Thank you for providing Horley Town Council (HTC) with an opportunity to respond to the above Community Centres consultation by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (RBBC). The matter was considered by our Members at our Full Council meeting held on 2 March 2021, at which time, the following comments and observations were made in regard to 'Regent House', Albert Road, Horley.

Regent House is situated close to the town centre of Horley with good public transport links nearby. In the past, it has been well known as a busy community centre, providing welfare and social support and wide-ranging community group activities as well as a focal point for extensive public information. As such, it has served as an important community hub with many health, well-being, educational and recreational activities on offer with the benefit of bringing people of all age groups together, regardless of ability, to connect and socialise.

However, it is generally felt that, in recent years, the overall level of community service provision, under the former private management of Regent House, has deteriorated rapidly for a number of reasons which we now set out below:

- The perception of Regent House in general terms has become very outdated and requires a full transformation and a widespread promotion to reflect its purpose to provide a well-managed, Council run community facility.
- Although the building provides good accessibility with a roomy car park, disabled access on entry and a lift and stairs to the upper floor, it lacks any visual signage by the entrance to direct visitors, especially for those visiting for the first time.
- The upstairs Café is set out in a reasonably sized area but it has not been operational for some considerable time now. Similarly, the licensed bar which previously catered for private functions, is no longer available which requires hirers to supply their own drinks for their functions. As such, these now appear to be redundant facilities.
- Many patrons have objected to having to pay an annual membership fee in the past and this has been widely criticised as an unfair levy imposed for using a community-based facility. This is especially so since the introduction of these charges happened to coincide with a vast reduction in the services offered, including a poor lunch time meal service with very little choice and inability to cater for vegetarians. We understand that the Banstead and Woodhatch centres both do levy a membership charge which might be more acceptable in Horley if such services were to be vastly improved. At the same time, membership fees should be kept at a reasonable rate since the age demographic within this context are to a large degree, senior citizens.

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- Since the building itself provides a versatile space, it could be much better utilised with additional recreational provision, such as, film screening.
- The 'Dial-a-Ride' door-to-door transport service had provided an excellent service to many patrons requiring transport in the past but it was withdrawn some years ago.

For the reasons stated above, we would like to put forward the following recommendations to be considered for making improvements to Regent House:

1. To rename the building to 'Regent Community Centre' or something similar and upgrade the building with a contemporary makeover to invigorate its appeal as a popular community facility.
2. To install clear directional signage by the entrance and to the car park along with a new contemporary community notice board to provide information on the facilities and services available.
3. To reopen the upstairs Café to increase visitors with wide-ranging healthy menu choices at reasonable prices. To provide the licensed bar for private and other functions.
4. To abolish or significantly reduce annual membership fees for regular patrons with value for money for the services provided.
5. To consider providing a small cinema and/or a multi-arts centre as part of the main service provision.
6. To support an affordable transport service to and from the community centre for the elderly.

Since Regent House is situated within close proximity to the Horley Town Council offices, our Members would welcome an opportunity to build on their good relationship with centre managers and staff to help promote the new centre as well as work in close partnership with County and Borough Councillors to make it the very best that it can be. We feel very encouraged by the fact that RBBC has taken over the management of Regent House and for sharing its vision for community centres across the Borough in these modern times. Your response to the Covid-19 pandemic with the introduction of the Foodbank club (along with many other community schemes) is to be highly commended and we wish to pass on this positive feedback to everyone involved in these vital community initiatives.

We do hope that you will take our comments on board and we look forward to hearing the outcomes of the consultation at the planned virtual RBBC briefing to be held for our Members on 20 April 2021, at 6.30 pm.

Yours sincerely



Joan Walsh
Town Clerk
Horley Town Council

cc: Justine Chatfield – RBBC Head of Community Partnerships