

Campaigners given weeks to save care home cafe

Campaigners fighting to save the café in a West Lothian care home complex have just weeks to come up with plans.

The deadline for proposals to come forward for the Bathgate venue is 27 May councillors and members of West Lothian's Integration Joint Board have been told.

The IJB heard this week that there have been two requests for additional information and viewings of the café requested. The advertisement has been viewed over 31,000 times.

The campaign group Save Rosemount Café has asked the Health and Social Care Partnership to take the closure off the table and work with West Lothian council on a long-term solution.

The café in the Rosemount Gardens care complex is open six days per week but currently operates at a loss of £100,000 per year because of a lack of custom.

Local councillors who have fought the plan believe the café has been chosen as 'low hanging fruit' and question what effective savings would be.

The proposal would see staff relocated to other council venues. After a march meeting which first tabled the closure as part of the IJB budget cuts local SNP councillors Pauline Stafford and Willie Boyle had asked: "With a no redundancy policy where do the staff go and who picks up the cost of transferring them somewhere else. Where is the real saving?"

Robin Allen, senior manager older people services, told this month's meeting of the IJB: "The IJB agreed to review Rosemount café two months after 25 March 2025, with a review and update provided at the end of the first month, and to agree that the facility will be closed if no viable expressions of interest have been received at the end of this period."

He added: "The opportunity for a local community group or local business to take over the running of the café was publicised on the West Lothian Council Facebook page and at the café site, prior to the meeting of IJB on 25 March 2025.

"An updated advertisement was published on 14 April 2025 noting that IJB is inviting organisations/groups interested in leasing the café at Rosemount Gardens in Bathgate to come forward.

"Independent providers, social enterprises or voluntary organisations who would be interested in operating the café were urged to get in touch.

"There have been two requests for additional information and viewings of the café requested. The advertisement, which has been viewed over 31,000 occasions, will remain live until 27 May 2025."

In a report to the Board Mr Allen added that a campaign group named, Save Rosemount Café, contacted Alison White, the director of the Health and Social Care Partnership on 22 April expressing their concern about the proposed closure of the café.

The group requested that the IJB remove the saving for the year 2025/26, to allow time for stakeholder consultation and development of partnership working between West Lothian Council and community organisations "to find a sustainable solution to maintain this vital service".

The group also asked that the IJB use the next month to fully scrutinise the financial figures of the café, consider the wider community benefits it brings.

Board member John Innes asked what would happen if no viable proposal came forward before the Board meets again in June. He was told that the venue would close as part of the 25/26 budget proposals.

Union representative Stevie Dunn asked if more information could be made available on the proposals to find work places for staff.

“What are the plans for the staff in the event that the cafe closes. I suppose they’ll have to be managed under organisational change. Is that the proposal?

Mr Allen said: “There are four FTE and five individuals involved. We considered what options were available and worked with colleagues in Property Services to identify alternative positions for those individuals to move to before the March meeting. With the two-month deferment we will need to pick that up again.”

He added that should a new operator be confirmed the issue of Tupe (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, which ensures that employees typically continue to work for the new employer under the same terms and conditions as they had with the previous employer could be considered.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter