

DAY CARE PROVISION FOR THE ELDERLY – SUMMARY OF SERVICE DELIVERY EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD COMMENTS

At its meeting held on 13 January 2022, the Service Delivery Executive Advisory Board (EAB) was invited to consider a report which informed it of the outcome of a public consultation in respect of proposals for the future delivery of day care services for the elderly and sought comments regarding the recommended consolidation of provision at The Hive, Guildford. The report also recommended that a mandate be developed concerning options for the future use of the Shawfield Centre, Ash, following the proposed consolidation of provision at The Hive.

The Head of Community Services introduced the report and the ensuing points arose from related questions, comments and discussion for forwarding to the Executive:

1. Whilst the EAB acknowledged that any closure of, or decrease in, services was regrettable and could evoke a sense of loss amongst service users, the Council's financial situation necessitated the review of discretionary services with a view to identifying budget reductions as part of its Savings Strategy.
2. The Shawfield Centre had been closed since the COVID-19 outbreak and displaced service users had been transported to The Hive since that time, when Government guidance allowed. Robust risk assessments and temperature testing had been undertaken and there had not been any Coronavirus issues at The Hive.
3. Virtually all people who had received day care services from the Shawfield Centre prior to the pandemic now attended The Hive, if they were able to do so, and there was no knowledge of anyone previously in receipt of care now being without. Although the Shawfield Centre had offered day care facilities and was not merely a lunch facility, the majority of users attended for the lunch club only when the facility had been open prior to the pandemic. It was felt that this group, the majority of who resided in the neighbouring Japonica Court, were reluctant for the Centre to close. Therefore, consideration could be given to identifying an alternative lunch provision in the sheltered setting, possibly utilising the kitchen area and the Benson Room, within available resources.
4. Discrepancy As the number of consultation responders selecting Option 1 (to continue to operate two centres for older people's provision) outweighed the number of total service users, it was suggested that the findings should be considered with an element of caution. Consultation responses from the NHS and Surrey County Council Adult Social Care (ASC) advised that neither organisation referred people to the Shawfield Centre and would refer them to The Hive irrespective of their address in the Borough.
5. The reference in the report to the residents of Japonica Court benefiting from increased activities being offered within the sheltered housing scheme were being pursued by the Council's Sheltered Housing and Community Services Teams. This involved liaison with community leaders to assist with the provision of some activities such as quizzes, lunches, a social club and the Memory Lane initiative for people with dementia. Although there was limited staffing capacity to support increased activities, this matter had been prioritised and preparations, based on an activity plan, were at an advanced stage, COVID-19 allowing.
6. Some councillors had visited The Hive and were impressed with the services on offer and achievements realised in recent years. The premises included a quiet sanctuary area and an under-utilised store would be converted to form a further break out provision.
7. The capacity of The Hive was 100 clients per day and whilst it was difficult to predict future service demand in the Ash area owing to potential new residential developments, it was confirmed that The Hive had adequate capacity to serve the Borough in the foreseeable future.

8. In terms of people living with dementia, levels of severity varied and the NHS and ASC had requested the Council to provide an integrated model of care. The service sought to maintain a ratio of people with severe dementia representing under half of service users in order to maintain a manageable situation. As people's dementia level deteriorated, alternative suitable care provision was sought. Reference was made to Surrey County Council's draft Dementia Strategy and associated survey, to which anyone affected by dementia as a sufferer or carer could respond.
9. The Council operated its own community transport fleet which consisted of 11 vehicles which were being replaced with electric versions as they became due for renewal to improve the Council's carbon footprint. The fleet served the whole Borough and had sufficient capacity to transport all users of The Hive, where the vehicles were based. There was also the option of utilising a car to transport individuals who preferred to travel alone in a smaller vehicle with a regular driver. Although there was a possibility of adding a further car to the fleet for this purpose at some point in the future, this would be dependent upon the review of the overall fleet in terms of need and capacity, which were currently being met. The community transport service was well publicised with links to relevant community groups and services. The vehicles were available for community transport bookings whilst service users were visiting The Hive. The drivers were paid Council employees.
10. The identification of a direct transport route between Ash and The Hive avoiding pick up / drop off points and delays would be beneficial in the event that the Shawfield Centre remained closed. Although service users were currently collected from their place of residence in logical groupings to minimise delays, it was possible for the Council to organise pick up / drop off points as an alternative for those who were able to access them.
11. Although many service users attended day care provision from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm including travelling time, there were more flexible options for those who preferred a shorter day and there was vehicle scheduling capacity to facilitate this. Visits tended to focus on lunchtime to enable people to have a hot meal. Carers were welcome to accompany their cared for to The Hive and engage fully with the variety of activities on offer, also receiving some respite time if wished. There was a special area tailored to the needs of dementia sufferers where alternative activities could be pursued.
12. The Shawfield Centre was currently designated as a rest centre in case of emergency, leaving remaining rest centres at The Hive, the Spectrum and Surrey Sports Park in the event of its permanent closure. However, Applied Resilience was undertaking some work to identify assets owned by other organisations, such as parish councils and churches, outside the town centre which could be utilised as rest centres with supplies being provided by the Council. It was requested that further information be provided to the EAB when officers were in receipt.
13. In terms of the financial implications associated with the closure of the Shawfield Centre, officers were confident that the projected savings identified in the report would be achieved. However, some councillors felt that a breakdown of the savings would be informative. The EAB was advised that the building running costs were the most significant financial factors for the Council in this scenario whilst additional clientele attending The Hive could be absorbed into the existing services. There were also some savings opportunities relating to staffing and service contracts relating to meal provision. It was noted that, in the event that the Shawfield Centre re-opened, it would require refurbishing at an estimated cost of £100,000 to render it fit for purpose as a day care service facility.
14. The future use of the Shawfield site, following consolidation of provision at The Hive, would be subject to a separate mandate. There was a covenant in respect of the land which could create legal complexities. If the building was to be retained as a community facility such as a community hall, this would need to be outside the Council's ownership for financial reasons. It was felt that the future use of the building

should be addressed as rapidly as possible to avoid a community facility falling into disuse for any length of time.

15. A recent visit by a councillor to Dray Court, Guildford, had revealed that residents were content with the services being provided at The Hive. However, there was an issue at the premises whereby some residents went out and pursued activities such as visiting The Hive, whereas other occupants generally remained confined to their personal accommodation and did not visit the communal area. A further issue was the closure of kitchenettes in sheltered accommodation. These factors highlighted the need for an overall review of Older People's Services in the wake of COVID-19. Officer discussions were taking place in this regard and could lead to the establishment of a working group, including the Older People's Champion, to secure improvements to the communal areas and activities in sheltered housing units within available resources.

The Lead Councillor for Community and Housing thanked the EAB for its varied and thoughtful questions and comments arising from the report. She advised that attention would be given to working more closely with the Older People's Champion in respect of future reviews and consultations of this nature. The Champion's views were included in the EAB's submission to the Executive.

Having indicated its general support for the proposals in the report, the EAB agreed the following recommendations to the Executive:

- (a) The provision of day care services for the elderly be consolidated at The Hive to maintain high quality service delivery for all residents in the Borough.
- (b) The possibility of introducing a lunch provision at Japonica Court be explored to support those residents who previously accessed the lunch club at the Shawfield Centre.
- (c) A mandate be developed in respect of the options for the future use of the Shawfield Centre site without delay to prevent a community facility falling into disuse for a length of time. One of the options should consider the operation of the property by an external organisation such as a parish council, charity or local enterprise.
- (d) A breakdown of the projected revenue savings of £170,000 be provided to clarify the amount of funding expected to be saved from the Shawfield Centre closure, balanced against any rise in costs associated with an increase in the use of The Hive and community transport and any ongoing up keep of the building including utility payments.