

Community cuts agreed by Integrated Joint Board

Dozens of community groups have lost core funding after health chiefs agreed to axe requests totalling £1.9m a year.

Members of the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board (IJB) voted to agree the three-year grants programme to hand out £14m from April, despite £31m of requests from community groups. A total of 35 organisations who currently receive grants were not recommended for renewal.

An innovation fund of £100,000 will be put aside as a buffer, in case users are adversely affected by the cuts. At a heated meeting, the depute council leader hit out at a lack of funding from the Scottish Government for requiring the IJB to cut the funding for groups. Amid protests from noisy protesters outside City Chambers, groups highlighted the impact on losing the funding – with some groups set to be closed down.

Former MP and MSP Malcolm Chisholm from Pilton Community Health Project, which has worked with some of the country's most deprived communities for 35 years, told the board that the group is "more needed than ever".

He added: "If you don't overturn the recommendation, this project will have to close in March.

"This project is absolutely essential. It's not just local people that will be appalled – this would cause ripples way beyond the Pilton area."

Members of Nari Kallyan Shangho (NKS), which supports South Asian women and other minority communities in south Edinburgh, told board members that the organisation is the “only service that’s equipped to cater for religious and minority needs” and urged the board not to take away “core funding”.

The group said cutting funding would “send out a very negative message” and that it would “divide people”.

Depute council leader, Cllr Cammy Day, made a “plea for reconsideration” from the IJB to withdraw funding from organisations, but acknowledged the difficult position the IJB was in.

He added: “None of us should be here. The Scottish Government needs to properly fund services. Do all you can to support these life-saving services.”

Moira Pringle, the IJB’s chief finance officer, was quizzed by board members after concerns were raised over a lack of feedback for organisations.

She said: “We worked very hard to come up with a process people could get behind and support. We do believe that these do offer the best value for that £14m we have.

“It was decided not to provide individual feedback based on the volume of the applications. We felt it was going to be very difficult and challenging to go around every organisation that had not been successful in this process.

“We have written to everybody that applied and we have written to everybody who had not been recommended for an award.”

Kirsten Hey, non-voting board member, called on her colleagues to think about the impact on community groups.

She said: “We are relying more and more on third sector organisations.

“I would like to say to the voting members to consider whether

there's anything they could do around requesting a further investment into the impact and right and wrongs of disinvesting in services which we know work and would have a huge impact on people."

IJB chairman, Cllr Ricky Henderson, proposed that finance officers will work with unsuccessful organisations to "ensure that service users are offered appropriate alternative support" and will "assist with identifying alternative funding or restructuring."

He added: "I think we need to be wary of making any decisions that would exacerbate health and inequality and not make any situations worse."

The IJB was considering the report below at its meeting this morning :



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As well as the photo above we have a selection of photos by Thomas Brown of Friday's protest by [Pilton Community Health Project](#) in North Edinburgh. The group faces closure because of the cuts agreed today.