

**CABINET - 20 JULY 2021****PROVISION OF SHORT BREAKS AND SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation on proposed changes to the provision of the in-house short breaks services and make recommendations for a proposed way forward.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - a) The outcome of the consultation on proposed changes to the provision of the Council's in-house short breaks services be noted;
 - b) The refurbished facilities at The Trees in Hinckley be used for the provision of short breaks, taking the total number of beds at the site to 12;
 - c) The Smith Crescent facility in Coalville be closed as a place for the provision of short breaks;
 - d) Alternative provision for existing users of the short break services at Smith Crescent, tailored for each individual, be provided at one of the other in-house short breaks facilities at Hinckley, Melton, and Wigston;
 - e) The proposal for a replacement short breaks facility at the Cropston Drive site in Coalville, previously agreed in 2019, be withdrawn;
 - f) Revised development proposals for the Cropston Drive site in Coalville are now developed for future consideration by the Cabinet.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The existing accommodation at Smith Crescent (part of the Cropston Drive site in Coalville) presents a number of accessibility challenges which cannot be addressed cost effectively and impacts opportunities to maximise occupancy.

4. Former residents of The Trees in Hinckley have decided not to return to the newly refurbished facility. Using this accommodation for the provision of short breaks alongside the Council's other short breaks services in Melton and Wigston increases the total number of beds available across the County from 22 to 24.
5. Existing and planned future use of short breaks facilities within the County can be accommodated within this proposed capacity, including the needs of current users of Smith Crescent short breaks service. This would therefore negate the need for additional investment and the development of a replacement facility in Coalville.
6. It has not been possible to achieve an economically viable bid to develop the previously agreed proposals for the Cropston Drive site. This would now provide an opportunity to review and develop alternative proposals for this site that could be met within the capital allocation identified.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

7. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the proposals at its meeting on 7 June 2021 and its comments are set out in Part B of this report below.
8. As there is no Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled before September, a copy of the Cabinet report will be circulated to all Committee members to enable them to submit further comments should they wish.
9. Subject to approval, the service at Smith Crescent will remain suspended (as has been the case since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic) and will be formally de-registered with the Care Quality Commission. An Action Plan to consult with staff on the closure and potential redeployment opportunities will commence in August 2021.
10. An options appraisal for the future use of the Cropston Drive site will be developed, the recommendations of which will be reported to the Cabinet in the future.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

11. In June 2018, the Cabinet agreed that long-stay residential services at The Trees in Hinckley continue to be provided subject to reconfiguration and refurbishment of the existing building. It also agreed that a new short breaks service be developed on the Cropston Drive site to replace the existing Smith Crescent short breaks service.
12. On 8 February 2019, the Cabinet approved funding for the 2019/20 to 2022/23 capital programme including £3.7m for the redevelopment of the Smith Crescent/Cropston Drive site. Plans for the site were subsequently approved by the Cabinet in June 2019.
13. On 23 March 2021, the Cabinet received a report outlining proposals for the future use of The Trees in Hinckley and development of the site at Cropston Drive in Coalville and agreed that the Director of Adults and Communities be authorised to commence a consultation exercise:

- i. To close Smith Crescent in Coalville as a place for the provision of short breaks and for short break provision to be provided at the following three locations in Leicestershire - Hinckley, Melton, and Wigston;
 - ii. To expand the existing facilities at The Trees in Hinckley for the provision of short breaks taking the total number of beds at the site to 12;
 - iii. To withdraw the current proposals for the development of the Cropston Drive site in Coalville pending the outcome of consultation which would inform revised development proposals for the site.
14. The Cabinet noted that the consultation proposal had changed slightly from that outlined in the report and would now involve initial engagement with the 17 service users who usually accessed the Smith Crescent short breaks service (to ensure that the views of those most affected by the proposals were able to have additional time and input into the overall consultation) and formal consultation would follow in May.

Resource Implications

15. On the 8 February 2019, the Cabinet approved funding for the 2019/20 to 2022/23 capital programme including £3.7m for the redevelopment of the Cropston Drive site (also known as the North West Leicestershire).
16. Staffing vacancies at Smith Crescent remain on hold whilst the service remains suspended. Existing staff remain temporarily redeployed in response to the pandemic and there is confidence that there are sufficient alternative options for them within the Department, should the service not reopen.
17. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

18. This report has been sent to all members of the County Council.

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PART B**Background**

19. In June 2018, following a consultation on in-house short breaks services in Hinckley and Coalville, proposals to reconfigure The Trees in Hinckley and to develop a replacement short breaks facility on the site occupied by Hamilton Court residential care home and Smith Crescent short breaks service (known as the Cropston Drive site) in Coalville were approved. This would have given the Council sufficient short breaks accommodation in the County to meet demand and ensure that the long-stay residents of The Trees would be able to continue residing there following a period of refurbishment. This also resulted in the decommissioning of Hamilton Court residential home, which closed in August 2019.
20. The refurbishment of The Trees was completed in December 2020 at a cost of £1.1m on the basis that the permanent residents had expressed a wish to return. The refurbished aspect of the building provides accommodation for up to eight individuals with associated communal space and staff accommodation. The Department remained actively involved with residents and their families during their temporary alternative placements. However, following reviews of their care and support needs all those who previously resided at The Trees decided to remain in their alternative accommodation.
21. It has not been possible to achieve an economically viable bid to develop the previously agreed proposals for the Cropston Drive site. This, along with the completed refurbishment of The Trees, and the opportunity to review its intended use formed the basis on which previously agreed decisions have been reviewed.
22. Given that The Trees is not required by former residents and that the previously agreed proposals for the Cropston Drive site cannot be achieved within current funding, a review of the options available has been undertaken. The outcome of the review recommended that extending the short breaks service at The Trees to accommodate 12 service users was the preferred option. This was because the development at The Trees would meet the needs of people that access short breaks, it would provide operational efficiencies, and this model of care followed successful models adopted elsewhere in the County (Melton, Oadby and Wigston).
23. The remodelled facilities at The Trees will provide specialist accommodation for those who currently access the Council's short breaks service and offer an opportunity to fully utilise existing accommodation that is already available, without the need for further additional investment to develop additional provision. The current and proposed in-house service availability is outlined in the tables below:

Current Service Availability

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Carlton Drive, Wigston | 7 beds |
| Melton Short Breaks, Melton | 5 beds |
| The Trees, Hinckley | 4 beds |
| Smith Crescent, Coalville | 6 beds |
| Total | 22 beds |

| Proposed Service Availability | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Carlton Drive, Wigston | 7 beds |
| Melton Short Breaks, Melton | 5 beds |
| The Trees, Hinckley | 12 beds |
| Smith Crescent, Coalville | 0 beds |
| Total | 24 beds |

Pre-consultation Engagement - Smith Crescent Short Breaks

24. In advance of the launch of the formal consultation, discussions with people who were directly affected by these proposals took place to ensure that key considerations were captured and could be highlighted.
25. Family members/carers of those people who currently use Smith Crescent have been contacted to arrange either a telephone appointment or, if necessary, a face-to-face meeting to discuss the proposals. (Face-to-face discussions took place in accordance with Covid-safe procedures).
26. A total of 15 discussions were held with relatives/carers of people who use Smith Crescent, covering 16 of the 17 people who would usually access the service. Seven took place over the telephone and eight face-to-face. The family of one person who has previously used Smith Crescent advised that person already now accesses The Trees, therefore no further engagement was required. The key areas of discussion focussed on:
- The proposal to close Smith Crescent;
 - The future use of The Trees;
 - How best to engage with those who use Smith Crescent to ensure where possible they can contribute their views to the consultation;
 - If the proposal went ahead, what transitional arrangements would need to be considered for people to access alternative services;
 - Any other feedback or comments that were important to highlight.
27. In respect of the proposal to close Smith Crescent, 73% of relatives/carers disagreed with the proposal and 27% agreed. Views were expressed both in terms of the existing building remaining open, and/or a replacement being built on the existing site.
- “This is very sad, Smith’s is close and handy for us.”*
- “It’s rubbish, we really need it as there is nothing else around here. Don’t let Smith’s shut.”*
28. On the future use of The Trees, 53% thought that the refurbished facility should be used for short breaks, 40% did not articulate a specific view, and 7% thought that the building should be used for something else.

“It should be used for short breaks. I understand why the Council is doing this.”

“It makes sense to use something that is already there that is currently empty. We did think previously that redeveloping Smith Crescent would be a luxury, but were happy to go with this at the time.”

29. It is important that the views of people who use Smith Crescent were able to be explored as part of the consultation. Feedback from their relatives/carers included the following points:
- Easy Read questionnaires should be provided for the individuals to complete independently;
 - Support to complete the Easy Read questionnaire should be given;
 - Some service users were unable to engage, even with advocacy or support;
 - Some relatives/carers would prefer that the proposal was not discussed with the person due to the detrimental impact it would have in advance of any formal decisions being made.
30. A sensitive area of discussion focused on what transitional arrangements would need to be in place should the proposal be taken forward. It was reiterated that the proposal was subject to formal consultation and that no decisions had been made and that the purpose of the discussion was to understand in more detail the individual circumstances and impact a potential change in service would have. Suggested approaches included:
- Enabling short visits during the day for lunch/tea and an overnight visit, to build confidence and trust in an alternative service. 93% of people advised that this should be in place.
 - Providing video tours of the alternatives– 47% of people wanted to see this.
 - Enabling visits to The Trees and/or the other in-house short breaks services at Melton and Wigston – this was requested by 67% of people.
 - Having the staff from Smith Crescent to support individual service users as part of their transition.
31. In addition to the service users there was a wide range of feedback from their relatives and carers. Some of this was very individual, pertaining to the person they directly supported, and a few key themes also emerged, namely:
- The importance of a local service for people – 60% of relatives/carers said that there should continue to be a local service for people in the North West Leicestershire/Charnwood areas.
 - The rationale for the proposals – 40% of relatives/carers understood and agreed with the approach the Council was taking.
 - Disappointment that a replacement facility was not being built on the site as this had previously been agreed by the Council – 40%.
 - Distance/travel time to alternatives – 40% of relatives/carers expressed concern about the journey distance/duration with half of these extremely concerned about the physical impact the additional distance/travel time would have on their relative and whether this would even be possible.

- The continued need for bookable short breaks services locally – 60% focussed on the importance of having access to bookable short breaks and that this was essential for them to be able to continue in their caring role.
 - Praise for the existing staff team at Smith Crescent – there was widespread thanks to the staff team for the excellent service they have provided.
32. Staff at Smith Crescent were also invited to participate in pre-engagement discussions. Nine members of staff attended face-to-face discussions, with a further two members of staff holding telephone meetings. Feedback can be summarised as:
- Recognition of the challenges of the existing building and that it was no longer fit for purpose;
 - That the proposal made economic sense;
 - An acknowledgement that there has been a clear decline in the use of Smith Crescent over recent years;
 - Considerable worry about future job opportunities within the Council should the service close;
 - A commitment to be involved in any service user transitions to alternative in-house short breaks services;
 - The refurbished facility at The Trees should be used for short breaks.

Consultation Process

33. The six-week formal consultation took place between 10 May and 20 June 2021 comprising a questionnaire on the proposals, available via the Council's website at www.leicestershire.gov.uk/short-break-changes, or by post on request. An Easy Read version was also produced.
34. Relatives/carers of those individuals affected by the proposals were contacted directly about the consultation and paper copies of the consultation documents were distributed.
35. The consultation was also promoted to:
- Employees of Smith Crescent;
 - Elected Members;
 - Trade Unions;
 - Leicester City Council;
 - Rutland Council;
 - Local Clinical Commissioning Groups;
 - The seven district councils; Blaby District, Charnwood Borough, Oadby and Wigston Borough, North West Leicestershire District, Harborough District, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough and Melton Borough;
 - Healthwatch;
 - Voluntary Action Leicester;
 - The general public via social media posts on the Council's Facebook and Twitter platforms.

Overview of Consultation Responses

36. The Appendix to this report details the consultation responses. A total of 43 responses were received.
37. The following themes were identified in particular during the consultation, which mirrored those that were highlighted during the pre-engagement activity. A response to these themes is detailed within each point:

a. That a short breaks service in the Coalville area should be retained.

A theme throughout the consultation responses was that a local service in the Coalville area should be retained. The number of people who usually accessed Smith Crescent was 16 (during the pre-engagement period one person moved to The Trees, prior to short breaks services being suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic). The number of people who would usually access Smith Crescent is lower than that for other short breaks services provided by the Council – Hinckley has 29 people who would usually access the service, Melton 43 and Wigston 52.

As half of users live more than five miles from Smith Crescent and three live over 10 miles away, the rationale for a local service to provide for those in the Coalville area is weakened.

b. The existing Smith Crescent building should either be refurbished and brought up to standard, or a replacement facility (as previously agreed) should be built.

There was strong support for either the existing building to be refurbished or a replacement built. The existing building presents a number of challenges and it would not be economically viable to bring it up to the necessary standard. Whilst a local service remains the preference of respondents, the Council's in-house short breaks services are accessed by approximately 140 individuals. Based on an average allocation of six weeks per year, the total demand currently amounts to 840 beds weeks - the adoption of the proposals in this report would see a total capacity of 1,248 beds weeks per year being available. This would provide sufficient capacity for existing users of services as well as room for additional growth in demand.

c. The distance of alternatives at Hinckley, Melton and Wigston is too far to travel, both for service users and any family members wishing to visit.

It is acknowledged that additional travel for those local to the Coalville area will be of concern. Those who currently use the Coalville service travel on average 6.1 miles. This is comparable to services at Hinckley and Wigston, where the average distance travelled by those accessing these services is 7.1 miles and 6.8 miles respectively. Those attending the Melton service travel further on average, 13.3 miles, reflecting the rurality of that area.

Personalised transport and escort support arrangements (where this is required) would need to be put in place to support those who would need to access alternatives if the closure of Smith Crescent is approved.

- d. The proposals will have a negative impact on those who currently access Smith Crescent.

There was concern that moving the existing service users to alternative provision would have a negative impact on them. Discussions with families and service users in the pre-engagement period and subsequently during visits to look at alternatives have gone some way to alleviating these concerns. The continuity of care and support arrangements was very important to families. It was noted that any transition would be undertaken in a planned way, with day and overnight visits initially, and detailed information could be provided by Smith Crescent staff to ensure that individual arrangements were put in place in advance.

- e. There is increasing demand for short breaks services and more beds are needed.

A number of consultation respondents commented that more short breaks beds were needed. The proposals outlined increase overall capacity from 22 beds to 24. Current analysis shows that there is capacity to accommodate existing demand (as referenced at b. above), with sufficient capacity to accommodate for growth.

- f. An acknowledgement that the current Smith Crescent building is not fit for purpose.

Comments to the consultation noted the challenges of the existing building and that it could not be fully utilised for its intended purpose as it currently stands.

- g. Concern that these proposals will result in service availability challenges for existing users (and those who current access Smith Crescent) of the services based in Hinckley, Melton and Wigston.

Whilst there can be some difficulties in service availability during peak periods, e.g. summer and school holidays, capacity for each service, taking into account a closure of Smith Crescent, remains sufficient to meet overall demand. Improved ways of booking the service are being adopted to help maximise attendance and occupancy in line with preferences where possible.

- h. Concern that the support options outlined as a way to support the transition of those currently accessing Smith Crescent to alternatives, may not be available or would materialise.

As referenced previously, individual and tailored transition arrangements would be discussed and documented with each person. The Council wishes to assure the families/carers of those who currently use Smith Crescent that personalised arrangements will be put in place.

- i. The importance of short breaks/respite services to support carers in their caring role.

This is fully acknowledged, and it remains a priority for the Council to ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate services available in the County to meet the needs of people accessing these services.

Comments of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

38. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report regarding the proposed consultation on changes to the provision of in-house short breaks services on 7 June 2021. The Committee requested that the report be circulated to all members of the Council (not just members representing the electoral divisions in the Hinckley and North West Leicestershire areas), to alert them to the consultation and to encourage as many responses as possible.
39. The following key points also arose from discussion:
- Members received assurance that the Department had been mindful when considering the future plans for short breaks' services that service users had been unable to access the services throughout the Covid-19 pandemic due to national restrictions in place.
 - Members noted the Department would continue to try to retain and redeploy staff in other service areas where there were vacancies and increased demand.
 - A Member representing an electoral division in the Hinckley area commented that use of The Trees facility to provide short breaks' services appeared to be a reasonable way forward given that former residents wished to remain in their alternative accommodation and, so far, the majority of consultees had expressed their support for this proposal.

Conclusions

40. The pre-engagement activity and overall consultation has provided an opportunity to understand the individual circumstances and support needs of families and service users affected by these proposals. The overall view of respondents remains that a local service should be retained, however the rationale to proceed with additional investment to replace the existing facility is lessened by the alternative options that are available across the County.
41. Fully utilising existing capacity, including the refurbished beds at The Trees is able to meet existing and planned demand for services. Average travel distances across the County also outline that an element of travel is common for most people accessing these services, providing a local offer for some and not others would be a disproportionate response.
42. The proposed closure of Smith Crescent will mean the transition of 16 existing users of the service, with at least half of them travelling further than they currently do for their short breaks service. Subject to the Cabinet's agreement to the proposals in this report, contact will be made with families and users of this service to develop personalised transition plans. Short breaks services have recently reopened following their suspension due to the pandemic.

43. Formal consultation will be undertaken with staff who work at Smith Crescent on the proposed closure of the service, whilst exploring redeployment options that are currently available with a view to minimising any compulsory redundancies.
44. As the Cropston Drive site is no longer needed for a replacement short breaks facility there is an opportunity to review options for its use and develop revised proposals in line with the existing capital allocation.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

45. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening document has been completed in relation to the consultation and proposals agreed by the Council's Cabinet. It has been reviewed following the conclusion of the consultation and concluded that the recommendations should have a neutral impact on the services.
46. The EHRIA has reiterated the need for attention to be paid to the management of change processes to ensure people are supported well through any transitional arrangements.

Background papers

- Report to Cabinet: 12 June 2018 – Reconfiguration of In-House Learning Disability Residential Accommodation
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5181&Ver=4>
- Report to Cabinet: 8 February 2019 – Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/2020 to 2022/23
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5600&Ver=4>
- Report to Cabinet: 25 June 2019 – Re-development of Disability Services in North West Leicestershire
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5604&Ver=4>
- Report to Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 8 March 2021 – Provision of Short Breaks and Supported Living Services
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1040&MID=6461#AI67201>
- Report to Cabinet: 23 March 2021 - Provision of Short Breaks and Supported Living Services
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6441&Ver=4>
- Report to Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 7 June 2021 – Provision of Short Breaks and Supported Living Services
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=6462>

Appendix

Short Breaks - Consultation Summary

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