

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

17 January 2012

Public Participation

Statement from Ms Valerie Oxley

Proposed Creation of Central Devizes Customer Access Point and the Closure of Browfort, Urchfont Manor and Bradley Road Buildings (Item 9)

Statement

I am shocked and disappointed to hear that Urchfont College, near Devizes is in danger of closing in September 2012. I have taught 25 courses at Urchfont Manor over a span of 15 years. I have enjoyed working with committed students from the local community and beyond, backed up with superb care in a stunning landscape. I have never thought of the courses I teach at Urchfont Manor College as 'holidays', to me they are study weekends with students, people who are keen to learn and develop a skill. A study break at Urchfont Manor can be a life enriching experience, not only as a result of the learning on the course and the meeting and making of new friends, but also the impact of the environment in which this all takes place, the beautiful garden around the Manor, Oakfrith Wood and surrounding fields and delightful village. Urchfont Manor is a unique and outstanding place for adult education, development, training and learning. Closure would have a great impact on the local community.

Reputations for continued excellence take years to achieve and maintain. It has been proven that adults learn more quickly in a residential, safe and secure environment, it would be a disaster if the residential adult education provided by Urchfont Manor was to be curtailed. Urchfont Manor can offer more than just a high standard of education, the situation is superb and the staff there are a dedicated team, the food is wholesome and considered by myself and my students as absolutely outstanding. Students return again and again, new students are welcome and local people are proud of 'their' Manor. Everyone speaks highly of the Urchfont experience.

Please do your utmost to find some way to help adult education to continue and flourish at Urchfont Manor, to help people to develop and learn new skills, to give them confidence and feel valued as they move through life. Don't turn your backs on residential adult education, don't chide the many people have fought great battles for adult education through difficult times in this country. There are many people who feel passionately about the future of courses for adults at Urchfont Manor, once they go you also lose their good will.

With the imminent increase in University fees there will be many people looking for alternative short courses and training – an ideal opportunity for Colleges such as Urchfont to develop and expand – don't close your doors too soon!

I rang the College recently to check on 'numbers' on my courses for this year – the results are below:-

URCHFONT MANOR COLLEGE

Friday 25th May – Sunday 27nd May **2012** 12/12 (6 waiting) FULL

Friday 12th t October – Sunday 14th October **2012** 12/12 (4 waiting) FULL

With regards,

Valerie Oxley Cert.Ed, FHEA, SBA

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