

# HARMONY HALL FOR ALL

## Users and Community Campaign to Save Harmony Hall, E17 from Closure

Harmony Hall in Walthamstow is set to close. This small well-established community building in Truro Road just off the market High Street has a rich history in providing for local workers, youth and the community generally over generations. Now the owners, a registered charity called Livability, have decided to sell-off the building to solve its own financial crisis. The heroic efforts of the management to raise the money to buy it have failed. The possibility of closure is terrible news.

Around seventy local user groups - faith groups across all cultures, mental health groups for all ages, language classes of all kinds, children's activities and much more - are all welcomed into this lovely characterful and homely building. Some meet weekly, others more irregularly. The building is one of the few meeting places left in central Walthamstow, and it is accessible.

This closure could have disastrous consequences for vulnerable people with mental health issues. Andy Munton of ELMS said "Mental health services in Waltham Forest have been decimated over the past 10 years – all the day centres have been closed and rehab programmes run down. The Elms weekly lunch club with its various social activities (every Thursday 12-4) attracts upwards of 40-50 every week. The centre's closure would be devastating for our users. It represents the one safe haven for users during difficult times, a place to meet people of similar experience, a place where they will not be judged and a space where creativity, in terms of arts and crafts, can flourish with the rolling art displays from Think Arts bringing life and colour to the building and the wider community."

Similar sentiments have been expressed by groups offering young people access to an alternative lifestyle to drugs and knife crime. The consequences for the community don't bear thinking about.

Linda Taaffe a long-time campaigner with Save Our Square and Secretary of Waltham Forest Trade Union Council commented: "Harmony Hall is almost an

icon of that community spirit so lauded by councillors. Yet neither the local council, nor City Hall has been able to offer any help so far. The inscription over the entrance reads *“Harmony Hall - a multi-cultural family centre serving the people of central Walthamstow”*. We are alarmed that the building will likely be bought-up by one single rich faith group. We fear it is heading in the direction of the Hoe Street cinema mark 2. Harmony Hall belongs to all in our community – not to any one single faith group.”

**User groups have called an emergency public meeting at 7pm on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> February in Harmony Hall Truro Road, E17 7BY** open to all user groups, the wider community, friends and neighbours. We won't stand by and let this closure happen.

For further information:

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