

**COUNCIL – 17 DECEMBER 2015
QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Agenda item 6 refers

1. Ms E Batrick, 37 Tunmeade, Harlow, to Councillor Tony Durcan, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Enterprise

What is the Council doing to ensure that The Square will continue to exist in new premises in 2016?

Reply from Councillor Tony Durcan, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Enterprise

The Council shares residents' concerns about the town losing such an important community facility and there is no doubt that The Square makes a tremendous contribution to Harlow and live music in the region.

Since February 2014 the Council has been actively working with The Square to consider a number of buildings, both owned by the Council and the private sector, where it might relocate. This included buildings in the Town Centre, the Latton Bush Centre, the Town Park and the Hospital site.

The Council also put forward a proposal for The Square to relocate to the Playhouse and carried out independent studies to see how this could work. The Playhouse and The Square equally make a huge contribution to life in Harlow and help attract visitors to the town and in the same location could have provided an even better live entertainment venue for everyone in one place.

While for many different reasons The Square did not find any of these suitable, I understand that The Square is actively considering a potential venue in the Town Centre with a private landlord.

The Council has advised The Square to produce a business plan covering the costs and timescales for transition to a new venue and its long term sustainability. The Council has also advised that it considers changing its company structure, possibly to a Social Enterprise, so it can attract external funding to help towards establishing a new community venture.

The Council has offered to help produce a business plan for The Square. Once this is in place we will explore if the Council could provide additional support for a new community based venture, consistent with the Council's objectives around youth provision, community engagement, and town centre regeneration. The Council would also encourage such a venture to seek ongoing funding from private, voluntary and public sector sources to support educational, arts and youth provision objectives.