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09 September 2021

To: All Members of the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel

Dear Member,

Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel - Thursday, 9th September, 2021

I attach a copy of the following reports for the above-mentioned meeting which were not available at the time of collation of the agenda:

11. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS (PAGES 1 - 4)

Possible relocation of The Grace Organisation to the former Irish Centre building.

Yours sincerely

Dominic O'Brien,
Principal Scrutiny Officer

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Briefing note: **Possible relocation of the Grace Organisation to the site of Irish Cultural and Community Centre**

Meeting: Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel – 9th Sep 2021

1. Background

- 1.1 On 7th September 2021, Members of the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel visited the site of the Irish Cultural and Community Centre on Pretoria Road in Tottenham following issues that had recently been referred to the Panel by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is currently conducting a Scrutiny Review into the proposed High Road West redevelopment scheme in the Northumberland Park ward. The proposed redevelopment would involve the demolition of a number of residential, business and community buildings. This would include the Whitehall & Tenterden Centre on Whitehall Street which is owned by the Council and currently leased to the Grace Organisation, a charity which provides day opportunity services for older residents.
- 1.3 The Council has recently issued a Section 25 notice to the Grace Organisation which the Panel understands would theoretically require them to vacate the premises by November 2021, though in practice The Grace will remain tenants at will until the relocation site is available. The Council's latest relocation proposal involves part of a currently disused Council-owned building, previously used as the Irish Cultural and Community Centre.
- 1.4 As part of their Scrutiny Review, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee became aware of concerns from the Grace Organisation about the suitability of the proposed new premises for their clients. They were particularly concerned about the size of the space being offered, access issues for clients with dementia and access to kitchen facilities which they require for their luncheon club and meals on wheels services.
- 1.5 In August 2021, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee decided to refer this issue to the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel for further scrutiny, given the Panel's remit on social care issue and previous contact with the Grace Organisation.

2. Grace Organisation

- 2.1 In March 2019, Members of the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel visited the Grace Organisation at its current site at the Whitehall & Tenterden Centre as part of a Scrutiny Review into day opportunities in the borough.
- 2.2 The Grace Organisation provides day opportunity services to older people with dementia, disability or long-term physical/mental health issues. It was founded

in 1983 by the late Daphne Marche MBE and the current Director is her daughter Paulette Yusuf.

- 2.3 At the time of the Panel's visit in 2019, the Grace had around 150 attendances per week, the majority of which were funded through contracts or personal budgets, though there were some self-funders. The service users at the centre had varying levels of needs and the proportion of service users suffering from dementia had increased in recent years.
- 2.4 Activities included singing, arts and craft, exercises, games/quizzes and a luncheon club. At the time of the visit, the Grace Organisation had four vehicles to provide transportation for service users and the drivers typically doubled up as carers at the day centre during the day.
- 2.5 As with some other day centres, The Grace was experiencing some financial difficulties and struggling with cash flow, with the lack of uplift in the local authority payments proving to be particularly difficult. Panel Members were informed that The Grace had to engage in significant fundraising activity in order to balance the books and were also fortunate to be supported by volunteers who help to keep the day centre running.
- 2.6 At the time of the Panel's visit, the Grace Organisation was in dialogue with the Council over relocation options, with a move to Wood Green cited as the most likely option. This was a particular concern as the majority of their client base was based in Tottenham.
- 2.7 Officers have said that the Grace Organisation could not be relocated to new premises in the High Road West redevelopment site, mainly because the new buildings would not be available at the time that the old buildings would need to be demolished. In addition, the parking space at the new community buildings was not expected to be sufficient for the Grace Organisation's needs.

3. Possible relocation to the site of the Irish Cultural and Community Centre

- 3.1 In July 2020, the Irish Cultural and Community Centre went into liquidation with activities and services permanently closed.¹ The Council, as the freeholder of the building, indicated that it would explore options for the building which it saw as a community asset for the borough.
- 3.2 In recent evidence to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, officers said that the Council was committed to providing 'like for like' alternative accommodation for the Grace Organisation and had considered the Irish Centre building as a possible option for this when it was vacated last year. They added that the Irish Centre building had the advantage of being well located for the Grace

¹ 'Closure of the Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre', July 24th 2020
<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/news/closure-haringey-irish-cultural-and-community-centre>

Organisation's client user group and the amount of space being offered was at least equivalent to their current space. It would also provide the opportunity to provide a space that had the standards required to help people with dementia and Alzheimer's needs as part of the Council's efforts to raise day opportunities in the borough to recognised standards.

- 3.3 Officers noted that the Grace Organisation was interested in obtaining the use of the main hall, however this was not available as it was needed for wider community use. While they acknowledged the aspirations of the Grace Organisation, there were competing priorities for the building as a community facility that the Council was trying to manage.
- 3.4 When visiting the site of the Irish Centre on 7th September 2021, Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel members were concerned about the poor general condition of the building and the apparent lack of maintenance in large sections of the building since it had been vacated.
- 3.5 The Panel were provided with a plan of the building which highlighted a space of 108 sq/m, along with office space and a kitchen area which had been identified as a possible space that could be allocated to the Grace Organisation. The Panel viewed these areas and officers acknowledged that, while the overall floor space provided would be 'like for like', there would be a larger proportion of office/kitchen space compared to the main activity space for clients.
- 3.6 The Panel understands that some funding for the refurbishment of the space allocated to the Grace Organisation would be provided from the High Road West scheme as finance was available to support relocation of organisations that had been displaced. However, this would not apply to the refurbishment of the rest of the building.
- 3.7 It was noted that the proposals were not yet 'set in stone' and that dialogue was ongoing with the Grace Organisation. Panel Members acknowledged that there were competing priorities for the use of the building. Panel Members also discussed logistical issues that would need to be carefully considered, such as the fair allocation of kitchen space which would be important to both the Grace Organisation and other organisations holding events in the main hall.
- 3.8 The site of the Irish Centre is close to the Grace Organisation's current building and is therefore a more suitable geographical option than previous proposals to relocate to Wood Green. The Panel agreed that continued dialogue with the Grace Organisation to work through the logistical issues was the most appropriate way forward at the present time. The Panel would continue to monitor progress on this issue.

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