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# Notrees Care Home – Response to Consultation

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Executive
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	22 September 2022
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Jo Stewart
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	11 July 2022
<b>Report Author:</b>	Paul Coe
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX4258

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

This report sets out new recommendations following the public consultation on the proposed closure of Notrees Care Home.

## 2 Recommendations

2.1 This report recommends that:

- a) Adult Social Care (ASC) does not progress with the proposed closure, but continues to operate the service while further work is undertaken. This will include re-starting permanent admissions.
- b) ASC communicates that intention to all relevant stakeholders as soon as possible.
- c) ASC undertakes further work to identify options to deliver a service which is viable in the long-term. This will include discussions with Sovereign Housing, who have a shared interest in the site.
- d) ASC continues to monitor both the level of service user need and the situation in the external provider market.
- e) ASC will set out an updated and costed set of recommendations in due course.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	In the short-to-medium term the financial impacts are minor. The Notrees revenue budget is generally fairly well managed. The biggest threat to this is the challenge regarding bed occupancy

**Notrees Care Home – Response to Consultation**

	<p>levels. A significant number of empty beds can create challenges in budget management. Closure of the home was anticipated to generate a saving, based on the assumption that external beds could be sourced more cheaply, but these savings were not put forward as they could not be confirmed until after consultation. There are capital monies available to undertake some improvements in the site. The longer-term costs are likely to increase due to the age of the building.</p> <p>Work to identify future plans for the site will be fully costed.</p>			
<b>Human Resource:</b>	<p>The recommendations support the retention of existing staff.</p> <p>There remains a challenge in securing sufficient staff (both permanent and agency) due to the home’s relatively rural location.</p>			
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>The proposed actions reduce the likelihood of challenge.</p> <p>There are covenants in place which restrict the available options for the future use of the Notrees site. This principally relates to the requirement that the land be used for ‘elderly accommodation’. Legal advice is being sought on the available options.</p>			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>The proposed actions reduce the risk of reputational damage as they take full account of the consultation response.</p>			
<b>Property:</b>	<p>The proposal is to retain Notrees and explore options for future use/ configuration, including discussions with Sovereign regarding their portion of the shared site.</p>			
<b>Policy:</b>	<p>The proposed actions need to sit alongside the wider ASC Care Homes Strategy.</p>			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				

Notrees Care Home – Response to Consultation

<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>Health Impact:</b>		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>Core Business:</b>		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		The impacts will emerge when further work has been undertaken.

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Jo Stewart - Executive Member for Adult Social Care Andy Sharp – Executive Director, People Paul Coe - Service Director, ASC Jenny Legge – Performance and Risk Tracy Thorne – Finance Manager Richard Pask - ASC Business Manager
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## 4 Executive Summary

4.1 The ASC Care Homes Strategy was agreed at Ops Board. One of the recommendations was that:

‘Notrees Care Home is closed within 18 months, as the building requires significant investment and it provides residential care for those with relatively low needs, which is a declining part of the market.’

4.2 Public consultation on this proposal was undertaken, and closed on 8<sup>th</sup> June.

4.3 The response to the public consultation indicated very significant levels of support for the service and strong resistance to the proposal to close. Responses demonstrated that the local community saw Notrees as a valuable asset playing an important role in the life of the community.

4.4 In light of the responses, a revised recommendation has been developed.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Arguments for closure

5.1 The arguments for closure were set out in the consultation documents. The following extracts set out the principal elements:

5.2 ‘The shape of demand for Adult Social Care has been changing over recent years, in part due to the impact of the pandemic on the needs of older people. Research, undertaken by Age UK, shows that there is a significant increase in the need for social care. The need for ‘ordinary’ residential care is growing more slowly than other needs and there is significant market capacity in West Berkshire and nearby homes. Currently only 40% of care home beds in West Berkshire are for dementia needs and these are at over 90% capacity. While general residential places, which make up 30% of available places, are operating at only 78% capacity.’

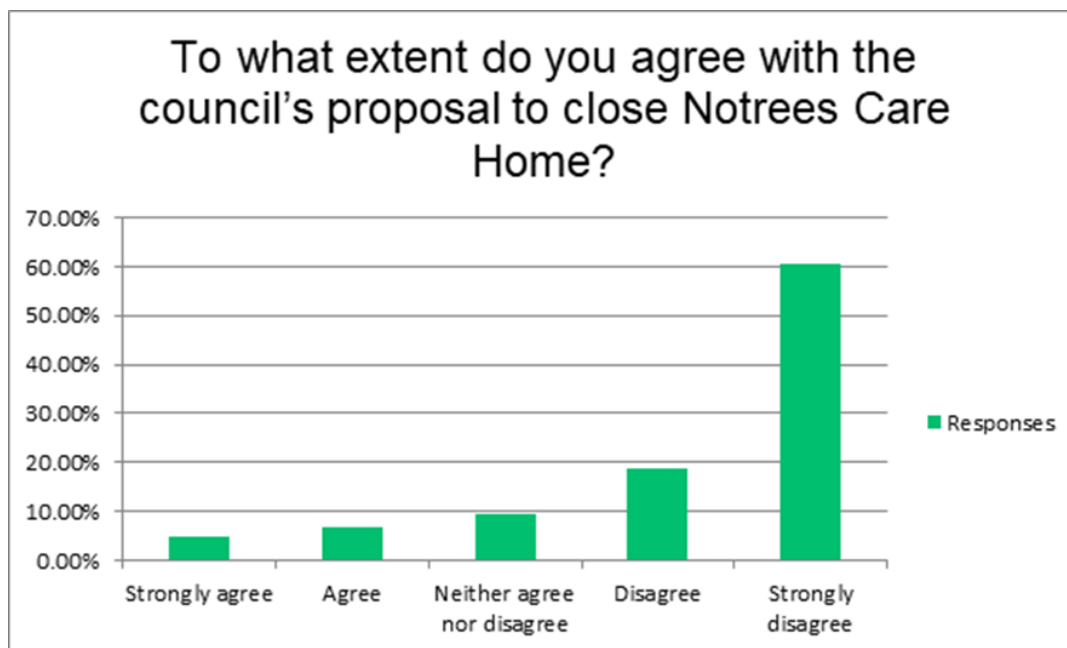
5.3 ‘It is also anticipated that more people who fund their own care will look to have carers in their own homes, until their needs become complex and nursing or advanced residential care is required.’

## Notrees Care Home – Response to Consultation

- 5.4 'Notrees cares for people who are more able, and have less complex needs and, as part of a recent evaluation of our services carried out by our Market Management Lead, who has been monitoring the care home market, it was assessed as a facility that was seeing a reduction in the number of residents who wished to live there.'
- 5.5 'Notrees is situated in a relatively rural location in the village of Kintbury which impacts on recruitment of new staff, as well as demand for places for residents. There is currently a significant challenge to recruit and retain appropriate number of quality staff in the Adult Social Care sector. A combination of Covid burnout, competition from the NHS, reduced numbers of workers from the European Union and rising wages in other sectors is making it harder to find and retain the necessary staff. The rural setting and small size of the home create additional hurdles to these more general recruitment and retention challenges.'
- 5.6 'Notrees has been assessed to be approaching the end of its life and would require around £400,000 to refurbish and maintain for another 5-7 years.'
- 5.7 'The home itself is relatively small, so may struggle to achieve levels of efficiency, especially with any tightening of Care Quality Commission regulations. Larger facilities can function effectively on smaller staffing ratios and purpose built homes will be designed to allow more room for social distancing, modern equipment, easier isolation of affected residents in cases of infection, fewer touch points and safer visitor areas.'

### Responses to the consultation

- 5.8 At the point when the consultation formally ended, the following had been submitted to the council:
- 5.9 Hard copy petitions against the closure totalling **418** signatures.
- 5.10 An online petition 'Save Notrees Care Home' (@change.org) had **522** signatures. This number has risen to **620** as at 1/7/2022.
- 5.11 The Liberal Democrats launched a petition (<https://www.wbld.org.uk/save-notrees>). The number of signatories is not visible on the site and has not been shared. The Liberal Democrats have communicated the intention to present the petition to Full Council on 19<sup>th</sup> July.
- 5.12 A formal response was also submitted by Kintbury Parish Council arguing for the retention of the service.
- 5.13 **115** people responded to the consultation and the summary of the responses is as follows:



5.14 Responses were received from a cross-section of people and included some directly affected people including resident of the home, their family members and staff working in the service.

5.15 The level and nature of the objections is very significantly greater than those submitted to the consultation on the closure of Walnut Close.

### Press Interest

5.16 There has been some press interest.

- a) <https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/berkshire-care-home-facing-closure-23789594>
- b) <https://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/brexit-and-covid-burnout-blamed-for-staff-shortages-9251167/>

### Counter Proposal

5.17 The Registered Manager of Notrees has developed a counter proposal for future uses of the site. It will be taken into consideration as we develop future options.

## 6 Conclusion

6.1 The recommendation to close Notrees Care Home was set out in the ASC Care Homes Strategy. Consequently a public consultation was undertaken.

6.2 The response to the public consultation indicated very significant levels of support for the service and strong resistance to the proposal to close.

6.3 In light of the responses it is recommended that a revised set of options are developed for the future use of the site which will seek to reflect the responses while also ensuring

that the service is viable in the long-term. In the interim, the service will revert to 'business as usual, including re-starting permanent admissions.

## 7 Appendices

None.

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### Subject to Call-In:

Yes:  No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

**Wards affected:** Kintbury

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