

Charity is struggling to find a place to call home!

Surrey Advertiser - 14/8/15

A charity is still struggling to find an Elmbridge home after 18 months despite receiving donations from the likes of Waitrose.

Cool Activity Zone C.I.C. (CAZ) will provide sports and activities to less fortunate members of the Elmbridge community, particularly 16 to 24 year-olds, and received two donations through Waitrose's Community Matters (Green disc) scheme last week, from both the Walton and Weybridge stores. However, the charity is currently homeless and may need to outpost operations around the borough, but 'would be a more flexible operation' in one location. Back in June, founder of the charity, Dick Moore, emailed members and staff at Elmbridge Borough Council saying it was impossible to secure sites or properties to set up charity or social enterprises in Elmbridge. He said: "Being one of the handful of wealthiest boroughs in the country 'not for profit' projects have no chance of competing for locations against the lucrative commercial sector. "Ignoring the plight of financially and socially deprived Elmbridge residents will only result in problems in the future."

Once up and running, the project would include activities such as boxing, fencing and martial arts, yoga, pilates and tai chi, and all forms of dance, art, sculpture and basic vehicle maintenance/DIY help. It would also feature a music studio, internet radio station and 'Chill Out Zone Cafe' to provide GNVQ qualifications in catering. Mr Moore made enquiries for various locations including the old Woolworths, Birdseye and P&Q buildings in Walton, the first floor of the Weybridge Library and Walton Snooker Club in Molesey, but none proved successful due to availability, unrealistic set-up costs and short length of lease.

An Elmbridge Borough Council spokesman said: "There is huge demand for accommodation in Elmbridge and prices are of course at historically high levels. The Council does support voluntary and charity sector organisations both with the limited accommodation available and through grant assistance in some cases. The Elmbridge Hub is a case in point where local organisations have access to council subsidised accommodation. We have no record of having received any communication to date from the charity Cool Activity Zone, but if they would like to contact the council we will be happy to provide advice and guidance."

Jackie Lodge, Chief Executive of Walton Charity, said: "The cost of all property in the south east is 'prohibitively high' and it is 'virtually impossible' for many small charities and social enterprises to find a site."

Anyone interested in becoming involved with the CAZ charity should firstly look at its website www.coolactivityzone.com and then make contact with Dick Moore via email at coolactivityzone@gmail.com or by phone on 020-8224-2061.