

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 12th August, 2010 at Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillor B Silvester (Chairman)
Councillor C Beard (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors D Flude, S Furlong, S Jones, W Livesley, A Martin, A Moran, A Thwaite and C Tomlinson

Apologies

Councillors C Andrew, G Baxendale and S Bentley

53 SUBSTITUTE

Councillor R Parker

54 IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor R Domleo, Portfolio Holder for Adult Services
Councillor O Hunter, Cabinet Support Member for Adult and Health Services
Councillors T Beard, R Cartlidge and R Westwood

55 OFFICERS

P Lloyd, Head of Adult Services
J Greenwood, People Directorate
M Flynn, Legal and Democratic Services

56 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS/PARTY WHIP

Councillor D Flude – Personal Interest as a member of the Alzheimers' Society and Cheshire Independent Advocacy

Councillors R Domleo and O Hunter – Personal and Prejudicial Interest in respect of item 59 – Call In of Key Decision 48 – Future Provision for Older People with Dementia – in accordance with paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Member Code of Conduct.

57 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

Mrs Denise Roberts spoke regarding her concerns at the proposed closure of Cypress House, Handforth which was to be the subject of consideration by the Committee later in the meeting at item 59.

58 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59 CALL IN OF KEY DECISION 48 - FUTURE PROVISION FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, a valid notice had been submitted which required this Committee to consider and, if appropriate, offer advice on the decision taken by Cabinet on 19 July 2010 concerning the implementation of the Living with Dementia Strategy and the closure of Cypress House, Handforth. The Chairman advised Members of the procedure to be followed, and the options available to the Committee, as set out in the report included in the agenda.

On behalf of the Members who had signed the call in notice, Councillor D Flude outlined the basis for the call in, namely that the business case to develop further sites in Macclesfield and Congleton jointly with the Central and Eastern Cheshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) might not be achievable, due to financial constraints and the proposed abolition of PCT's in 2013. It was also felt that insufficient opportunity had been given to the Committee in its overview role to examine the development of the Dementia Policy, from which the decision to close Cypress House had arisen.

Councillor R Domleo, as the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, outlined to the Committee the reasons for the decision taken by the Cabinet with regard to the Living with Dementia Strategy, and the specific proposal to close Cypress House. The report considered by the Cabinet, which set out the issues and options, together with the full decision of Cabinet had been circulated to the Committee to provide the necessary detailed information. Cabinet took the view that, although social care redesign had made the delivery of services more efficient, more remained to be done to remove spare capacity from the system. The under utilisation of beds in Cypress House made it necessary to consider the future provision there, particularly as sufficient alternative and suitable facilities were available in the locality. The closure of Cypress House could be agreed without any diminution of service to users and carers.

The Portfolio Holder indicated that the proposed changes could, if necessary, be delivered prior to 2013 without the active engagement of health partners, although it was understood that the PCT was already beginning to discuss with GP Practice Consortia the future direction and delivery of key projects including the changes relating to the Dementia Strategy. It would be regrettable if structural changes in the NHS were to have a detrimental effect on the need to provide a more relevant and effective pattern of provision for dementia sufferers. The call in, whilst raising these issues, did not in the Cabinet Member's view say how the

financial constraints and structural changes would impact on the decision to close Cypress House.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, which covered the following issues:

- Whether the consultations on the closure of Cypress House dealt with the financial constraints faced by the authority and the impact on the neighbourhood, as well as the implications for service users and carers
- Whether customers who required intermediate care following discharge from hospital could still access this provision prior to their return home, and whether they would have to travel further to obtain a bed
- Whether the alternative provision including the Handforth Centre could offer the same levels of support, services and user experience including the opportunities for social interaction as at Cypress House, given its Care Quality Commission rating as excellent
- How the resources available and utilisation levels at Cypress House compared with other establishments
- The extent to which the decision to close Cypress House had been finance led, rather than by the needs of service users
- Whether the proceeds of sale from the surplus property would be reinvested into Adult Social Care services

In response, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the average vacancy rate across the five Community Support Service residential establishments was 56 beds at any one time, and that this could not be sustained. Even with the closure of Cypress House 31 surplus beds would remain in the system, so customers requiring a bed would be able to access the service. The consultation had been about which of the premises should be closed, and recognised that alternative facilities in the north of the Borough were located within reasonable distance from Cypress House. There was evidence that even at present, service users chose to travel to their preferred facility, which may not be the nearest one.

Councillor Domleo was impressed with the quality and enthusiasm of the staff at Handforth House and noted that many would be redeployed from Cypress House, thereby bringing their relevant skills and experience with them. The Council's policy was that surplus property became a corporate resource, any income from which was not necessarily used for the benefit of the service concerned.

Members reiterated the view that it would have been preferable for the Committee to have been able to exercise its overview role more fully in advising on the development of the Dementia Policy, in addition to consideration of the detailed proposals which resulted from the application of that Policy.

There being no more questions for the Cabinet Member, in view of their Personal and Prejudicial Interest in the matter, at this point both Councillors Domleo and Hunter withdrew from the meeting.

In accordance with the call in procedure, the Committee considered whether or not advice should be provided to the Cabinet on its decision. Members raised issues concerning the priority to be afforded to the needs of service users, given that the incidence of Dementia was increasing in the Cheshire East area, taking into account the surplus capacity and financial considerations. Members were advised that the cost of keeping Cypress House open amounted to £16000 per week, which could be redirected to provide additional investment in other care services. At the last meeting of the Committee, a Task Group had been appointed to carry out a review of Support for Older People with Dementia, to which the proposal for Cypress House could be referred in the context of the Dementia Policy. Members also took into account the resource implications and the costs involved in delaying the proposed closure.

RESOLVED

That no advice be offered to the Cabinet on this matter.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.07 pm

Councillor B Silvester (Chairman)