

Courtney Hay  
(National Complainant Aid Campaign)

*I know this meeting is a testimony to your endurance, your determination and your resourcefulness. The fact that we are here today, with you taking control of this resource is a testimony to your ability to struggle over many, many years.*

Andy Keeling  
(Deputy Chief Executive, Leicester City Council):

*Our partnership will continue but I really genuinely wish the Highfields Community Association every success. You thoroughly deserve it, there's so much good work that happens through this Centre and you all deserve credit for that.*

Councillor Hanif Aqban, Spinney Hills Ward

*This milestone has been achieved, its been very hard, very difficult as the three ward councillors representing this area, we've had some very turbulent times ourselves as much as the Governing Body had, but eventually we have delivered. We pay tribute to Priya, this is his legacy, he's delivered it.*

Mussa Hajat, Governing Body member

*Today of course it's been a day in waiting; it's been a long, long journey, a day of joy and happiness. It's been tough and some of the key players are Priya, Pat, Abdul Osman and Dr Chowdhury, without whom this journey would not have come to fruition.*

Mohammed Dawood,  
Cabinet Lead for Community Cohesion

*It's a great achievement, it's been a struggle for great many years, this is an investment for the future and that you can work with communities, deprived communities in the area. It's been a dream for Highfields Community Association and believe it or not, as a graduate of Highfields Centre I used to work here 20 years ago! So I can see what it was, what it is and what it can be.*

Abdul Osman,  
Cabinet Lead for Regeneration and Transport

*When I was here at the last AGM and as its Chair, I made a pledge that the next one would be a historic occasion as it would be under Community Governance and so its proved. I am a firm believer in devolving power and this is the first centre to have an historical change in Leicester.*

## HCA - an example for others to follow locally and nationally!

Our struggle and successes are recognised nationally and recently on 15th November 2010, Respublica launched their report on "To Buy, to Bid, to Build: Community Rights for an Asset Owning Democracy" which was prepared by Phillip Blond, Director, ResPublica and Steve Wyler, Director, Development Trust Association and the event was chaired by Greg Clark MP, Minister of State for Decentralisation.

Our story about Community Governance was one of two featured at the launch – the other being the £200m proposal for the Dover Port Authority.

Our story will also be featured at the DTA's launch of "The Big Society Challenge" Book Launch - Thursday 13th January, London.

This will be the third occasion in 6 months when we have been featured at national launch events in London!

### Celebrate our independence!

We cordially invite you to Highfields Community

Governance Dinner and Dance  
on Thursday 27th January 2011 at 7pm.

Please join us in celebrating the successful achievement of our long standing goal of taking control of Highfields Centre and most of its staff, management and programme!

To confirm your booking please contact  
Pat Gardner on 0116 253 1053 or  
Email: pat.gardner@highfieldscentre.ac.uk.

Attend the whole event and you qualify  
for our special independence offers:

1. Become an individual member of **HCA - Half price!**
2. Buy one meal and get another **half price on Thursday lunchtimes at our H-Café.**
3. A **free portrait** done by our Arts Staf
4. **1 Hour free** session in either Mango Rooms music studio or in the video editing suite.

All offers end on 31st January 2011.

# H I C A N

HIGHFIELDS  
COMMUNITY  
ASSOCIATION  
NEWS

SPECIAL INDEPENDENCE EDITION DECEMBER 2010  
IF ANYONE CAN, HIGHFIELDS CAN!

## INDEPENDENCE DAY 1ST DECEMBER 2010!

*Community Governance finally achieved.*



from Left to Right: (Back Row) Cllr Abdul Osman, Andy Keeling, Priya Thamotheram, Furzana Khalifa, & Esmail Esmail  
(Front Row) Cllr Culdipp Bhatti, Iris Lightfoote, Baljit Singh, & Cllr Veejay Patel. Signing-over ceremony held at Town Hall on 7th December 2010

It's done! On 1st December 2010, we finally started life at Highfields Centre as an independent establishment, but with early years, youth and adult learning services still continuing to be delivered by the City Council.

However, their continued use of the specific rooms is now for the first time, limited to certain days and times and we will have access to those rooms at all other times throughout the week!

**HC**  
HIGHFIELDS CENTRE  
HIGHFIELDS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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from Left to Right: (Back Row) Cllrs Shofiq Chowdhury, Hanif Aqbany, Iqbal Desai and Priya Thamotheram

(Front Row) Furzana Khalifa, Esmail Esmail, Baljit Singh, Iris Lightfoote, Cllr Abdul Osman and Andy Keeling at HCA AGM 10th Decemeber 2010, celebrating our independence!

### Fourteen Years and still standing!

The fourteen year journey we've been on since December 1996 to raise £5m, redevelop the old Highfields Youth and Community Centre and to bring it all under community governance has been a costly exercise, not just in terms of the legal and associated fees but especially in terms of the time, energy and creative talents that have had to be utilised to overcome the numerous and seemingly never ending obstacles we've had to surmount. The Council's decision in 2004 to inflict the wretched and disastrous lifelong learning review on this Centre gave rise to a much more vigorous and determined campaign (HUC) by us to get things back on track. This was achieved in December 2006 but it took another two years before the decision to complete the transfer was made in January 2009 and yet, the agony continued!

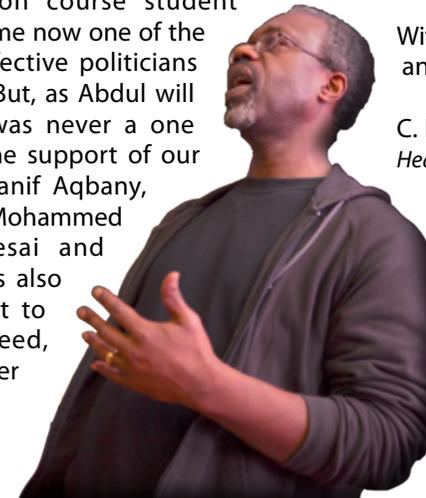
**HUC**  
**Highfields**  
**Users**  
**Campaign**

### Action and not just warm words, thank you Andy Keeling!

By our last AGM, it was clear that this situation could not be tolerated for much longer and hence, on 4th March 2010, a public meeting was held to consider the reasons why senior Council officers were being allowed to sabotage the democratic decisions of the Council's Cabinet. With the new political leadership within the Council, a further Cabinet decision was effected on 21st June 2010 to complete the long delayed transfer by 1st August 2010. Whilst this was fairly ambitious, as there were still many of the details still to be finalised, the fact that we've finally completed the transfer is in many ways due to the very first senior Council officer since local government reorganisation in 1997 who has maintained a consistently open, honest and a refreshingly welcome integrity in his dealings with us. For that, a big thank you to Andy Keeling, the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. But, as he has been the first to point out, he was doing nothing more than what was required of him in relation to the decisions made by the ruling administration but it's a pity that is not a shared practice within those serried ranks!

### Officers could not ignore Councillors and MP!

The transition from a bucket load of sympathy and warm words to decisive action has been closely related to Cllr Abdul Osman's decision to resign from the Association's Governing Body and to bring this long running saga to a successful conclusion and a big thank you to him. For all of us and particularly, the young people in our community, there cannot be a better or more instructive role model than a youth club member and a subsequent Access to Higher Education course student progressing to become now one of the most senior and effective politicians within the Council. But, as Abdul will readily state, this was never a one person show and the support of our local councillors (Hanif Aqbany, Shofiq Chowdhury, Mohammed Dawood, Iqbal Desai and Patrick Kitterick) has also been a key element to this outcome. Indeed, our local MP, Sir Peter Soulsby's support for community



governance at an earlier stage cannot be forgotten and we'd like to place our thanks to all of them on this historic occasion.

### Centre Users, friends, colleagues and staff unite to succeed!

For the Centre's staff, the unnecessary turmoil and tribulations resulting from what has been described as the City Council's unsuccessful attempt in 2004 to hijack and destroy the vision for the new centre, has meant huge uncertainties, disillusionment and disappointment. It is an enormous credit to those staff members who have not only remained true to their belief and confidence in the Association's pursuit of our shared vision for the new centre but that they have also contributed to its successful realisation.

We would also take this opportunity to thank all our other staff, users, colleagues and friends (from near and far) for their invaluable support and encouragement over these very challenging years and we look forward to working with you all in the coming year to realise the massive potential of the new centre.

**A first step on this road will be the Independence Celebration event and official opening of Highfields Centre on 27th January 2011 and we look forward to seeing you on that day, if not before.**

With all good wishes for a happy and productive New Year.

C. Priya Thamotheram  
Head of Centre

**Courtney Hay.**  
Guest speaker at our AGM.  
Friend of HCA, campaigner and advocate for community governance, justice & equality.