

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PROSPECTIVE PURCHASE OF SOUTHWELL
COURT RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME**

To: **Adults Committee**

Meeting Date: **3rd November 2015**

From: **Adrian Loades
Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **Key decision: No**

Purpose: **To update Adults Committee on negotiations to acquire Southwell Court Residential Care Home, and to share recommendations on the future of the site following consideration of expert advice**

Recommendation: **Adults Committee is asked to agree:**

- (a) not to purchase or lease Southwell Court Care Home**
- (b) to the County Council working with South Cambridgeshire District Council to secure the development of an extra care sheltered scheme on this site**

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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Southwell Court is a residential care home with 35 beds, situated in Melbourn, South Cambridgeshire. It was originally built by Granta Housing Association in 1994, on land gifted by South Cambridgeshire District Council and with grant aid from the Department of Health. It was subsequently acquired by Metropolitan Housing Association who merged with Granta.
- 1.2 The County Council was informed by Metropolitan in Autumn 2014 that it no longer wished to provide a residential care service on this site, as it did not believe it was viable and it did not consider residential care to be part of its core business. The home was subsequently closed in December 2014, necessitating the transfer of residents to other care homes. At the time concerns were raised by County and District Council officers and Ward Members, the Member of Parliament and residents.
- 1.3 The result of the closure has been a significant loss of residential care capacity, in an area where there is relatively low provision. The closure occurred at a time when the County Council was considering how best to expand affordable care home provision, in Cambridgeshire, including the possibility of building its own care home. This work continues and has been the subject of a separate report to Adults Committee.

2.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 Since the closure of Southwell Court, the County Council has been working closely with South Cambridgeshire District Council officers, County and District Council Ward Members and Metropolitan to acquire the site in order to restore and potentially develop additional residential care capacity.
- 2.2 A series of meetings have taken place with Metropolitan to progress this aim. This has at times been difficult, as Metropolitan have been inconsistent in their messages concerning disposal and value of the land. That being said, it has been possible to make some progress and local partners have worked well together to explore options and a way forward.
- 2.3 As part of the process of acquisition, land searches have revealed that South Cambridgeshire District Council has a covenant in place which restricts the future use of the land to older people's care provision. This has been extremely helpful in facilitating discussions between the interested parties. It also has a direct impact on the commercial value of the land.
- 2.4 As part of the negotiation process, a commercial valuation of the site has been obtained and a tentative agreement has been reached with Metropolitan on an asking price of £1.5 million. This is in recognition of a further £250K capital investment requirement, by the Council, to bring the building up to standard.
- 2.5 The agreement set out in 2.4 was subject to a detailed assessment by an expert consultant and ultimately to approval by the full Council. Accordingly, Cordis Bright, a specialist care home consultancy were instructed to consider the commercial viability of running the care home in its present or in an altered form. They have advised that while the building is in relatively good condition, the number of bedrooms is insufficient to make it commercially

viable. Furthermore, the design of the building makes it difficult to usefully extend or remodel, and also increases staffing requirements and costs.

- 2.6 Cordis Bright concluded that while the asking price is competitive, they would not recommend purchase of the property in its present form. They have suggested an alternative option for consideration of a five year leasing arrangement as a short term measure to increase capacity. However, this too is costly and would be likely to result in an additional revenue requirement of £3 million over a five year period.
- 2.6 Further discussions have taken place between Council Officers and Cordis Bright and these have concluded that reopening the home in its present form is not economically viable. There are other potential options for the site. The most practical of which would be for South Cambridgeshire District Council to facilitate the development of an extra care sheltered housing scheme, designed to meet the needs of older people and incorporating specialist support for people with dementia.
- 2.7 Such a development would be in keeping with the strategic aims of both the County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and initial indications are that SCDC are interested in pursuing this option. The County Council has also received a view from the Homes and Community Agency that they are keen to provide capital funding to support such an initiative. There are no capital requirements for the County Council in pursuing this option, and there will be no additional revenue requirements.
- 2.8 Members are asked to comment on the content of the report and recommendations. Specifically, to support the work with South Cambridgeshire District Council to take forward the proposal to develop an extra care sheltered housing scheme with specialist support for people with dementia.

3.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- 3.1.1 The proposed development would provide significant local employment opportunities for Melbourn and the surrounding area. It would also provide a cost effective alternative to residential care for local residents.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- 3.2.1 There is a strong evidence base that suggests extra care sheltered housing improves health and wellbeing outcomes and helps to maintain independence in older age.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

- 3.3.1 Extra care sheltered housing provides for the availability of 24/7 care to support independent living for some of the most vulnerable members of society.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

- 4.1.1 Extra care sheltered housing provides a range of services including accommodation that support people to be independent for longer, reducing the need for costly care home provision.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

- 4.2.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 4.3.1 The proposal increases the availability and types of service available for older people with long term conditions including dementia.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

- 4.4.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

- 4.5.1 The County Council and District Council division Members have been actively involved with this issue. It is anticipated that this will continue as plans develop. It will also be important to involve local residents.

4.6 Public Health Implications

- 4.6.1 There is a strong evidence base that suggests extra care sheltered housing improves health and well-being outcomes for older people.

Source Documents	Location
Review of potential purchase of a Care Home Cordis Bright, July 2015	richard.o'driscoll@ cambridgeshire.gov.uk