

Media and other responses to the work of the Committee

This Committee has worked in a very open way, wanting to publicise the nature of its work and the issues it is confronting, and inviting informed comment to assist in decision making. The local media have taken considerable interest. As a result of this, the work of the committee has featured in the following ways:

**(a) Nottingham Evening Post (3 articles so far):**

1. General feature on the review following a briefing. Headline: 'Crunch over homes for Notts older people.' First line: 'A major review to decide the future of the County Council's last 15 homes for old people starts today.'

2. Article following first Cabinet Committee. Headline: 'Council homes sale 'may price out OAPs'.' First line: 'Elderly people in need of residential care could be priced out of the market if council homes close, a committee set up to review council-run care homes has heard.' Quotes from Councillor Lonergan.

3. Article on day centre review following second Cabinet Committee. Headline: 'Plan to merge elderly care.' First line: 'Old people could attend day centres alongside adults with learning and physical disabilities.' Quotes from Malcolm Dillon.

**(b) Newark Advertiser (3 articles so far):**

1. Headline: '£1.3m home sale feared.' First line: 'A home that has looked after frail pensioners in Newark for 20 years is under threat of closure.' This article includes a comment from the editor criticising the Council for not allowing their journalist to have access to Woods Court. Quote: 'The council has reacted by barring our staff from the premises because, it claims, the residents might be unduly alarmed. Although it is tempting to interpret this as a clumsy attempt to muzzle dissent, the more charitable view is to regard it simply as patronising arrogance.'

2. Article based on interview with a former worker at Woods Court. Headline: 'Fearing closure has been decided.' First line: 'A former worker at a Newark care home under threat of closure believes a decision has already been made.'

3. Article following second Cabinet Committee. Headline: 'Decision delay on care homes.' First line: 'A committee deciding whether to close care homes including Woods Court in Newark will delay making its recommendations.'

**(c) Radio Nottingham**

Malcolm Dillon did an interview with Alan Clifford about the review on 16<sup>th</sup> April.

**(d) Correspondence**

Information about the work of this Cabinet Committee was also placed on the entry page of the council's web site and the intranet. As a result of this and the media publicity, there has also been correspondence from some staff and from members of the public, usually people with relatives who have been or are currently in a council care home. Points made included:

- Homes should focus more on assessment and ways of preventing admission to hospital and achieving safe discharge from hospital
- Extra care would reduce the likelihood of a relative with Alzheimer's entering residential care, which she was very opposed to
- Residents feel safer in council homes as they know where to go to put things right, which can take an age in privately run homes even with CSCI.
- Extra care would help reverse the reduction in wardens in sheltered housing

Other correspondence has been from Newark, with concerns about the future of Woods Court in the light of the way the Newark Advertiser had presented the story.

- A GP practice praised the 'exceptional' service and urged that any reduction or cessation of the service would be extremely detrimental.
- The intermediate care had prevented an otherwise seemingly inevitable entry to residential care
- Carers value the breaks service as a completely reliable local service.
- Staff were excellent and the service should not be closed for cost reasons

**(e) Care homes**

In the care homes themselves, the reports to the committee and an immediate summary of outcomes have been put on notice boards and are discussed with residents, staff and carers. There has been concern at the potential for closure and the uncertainty that a review of this nature generates, and the recommendations of the committee are awaited with understandable anxiety. This is particularly the case at Kirklands, Ashcroft and Daleside, given that they have already been identified for potential closure in Cabinet, and at Woods Court, following

the local media approach. Staff are particularly concerned at the lack of redeployment opportunities which would be available for them following any closures.

**(f) Nottinghamshire OPAG – the Older Persons Advisory Group**

Members of Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG) attended the first meeting of the cabinet committee and commented there. The Service Director for Older People and Strategic Partnerships has attended two subsequent meetings, with Councillor J Taylor in the Chair. Members of OPAG had much to say, including the following:

- The increasing number of older people will have an impact on care that is to be provided
- More care is being undertaken in the home
- Opportunity Age in Nottinghamshire – one of the aims of the strategy is to improve the social care of older people in the community
- Council care homes are coming under threat due to the private care homes which are 'run by accountants'
- Worry that private homes are money led not service led
- New council homes that have been built recently are highly regarded and well regarded by both residents and their families
- Sustainability – end of prevention pilot funding – what happens then?
- Nottinghamshire County Council have to find more funding over the next two years to maintain prevention initiatives
- Care workers are among the lowest paid workers and with the Equal Pay situation this cost has to be met by Nottinghamshire County Council
- Suggestion of alternative care with voluntary and community sector and more support from these sectors
- Work more closely with partners, including PCTs and other Local Authorities
- Short term stay and step down beds should be continued
- Concern that consultation should be listened to and decisions not made irrespective of it.
- Adult Social Care & Health need enough resources to help older people to stay in their own homes longer
- It was felt more attention is required to focus on the demographics of the county.
- It was felt the County Council homes were better value
- The County Council gives quality on average above the private sector
- Who will provide the 'safety net' when the private care homes close?
- It would be difficult to place clients in new homes if the home they are in has to close
- Care in the community in rural areas – difficulty in recruiting staff

- Transport costs for transporting individual to day centres is a key issue
- Independent sector on the whole only pays the minimum wage
- Provision in the independent sector may lead to the reduction in management support i.e. training/limited number of carers
- Quality of care homes should have the same criteria in both the County Council and the private sector - concerns with independent sector – monitoring/evaluation of services

**(g) Age Concern, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire**

A paper was sent by Age Concern to members of the Cabinet Committee. It emphasises the importance of choice of services; quality in care homes – usually experienced through staff more than environment and locally generally better in council homes; active involvement of affected older people though change; and decision making by the council in an informed context concerning anticipated needs.

**(h) Alzheimer's Society, Nottinghamshire**

Wrote to say that some people with dementia are in council care homes and many are users of council day services, and if there is to be change, people with dementia are going to need extra support to help manage the change.

Without good community support, increasing numbers of carers will be unable to continue caring and pressures on long term care will increase. Good community support means increased home care and preventative services such as help with cleaning, shopping, DIY and gardening. Staff must be well trained in dementia care skills and there must be good opportunities to access direct payments and individual budgets.

**(i) Newark and Sherwood District Council**

The Council considered a Briefing Note sent to each District Council by Malcolm Dillon at some of its meetings and sent the following response;

Newark and Sherwood District Council's Cabinet Members, and Members of the External Relations and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee, have now had opportunity to consider and debate the implications of the review. Members wished the following comments to be made to the County Council:

**(1) Cabinet**

Cabinet agreed that "given the County Council's strategy for delivering day care and other facilities for the elderly is centred upon its

residential homes and that the County Council has already allocated considerable resources to support that strategy, Newark and Sherwood District Council urges the County Council to continue to maintain its residential homes at Bishops Court, Boughton and Woods Court, Newark."

(2) External Relations and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

"The Committee does not consider that at this point it has enough information to be able to form an opinion on which of the three options stated in the consultation document it would support and wishes to wait until after the County Council's review has taken place and the findings are available when it will consider the matter further."

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