

ANNEX 1: REVIEW OF CATERING IN OAKMERE AND WILLOWMERE EXTRA CARE SCHEMES

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1 Background

1.1 Extra Care Housing & PFI Arrangements

1.1.1 Extra Care Housing

Extra care housing (ECH) is a specialised form of housing, designed to support mainly older people to live as independently as possible for as long as possible. As residents' care needs increase, additional support is available to assist them, usually provided by an on-site care team.

In Cheshire East, we have four ECH schemes run by Registered Providers; two of these are schemes that were built under Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements in 2008-2009. This report relates to these two schemes, Oakmere in Handforth and Willowmere in Middlewich.

1.1.2 PFI Arrangements

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements were introduced by central government as a way to build significant assets for the public sector using private sector investment. Cheshire County Council commissioned a consortium to design, build, finance and operate five extra care schemes across Cheshire under a PFI contract which will expire in 2039. As part of the arrangements under this contract, the County Council agreed to commission care in these schemes and provide the catering provision.

The PFI contract was passed to Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West & Chester Council jointly when the county council was abolished as part of the Local Government Reorganisation in 2009.

1.2 Catering Service January 2009 – 03 January 2025

1.2.1 Initial setup

The first scheme to open in 2009 was Oakmere in January. Willowmere followed in April 2009. Cheshire County Council set up the catering teams to provide the service and responsibility for these teams and the services themselves was passed to Cheshire East's School Meals Service in April 2009. The arrangements were governed by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and under this SLA, Adult Services was obliged to cover any losses the service made. It appears that at the time, it was anticipated that this would be a short-term measure to support the service which was operational from the day the scheme opened and before full occupancy was achieved.

1.2.2 Ongoing Sustainability Issues

Soon after opening, it was recognised that the service was likely to be unsustainable without additional funding on an ongoing basis. Between 2010 and 2024, efforts

were made to increase income and reduce costs in order to make the service financially sustainable, including changing opening hours, changing the way the service was provided (e.g. food being prepared offsite and reheated onsite) and ensuring that all ad hoc catering and events were financially self-sustaining.

Ultimately, creating a sustainable service without additional funding proved impossible for the council and lack of market interest/market failure is recognised as an ongoing risk.

Details of additional funding provided from 2015/16 to 2024/25 may be found in [Appendix 1: Additional Funding](#).

1.2.3 Withdrawal of Catering Service

Cheshire East's Children and Families Committee decided that the school meals service should cease trading at the end of 2024/2025. The school meals service operated the restaurant and catering service in both Oakmere and Willowmere, providing all back-office support for the services including management of the service, provision and management of the staff and access to financially beneficial provisions contracts. Based on the anticipated loss of these back-office services, the decision was made to close the scheme catering services on Friday 03 January 2025.

2 Interim arrangements since 03 January 2025

Engagement took place with residents to keep them informed in the months prior to the closure of the catering service. Their strong desire and reasons for the provision of hot, nutritious meals eaten in a communal setting, led to interim arrangements being made to cover the period between the closure of the onsite service and the confirmation of budget/future plans for the catering provision, which was anticipated to be the end of May 2025. Two VCFSE organisations applied for grant funding to deliver hot meals to residents and to facilitate activities on each scheme twice a week between 03 January and 31 May 2025. These arrangements were extended to the end of November 2025, once it was identified that the longer term solution was likely to be an onsite catering provider and additional time would be needed to arrange this.

2.1 Interim Provision: Oakmere

The Welcome, a VCFSE organisation based in Knutsford, delivers hot meals to Oakmere Monday-Friday and chilled meals on Fridays that can be heated over the weekend. They also deliver a variety of sessions to Oakmere residents and occasional visitors from the local community. Most meals are delivered to the dining room at Oakmere where residents congregate and eat together.

Eighteen residents who returned the May 2025 survey said that they had used the interim hot meal delivery service and they scored it 2.9/5.0. Residents suggested that The Welcome needed more choice/flexibility and improvements in administration of the service as well as changes to the time of delivery. Eighteen residents equates to 58% of those who returned the survey, and 32% of those living in Oakmere. However, it should be noted that some of the surveys may have been completed by joint occupants so the actual percentages may be a little higher.

2.2 Interim Provision: Willowmere

Wishing Well, a charitable organisation based in Crewe, delivers hot meals to residents' apartments with support from third party organisation – Middlewich Good Neighbours – Mon to Fri. Wishing Well declined to offer chilled/frozen meals for residents to reheat citing food safety concerns. They also facilitate a weekly, well-attended exercise class at Willowmere.

Seventeen residents who returned the May 2025 survey said that they had used the interim hot meal delivery service and they scored it 4.2/5.0. Residents said that they would like more choice, the option of a meal at weekends and improvements in the administration of the service. Seventeen residents equates to 55% of those who returned the survey, and 24% of those living in Willowmere. However, it should be noted that some of the surveys may have been completed by joint occupants so the actual percentages may be a little higher.

Further information on interim arrangements and provider and resident feedback may be found in [Appendix 2: Interim Arrangements](#).

3 Review of the residents needs

3.1 Engagement prior to 03 January 2025

Face-to-face meetings took place with residents on 16 August 2024 and a survey was launched to obtain residents' views on the options for the future of the service and to discover what was important to them. The majority of the survey responses from both schemes favoured a continuation of the current service and that residents valued hot, nutritious meals and the position of the restaurant as a "community hub". Further face-to-face meetings were held with residents on 05 December 2024, informing residents about the interim arrangements that had been put in place following the feedback received from them in August 2024.

3.2 Advantage Annual Survey – February 2025

Advantage – the Council's PFI partner – surveys residents annually on all aspects of living in their schemes, including those services provided by the Council. In February 2025, the survey asked about the previous service (provided by the Council up to 03 January 2025), the interim provision (which at the time was very new) and what residents would like to see in the future.

3.2.1 Advantage Survey – Oakmere

Uptake for Oakmere was approximately 80% , equating to around 42 responses. This is a higher return than that achieved in August 2024 and significantly higher than the return achieved in May 2025.

In Oakmere, 96% of respondents said that they were satisfied with the previous service provision but only 18% were satisfied with the interim hot meal delivery arrangements (which were very new at the time).

When looking at future options, 45% preferred 7-day opening with 76% favouring a catering service based on site. A service similar to the service which closed in January was favoured by 74% of respondents and lunch was the preferred mealtime of 41% of respondents, followed by breakfast (24%) and evening meal (19%).

3.2.2 Advantage Survey – Willowmere

Uptake for Willowmere was approximately 75%, equating to around 52/53 responses. This is approximately equal to the return achieved in August 2024 and significantly higher than that achieved in May 2025.

In Willowmere, 88% of respondents said that they were satisfied with the previous service provision and 31% said that they were satisfied with the interim hot meal delivery arrangements (which were very new at the time).

When looking at future options, 73% preferred 7-day opening with 100% favouring a catering service based on site. A service similar to the service which closed in January was favoured by 67% of respondents. Lunch was the preferred mealtime of 45% of respondents, followed by breakfast (32%) and evening meal (23%).

See also [Appendix 3.1: Advantage Annual Survey – February 2025](#).

3.3 CE Resident Engagement – May 2025

3.3.1 Drop-In Sessions

3.3.1.1 *Oakmere – Tuesday 20 May 2025 and Tuesday 27 May 2025*

The drop in sessions included 32 bookable 15 minute appointments. Two Officers spoke to 30 residents during the sessions, helping them to complete surveys and recording their views face-to-face. The support offered had a excellent uptake and was appreciated by those who needed the support.

3.3.1.2 *Willowmere – 16 May 2025 and 23 May 2025*

The drop in sessions included 32 bookable 15 minute appointments. Two Officers spoke to 4 residents during the sessions, helping them to complete surveys and recording their views face-to-face. Uptake at this venue was significantly less, but was appreciated by those who needed the support.

3.3.2 Resident Survey – Future Options

3.3.2.1 *Oakmere*

The overwhelming majority of respondents wanted to see the return of the onsite catering service. Only one of these said that they would not use the restaurant if it returned.

Nineteen respondents wanted the service to be open every day, a further nine chose 5-days per week. No one chose 1-2 days. Most residents chose lunch as the most important mealtime, while significantly more people chose the Evening Meal rather than Breakfast as their second choice.

The survey asked respondents to rank their top four reasons for visiting the restaurant. Twenty-four residents chose Lunch as their top reason to visit the restaurant. Meeting other residents was the most popular second reason, whilst meeting external visitors was the most popular third option.

Residents were asked to choose the best of three options for the future service. These options included hot meals at lunchtime with snacks available at other times, snacks and light bites, or vending machines (supplying hot/cold food and hot drinks 24 hours a day). Exactly 90% chose one or two hot meals plus snacks. When given options from £3-£5 to more than £9, nearly half of the respondents thought that £7-£9 was a reasonable price for a two-course lunch. Just over a quarter thought £5-£7 was reasonable.

With sustainability in mind, the survey asked whether residents would be willing to pay an additional weekly cost towards a sustainable, in-house catering service. Just under two-thirds said they would, although comments

showed that they were generally cautious about the idea. The survey asked residents if they would like the catering provider to deliver activities/seasonal events – the response was ~60/40 yes/no.

The final three questions of the survey asked about linking to the local community – which received a generally positive response, any other options that would work in the scheme – 84% said no and asked if there was anything else important to the respondent about the catering service. The answers received to the last question reflected previous answers, with respondents mentioning the importance of hot, nutritious meals and the social benefits of eating together.

3.3.2.2 *Willowmere*

The overwhelming majority of respondents wanted to see the return of the onsite catering service. Again, only one of these said that they would not use the restaurant if it returned.

Nineteen respondents wanted the service to be open every day, a further nine chose 5-days per week. Two people thought that 1-2 days would suit them. Most residents chose lunch as the most important mealtime, while significantly more people chose the Evening Meal rather than Breakfast as their second choice.

The survey asked respondents to rank their top four reasons for visiting the restaurant. Although not as definitive as the results from Oakmere, sixteen residents chose Lunch as their top reason to visit the restaurant. Meeting other residents was the most popular second reason, whilst meeting external visitors was the most popular third option.

Residents were asked to choose the best of three options for the future service. These options included hot meals at lunchtime with snacks available at other times, snacks and light bites, or vending machines (supplying hot/cold food and hot drinks 24 hours a day). More than 90% chose one or two hot meals plus snacks. When given options from £3-£5 to more than £9, more than half of the respondents thought that £7-£9 was a reasonable price for a two-course lunch and just under a quarter thought £5-£7 was reasonable.

With sustainability in mind, the survey asked whether residents would be willing to pay an additional weekly cost towards a sustainable, in-house catering service. Just under two-thirds said they would – their comments showed that they felt they needed the service. The survey asked residents if they would like the catering provider to deliver activities/seasonal events – the response was ~75/25 yes/no.

The final three questions of the survey asked about linking to the local community – which received a generally positive response, any other

options that would work in the scheme – the majority said no and asked if there was anything else important to the respondent about the catering service. The answers received to the last question reflected previous answers, with respondents mentioning the importance of hot, nutritious meals and the social benefits of eating together.

More details on the May 2025 survey results may be found in [Appendix 2.3: Resident Survey – May 2025](#).

3.4 Summary of Resident Engagement

Residents have been consistent in their views since August 2024. They have stressed the importance of a choice of hot, nutritious meals at lunchtime and reported that they highly value the community “feel” of eating with their neighbours in the scheme as well as with people from the local community. Whilst the majority would like to see the restaurants open 7-days a week, some survey answers acknowledged that this might not be possible. Residents were keen to ensure that whoever ran the restaurants advertised both inside and externally to the scheme and understood the importance of ensuring the service was sustainable for the future.

4 Soft Market Testing

Since the catering service was withdrawn, the Council has been approached by 4 individuals/organisations expressing an interest in providing a future service. These individuals/organisations have been contacted and directed to The Chest where updated information has been and will be made available.

A questionnaire was published via The Chest on 02 June 2025 to gain the views of interested parties prior to any procurement exercise. All known organisations and individuals who had previously shown interest in the catering opportunities were informed that the questionnaire had been published and how to access it.

Nine organisations were recorded on The Chest as viewing the questionnaire; three registered their intention to complete the questionnaire and ultimately, two responses were received, both from small private companies.

4.1 Summary of Responses

4.1.1 Experience/Challenges

Neither of the respondents had experience delivering catering services in an extra care setting, but both claimed experience in similar community- or service-focused environments. Both mentioned managing diverse dietary needs, the importance of staff, food safety and providing sustainable, affordable and nutritious menus.

When asked to identify the main challenges of such a service, both respondents gave a similar list including:

- Diverse dietary needs/health considerations of customers
- Maintaining choice, independence and dignity
- Adequate staffing and staff training
- Regulatory compliance and Health & Safety

One also mentioned timing/scheduling meals around the routines and care needs of residents, whilst the other mentioned limited budgets and keeping costs competitive.

Both respondents provided strategies for dealing with these challenges.

4.1.2 Financial Sustainability

Both organisations emphasised the importance of working efficiently and minimising food waste to ensure sustainability, also mentioning the importance of staffing and producing cost-effective (affordable) meals for customers. They said the inclusion of the local community to increase footfall would enhance sustainability.

When asked about additional support that would enhance viability both emphasised assistance with utilities, permission to serve external customers, initial set-up support. One respondent mentioned that a multi-year contract would allow them to invest in community engagement and build a loyal customer base.

4.1.3 Menus, Opening Hours, etc.

The questionnaire asked how the service might look, asking respondents to describe a typical week. Both described opening every day for Breakfast, Lunch and Afternoon Tea. The lunchtime service would include two hot options (one vegetarian) with snacks for those with smaller appetites. One suggested an early evening meal, whilst the other described a takeaway or delivery service to local residents, if this was permitted.

4.1.4 Contract and Mobilisation

Both organisations said that they would be interested in tendering for the catering service with both looking for a 3+2 years contract length. Mobilisation was estimated at between 6 and 10 weeks (6-8 weeks and 8-10 weeks).

4.1.5 Marketing to Residents and the Local Community

When asked about the best ways of attracting custom from residents and the local community, both respondents mentioned the importance of resident engagement, a welcoming environment, themed days and events (eg Fish Fridays and Sunday Roasts), consistency of the offering and providing affordable high-quality food.

The final question asked how the service could have a positive impact on the local community. Both respondents suggested that it should be a community hub, supporting local employment and training, partnering with local organisations.

More details from both questionnaires may be found in [Appendix 3: Soft Market Testing](#).

5 Achieving Sustainability

Many local authorities and registered providers recognise that providing a sustainable catering service in extra care schemes is often difficult, but there are some models which can assist and/or provide long-term funding.

These include:

- **Residents paying towards the catering service as a condition of tenancy**

If paying for catering is a “condition of tenancy”, this means that residents are obliged to pay towards the catering service in the same way that they pay for rent and service charges. Usually, the payment covers a set number of meals per annum (e.g. an average of 5 lunches per week) and these meals can be taken without further payment. The catering provider has a guaranteed income to cover overheads and can more easily anticipate the number of customers they can expect. Because of the obligation to pay for this service, best practice would be for it to be set up when a scheme first opens. This type of arrangement would not be possible in Oakmere and Willowmere, partly because the schemes have been open for many years and partly because there are some doubts about whether the PFI arrangements would allow it.

It should be noted that the idea of residents paying a fixed weekly amount towards a sustainable catering service was mooted in the May 2025 survey and the response was cautious but generally positive. However, the residents who completed the survey were those most interested in the catering provision and their views may not reflect the views of the whole population.

- **Landlord responsibility**

Often, landlords are responsible for sourcing a catering provider for their schemes/residents. Unless the landlord has a specific contractual obligation with the Council or their residents, there is a risk that they might withdraw the service if it became unaffordable. Mill House (in Nantwich) and Pickmere (Crewe) both have catering services arranged by the landlord (The Guinness Partnership).

It is understood that the responsibility for the provision of catering was discussed during the original PFI negotiations between Cheshire County Council and Advantage, and that the County Council agreed to take

responsibility for commissioning catering in the schemes, which was then reflected in the wording of the PFI contract.

- **VCFSE Organisations**

Organisations from the VCFSE sector deliver catering in some extra care housing schemes. This can be combined with a local meal delivery service, lunch club service or similar with the scheme kitchen acting as a base for external (charitable) operations. Wishing Well (who are currently delivering hot meals to Willowmere residents) is known to be delivering onsite catering services in at least three extra care schemes; Mill House in Nantwich, Pickmere in Crewe and Anderton Place in Northwich (Guinness Partnership are the landlord for all three schemes).

- **Supported Employment**

Sometimes extra care catering services can also provide supported employment opportunities. Cheshire East's Mental Health Reablement (Occupational Opportunities) previously ran the bistro at Mill House, but this was closed several years ago as an internal restructure meant staff had to pull out.

- **Economies of Scale**

Running more than one extra care catering service is likely to allow a provider to take advantage of economies of scale, particularly with staff cover, provisions and other contracts, etc..

- **Good service, efficient working, staff training etc.**

Both organisations who responded to the soft market testing questionnaire commented that efficient working and being able to deliver services to non-residents would be key to financial sustainability. (See also [Appendix 3: Soft Market Testing Q3](#))

It is also possible for an extra care scheme to exist without in-house catering, but this depends on the level of care required by residents and often on the location of the scheme and its local amenities.

6 [Avantage/YHG's expectations/contributions](#)

Cheshire County Council contracted with a consortium to design, fund, build and manage five extra care schemes across Cheshire under Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements. Avantage is the Special Purpose Vehicle (or Special Purpose Company) that was created to manage the PFI contract and initially all three members of the consortium were shareholders in Avantage. Over time, the

shareholders changed and there is now a single organisation which has sole ownership and its parent company is Your Housing Group.

Under the PFI arrangements, the land on which the schemes were built was leased by the Council to a member of the original consortium – Manchester & District Housing (M&D). M&D became the landlord of the schemes and took on landlord responsibilities, including issuing tenancy and leasehold agreements. M&D was subsequently subsumed into Your Housing Group and the current landlord – Your Housing Limited - is a wholly owned subsidiary of Your Housing Group.

Also under the PFI arrangements, the council (Cheshire County Council at the time) took on the responsibility of operating the catering facilities, meaning that it provided the staff, management and know-how to run the catering services as well as light kitchen equipment such as pots/pans/ cooking utensils, tableware, glassware and silverware. Under the PFI arrangements, Avantage provides heavy kitchen equipment (ovens, grill, dishwasher, fridges/freezers, etc) and some cleaning services. Your Housing Group, as landlord, provides utilities – electric, water and sewerage.

Engagement has taken place with Avantage and Your Housing Group since mid-2024 and whilst neither organisation is able to provide additional assistance towards a catering provision, both have supported the Council in engaging with residents. Your Housing Group has confirmed that it will not seek a commercial lease arrangement for the kitchens and ancillary accommodation, considering this to be part of the PFI arrangement. Avantage has said that it will maintain agreed cleaning schedules and comply with contractual obligations re the provision of equipment to the kitchens.

7 Catering Provision Options

7.1 Assets and Constraints

7.1.1 Oakmere and Willowmere Assets

- Fully-fitted commercial kitchens with most equipment maintained/ replaced under the PFI contract
- Some kitchenware, tableware, glassware and silverware available for use.
- Onsite customer base - residents, friends and families plus staff. Both schemes are located in well-populated areas with lots of potential customers in the neighbourhood. In the recent resident survey, 27 Oakmere residents and 29 Willowmere residents said that they would use the restaurants.

- Cost of utilities currently covered by the landlord under the PFI arrangements.
- Use of kitchen/dining areas and ancillary accommodation provided rent-free under the PFI arrangements.
- Daily cleaning of restaurant area (under PFI arrangements)

7.1.2 Constraints

- Failure of previous procurement (lack of interest from the market)
- Kitchenware, tableware, glassware and silverware – some available for use but likely to be insufficient for running restaurant at capacity. May need to be topped up by any incoming provider

7.2 Options Appraisal

7.2.1 Option 1: Let the interim service lapse at the end of the current arrangements and do not replace

The current interim arrangements are set to lapse at the end of November. The council could choose not to make any further arrangements.

Benefits

- No further costs to the council.

Disadvantages/Risks

- Potential breach of PFI Contract. Contract variation is possible to resolve this but could be complex as likely to affect several parts of the contract, including the payment mechanism. Likely that multiple approvals would be required, including potentially from central government. Likely to be costs involved.
- Whilst “mothballing” the catering kitchens would potentially reduce the council’s PFI payments, it is not known if this would result in a corresponding reduction in the credits received from central government. It is also not known if the two reductions would be equivalent.
- Removal of the catering service may make the schemes less attractive to potential residents, including leaseholders.
- If the schemes become less attractive to potential residents as a result of the lack of catering provision, this may damage the ongoing relationship with Advantage. The PFI Contract is not due to expire until January 2039.

- Removing the onsite catering option may make the schemes less attractive to potential residents with higher and more complex needs, including those who could potentially be diverted from AWC.
- Based on resident engagement to date, it is very likely that residents/families will object to losing all catering provision on site.
- Current thinking on new schemes is that (depending on location) they should have a restaurant/bistro/catering service. Removing the service from these schemes would undermine CEC's position on this.

7.2.2 Option 2: Hot & Cold Food Smart Vending Machines

Provision of vending machines which come with a microwave oven that can dispense both chilled and hot food as well as hot and cold drinks.

Benefits

- Hot and cold food and drinks would be available 24/7.
- Relatively low cost solution to provision of hot meals. Costs would include keeping the vending machines maintained and filled.
- Choice of food and drinks for residents – machines could be stocked based on residents' preferences as indicated by consumption.
- Residents who prefer to eat breakfast or evening meals could choose to do so.

Disadvantages/Risks

- Would require re- stocking on a regular basis.
- Residents were almost unanimous that vending machines would not be suitable for extra care schemes. This could mean that residents would not use the facilities.
- Some residents would require assistance to use the vending machines, including carrying food and drinks to wherever they were going to be eaten. Carrying hot food and drinks through the scheme has previously been highlighted by Advantage as a health and safety risk.
- Meals would be dispensed individually, meaning that a group of people dining "together" would receive meals at different times.
- Although there would be a choice of meals from the vending machine, that choice could be limited and catering to specific dietary requirements might be an issue.
- Vending machines would need to accept a variety of payment methods and without the benefit of a person involved would lack payment flexibility (e.g. pre-payment or a "slate" system).
- Would not necessarily give a social experience, as residents and visitors could eat at different times of the day.

7.2.3 Option 3: Continue Hot Meals Delivery Services

Procurement of permanent hot meals delivery services to each scheme.

Benefits

- Ensures that hot meals are available to residents who choose to order them.
- Relatively simple contract management.

Disadvantages/Risks

- Demand for delivered hot meals is relatively low compared to previous estimates of restaurant use (In Oakmere – 7 meals per day vs 20-30 meals prepared by the previous caterer and in Willowmere – 17 meals per day vs 30-40 meals prepared daily). Current uptake may not be enough to support a sustainable service.
- Whilst not impossible to “piggyback” deliveries to people in the local community, the logistics of this would need to be thoroughly investigated.
- Most residents who completed the survey expressed a strong preference for a site-based service – it is possible that they would not support a meal delivery service long-term.
- There have been some issues with the current services that would also affect any new/procured delivery services (e.g. nomination of a safe space for delivery if the resident is out).
- Residents have commented that the delivery services don’t facilitate community gatherings in the same way as the restaurants and this issue would be perpetuated.
- May lead to social isolation within the extra care schemes. Whilst there are programmes of events and activities, anecdotally some residents were known to only leave their apartments at lunchtime to visit the restaurant and concerns have been expressed that at least one of these residents has not been seen on site since the restaurants closed.
- Lack of choice and availability of specialised/personalised diets may not suit some residents, particularly those with more complex needs.

7.2.4 Option 4: Procure new operator to provide site-based catering service

Co-design a new site-based catering service to ensure onsite meal preparation, menu choice and community-building to start as soon as possible.

Benefits

- Ensures hot, nutritious meals are available to scheme residents and to the local community.
- When surveyed residents were consistently and strongly supportive of an onsite service.
- Could provide basic groceries meaning that residents who are unable to leave the scheme could purchase some basic groceries, such as bread, eggs, butter, toilet rolls, etc.
- Presents an opportunity to provide meal delivery to vulnerable residents within the local communities, where there is currently limited availability and there is a known demand for this service
- Depending on the specification, could enhance community cohesion and intergenerational activities.

Disadvantages/Risks

- It is possible that procurement will fail due to lack of interest from the market.
- Raising residents' expectations may cause issues if the council is then unable to meet those expectations.
- Contract will need to be monitored closely as this is now a high-profile service.
- Lack of parity with other extra care schemes in Cheshire East.
- Ongoing cost to base budget to support service whilst setting up and growing the business.

8 Conclusion

Overall, the best solution appears to be a sustainable catering service providing at least one hot meal daily. Interest received plus market testing indicates that this is likely to be a feasible option with limited funding from the Council's base budget.

The Council has ambitions to accommodate more people with complex care needs in all its extra care schemes as well as diverting people from AWC. An onsite catering service will help to diversify the accommodation offer from the council, ensuring that people with a short-term need for AWC can move elsewhere if their needs decrease but they are unable to return to their previous homes and that people who can remain independent do so for as long as possible.

It is therefore proposed that the Council seeks one or more providers to run restaurant and catering services in Oakmere and Willowmere.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Additional Funding

The table below shows the level of additional funding provided to the catering services over the last 5 years.

| | 2020/21* | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25** |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Oakmere | £22,144 | £43,904 | £59,552 | £56,957 | £57,496 |
| Willowmere | £53,641 | £57,054 | £73,151 | £81,312 | £97,996 |
| TOTAL | £75,785 | £100,958 | £132,703 | £138,269 | £155,492 |

* Part year due to closure during lockdown

** Part year due to closure on 03 January 2025

Note that the additional funding calculation for 2024/2025 is for operational costs only and does not include any redundancy payments.

Until 2024/25, the budget line for this service was £330,000 pa. This budget has since been reduced to £60,000 pa to cover catering provision at both schemes.

9.2 Appendix 2: Interim Arrangements

9.2.1 Appendix 2.1: Oakmere – The Welcome

9.2.1.1 Provider Feedback

The Welcome has been asked to provide monthly statistics on the service provided to Oakmere residents, as well as anonymised case studies demonstrating the benefits of this service.

| Hot Meals Delivery | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Total No Meals per Month | 111 | 167 | 178 | 136 | 102 | 79 | TBC |
| Average Weekly Meals | 28 | 42 | 44 | 34 | 25 | 20 | TBC |
| Activity Sessions | | | | | | | |
| Number of people attending activity sessions per month | 25 | 27 | 27 | 30 | 30 | 24 | TBC |
| Average attending activities per week/session | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | TBC |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| January 2025 | Female resident suffers with dementia and has always used the onsite restaurant for her meals as it allows her to socialise with other residents. The hot meal delivery has allowed this to continue and the carers have said that being able to eat the meal in the restaurant with her neighbours is a particular highlight and is beneficial to her wellbeing. |
| February 2025 | PB is often visited by a friend and they used to dine in the onsite restaurant together and enjoy this social |

| | |
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| | time. PB has been able to pre-order additional meals from The Welcome when he knows his friend is coming, which has allowed them to continue dining together. |
| March 2025 | Ms C says that she is thoroughly enjoying the meals and, having worked in catering her whole life, she thinks they are excellent quality. She says that she sincerely hopes the meal delivery continues. |
| April 2025 | SB receives the hot meal delivery 5 days a week plus 2 chilled meals to reheat for the weekend. Knowing that SB is receiving a meal each day gives the family peace of mind. |
| May 2025 | SB is a regular recipient of the hot meals, and she has recently been in hospital for 10 days. Her family found it reassuring to know that she would continue receiving hot, nutritious meals when she returned home to aid in her recovery. |
| June 2025 | IO orders a roast dinner every Wednesday as this is the meal she wouldn't bother making for herself, due to the complexity of the preparation and cooking. She really looks forward to Wednesdays as this is a treat for her. |

9.2.1.2 Resident Feedback 2025

The Council received 32 responses from residents to the May 2025 survey, a rate of return of ~60%.

Q2 Have you used the interim service (hot meal delivery)?

Eighteen people said that they had tried the interim service. Some of those who had tried the service reported that they had had a bad experience.

Q3. What are your thoughts about the interim service (hot meal delivery)?

| Aspect | Average Score (out of 5) |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Time of meal delivery | 2.76 |
| Quality of meals | 2.71 |
| Available selection | 2.41 |
| Days available | 3.18 |
| Location of delivery | 3.24 |
| Cost/value for money | 3.19 |
| | |
| Overall Average | 2.92 |

Q4 Following on from your answers to Q3, what improvements could be made to ensure the interim service is more suitable for your needs for the following 6 months?

Sixteen responses were received to this question and residents mentioned the following:

- Administration issues – problems ordering or cancelling
- More choice/not wanting a pudding
- Timing of delivery (needs to be closer to midday)

Q5. You told us that you don't use the interim service. Please tell us why you don't use the service and what arrangements you currently have in place.

The majority of the residents who answered this question said that they cooked for themselves. Some people said that they had assistance from family members or carers.

Many residents said that they didn't use the restaurant because they cooked for themselves, but others said that it was because of perceived or actual lack of quality, value, choice and that the order forms were a hassle to complete.

9.2.2 Appendix 2: Willowmere – Wishing Well

9.2.2.1 Provider Reports

Wishing Well has been asked to provide monthly statistics on the service provided to Willowmere residents, as well as anonymised case studies demonstrating the benefits of this service.

| Hot Meals Delivery | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul* |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Total No Meals per Month | 366 | 312 | 323 | 338 | 385 | 327 | 308 |
| Average Weekly Meals | 91.5 | 78 | 81 | 85 | 97 | 82 | 77 |
| Activity Sessions | | | | | | | |
| Number of people attending activity sessions per month | 0 | 0 | 37 | 46 | 32 | 34 | 0 |
| Average attending activities per week/session | 0 | 0 | 9 | 12 | 8 | 9 | 0 |

* No activities due to summer recess.

| | |
|---------------|--|
| January 2025 | <p>We have been overwhelmed by the response we have had from Willowmere residents. They have been incredibly grateful for the service that we have provided so far and have made it clear that they would like The Wishing Well to manage the onsite Bistro at Willowmere. The Caring team have also been supportive of our offer and we are pleased to have built a strong relationship with Middlewich Good Neighbours who are a local community group in Middlewich. Our focus in month was to ensure we got the catering provision correct. We have now been able to mobilise our physical activity provision so next month's report will be reflective of our input in this area.</p> |
| February 2025 | <p>We have received a number of positive comments and remarks since we started this project. This month we want to highlight the importance of a lady called X who is a real community champion and is helping to shape the provision at Willowmere. She was one of our customers at another extra care scheme so had heard all about The Wishing Well and the services we provide in the community. She's a real community leader and wants to make sure her friends and neighbours at Willowmere get their voices heard. We have advised her to form a small committee so we can communicate effectively with our partners at Cheshire East about the provision at Willowmere in the short, medium and long term. This is real community based consultation, which should hopefully ensure the right provision is in place for Willowmere residents moving forwards.</p> |
| March 2025 | <p>T turned 99 in March and we were so pleased to be able to celebrate with him as we delivered his meal. T is a great character and has many stories to share. He mentioned he has "one more year to go" before he gets his message from the King. T received meals from us every day and is always incredibly kind and grateful. He leaves a note for us by the door every day and always invites us in for a brief chat.</p> |
| April 2025 | <p>This month was the first month where we were able to extend our provision into the wider community in</p> |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| | Middlewich. This is a crucial step as it helps to embed our provision in the local community and if The Wishing Well were to take on the Catering site at Willowmere – it would be vital part of the operating model. What was particularly pleasing to see was that both volunteers and residents were keen to support this extension. We now deliver 3 meals outside of Willowmere and hopefully this will increase in the weeks and months ahead. |
| May 2025 | In May, we provided a VE Day buffet celebration for the residents at Willowmere. It would a lot of joy and happiness to the independent living centre and a real community/ village feel to the space. We received plenty of positive feedback on the day and in the following days our drivers were told how special the event was. There was greater calls for Wishing Well to take on the Bistro and an ask for us to deliver more events and activities whilst a new Bistro provider is found. |
| June 2025 | Over the last few weeks, we have been doing some extra work with a lovely lady who has unfortunately developed arthritis in her jaw. We have sent her several different meals and the drivers have been checking in with her and asking for feedback. After visiting her a couple of weeks ago, we have seemed to have set out a menu that works for her, and she is extremely grateful as she thought she might have to cancel. This one small change for us has had a huge impact on her health and wellbeing. She can now have our meals and is in relative comfort. |
| July 2025 | “You really have brought us something to smile about here at Willowmere. Please take on the Bistro – We don’t know what we would do without you.” (Willowmere resident) |

9.2.2.2 Resident Feedback – May 2025

The Council received 32 responses from residents to the May 2025 survey, a rate of return of ~46%.

Q2 Have you used the interim service (hot meal delivery)?

Seventeen people (55%) said that they had tried the interim service.

Q3 What are your thoughts on the interim service (hot meal delivery)?

| Aspect | Average Score (out of 5) |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Time of meal delivery | 4.12 |
| Quality of meals | 3.82 |
| Available selection | 3.94 |
| Days available | 4.25 |
| Location of delivery | 4.53 |
| Cost/value for money | 4.31 |
| | |
| Overall Average | 4.16 |

Q4 Following on from your answers to Q3, what improvements could be made to ensure the interim service is more suitable for your needs for the following 6 months?

Sixteen responses were received to this question and residents mentioned the following:

- Administration issues – problems ordering or cancelling
- Having the option for a meal at weekends
- Quality – preference for meals cooked and served on site
- More choice

Q5: You told us that you don't use the interim service. Please tell us why you don't use the service and what arrangements you currently have in place.

The majority of the residents who answered this question said that they cooked for themselves. Some people said that they had assistance from family members or carers. A couple of respondents said that they had tried the meal delivery service but it wasn't suitable for them.

9.3 Appendix 3: Resident Engagement relating to the Future of the Service

9.3.1 Appendix 3.1: Avantage Annual Survey – February 2025

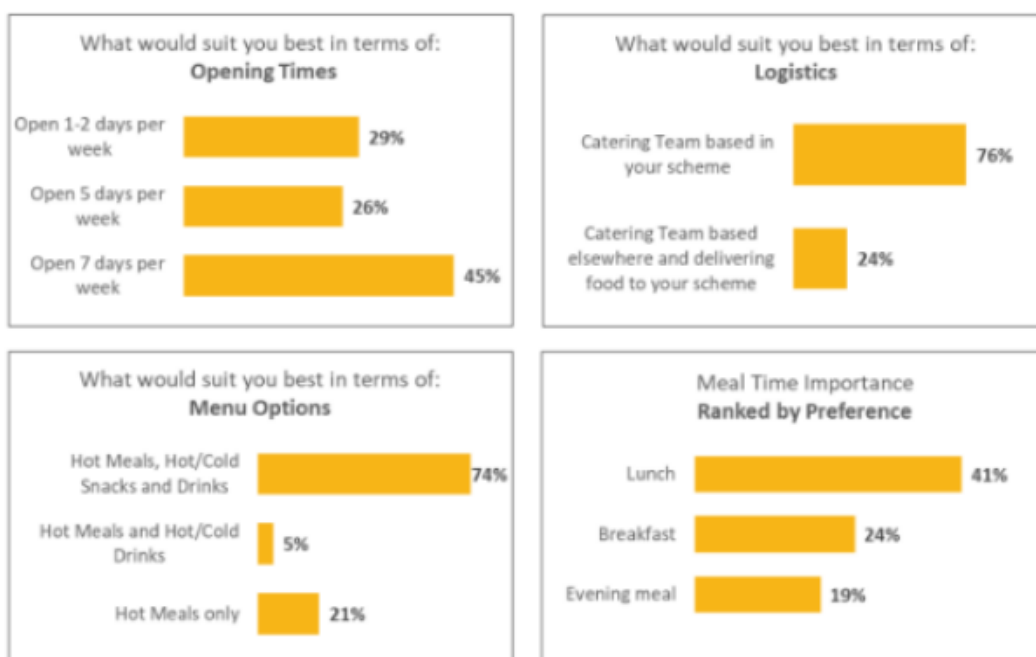
Avantage – the Council's PFI partner – surveys residents annually on all aspects of living in their schemes, including those services provided by the Council. In February 2025, the survey asked about the previous service (provided by the Council up to 03 January 2025), the interim provision (which at the time was very new) and what residents would like to see in the future.

9.3.1.1 Oakmere Responses

- 96% of respondents said they were satisfied with the service provision delivered up until 03 January 2025.

- 47% of respondents said the closure impacted their daily lives “a lot” or a “great deal”.
- 18% of respondents said they were satisfied with the interim arrangements in the form of a hot meal delivery service.

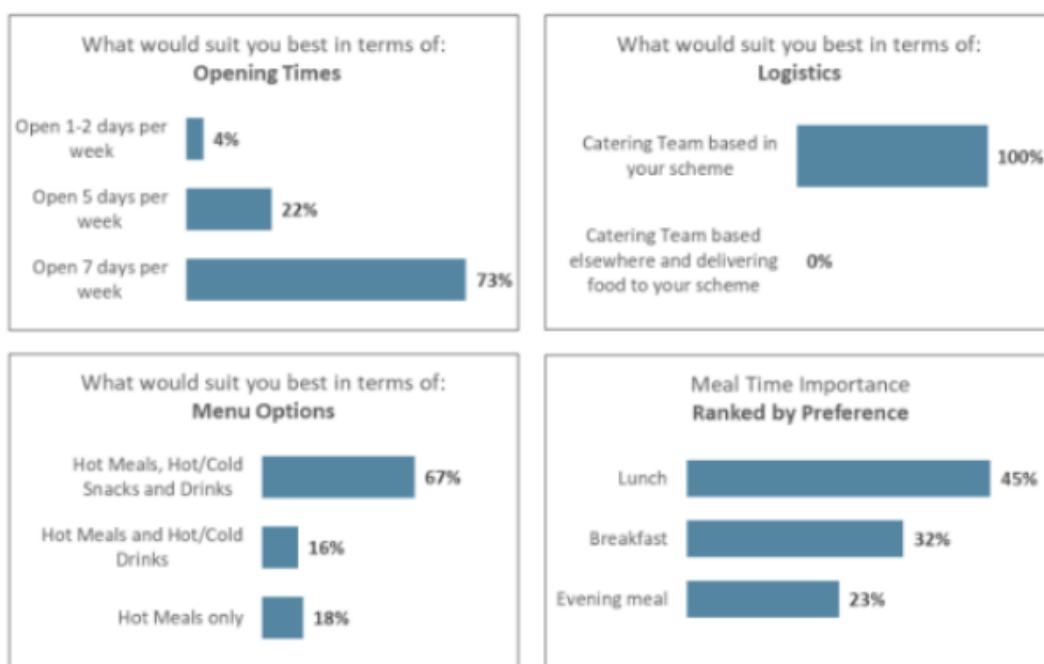
Future Catering Options for Oakmere



9.3.1.2 Willowmere Responses

- 88% of respondents said they were satisfied with the service provision delivered up until 03 January 2025.
- 69% of respondents said the closure impacted their daily lives “a lot” or “a great deal”.
- 31% of respondents said they were satisfied with the interim arrangements in the form of a hot meal delivery service.

Future Catering Options for Willowmere



9.3.2 Appendix 2.3: Resident Survey – May 2025

Responses to Part 2 of the May 2025 Survey are summarised below. This part of the survey related to the future of the catering service. A total of 31 responses was received from each scheme.

9.3.2.1 Oakmere Responses

Q6 What catering service would you like to see in future? (Choice of: Onsite Catering, Vending Machines, Hot Meal Delivery, Own Arrangements)

Twenty-eight respondents (90% of respondents/50% of residents) chose “on-site catering” as the best option for their scheme.

Q7 If onsite catering was provided in the extra care schemes, would you use it?

Twenty-seven residents replied “Yes” to this question with about half of those adding comments as requested. Some people said that they would use it every day, others noted that they welcome choice and flexibility of menu options. One person commented that it would make mealtimes “more pleasant and social”.

Q8 When thinking about availability of catering in your scheme, which 1 of the following suits your needs best?

This question asked residents how many days a week they would like catering available in the scheme. The options were given were 1-2 days per week, 5 days or 7 days. Nearly 60% of residents said that they would like the service to be open every day and a further 28% chose 5 days a week. Two of the latter suggested that the service should be open on Sundays, whilst others indicated that they would accept a 5-day service but would prefer a 7-day service.

No one chose 2 days per week.

Q9 In respect of mealtimes, please rank Breakfast, Lunch and Evening Meal in order of importance.

Nearly 80% of residents said that lunch was the most important mealtime. Lunch was also the most popular mealtime to be ranked overall. Five people ranked an evening meal first and a further 15 ranked it second. Of the people who expressed a second choice, 68% of them chose an evening meal. Breakfast was ranked least important in the total number of rankings it achieved and came last as a first and second choice. The details are in the table below.

| | 1 st Option | 2 nd Option | 3 rd Option | Total |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Breakfast | 1 | 4 | 14 | 19 |
| Lunch | 22 | 3 | 1 | 26 |
| Evening Meal | 5 | 15 | 3 | 23 |
| TOTAL | 28 | 22 | 18 | |

Several people emphasised that a *hot lunch* was important.

Q10 Rank your top four reasons for visiting the restaurant.

The survey gave a list of seven reasons to visit the restaurant, and residents were asked to choose their top four.

Twenty-four residents chose Lunch as their top reason to visit the restaurant. Meeting other residents was the most popular second reason, whilst meeting external visitors. was the most popular third option.

Overall, Lunch was the most mentioned reason for visiting the restaurant, followed by meeting external visitors and then meeting other residents. Further details may be found in the table below.

| | Top Reason | 2nd Reason | 3rd Reason | 4th Reason |
|---|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Cooked Breakfast | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Cooked Lunch | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hot/Cold Drinks | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Hot/Cold Drink plus Snack | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| Special Occasions/ One-Off Events | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Meeting friends/family who live in your scheme | 0 | 11 | 4 | 1 |
| Meeting friends/family who do not live in your scheme | 0 | 6 | 12 | 4 |

Note: some respondents chose fewer than four options.

This aligns with previous survey results, which indicate that the social aspect of eating in the restaurant is important to many of Oakmere's residents.

Q11: Which of the three options (Similar to Current/Lite Bites/Vending Machines) do you think would be best in future?

Exactly 90% of the survey responses said that Option A - a service similar to the previous service – would be best in future. Of those who went on to choose 2nd and 3rd options, 90% who chose a middle option chose a “light bites” service and ~92% of those who completed a third option that a vending machine service would be the worst option. The details are in the table below.

| Option | Best Option | Middle Option | Worst Option | Total |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| A – choice of hot meals | 27 | 2 | 0 | 29 |
| B – Lite Bites | 2 | 19 | 1 | 22 |
| C - Vending Machines | 1 | 0 | 12 | 13 |
| | 30 | 21 | 13 | |

Note: some respondents chose not to complete Middle/Worst Options

Q12: What do you consider to be an acceptable price for a 2-course lunch?

Nearly half of the people who responded to this question said that they thought that £7.00-£9.00 was a reasonable price for a two-course lunch. A further 27% said that they thought £5.00-£7.00 was reasonable. Nearly one in five (17%) thought that £3.00-£5.00 was reasonable, whilst only 3 residents (10%) thought that over £9 would be acceptable. The details are in the table below.

| Option | Response |
|--------------|----------|
| £3-£5 | 5 (17%) |
| £5-£7 | 8 (27%) |
| £7-£9 | 14 (47%) |
| More than £9 | 3 (10%) |

Q13a: Would you be willing to pay an additional weekly cost towards a long term, in-house catering service?

Just under two thirds of the residents surveyed said that they would be prepared to pay an additional weekly cost, although they were generally somewhat cautious about the idea. Just over a third said that they would not be prepared to pay an additional weekly cost - some said that this was unaffordable, or that they did not intend to use the restaurant in any case.

| Additional Weekly Cost | Response |
|------------------------|----------|
| Yes | 16 (62%) |
| No | 10 (38%) |

Q13b: Would you like the provider to deliver activities/seasonal events?

Residents were split over this question with approximately 60% saying “yes” and just under 40% saying “no”. Residents who supported this idea thought that this would help to bring external visitors into the scheme and several commented that they had supported these events previously.

| Activities/Seasonal Events | Response |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Yes | 17 (61%) |
| No | 11 (39%) |

Most of those who did not support the idea, did not comment or commented that others were already doing this in the scheme.

Q14: How would you like the provider to link to the local community?

Several people did not respond to this question, but of those who did, nearly half said that the local community should be welcomed in – many of these saying that it would be good to see more people socially. Some surveys mentioned that welcoming external people into the restaurant would improve the viability of the service, and a significant minority suggested that there should be more (and better) advertising of the service. Some residents suggested that if the local community were welcomed into the restaurant, residents should get preferential treatment – either a discount or a specific timeslot where they were the priority.

Q15. Are there any other options you think would work well in your scheme?

Responses to this question included several saying that hot food/a restaurant was needed especially for those who are unable to shop/cook for themselves. Also one survey suggested serving meals to carers only 11.30-12.00 so that they could take meals to residents in their apartments where this was required, rather than having carers queue with residents at 12.00.

Q16. Please tell us anything else important to you about the catering service.

Five people said that it was important that the service be reinstated, whilst 13 mentioned the importance of the social aspect of the restaurant service. There were also 9 mentions of the importance of nutritious, hot meals. Three people mentioned including the local community. There was also mention of a “proper” coffee machine, employing a qualified chef, using local catering colleges to provide staff for training.

9.3.2.2 Willowmere Responses

Q6 What catering service would you like to see in future?

An overwhelming majority of the people who filled in the survey wanted to see an onsite catering service in future. Only four residents chose other options.

Q7 If onsite catering was provided in the extra care schemes, would you use it?

More than 90% of the people who responded to the survey said that they would use onsite catering, if the service was provided. These people commented that they would welcome the choice, quality and social opportunities an onsite service would provide.

Q8 When thinking about availability of catering in your scheme, which 1 of the following suits your needs best?

This question asked residents how many days a week they would like catering available in the scheme. The options were given were 1-2 days per week, 5 days or 7 days. Nearly 60% of residents said that they would like the service to be open every day and a further 28% chose 5 days a week. Only two residents chose 2 days per week.

Q9 In respect of mealtimes, please rank Breakfast, Lunch and Evening Meal in order of importance.

Just over three-quarters of residents said that lunch was the most important mealtime. Lunch was also the most popular mealtime to be ranked overall. Four people ranked an evening meal first and a further 12 ranked it second. Of the people who expressed a second choice, 63% of them chose an evening meal. Breakfast was ranked least important in the total number of rankings it achieved and came last as a first and second choice. The details are shown in the table below.

| | 1 st Option | 2 nd Option | 3 rd Option | Total |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Breakfast | 3 | 5 | 12 | 20 |
| Lunch | 23 | 4 | 1 | 28 |
| Evening Meal | 4 | 12 | 7 | 23 |
| TOTAL | 30 | 21 | 20 | |

Q10 Rank your top four reasons for visiting the restaurant.

The survey gave a list of seven reasons to visit the restaurant, and residents were asked to rank their top four.

About half the residents chose Lunch as their top reason to visit the restaurant. Meeting other residents was the most popular second reason, whilst meeting external visitors was the most popular third option.

Overall, Lunch was the most mentioned reason for visiting the restaurant, followed by meeting other residents and then meeting external visitors. Further details may be found in the table below.

| | Top Reason | 2 nd Reason | 3 rd Reason | 4 th Reason |
|--|------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Cooked Breakfast | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| Cooked Lunch | 16 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hot/Cold Drinks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Hot/Cold Drink plus Snack | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| Special Occasions/ One-Off Events | 0 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Meeting friends/family who live in your scheme | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meeting friends/family who do not live in your scheme | 0 | 2 | 6 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

This aligns with previous survey results, which indicate that the social aspect of eating in the restaurant is important to many of Willowmere's residents.

Q11: Which of the three options (Similar to Current/Lite Bites/Vending Machines) do you think would be best in future?

Nearly 95% of the survey responses said that Option A - a service similar to the previous service – would be best in future. Of those who went on to choose 2nd and 3rd options, more than 80% who chose a middle option chose a “light bites” service and ~88% of those who completed a third option that a vending machine service would be the worst option.

| Option | Best Option | Middle Option | Worst Option | Total |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------|
| A – choice of hot meals | 27 | 1 | 1 | 29 |
| B – Lite Bites | 2 | 15 | 1 | 18 |
| C - Vending Machines | 0 | 2 | 15 | 17 |
| | 29 | 18 | 17 | |

Q12: What do you consider to be an acceptable price for a 2-course lunch?

Over half of the people who responded to this question said that they thought that £7.00-£9.00 was a reasonable price for a two-course lunch. A further 23% said that they thought £5.00-£7.00 was reasonable. One resident considered £3.00-£5.00 reasonable, whilst 5 residents (17%) thought that over £9 would be acceptable. The details are in the table below.

| Option | Response |
|--------------|----------|
| £3-£5 | 1 (3%) |
| £5-£7 | 7 (23%) |
| £7-£9 | 17 (57%) |
| More than £9 | 5 (17%) |

Q13a: Would you be willing to pay an additional weekly cost towards a long term, in-house catering service?

Just under two thirds of the residents surveyed said that they would be prepared to pay an additional weekly cost for an in-house catering service. Just over a third said that they would not be prepared to pay an additional weekly cost - some said that this was unaffordable, or

that they did not think they would use the restaurant often enough to make this cost-effective.

| Additional Weekly Cost | Response |
|------------------------|----------|
| Yes | 16 (64%) |
| No | 9 (36%) |

Q13b: Would you like the provider to deliver activities/seasonal events?

Seven in ten residents said that they would like the catering provider to deliver activities/seasonal events. Many of those who supported this idea thought that this would help to bring external visitors into the scheme and several commented that they had supported these events previously. They welcomed more social activities. Most of those who did not support the idea, did not give reasons why.

| Activities/Seasonal Events | Response |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Yes | 19 (73%) |
| No | 7 (27%) |

Q14: How would you like the provider to link to the local community?

Several people did not respond to this question, but of those who did, nearly 80% said that the local community should be welcomed in – many of these saying that it would be good to see more people socially. Several residents were also supportive of the catering provider delivering meals to local residents who were housebound. One survey mentioned that welcoming external people into the restaurant would improve the viability of the service, and several suggested that there should be more (and better) advertising of the service. One resident suggested that if the local community were welcomed into the restaurant, residents should be given priority.

Q15. Are there any other options you think would work well in your scheme?

Responses to this question included several saying that hot food/a restaurant was needed and it would be nice to be able to socialise with friends/order a buffet for celebrations, birthdays and wakes. One survey suggested opening the facilities to external community groups. One person thought that an out-of-hours vending machine alongside the restaurant could be worth exploring.

Q16. Please tell us anything else important to you about the catering service.

Nearly half the people who answered this question commented that hot nutritious meals were important to them. There were also 9 mentions of the importance of the restaurant as a social hub. Two people mentioned including the local community. Some people mentioned concerns with less able people having to cook for themselves. There were also mentions of a personalised service, with choice, freshly cooked food and supporting employment of local people.

9.4 Appendix 3: Soft Market Testing

In June 2025, the Council published a soft market questionnaire. Two responses were received. An anonymised summary of those responses follows – wording is as per the submission except where removed to preserve anonymity and relevance. Note that the questionnaire was explicitly “an information gathering exercise” and not a pre-qualification process or part of any formal procurement process.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Q1 | Do You have experience of delivering catering services in an extra care housing scheme or similar environment? If so, what does this include? |
| A1.1 | <p>While Organisation 1 has not directly operated within an Extra Care Housing Scheme, we have extensive experience delivering catering services in similar, service-focused environments that require a high level of care, attention to detail, and customer engagement. With over 40 years of industry experience and more than two decades as an independent, family-owned business, we’ve successfully managed long-term food and beverage contracts across a variety of multi-user and public settings.</p> <p>Our experience includes working with a number of organisations where we’ve been responsible for multi-site catering operations. These contracts have involved delivering consistent, high-quality meals while managing diverse dietary needs, upholding rigorous health and safety protocols, and ensuring excellent customer service standards.</p> <p>As a Real Living Wage employer, we place strong emphasis on staff training, food safety, and compliance with all relevant health and industry regulations—principles that align closely with the expectations of Extra Care Housing Schemes. Our ethos focuses on sustainable, affordable, and nutritious food offerings, and we are confident in our ability to tailor our services to support the wellbeing and nutritional needs of residents in such settings.</p> |
| A1.2 | <p>While Organisation 2 has not yet delivered catering services specifically within an Extra Care Housing Scheme, we have relevant experience operating cafés in inclusive and community-focused environments that support people of all ages, including older adults and individuals with additional needs. These include cafes in parks and leisure centres.</p> <p>All these settings serve a broad demographic, including older people, families, and individuals attending wellness and leisure programmes. Our approach in all locations emphasises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable, nutritious menus designed with community health in mind, including options for specific dietary needs such as low-sugar, low-fat, and allergen-sensitive meals. |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming and accessible environments, where social interaction is encouraged, and customers are supported in a respectful and friendly way—key qualities in extra care settings. • Community engagement, with seasonal menu changes, themed food days, and integration with on-site activities (e.g. leisure classes or community events), contributing to a sense of inclusion and belonging. • Operational consistency, including managing staff, food safety, and customer service to meet both commercial targets and community expectations. |
| | |
| Q2 | What do you understand to be the main challenges to the delivery of catering services in Extra Care Housing Schemes? How can these be effectively addressed to improve outcomes for the residents of Cheshire East? |
| A2.1 | <p>Delivering catering services in Extra Care Housing Schemes presents a unique set of challenges, primarily centred around the need to balance nutritional standards, individual preferences, and health-related dietary requirements within a consistent and cost-effective operation. Key challenges include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Meeting Diverse Dietary Needs Residents often have specific health conditions (e.g. diabetes, dysphagia, or allergies) requiring tailored meals. Maintaining variety while ensuring all food meets nutritional and medical guidelines can be complex. <i>Our Solution:</i> Prioritising staff training in dietary and allergen awareness and working closely with health professionals and residents to ensure menus are inclusive, safe, and nourishing. We regularly update our meal offerings based on seasonal produce and resident feedback. 2 Maintaining Choice and Dignity Food is not only about nutrition—it's about comfort, familiarity, and dignity. A rigid or institutional approach to food can negatively impact quality of life. <i>Our Solution:</i> We engage residents in menu planning, offer flexible meal options, and create a warm, welcoming dining environment that feels more like home than a care facility. This approach encourages independence and personal choice. 3 Ensuring Consistency and Quality with Limited Budgets Managing quality, freshness, and variety while adhering to strict budget constraints can be difficult. |

| | |
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| | <p><i>Our Solution:</i> Organisation 1 is agile and cost-efficient. We have strong supplier relationships and streamline procurement processes, allowing us to deliver high-quality food at competitive prices. We also use local suppliers wherever possible to support community resilience and reduce food miles.</p> <p>4 Staff Recruitment and Retention Recruiting and retaining skilled, compassionate catering staff is a sector-wide challenge.</p> <p><i>Our Solution:</i> As a Real Living Wage employer, we value and invest in our team. We provide robust training, clear progression routes, and a supportive culture, which translates into more consistent, higher-quality service delivery for residents.</p> <p>5 Regulatory Compliance and Health & Safety Ensuring that all food safety, hygiene, and care regulations are adhered to is crucial in a care environment.</p> <p><i>Our Solution:</i> We have embedded robust health & safety and food hygiene practices across all our sites, supported by ongoing training, internal audits, and a culture of accountability.</p> <p>Improving Outcomes for Residents of Cheshire East</p> <p>To enhance outcomes for residents, we believe in a partnership-based approach. This includes regular resident feedback sessions, collaboration with care teams, and a continuous improvement ethos. By listening and adapting, we can provide not just meals, but meaningful dining experiences that support physical wellbeing, mental health, and social engagement.</p> |
| A2.2 | <p>Based on our experience operating cafés in inclusive, public-facing environments, we understand that delivering catering services in Extra Care Housing Schemes presents several unique challenges, particularly due to the diverse and evolving needs of elderly and sometimes vulnerable residents.</p> <p>Below are some of the key challenges we anticipate along with potential strategies to improve outcomes for resident.</p> <p>1. Dietary and Health Considerations</p> <p>The residents may have specific dietary requirements due to medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or dietary restrictions related to age (e.g., reduced sodium or sugar intake). When planning the meals it will be essential to take this into consideration.</p> |

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| | <p>2. Maintaining resident choice, independence and cultural requirements</p> <p>Residents may have varied preferences around the meals and their timings. The residents may be from different cultural backgrounds with cultural requirements around the meals they have, meaning that providing a one-size-fits-all menu may not be effective.</p> <p>3. Staffing and Training</p> <p>Ensuring adequate staffing will be key for the delivery of services. The staff delivering and preparing meals must be adequately trained not only in food safety but also in understanding the unique needs of residents in Extra Care Housing Schemes.</p> <p>4. Timing and Scheduling</p> <p>Residents may have varying routines and care needs, which affect when and how they receive their meals.</p> <p>Strategies</p> <p>Food safety standards</p> <p>Maintaining the food safety standard will be essential. As an organisation we ensure that staff working at our sites are trained in food safety. We have policies in place for staff to follow. We have process in place to ensure that we are following the law within UK for food handling and safety. Some of the e.g. is temperature log for monitoring of temperature, stock rotation to ensure that wastage is reduced.</p> <p>We maintain detailed logs of all ingredients, recipes, and allergens, as mandated by Natasha's Law 2021, ensuring this information is readily accessible to both staff and customers. These logs are regularly reviewed and updated to accommodate any new products we introduce.</p> <p>We follow the HSE Health and Safety standards and ensure with the requirements within the premises. We have fire extinguisher, first aid kit in the premises as per the our Health and safety arrangements and all our electrical equipment's are PAT tested. We keep fire safety training records.</p> <p>Collaborative working</p> <p>It will be essential to work collaboratively with the management, staff and residents to ensure that the needs are met effectively and efficiently. We have experience within our current council contract for kids club where we have worked with staff to offer a menu that meet the needs and preference of the kids and equally nutritious and enjoyable.</p> <p>Meal Planning</p> |
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| | <p>Ensuring that the meals are provided to the residents in a timely manner as per their care plan and schedule. Utilising the kitchen at site will allow the timely service of the meals and avoiding any delays.</p> <p>Customisable menu</p> <p>We will be looking to work with the staff and resistance to allow us to offer a flexible meal option that caters to the cultural and dietary needs of the residents. We will be looking to create a rotating menu with a range of options, allowing residents to choose meals based on preference. This will help prevent dissatisfaction.</p> <p>Regular feedback</p> <p>In our current practice we value customer feedback and utilise these to make improvement to our services and ensure that we are meeting the needs of the community. We would be looking to do the same in the extra care housing scheme by taking regular feedbacks from our residents and where reasonable and possible make changes to improve our services.</p> <p>I believe that by taking these considerations into account and fostering a collaborative approach, catering services can make a positive and lasting impact on the lives of residents in Extra Care Housing Schemes.</p> |
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| Q3 | <p>What would be your approach to making this a financially sustainable service? What type of additional support might you need to achieve this, for example, offset utility costs, ability to deliver outside of the facility, initial/ongoing subsidy from either the Council or scheme residents?</p> |
| A3.1 | <p>At Organisation 1, we understand that sustainability—both financial and operational—is critical in delivering long-term, value-for-money catering services in Extra Care Housing schemes like Oakmere and Willowmere.</p> <p>Our Approach to Sustainability:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p>1. Optimising Core Operations</p> <p>We would apply our proven model of efficient staffing, smart procurement, and minimising food waste to keep overheads low while maintaining quality. Our established supply chains and in-house menu development ensure meals are both cost-effective and tailored to residents' nutritional needs and preferences.</p> <p>2. Flexible, Resident-Centric Service</p> <p>Offering tiered meal options (e.g., standard, lighter bites, premium dishes) provides choice while controlling costs. We also build resident engagement into our model—co-creating menus and running regular feedback sessions to ensure high satisfaction and steady meal uptake.</p> |

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| | <p>3. Community Inclusion to Grow Revenue With Oakmere and Willowmere already partially open to the public, we would actively promote the bistro as a welcoming space for local residents, families, and community groups. This not only supports intergenerational community-building but also creates additional revenue that helps subsidise resident services.</p> <p>4. Events and Social Dining We would host regular themed events (e.g., seasonal lunches, community afternoon teas) to boost engagement and attract external footfall, turning dining into a social experience while supporting financial sustainability.</p> <p>Support That Would Enhance Viability: To make the service truly sustainable—especially in the early stages—we would welcome consideration of the following support mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility Support Assistance with utility costs (especially in shared or communal areas like kitchens and dining rooms) would help stabilise operating expenses and keep prices fair for residents. • Permission to Trade Beyond Residents Being allowed—and actively encouraged—to open the bistro to the general public and nearby organisations would significantly improve viability. We could offer light catering to nearby community groups or small local events, generating additional revenue. • Initial Setup Support A modest initial subsidy or fit-out support (where additional kitchen or point-of-sale equipment is required) would allow us to quickly establish a high-quality operation with minimal disruption. • Longer-Term Contract Structure A multi-year contract would allow us to invest in community engagement and build a loyal customer base, both within the schemes and externally, leading to long-term stability without reliance on high subsidy levels. |
| Q3.2 | <p>Our approach to financial sustainability in an Extra Care Housing catering service would be based on a balanced, multi-stream model that draws on our experience operating successful community cafés in similar public-service environments.</p> <p>1. Core Principles for Sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable, nutritious meals for residents priced to cover direct costs while remaining accessible. • Open access to the local community, allowing us to increase footfall, promote intergenerational use, and build additional revenue through non-resident visitors. • Efficient kitchen operations, including careful stock control and minimal food waste through menu planning and forecasting. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced staffing model built around local recruitment and team consistency to keep costs down while maintaining high standards of service and engagement. <p>2. Additional Support That Would Enhance Viability: To ensure the service is not only sustainable but also delivers the social and wellbeing outcomes expected in Extra Care settings, we may require some targeted support, especially in the early stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial support with utility and facilities costs (e.g., gas, electricity, waste management) to offset overheads while resident and public footfall builds. • Permission and flexibility to serve external customers, including local community groups, delivery to nearby care homes or community centres, and public café access. • Modest start-up subsidy or rent-free period to support mobilisation and staff recruitment/training before full-service uptake is achieved. • Support with marketing and communication, especially from the Council or housing scheme operators, to promote the service to residents, families, and the local public. <p>3. Ongoing Partnership and Evaluation: Financial sustainability also depends on clear performance expectations, transparent communication, and regular review. We would propose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly financial and service reviews with Council representatives and scheme managers. • Resident feedback mechanisms to align the offer with preferences and improve uptake. • Flexibility to trial new ideas (e.g., afternoon teas, Sunday roasts, special events) that may increase income and engagement. <p>Conclusion: With the right conditions, particularly access to both resident and community trade, and modest early-stage support—we are confident that an Organisation 2-led service could become financially self-sustaining while delivering meaningful outcomes for residents at Oakmere and Willowmere.</p> |
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| Q4 | Given your experiences and expertise within this field, can you describe a typical week in such a scheme, including opening days/times and menu options, etc? |
| A4.1 | <p>Opening Days and Times: We would operate 7 days a week, ensuring residents and visitors have consistent access to nutritious food and a welcoming dining environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast: 8:00am – 10:00am • Lunch (Main Meal): 12:00pm – 2:00pm • Afternoon Tea / Light Bites: 3:00pm – 4:30pm • Evening Meal Service (Optional): 5:00pm – 6:30pm |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Access (Bistro): 10:00am – 4:00pm (Mon–Sat), 10:00am – 2:00pm (Sunday) <p>We can flex opening hours to suit resident needs and community demand.</p> <p>Menu Structure: Menus are built around nutrition, comfort, and choice, tailored to older adults with various dietary requirements. A rotating 4-week menu cycle would be used, updated seasonally and adapted with resident input.</p> <p>Daily Meal Options:</p> <p>Breakfast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full English (with modified or smaller portions available) • Porridge, cereals, toast, fresh fruit • Tea, coffee, juices <p>Lunch (Main Meal):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two hot meal options daily (e.g., Roast Chicken or Vegetable Hotpot) • Vegetarian and soft-food options always available • Traditional puddings (e.g., Apple Crumble, Rice Pudding) • Freshly prepared soup and roll for lighter appetites <p>Afternoon Tea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwiches, quiche slices, savoury pastries • Scones, tray bakes, fruit • Tea/coffee and social time <p>Evening Meal (Optional or Pre-Order):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighter options: omelettes, jacket potatoes, soup, or reheatable small dishes • Snacks, fruit, and hot drinks available for later consumption <p>Weekly Themes & Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday: Resident favourites (comfort food classics, e.g., Cottage Pie) • Tuesday: “Taste of the World” (e.g., mild curry, Italian pasta dishes) • Wednesday: Soup & Sandwich Social (open to public) • Thursday: Health & Wellbeing Menu (low-salt, diabetic-friendly focus) • Friday: Fish Friday – traditional fish & chips or baked fish alternative • Saturday: Afternoon Tea Café – open for residents and visitors • Sunday: Roast Lunch – with choice of meats, Yorkshire pudding, etc. <p>Resident & Community Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Menu Planning Sessions with residents to gather feedback • Themed Events – e.g., Easter lunch, Jubilee tea parties, music & meal afternoons • Invite Local Groups – knitting clubs, walking groups, family socials |
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| | <p>Additional Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal Pre-ordering & Room Delivery (for unwell or less mobile residents) • Special Diets: Gluten-free, diabetic, low-sodium, pureed/soft food menus available daily • Light Retail Offering: Grab-and-go snacks, drinks, basic groceries (optional) <p>Staffing Model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced catering manager on-site • Trained chefs and kitchen assistants • Front-of-house staff with dementia-friendly and safeguarding awareness • Cleaning and compliance teams ensuring daily hygiene standards |
| A4.2 | <p>Drawing on our operational experience at Jollys Kafe sites such as Howe Bridge Leisure Centre, Chaddesden Café in the Park, and Timperley, we would propose the following model for a typical week in an Extra Care Housing Scheme like Oakmere or Willowmere:</p> <p>Opening Days & Hours:</p> <p>We recommend operating 7 days a week, ensuring consistent service for residents while encouraging regular external visitors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday to Friday: 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM • Saturday & Sunday: 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM • Breakfast Service: 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM • Lunch Service: 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM • Afternoon Light Bites & Drinks: Until closing <p>Opening hours can be adjusted based on resident feedback and operational review.</p> <p>Menu Options:</p> <p>Menus would be rotated weekly, with daily specials, and adapted seasonally. Each day would typically include:</p> <p><i>Breakfast</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porridge with honey or fruit • Toast, preserves, eggs (poached/scrambled/boiled) • Low-fat yoghurts and fruit • Hot and cold drinks <p><i>Lunch (Main Meal)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two hot options per day, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Monday: Roast chicken or vegetable lasagne |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesday: Baked fish or macaroni cheese ○ Wednesday: Cottage pie or vegetarian stew ○ Thursday: Chicken curry or lentil dahl ○ Friday: Fish & chips or cheese & onion pie ○ Saturday: Quiche & salad or soup & sandwich combo ○ Sunday: Full roast dinner (beef, pork, or vegetarian option) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sides: Seasonal vegetables, potatoes, rice or pasta • Desserts: Fruit crumbles, sponge pudding, jelly & fruit, or diabetic-friendly options <p><i>Afternoon Offerings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toasted teacakes, scones, sandwiches • Tea, coffee, soft drinks • Light meals for those who missed lunch or prefer a smaller option <p>Special Weekly Activities to Build Routine & Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday: "Meat-Free Monday" vegetarian specials • Wednesday: Baking or cook-and-chat sessions with residents • Friday: Fish Friday—open to community visitors • Sunday: Roast lunch with option for families to join <p>Additional Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-order service for residents who prefer meals in their apartments • Takeaway or delivery service to nearby community members (if allowed) • Meal deals or loyalty cards to promote regular uptake <p>Conclusion: A typical week in the scheme would be structured, welcoming, and flexible to the needs of residents, helping to provide not just good nutrition but social connection and routine. With thoughtful scheduling, inclusive menus, and responsive staffing, this model would enhance both wellbeing and sustainability.</p> |
| Q5 | <p>Would your organisation be interested in tendering for this service? If so, what would be your desired length of contract to ensure best value, and how long would you require to mobilise the service from contract award? This should include recruitment of staff, advertisement and promotion of commissioned services/ activities.</p> |

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| A5.1 | <p>Organisation 1 confirms our strong interest in tendering for the catering services at Oakmere and Willowmere Extra Care Housing Schemes. As a family-owned, independent business with over 40 years' experience in the industry and more than two decades operating in the Northwest, we are well-positioned to deliver a sustainable, high-quality service that supports the wellbeing of residents and contributes positively to the surrounding community.</p> <p>2. Preferred Contract Length</p> <p>To ensure best value and long-term sustainability for all stakeholders, we would recommend a minimum initial contract term of 3 years, with the option to extend by a further 2 years (3+2 model). This contract length would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support meaningful investment in service development • Enable long-term engagement with residents and community partners • Promote pricing stability and operational continuity • Encourage a strong commitment to local employment and supply chains <p>We propose the contract operate on a cost-plus basis, which means Organisation 1 would be reimbursed for the actual costs incurred in delivering the service—such as food ingredients, staff wages, utilities, and operational expenses—plus an agreed fixed fee or percentage margin to cover overheads and profit.</p> <p>This model provides transparency and flexibility, allowing the service to adapt to fluctuations in costs (for example, changes in food prices or utility bills) without compromising on quality or staffing levels. It also safeguards affordability and value for money, as all costs are open to review and aligned closely with actual service delivery needs.</p> <p>By combining a longer contract term with a cost-plus pricing model, we can ensure both financial sustainability for the provider and consistent, high-quality catering services that meet the needs of residents and the wider community.</p> <p>3. Mobilisation Period & Activity Breakdown</p> <p>Organisation 1 would require a 6–8 week mobilisation period from the date of contract award to ensure a smooth and successful launch. This would include the following key phases:</p> <p>Week 1–2: Initial Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site assessments (kitchen layout, fixtures/fittings review) • Mobilisation plan finalisation and assignment of project manager <p>Week 2–5: Recruitment & Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local recruitment of catering staff (chefs, front-of-house, kitchen assistants) • Delivery of training in food hygiene, safeguarding, customer service, and dementia awareness <p>Week 3–6: Marketing & Promotion</p> |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and distribution of promotional materials to residents and surrounding community • Early engagement with residents and families via menu tasters and open days • Liaison with local organisations to encourage bistro footfall <p>Week 5–6: Operational Setup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier onboarding and stock procurement • Setup of POS systems and menu scheduling • Finalisation of daily service structure and dietary accommodations <p>Week 7: Soft Opening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial service to residents only, incorporating feedback for final refinements <p>Week 8: Full Launch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and resident-facing catering offer live, with full menu rotation and social dining events |
| A5.2 | <p>Organisation 2 would be very interested in tendering for the opportunity to deliver catering services at Oakmere and Willowmere Extra Care Housing schemes. We believe our experience operating in inclusive, health-focused community settings aligns closely with the aims of Cheshire East Council in promoting independence, nutrition, and social engagement among older residents.</p> <p>Desired Contract Length:</p> <p>To ensure long-term viability, quality investment, and community integration, we would recommend a minimum initial contract term of 3 years, with the option to extend for a further 2 years based on performance and mutual agreement.</p> <p>This duration would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide enough time to build trusted relationships with residents • Support investment in local recruitment, training, and community outreach • Offer stability for sustainable service development and customer base growth <p>Mobilisation Period:</p> <p>We estimate a mobilisation period of approximately 8–10 weeks from the date of contract award, broken down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeks 1–2: Detailed handover and site visits, compliance checks, utility arrangements, equipment review • Weeks 3–5: Recruitment of on-site catering team, including front-of-house and kitchen staff |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeks 5–7: Staff induction and training (food safety, dementia awareness, resident engagement) • Weeks 6–8: Menu planning, supplier setup, marketing and communications to residents and local community • Week 9–10: Soft launch or phased opening, feedback gathering and adjustments <p>This timeframe ensures a smooth, safe, and confident service launch, while building early awareness and engagement with residents and the local community.</p> <p>Conclusion: We are committed to delivering a high-quality, resident-focused catering service and would welcome the opportunity to bring the Organisation 2 approach to Oakmere and Willowmere. With the right contract term and clear mobilisation planning, we are confident we can offer both immediate impact and lasting value</p> |
| Q6 | In your experience, what would be the best ways to attract custom from residents and the local community? |
| A6.1 | <p>At Organisation 1, we've learned that attracting and sustaining interest from both residents and the wider community requires a careful balance of quality, familiarity, affordability, and a welcoming atmosphere. Based on our extensive experience delivering catering services in residential and public-facing environments, we would take the following approach to building and maintaining strong engagement:</p> <p>1. Resident Engagement from Day One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menu Co-Creation: Involving residents in menu design through tasting sessions, surveys, and monthly feedback groups ensures the offer is tailored to their tastes and needs, encouraging consistent uptake. • Flexible Meal Options: Providing a range of portion sizes, soft food options, and traditional dishes gives residents more choice and control—key to maintaining dignity and appetite in older adults. • Routine & Reliability: Having fixed mealtimes and consistent, friendly staff helps build trust and a sense of comfort, making the dining room a central part of daily life. <p>2. Creating a Welcoming, Inclusive Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Café Culture: Branding the dining space as a local café or bistro, with clearly advertised opening hours and public access, helps remove any stigma around “care home” dining and makes the space more appealing to the community. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm Front-of-House Presence: Trained, friendly staff who greet visitors and engage with residents by name foster a sense of belonging that encourages repeat visits. • Community Integration: We would invite local groups (e.g., coffee mornings, knit-and-natter, walking groups) to use the space, drawing in people who might otherwise not engage with the scheme. <p>3. Themed Days and Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly & Monthly Specials: Events such as “Fish Friday,” Sunday Roasts, or “Afternoon Tea Thursdays” become fixtures that people look forward to. • Seasonal & Cultural Celebrations: Events around holidays (e.g., Easter Lunch, Christmas Dinner, Diwali Snacks) bring residents, families, and locals together and create shared moments. • Entertainment Pairings: Music, quizzes, or local school visits alongside meal service make for memorable experiences and help build emotional connections with the service. <p>4. Local Marketing & Word of Mouth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Promotion: Flyers in local shops, GP surgeries, libraries, and community centres—combined with social media and council communications—help raise awareness of the service beyond the scheme. • Family & Friends Engagement: Encouraging residents’ visitors to dine with them builds word-of-mouth referrals. Offering discounts or loyalty schemes for returning guests can enhance this further. • Community Testimonials: Sharing positive stories, feedback, and pictures (with permission) builds trust and gives new customers a reason to visit. <p>5. Quality and Value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Pricing with Clear Value: Transparent pricing that reflects quality and portion size is crucial. Offering meal deals or loyalty cards for regular guests can make the service more attractive. • Consistency in Food & Service: High-quality meals served in a warm environment will always be the strongest selling point. |
| Q6.2 | <p>In our experience operating community-facing cafés, attracting and retaining custom from both residents and the local community relies on a combination of reliable service, inclusive atmosphere, targeted outreach, and meaningful engagement. Below are the key strategies we would adopt:</p> <p>1. Build Trust and Routine Among Residents</p> |

- **Familiarity and consistency:** Assigning regular staff to the site helps build personal connections and encourages repeat visits.
- **Resident input on menus:** Involving residents in menu feedback and occasional tasting panels increases buy-in and satisfaction.
- **Flexible meal options:** Offering smaller portions, soft food alternatives, and options for room service or takeaway supports varying needs.
- **Activity-linked catering:** Aligning food service with scheme events (e.g. coffee mornings, quizzes, or birthday celebrations) increases uptake and social participation.

2. Attract Local Community Members

- **Open access and clear signage:** Ensuring the café is visible and welcoming to the public, with clear external signage and walk-in access where appropriate.
- **Community partnerships:** Collaborating with local groups (e.g. walking clubs, carers' support, craft groups) to host meetups in the café space.
- **Local promotions:** Using flyers, community noticeboards, and social media to share menus, offers, and events with residents and nearby neighbourhoods.

3. Themed Events and Social Activities

- **Weekly themed food days** (e.g. "Pie & Pud Wednesdays" or "Sunday Roast Club") encourage curiosity and repeat custom.
- **Seasonal events** such as Mother's Day lunches, Christmas dinners, or summer BBQs help bring families and the wider public in.
- **Intergenerational events** like school choir visits or grandparents' tea afternoons build community bridges and draw in new visitors.

4. Consistent Quality and Value

- **Affordable, high-quality food** served in a clean, welcoming environment is the most reliable driver of word-of-mouth growth.
- **Loyalty cards and meal deals** can encourage residents and local visitors to make it a regular habit.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, building strong relationships with residents while creating a warm and open community hub is the most effective way to grow and sustain customer numbers. At **Organisation 2**, we've found that when

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| | people feel valued and included, they come back—not just for the food, but for the atmosphere and connection. |
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| Q7 | Please give any suggestions for how service delivery could have a positive impact on the local community. |
| A7.1 | <p>At Organisation 2, we believe that catering services within Extra Care Housing Schemes can be much more than just meal provision—they can serve as a social, economic, and community anchor. Below are several ways our service delivery model could generate meaningful impact for the local community:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating a Community Dining Hub <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Access Café/Bistro Model: By keeping the dining area open to the public during set hours, we can create a welcoming, inclusive space where local residents, family members, and community groups feel encouraged to visit. • Shared Events & Celebrations: Hosting public events such as afternoon teas, themed food days, holiday meals, and charity brunches builds intergenerational and cross-community connections. • Safe, Social Space for Isolated Individuals: Many older adults living locally may be lonely or isolated. An open, friendly catering facility gives them a safe, warm environment to enjoy food and make connections. 2. Supporting Local Employment & Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring Locally: Prioritising local recruitment for front- and back-of-house roles creates jobs, reduces travel time for employees, and supports the area's economy. • Apprenticeships & Work Placements: Partnering with local colleges, schools, or training programmes (e.g., for hospitality, catering, or adult re-skilling) could offer structured work experience placements or apprenticeships. • Inclusive Employment: We would be open to working with supported employment services to create opportunities for individuals with disabilities or barriers to work. 3. Partnering with Community Groups and Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Group Use of Facilities: Allowing local groups (e.g., social clubs, carers' groups, dementia cafés) to use the space at off-peak times for events or gatherings helps build visibility and inclusion. • Joint Activities with On-Site Teams: We'd work collaboratively with scheme staff to support social and wellbeing activities, such as cookery demonstrations, nutrition workshops, or gardening-and-cooking initiatives. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Supplier Engagement: Where feasible, we aim to source fresh produce, baked goods, and other ingredients from local farms and producers, supporting small businesses in the area. <p>4. Promoting Intergenerational Links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools & Nurseries: Hosting joint events or inviting local schoolchildren in for activities (e.g., singing at Christmas, baking sessions with residents) fosters understanding and connection between generations. • Volunteering Opportunities: Encouraging local residents or young people to volunteer in the bistro or at events helps bridge community relationships and builds soft skills. <p>5. Enhancing Community Health & Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable, Nutritious Meals for All: Offering low-cost, nutritious meals to members of the public—including older people living nearby—supports community health and food security. • Nutrition Awareness Events: Collaborating with local health teams (e.g., dietitians or wellbeing officers) to provide information about healthy eating, hydration, and food for specific conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart health). |
| A7.2 | <p>At Organisation 2, we believe that catering services in Extra Care Housing schemes can do more than provide nutritious meals—they can become a vital social anchor for the wider community. Based on our experience in inclusive café environments, we see several opportunities to create a positive and lasting community impact:</p> <p>1. Creating a Community Hub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening the café to the public transforms it into a welcoming, intergenerational space, reducing isolation among older people while encouraging casual visits from local families, carers, and groups. • Hosting community events such as themed lunches, coffee mornings, or cultural celebrations helps foster connections between residents and their neighbours. <p>2. Supporting Local Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment would prioritise local staff, offering opportunities to individuals from the surrounding area, including young people, return-to-work parents, and semi-retired individuals. • Where possible, we would offer apprenticeship or training roles, contributing to local workforce development. |

3. Partnering with Local Organisations

- We would explore partnerships with **local schools, charities, and wellbeing groups** to co-host events or volunteer days, such as dementia-friendly café sessions or intergenerational storytelling mornings.
- Collaborating with **health professionals or wellness providers** (e.g. yoga or nutrition groups) would add value to residents while also drawing community members into the space.

4. Showcasing Local Suppliers

- Where possible, we would source ingredients from **local food producers, bakeries, and suppliers**, supporting the regional economy and promoting sustainability.

5. Providing Safe and Inclusive Space

- The café can be a neutral, stigma-free meeting point for carers, support groups, and individuals with additional needs—offering not just food but belonging and support.
- We would ensure **accessibility and inclusivity**, making everyone feel welcome regardless of age, ability, or background.

Conclusion:

With the right ethos and community-minded approach, catering in Extra Care schemes can become a bridge between residents and the broader community—promoting wellbeing, inclusion, and economic benefit. At **Organisation 2**, we are committed to creating this kind of positive local impact wherever we operate