

**COUNTY COUNCIL – 5 FEBRUARY 2019  
WRITTEN QUESTION UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9.2**

**1. Question from Councillor Sandra Crawford**

I was approached by a resident who was distressed by the sudden announcement of the closure of the Hinton Grange Care Home last October (28<sup>th</sup>) 2018.

This is an excerpt from her email:

“I write regarding the proposed closure of Hinton Grange nursing home, Cherry Hinton.

The home is currently proposing to close for refurbishment in early December 2018 for 18 months.

Relatives and staff were told 2 weeks ago and are all completely dismayed by the proposed closure - to implement a cinema room, a coffee bar- none of which I feel are essential, basically they want to update the home and also do some refurbishments to toilet areas.”

On the 13th November 2018, the Cambridge City MP, and the leader of the City Council published accounts of the distress that residents had experienced at the suddenness of the closure, the lack of consultation and the lack of concern for the people living at the home which included 20 County residents (approx.).

Daniel Zeichners’ publication included:

“Daniel Zeichner, MP for Cambridge, and Councillor Lewis Herbert, local Councillor for Coleridge where the home resides and Leader of Cambridge City Council, have condemned the actions of care provider, Care UK, after telling residents of Hinton Grange care home that they will be closing the site for refurbishments a few days before Christmas Day Care UK has provided less than two months formal notice to residents and their families, who are now trying to find alternative care provision in the run up to Christmas.

Mr Zeichner and Councillor Herbert have been contacted by a number of families in recent weeks affected by this announcement, informing them that residents and families are experiencing serious levels of stress due to the short time frame before the 21st December. Hinton Grange care home is currently set to close for refurbishment for 18 months with all residents needing to find alternative care during that time. It is understood that staff face losing their jobs, however have been offered alternative locations to work, some of which are outside the city.

Daniel Zeichner MP said: “I am dismayed by the complete lack of compassion shown by Care UK for the residents and staff of Hinton Grange. To announce that the home will be closing just 4 days before Christmas and only providing two months’ notice is

simply not acceptable. I understand that many residents are frail and families are worried about the affect this move will have on their mental wellbeing.”

“The Chief Executive of Care UK needs to provide some answers. We need to know who made the decision to move 37 elderly residents, some in very vulnerable situations, on 21st December. That is the time of year when people should be enjoying the festive celebrations in familiar settings, not going through a traumatic and stressful move.”

I had a meeting with Wendi Ogle-Welbourn about this, after the Adults Committee in November.

I asked her:-

- 1) Why we had not been given any official notification of this closure, as my first knowledge of this came from residents, Councillors and MPs. I was extremely upset at not first being told by officers, especially being a member of the Adults Committee and feel it is very undermining and wrong.
- 2) How long the refurbishments would take and what would happen to those County residents, who would have to find other arrangements while this was happening. Wendi Ogle-Welbourn told me that no one would be moved unless suitable accommodation was found.

I was subsequently given updates by Will Patten. The residents have now all been moved out and the care home has closed.

This event has still left questions to be answered.

- 1) It appears that Care UK intend to demolish the Home and rebuild it, which will take far longer than any refurbishments thus causing more distress to the residents. Is the Council being informed that this will still be an affordable home for County residents that wish to return? Will this cause problems for finding new placements especially in this area?
- 2) In the light of the behaviour of Care UK, will the County continue to consider them a responsible and reliable company for the purpose of caring for County residents?
- 3) Why was the Adults Committee not updated at all at any stage of this process?
- 4) Why was there so little time for consultation with the residents and their families?
- 5) Will the County insist in any new contracts that any company that the Council uses for caring for people keeps both the County and the families updated on any plans at least six months in advance and that proper consultation is carried out?
- 6) Daniel Zeichner has stated in his publication of Care UK that

“The company have in the past been involved in controversy over tax issues, wage-cutting and political donations to local former Conservative MP and Health Secretary Andrew Lansley.” Could the Council use companies that have not only a more ethical approach to residents and their families in terms of consultation, but also in their conduct to staff and tax.

- 7) According to another member who reported about the threatened closure of care home in Queen Edith’s - this was also not in reports to the Adults Committee. Can we make sure that members are updated in good time in future?

### **Response from Councillor Anna Bailey, Chairwoman of Adults Committee**

#### **Why we had not been given any official notification of this closure, as my first knowledge of this came from residents, Councillors and MPs?**

Care UK discussed the action to refurbish Hinton Grange Care Home at a board meeting on October 8th, and subsequently informed residents at a meeting on 11th October. Officers became aware of the situation when residents and their families brought it to the attention of officers following disclosure by Care UK.

Care UK notified officers that they were required to discuss the proposal at their board and then meet with staff in line with their statutory responsibilities. Officers did discuss this at the first meeting held on the 25th of October where it was highlighted that the local authority also have a statutory duty to ensure residents were safe, and the lack of reasonable notice, coupled with the timing of the closure risked compromise of delivering on those duties.

Once officers were made aware of the situation the service director for commissioning was in dialogue with the Councillor Crawford to ensure regular updates were shared.

#### **How long the refurbishments would take and what would happen to those County residents, who would have to find other arrangements while this was happening?**

Care UK did not give any details on how long the refurbishment would take. Care UK had developed a transition plan to relocate residents. However in order to satisfy the Council’s statutory responsibility to ensure residents were safe the Council began to work with residents and their families to relocate them.

A contract governs the relationship between the Council and Care UK for the provision of Hinton Grange, the contract states that six months’ notice is required to close the provision, and residents could be moved in that time.

Council officers were able to move the residents in a three month period, however it is important to note that where there was a financial increase between the weekly rate being paid at Hinton Grange and the new placement, the Council are pursuing Care UK to recover the cost.

**It appears that Care UK intend to demolish the Home and rebuild it, which will take far longer than any refurbishments thus causing more distress to the residents. Is the Council being informed that this will still be an affordable home for County residents that wish to return? Will this cause problems for finding new placements especially in this area?**

Care UK have not shared information regarding the new provision and its future fees. There is currently a strategy to increase the capacity of care homes across Cambridgeshire to meet current and future demand. Therefore it is not expected that this delay will cause challenges in finding new placements in Cambridge City.

**In the light of the behaviour of Care UK, will the County continue to consider them a responsible and reliable company for the purpose of caring for County residents?**

Care UK have one other care home in the County. Field Lodge in St.Ives. Placements are still being commissioned for this home and there are no concerns regarding quality of care at this time. We will need to ensure robust due diligence is undertaken if, and when the new home is completed.

**Why was the Adults Committee not updated at all at any stage of this process?**

It is with regret that Adults Committee were not updated with this information. Learning is taken from this and updates will be forthcoming in future. In addition, we will ensure that Division Councillors are kept informed of provider issues in their area.

**Why was there so little time for consultation with the residents and their families?**

Care UK informed the residents before Council officers were made aware. Despite our best efforts, we were unable to extend the timeline between notification and closure. In consultation with families, it was clear that we would not be able to change the decision, and the more protracted the timeframe, the more distress would be experienced with residents and their families. Therefore resources were concentrated to undertake the required assessments, identify other settings that best met the needs of residents and manage safe transfer of those residents in time to allow them to settle in before Christmas.

Resident's social workers supported the transitions alongside Care UK staff and other health professionals. This was a very intensive piece of work delivered in a complete, sensitive and diligent manner.

**Will the County insist in any new contracts that any company that the Council uses for caring for people keeps both the County and the families updated on any plans at least six months in advance and that proper consultation is carried out?**

The requirement to provide six months' notice is outlined in the contract and the Council insisted that this clause was followed by Care UK. It is good practice for

providers to consult with residents and their families where changes are proposed, however to ensure the Council has a more robust contractual position, the clause for notice will be enhanced to incorporate the need for an appropriate level of consultation to take place.

**Daniel Zeichner has stated in his publication of Care UK that**

**“The Company have in the past been involved in controversy over tax issues, wage-cutting and political donations to local former Conservative MP and Health Secretary Andrew Lansley.” Could the Council use companies that have not only a more ethical approach to residents and their families in terms of consultation, but also in their conduct to staff and tax.**

Due diligence is carried out on new providers who are awarded contracts to ensure they are compliant with our requirements and legislative obligations. This includes:

- Insurance (Public Liability, Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity & Medical Malpractice)
- Policies and procedures (eg Safeguarding)
- Business Continuity Plans
- CQC registration certificate
- Most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) outcome.

Any concerns identified in this process are interrogated. Further routine contract monitoring is conducted where issues arising around these obligations maybe picked up.

We will be recharging Care UK if the cost of care incurred for residents in the new setting exceeds the cost that would have been due had residents remained in Hinton Grange until the contract term date of 31st March 2019

**According to another member who reported about the threatened closure of care home in Queen Edith’s - this was also not in reports to the Adults Committee. Can we make sure that members are updated in good time in future?**

It is regrettable that this was not completed for Hinton Grange & the Supported Living facility in Queen Edith Division. This will be part of the process in the future and as previously mentioned, it is our intention to contact Division Councillors when issues arise with care providers within their Division. This will include provision of regular updates

## **2. Question from Councillor Amanda Taylor**

The proposals to close The Haven supported living facility in Queen Edith's continue to cause deep anxiety amongst its residents.

Given the need for adaptations to the building to get it up to standard for disabled residents, will she make available a detailed report on what adaptations are required?

Will she also assure residents and the local community that The Haven is staying open?

**Response from Councillor Anna Bailey, Chairwoman of Adults Committee**

The Council is continuing to explore all opportunities to meet the needs of the individual residents at The Haven and will continue this alongside the on-going review of support needs. This includes the possibility of investment in the building and facilities to enable the current cohort to continue to reside at the accommodation in line with their current and emerging individual requirements. As the Council does not own the building, work had focused around the Landlord's ability to invest in the changes to the building that would be required to modernise elements of the accommodation and communal facilities. In addition a review of the needs of the current residents is being carried out to understand what aids and adaptations could be provided as well as what permanent alterations may be required. At the time of initial discussions, the Landlord had expressed that significant capital investment was not possible. Following the merger between Aldwyck Housing Group and King Street Housing during 2018, The Haven now forms part of the housing stock for Aldwyck Housing Group and Officers have been able to re-open conversations relating to possible capital investment and adaptations.

Council officers met with a representative from Aldwyck Housing group on January 24th 2019 and are awaiting the outcome of their internal reviews to make an assessment of the Landlord's ability to invest alongside any adaptations that may be required at The Haven. Many of the other accommodation options within Cambridgeshire for older people have been significantly modernised and adapted over the last 15 years and may provide a more appropriate alternative.

Work will continue to be carried out to assess the viability of the support service provision at The Haven to ensure that it meets the needs of the current residents, that the environment is appropriate to their needs and that, as part of the Council's duties to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately the service meets needs in the most effective way.

A broader plan regarding any proposed changes to the service offer, investment in the building and longer term requirements for the service would be presented to the local elected member and members of the Adults Committee for discussion and approval before any further action is taken. This will include any reports relating to investment in the building and adaptations that may be required. The Haven will remain open with current support arrangements in place whilst this work and subsequent Committee approval is undertaken.

### **3. Question from Councillor Amanda Taylor**

What is the total number of requests for disabled parking bays over the current and past municipal years and what is the average length of time between request and installation?

#### **Response from Councillor Shuter, Chairman of Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee**

Total number of requests for Disabled Persons Parking Bays (DPPBs):

2018/19: 63

2017/18: 60

2016/17: 40

2015/16: 45

2014/15: 57

There are two types of disabled parking bay that can be installed, mandatory and advisory bays. Mandatory bays require the making of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which includes the advertising of two public notices in the local press. Abuse of these bays can result in a Penalty Charge Notice. Advisory bays consist of just the road marking and no legislative sign, but cannot be enforced. As advisory bays do not require the making of a TRO and the advertisement of public notices in the press and don't require the installation of a post and sign plate they are cheaper and quicker to install.

To maximise the number of bays that can be installed with the annual accessibility budget where the installation of bays require TRO's, Orders are 'batched' together to maximise cost efficiency when publishing press notices. For example a yearly TRO is made for Cambridge City disabled persons parking bays that have been applied for that year and advertised in one press notice.

Through batching up the applications, advisory bays cost approximately £80 to install whereas Mandatory bays cost approximately £1,150, therefore more bays can be installed with the annual budget. Mandatory bays are installed in restricted areas or potentially restricted areas such as Cambridge City, Ely, St Neots, St Ives and Huntingdon but in all other rural areas advisory bays are more commonly installed (but applications will be assessed on a case by case basis).

#### **Time taken from receipt of application to installation;**

Mandatory bays take longer to process from receipt to installation due to the requirement to follow the statutory TRO process. Whilst only interested parties (neighbouring properties, local Council's and Councillors) are consulted prior to installation of an advisory bay. The average length of time taken from receipt of application to installation is,

Advisory bays: 4 months

Mandatory bays: 9 months

This time can vary depending on available budget, receipt and nature of objections, weather conditions and availability of lining contractors. Lining of bays are usually batched together due to lining contractors charging day rates.

Not all requests for DPPBs result in the implementation of a bay. Out of the 63 applications received during 2018/19, 21 were withdrawn. The remaining 42 comprises of 22 advisory bays and 20 mandatory.

#### **4. Question from Councillor Susan van de Ven**

Cambridgeshire County Council has a statutory obligation to make non-British EU citizens living in Cambridgeshire aware of the need to apply for Settled Status, post-Brexit, in order to secure their right to remain living in the UK; and also, to apply for Settled Status on behalf of vulnerable children and vulnerable adults, although Government has not yet provided a definition of what constitutes a vulnerable adult.

A resident in my division who might be designated as a vulnerable adult has endeavoured to apply for Settled Status in the public test phase that commenced on 21 January. This process has highlighted procedural points of concern, and questions about who should be considered a vulnerable adult.

The resident is a German citizen 80 years of age, resident in the UK for 58 years, divorced from a British spouse, with limited income, a council tenant, no private transport, no Android phone and no computer or internet access.

The application for Settled Status must be done on-line: this can be done via computer rather than smartphone, however required documentation must first be scanned via a Home Office app downloaded onto an Android device with specified features.

The nearest Cambridgeshire Libraries are in Cambridge or Great Shelford, but there are no bus services from this person's village to either destination. Nevertheless, once at a library, help would be required to set up a first-time email account and help with navigating a computer and internet, in order to work through a lengthy and complex application process.

In this person's case, a neighbour offered to help scan required identity documents with his Android phone, but could not successfully download the app (in common with experience reported by Addenbrooke's when its non-British EU employees went through the pilot phase in Nov-Dec 2018).

If an applicant cannot complete document scanning via an Android device, he or she needs to visit an EU Settlement Resolution Centre, of which there are none in Cambridgeshire. The nearest to South Cambridgeshire is the Hertfordshire Register Office in Hatfield, but this person has no access to transport to reach the centre. Once at the centre, the service provided would be limited to the scanning of documents. The application process would then need to be resumed on line at a library or private computer.



This person's experience raises the following questions:

How will the Council identify its vulnerable adults?

Will the Council adopt its own compassionate definition of vulnerable adults to include people who are frail, isolated and on limited income?

In addition to the waiving of library internet charges, what steps can the Council take to facilitate the ability of EU residents to access and complete the application process for Settled Status?

**Response from Councillor Anna Bailey, Chairwoman of Adults Committee and Councillor Shuter, Chairman of Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee**

The Council recognises that, for many EU citizens resident in our county, it is a worrying and uncertain time, and we are working hard to ensure they are given as much information as possible to reduce these concerns. We have produced an impact assessment based on the facts as we know them at present, and have formed a broad officer group to take forward direct action, particularly in relation to citizen engagement, led by one of our directors. The Government announcement of additional funding to support our efforts is very welcome, and we are currently discussing how best to deploy this resource to best effect.

Although we want to support all of our EU citizens with the information they need to secure settled status, we are of course particularly keen to ensure those in our care, such as looked after children and vulnerable adults, are particularly well supported through the process. I'd therefore like to thank Councillor Van de Ven for sharing the experiences of one of the residents in her Division, which provides us with some valuable early insights.

It is perhaps helpful to remind Members that, at present, the EU Settlement Scheme is not fully launched; the scheme is operating currently in a public test phase which limits somewhat the support available both locally and at a national level. The full scheme is due to launch on 30 March.

To respond to the specific questions raised:

**1. How will the Council identify its vulnerable adults?**

The Council records ethnicity and nationality against the majority of the children, young people, adults and older adults on the Council's information systems and we are currently analysing this information to enable us to make contact with anyone who may need support to apply for settled status. As part of our statutory assessment and review process we will ensure staff discuss issues related to settled status and support people to complete this process if it is needed.

We will also ensure our Adult Early Help Team and other services such as Reablement that have a wider reach signpost anyone who they come into contact with to the necessary support to apply for settled status.

More broadly, we also work closely with voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, and as part of our communications and engagement work, we will ensure these groups are provided with information and support to reach out to EU citizens including those who are more vulnerable.

**2. Will the Council adopt its own compassionate definition of vulnerable adults to include people who are frail, isolated and on limited income?**

Our overarching aim is to ensure that all EU citizens resident in Cambridgeshire are provided with the correct information as soon as we have it. As Councillor Van de Ven acknowledges, we are still waiting for guidance from the Government on their requirements for local authorities to support vulnerable adults. As soon as we receive this we will of course review it to ensure it aligns to our own principles of ensuring our most vulnerable residents receive the support they need, and will adjust our approach accordingly.

**3. In addition to the waiving of library internet charges, what steps can the Council take to facilitate the ability of EU residents to access and complete the application process for Settled Status?**

I'm pleased to confirm that internet access to all gov.uk web sites is free of charge in our libraries.

It is our intention to offer an Assisted Digital Service in some of our libraries, to support all of our EU citizens to secure settled status, particularly those who are more vulnerable. We are currently piloting this approach in Cambridge Central Library, but will aim to roll this out in as many other libraries as possible.

The service offered is a complete application process including document scanning and completion of the application with the resident – staff have been specially trained to undertake this task. Additionally, all libraries across the county can provide general assisted digital support, including pointing people to the correct website, helping them to get online, booking them time with a volunteer Computer Buddy or onto a digital skills course. Whilst this may not be suitable for the specific resident referred to in the Question, it will help to ensure others can receive the help they need.

We also understand that the Government will be offering assistance by telephone and home visits from WeareDigital. We assume that this will be available from 30 March when the scheme opens in full.