

NEWS Bulletin - Sunday 27 November 2022

SAVE AUBERGINE CAFE - Cardiff cafe for neurodivergent people at threat of closure as local landlord informs cafe he intends to raise rent by 50% before blocking renewal of lease

Aubergine Cafe needs your help! Their landlord has withdrawn the offer to renew their contract and intends to evict them by New Year meaning that their one-of-a-kind space could disappear from the local landscape. Join Aubergine Cafe in solidarity on Monday 28th November from 6.30pm until 8.30pm for FREE food and placard making, to celebrate the space, share ideas and letters of support and help them move forward with a plan to save their vital cafe and arts space.

“Having stood empty for a year or so, the property was a building site covered in mould, grease and botched jobs when we got our hands on it. We had to put in about £20K worth of building and materials, and a further £16,080 in community volunteer hours. It took us around 5 months. Then the pandemic hit, we paid rent faithfully throughout. We saved this space from staying empty as it was unleaseable before we rejuvenated it and saved it from rotting away for 3 years. Most importantly, we transformed the space to make it a sanctuary for autistic people and a place for the Riverside and wider Cardiff community to come to.”

“This situation with the increase all seemed to come about after we asked them to take care of some repairs, notably the front door which we struggled to open and close, and I recognise that that can be expensive, but we estimate we’ve paid £26,400 in rent to date. Altogether we’ve brought around £52k in value to their property turning it into a more valuable place. At the very least, we’d like to be able to have a conversation about how we can continue to work in the space we have created and not lose all of the assets our community has purchased and

quite literally, built together. It would be a travesty for us to have to start all over again, from scratch, effectively throwing away everything that we have worked for together.”

Selena Elliott - Director of Aubergine Cafe and Events CIC

Aubergine Cafe is a Disabled People's Organisation 100% owned and run by autistic/neurodivergent people - believed to be the first of its kind in the world.

The cafe hosts open mic nights for emerging neurodivergent poets and musicians from all around Wales, monthly exhibitions by local neurodivergent artists, and a weekly relaxed arts and crafts social group as well as providing an accessible and affordable venue for activities run by local people and organisations and networks such as Ladies of Rage to name just a few of the cafe's activities created by and for autistic/neurodivergent people. It is so much more than just a place to eat and drink.

How can you help? By turning up on Monday 28th of November and making placards with them and breaking bread with community members to show how important this place is to the local area - to individuals and to the wider community. They need letters of support, case studies and words of support from those who have been into the cafe, held events there as well as community members, plus any donations that you might be able to afford - these will be used to support the future survival of Aubergine in whatever way possible.

This winter, Aubergine Cafe is planning to be a 'Warm Welcome Space', where people can go along to the cafe who cannot afford to heat their homes. Over the past two and a half years, the Aubergine team have put so much work into turning the space from a neglected building site into a joyful, comfortable, accessible and much-needed sanctuary for autistic people in Cardiff. It is their home and they don't want to lose it.

Join the Aubergine Mailing List - <https://airtable.com/shrQIYswM2NL5IDDt> to keep up to date with news and progress and to find out how you can continue to support them.

END OF RELEASE

For press information please contact - Rachel Kinchin
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Further information

About Aubergine

The Aubergine Café is the vision of a small team of autistic/neurodivergent adults to empower other autistic people through accessible environments and innovative working practices while providing ethically sourced, nutritious and affordable plant-based food to local people in the wider community.

Aubergine is owned and run entirely by autistic/neurodivergent people from the kitchen and floor staff to administrators and directors. They implement robust policies of outreach and inclusion, not only with the autistic/neurodivergent community, but those with whom they also identify, such as LGBT+ and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.

Only 16% of autistic adults in the UK are in full-time paid employment, and only 32% are in some kind of paid work. Aubergine aims to address this deficit by offering employment opportunities and training for fellow autistic adults and generating best practice models which can be replicated in other work-forces.

Evidence based research shows that autism friendly changes in workplaces are actually 'people friendly': when put in place, people communicate more effectively, are more comfortable in their job, and in turn give more back to the business.

Through consultation, Autistic people have told them that many cafes and events are inaccessible to them because of challenges associated with autism, for example, the noise of the coffee machine, the brightness of the lights, and even the positioning of the seating. This means that many autistic adults miss out on accessing some of the most basic amenities.

The Aubergine Cafe business model is about finding solutions to enable autistic/neurodivergent people to access and maintain employment, by designing a working environment where problems are identified early and they can be solved early on, or whereby commonly identified workplace issues are simply removed from the offset.

Alongside being a food business, Aubergine are also an arts organisation, developing partnerships with local creatives allowing their café space to function as a versatile platform for creative expression, uplifting autistic/neurodivergent voices and providing a cultural and social hub for autistic/neurodivergent thinkers, performers and creators, hosting a variety exhibitions, workshops, film screenings and performance events featuring their work.