

## Budget Proposals 2016-17: Chestnut Walk Care Home

### Summary of Feedback Received and Key Findings

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#### Why we consulted?

Over the last four years we have had to make savings of £23m because we've received less money from central government. We have done this by becoming more efficient at what we do, by reducing some of our administrative functions and increasing our income. Throughout this period we have done our best to protect front line services.

We now have to find another £20m over the next four years, with almost £11m to be found in 2016/17. Much of this will come from further efficiencies within the council, but £4.6m will have to come from services that will impact the public.

In order to inform the budget setting process for 2016/17 we published a list of those proposals which would likely have a direct impact on service users, and sought the views from those affected and interested:

- to understand the likely impact
- to identify any measures to reduce their impact
- to explore any possible alternatives

#### Approach

All the proposals were published on the council's website on 3 November 2015 with feedback requested by 14 December 2015. Respondents were directed to a [central index page](#), with a video message from the Chief Executive outlining the background to the exercise.

Information relating to this proposal was linked directly from this index page. This contained more detailed information on what was specifically proposed, information on what we thought the impact might be, as well as what else we had considered in developing and arriving at this proposal. Feedback was then invited through an online form, and through a dedicated email address.

Head of Adult Services and Service Manager for provider services met with all staff to inform them of the proposed cuts and invite them to make a response.

Residents/ families of Chestnut walk were informed by letter and provided details of how to make a response to the consultation via the online consultation. Where requested specific meetings with families were set up to provide more detail and reassurance.

Each individual budget proposal was placed on our [Consultation Portal](#) which automatically notified those registered that an exercise had been launched. Members of the West Berkshire community panel (around 800 people) and local stakeholder charities, representative groups and partner organisations were also emailed directly, notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions.

Heads of Service made direct contact with those organisations affected by any of the budget proposals prior to them being made publically available.

A press release was issued on the same date, as well as publicised through Facebook and Twitter.

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#### **Background**

The council has a statutory duty to meet social care needs for vulnerable adults assessed as eligible under the Care Act (2014). This can include anything from providing advice and guidance, helping people stay at home by having a package of care or, in cases of high need, provision of residential care.

We do this by either providing the services directly or by purchasing them from independent or voluntary sector care providers.

The council currently owns and operates four care homes; these are located in Shaw, Thatcham, Kintbury and Hungerford. Two of the homes support people with dementia and two focus on older people who have high physical needs

Whilst a lot of work has been completed to ensure the homes represent good value for money, financial modelling on the smallest home shows that the council can purchase the care beds at a lower cost from external care providers. It is therefore proposed that we close the smallest home which is Chestnut Walk, which will result in a saving of £94,000.

#### **Summary of Key Points**

Responses were received from 13 individuals. 6 of these were service users or carers.

The following organisations responded:

- UNISON
- Pangbourne Parish Council
- Tilehurst Parish Council

The feedback received highlighted the negative impact the cuts in funding would have on very vulnerable elderly people and their families.

Many positive comments were made in relation to Chestnut walk; the quality of care received and staff team were regarded as 'outstanding' by a number of respondents.

Many were concerned about alternatives to the closure of the home, in terms of placements provided by the external market, and the locality and quality of such placements.

The following provides a more detailed summary of the responses received in relation to the specific questions:

#### **1. Are you, or anyone you care for, a user of this service?**

6 of the responses received were users of the service or carers / relatives.

#### **2. What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people?**

Respondents considered that the proposed cuts would have a significant impact on some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Impact identified included:

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- **Current residents**
  - Negative impact on health (physical and mental wellbeing) if required to move, causing significant anxiety (could shorten lives)
  - Continuity of care from GPs / District Nurses (DNs) will be lost
  - Increase in isolation and loneliness if they are moved further away from their family
- **Family and friends of residents**
  - Allocation of homes further away has a significant impact of the ability for families to visit
  - Increase in isolation and loneliness due to inability to visit
  - Concern that funding a place in a private facility of equal quality will fall back onto the shoulders of the family
- **Loss of good quality staff and quality Care Homes**
  - Loss of specialist existing staff / specialist care
  - Losing quality provision of residential care placements
- **Shortage of Care Home Placements in West Berkshire**
  - Proposal will impact on availability of Care Home placements locally
  - There are not enough care home places within West Berkshire; closing Chestnut walk will make this issue worse
- **Concern re alternative providers / external commissioned placements**
  - Commissioning beds from private sector will not secure the quality of Chestnut walk
  - Concern as to how the quality of beds externally available are assured
  - Recruitment issues of care staff in the private sector. This may therefore lead this proposal to have an adverse effect on vulnerable people
  - Concern that with any potential move to a big homes, the individual focus will be lost

Many positive comments were made in relation to Chestnut Walk; the quality of care received and staff team were regarded as 'outstanding' by a number of respondents. Many referred to the residents being consistently happy and well cared for, with some residents / family members being 'devastated' at potential closure.

The smallness of the home was seen as an advantage to ensure good quality care; and the facilities, although dated, were seen as less important than the feeling of 'family' that is felt throughout the home.

A question was raised by one respondent about how the saving of £94,000 was identified.

One respondent wanted to know why land worth £3.9m was gifted to a residential developer in the full knowledge that additional cuts to services would be necessary in 2016/17.

### **3. Do you feel that this proposal will affect particular individuals more than others, and if so, how do you think we might help with this?**

All respondents indicated that they felt the cuts would impact on vulnerable elderly individuals (residents) and their families.

Staff were identified as another group of individuals who would be impacted. With one respondent indicating that they cannot work anywhere else due to local commitments.

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There was significant anxiety about what this meant for individuals from 7 of the respondents, particularly in terms of potentially needing to move and finding an alternative externally commissioned placement that was of equal quality and relative location:

*“There will only three remaining council-run care homes (all of which, I understand, have a good reputation). This may mean that my mother, and the other residents of Chestnut Walk, may be expected to access private care which, in my opinion, has a very different ethos, focussing on profit (sometimes over care). My mother is very worried that she will leave a relatively small, close-knit community (at Chestnut Walk) and be re-homed in a large, impersonal home where a sense of community is harder to nurture. My mother feels loved by the staff and is frightened that she will not experience this level of friendship and care in a privately-run home...”*

#### **4. Do you have any suggestions as to how this service might be delivered in a different way? If so, please provide details.**

Many respondents did not have any suggestions. Some suggested the service was fine and should be left with resources diverted from services such as parking wardens and line painting and consult the people on how their money should be spent.

Some suggested the Local Authority build more care homes and effectively compete with the profit making private sector or extend / make the home bigger so cheaper have two floors make one floors.

Look at amalgamating resources, and putting higher dependency extensions on existing facilities or combining facilities (Examples of Alice Bye Court given as a good example).

One respondent suggested that the gifting of the land at Market Street should be stopped and sold on the open market to cover budget deficit required.

#### **5. Is there any way that you, or your organisation, can contribute in helping to alleviate the impact of this proposal? If so, please provide details of how you can help.**

No suggestions were put forward.

#### **6. Any further comments?**

Many respondents reinforced that the loss of this service will have a huge effect, on individuals and families, and that cuts should be looked at with services that do not directly impact lives.

There were many personal examples provided throughout the consultation responses of the impact the closure would have on their ‘mother’; ‘father’ and pleas to reconsider and keep the home open.

Consideration to staff was highlighted as a need.

One respondent reinforced that the Council should explain the decision:

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*“...to gift the Market Street site to developer, Grainger Trust for residential development. The land which was widely reported as being worth in the region of £3.9mn would have saved most of those services now scheduled for closure. To date I have seen no reasonable explanation to justify such actions...”*

On response suggested that it could be an efficient cost saving measure:

*“With the cost implications of maintaining the ageing building, Tilehurst Parish Council regret the proposed loss of the Care Home, which could affect residents of the Parish, but it would appear to be an efficient cost saving measure.”*

### Conclusion

There is a clear concern about what the impact of the proposed cuts in this service would mean for vulnerable individuals and their families. Also concerns about the alternatives to the closure of the home, in terms of the locality and quality of external placements.

No other alternatives put forward.

***Please note:*** *In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.*

*The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of 'those who responded', rather than reflective of the wider community.*

*All the responses have been provided verbatim as an appendix to this report. Whilst this summary seeks to distil the key, substantive points made, it should also be read in conjunction with the more detailed verbatim comments to ensure a full, rounded perspective of the views and comments are considered.*

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