

**The Limes Focus Group  
Brent Lane  
Dartford  
DA1 3AF**

6<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Dear Councillor

Re: Proposed closure of the Limes Care Centre in Dartford.

As a member of the Cabinet Committee, Adult Social Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet Scrutiny Committee or Councillor for the Dartford area, The Limes Focus Group has decided to send you a copy of our reply to the KASS Project Manager's letter regarding the Limes Focus Group's proposal. No doubt you have seen or will see the report written by Margaret Howard, Director of Operations regarding the recommendations of the Limes closure and we would also like to highlight many items in the report that continues to raise concerns and believe questions should be asked from cabinet and scrutiny committee members and answered by KCC officers

We apologise that this letter is not addressed personally to you, this is due to time restrictions before the committee meetings and this busy time of year.

We would like to add that the statistics mentioned by the Focus Group representative did not include the total admissions since the Limes reopened in December 2002 is

**1,068.**

Background No. 5, No. 7, No. 9, No 10 & No.12

Firstly all the disruption and loss of services for older people aged 55 plus and many jobs are bound to hit the local economy in all corners of Kent, is only expected to only generate £2.2million of savings from valuable and vital services in the next two years.

The Limes is situated on land that has several covenants attached. The cost of paying the legal fees already paid to research this information and the cost of legal negotiations to pay off these covenants. Money wasted that could be used for using care services for the vulnerable people of North West Kent.

This report should incorporate a complete breakdown of these costs and comparisons of various homes in the independent sector with different quality Care Quality Commission ratings included.

If there was only 70% capacity of beds used, surely the hospital and community social workers should have been monitored on what and how many referrals they were forwarding to the Limes and encouraged to refer more. The other 30% of bed vacancies should not be classed as a failure towards the Limes staff. They should only be responsible for the care of service users whilst they are at the Limes. There is more paperwork required for care plans due to Service Users short term stay and there can be many levels of change (i.e improvement of a Service Users wellbeing) during their time at the Limes.

The percentage of care staff that has completed and received an NVQ 2 to NVQ 4 in Health and Social Care is now 94. Imagine the cost of the training for staff just for NVQs which has taken place in previous years whom the majority, will be redundant if the Limes closes.

Do the costs of beds at the Limes include Day Centre costs when the Limes lost 10 beds in 2006? Since the day centre was located at the Limes staffing levels increased considerably, as before only 4 staff would have covered the 10 beds on a 24hour basis. We did not have the cost of the driver, 2 escorts and an additional Team Leader and an increase on the food budget etc. It was asked at the meeting in June 2010 by several staff, for the breakdown of costs separate from the enablement centre to represent a true reflection of costing, but the comparison has not been reported.

Also is the cost of the Occupational Therapists salaries included quoted for 2009/2010? They no longer work at the Limes since March 2010, end of financial year of 2009/2010.

#### Enablement care: No 3 No. 6 & No. 7

With the closure of Queen Mary's hospital A & E dept, we know for a fact that Darent Valley Hospital is currently overflowing in admissions at A & E and on the wards. They are treating people in ambulances and in corridors and struggling to cope. Staff have reported that they never seen it so hectic. The Limes by the end of this week will have full bed occupancy apart from one room closed –reason given later in the report.

The decommissioning of respite care beds to make way for enablement care beds at Gravesham Place. This will have a detrimental affect to service users and their carers that currently require respite care. Officers say they are “confident” that respite services can be delivered in the independent sector – what proof do they have of this? They say more people want to stay in their own homes – but carers will be given even less support if this is allowed to happen. What are the cost of a respite and enablement beds at Gravesham Place in comparison to the Limes and the independent sector?

Change of enablement care at the Limes was brought about due to the restructure and the redeployment of the Occupational Therapists (OTs) who provided an excellence service. Another poor decision that qualified OTs now nothing more than “pen pushers”.

The Limes do admit service users with mild dementia which is usually assessed once they arrive at the Limes, so this is completely untrue that we do not admit service users with dementia. We do not understand why the Limes Care Centre is not suitable for dementia care and no explanation in the report is given.

The Limes admissions criteria is set by KASS management, so if there were issues regarding bed vacancies surely these should have been raised and dealt with beforehand. Using of hoists have health and safety regulations for good reason for both service users and employees wellbeing.

#### Day Care No.17 & No. 19

The Limes was originally a 26 bedded unit but made way for the Day Centre when they were told they were temporarily being moved to the Limes, whilst waiting for a new building to be built. No explanation has ever been given before to Day Centre staff or Service Users until now.

The voluntary sector such as Age Concern/Age UK already has concerns for funding so increasing numbers of clients may not assist in this. It was reported in the Messenger

Extra last week that a local age concern unit is to lose 4 of its 5 minibuses due to cuts to its funding from the local council.

Availability at a place called Sutton Court and description is the news to the Focus Group, staff and service users at the Limes. Poor communications from the KASS management team yet again.

#### Alternative Proposals No 3 and No 4

As the Limes has been rated as excellent for the last two years, nothing less should be offered in way of enablement care even at Gravesham Place. Re: the buildings will require significant investment that KCC does not have access to. Does this mean buildings in all KCC homes in general or specifically the Limes?

KCC has no statutory duty to directly provide care and it's long term intention is to focus on undertaking a commissioning role – so what was the point of holding a 5 month consultation that was suppose to be listening to the advice and knowledge of staff and views of service users and their relatives. KCC Officers are clearly not interested what Kent council taxpayers really want for the future for older people.

The Limes Focus Group proposal does not reflect the range of other community based enablement services in the area. As far as the Focus Group know there are none, other than receiving care at home. The Community Enablement Care Team cannot deal with Service Users mobility during the night. Many who come to the Limes, in the first instance, are unable to get in and out of bed on their own. At the Limes, Service Users are constantly monitored every hour by the night carers who frequently find a service user who has tried to get up on their own and fallen on their way to the commode. If they were at home, they would probably stay lying on the floor until they were found.

#### Issues raised during the consultation No. 8

Will KCC still accept KCC service users at low cost once KCC no longer is a provider of any homes in the future? When are they planning to free themselves of homes like Gravesham Place, West View etc? Are they planning more closures in the near future? These questions should be answered as a whole, as part of the consultation for the future of care of older people.

#### Significant issues that have obviously not been highlighted in the report:

This Outcome report has been published to staff and councillors with a very tight deadline before the committee meetings and Graham Gibben's final decision. We cannot help observing this has conveniently been done so the time span is extremely short to raise very important questions and the report be scrutinised properly. In fact there should be a least a month's consultation period just to absorb and respond to the report for each of the homes facing closure.

Councillor Graham Gibbens said when debating at the council meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December categorically said "this is not about money!" You can see this on the web cast for proof! This totally contradicts Margaret Howard's reports and the words costings and savings arise too many times to mention.

As highlighted by Councillors Penny Cole and Avtar Sandhu at the council meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, the likelihood for vandalism and theft is extremely high when the Limes closes and the building remains empty. This has been already proven even whilst the Limes is still open.

In recent weeks, an attempted robbery of copper lead from the roof, ruined the ceiling in one of the bedrooms, making it unusable for service users. During the snowy weather, the robbery of a small platinum piece from the catalytic converter caused vandalism to the day centre minibus.

When Stanley Morgan and Leyton House closed, a former KCC business officer regularly had to travel from Maidstone to deal with break-ins and vandalism. The Mount building after KCC sold it, has remained empty after four years and as yet there are no definite plans for its future. As there is no description or explanation regarding the future for the Limes building, we can only foresee yet another empty building in the Dartford being boarded up for years to come. The Limes is currently such a happy place and provides such a valuable service, this is absolutely heartbreaking to think about.

We would also like you to note, once the Lawrence House Social Services office, West Hill, Dartford is closed in February 2011, The Limes Enablement Care and Day Centres by May 2011 and Manorbrooke in September 2011 means there will be no social service buildings provided by Kent County Council in Dartford whatsoever. So as many members of staff and service users are Dartford residents, we cannot help feel Dartford has been overlooked and become detached as part of Kent County Council, metaphorically in “no mans land” in between Gravesend and the Bexley Borough of London.

No support has even been given from KASS management to staff during the consultation period and when recent letters were handed out and instructed to send out on New Years Eve. This just strikes of total disrespect and contempt to service users and the staff. Staff had to deal with many upset service users with no advice given apart from “deal with the news sensitively to Service Users.”

We hope you will consider all our concerns in both letters. We feel these should be scrutinised thoroughly and important questions asked and resolved. If you would like to speak to a member of the focus group please contact us on 01322 224584, preferably Monday to Friday 9-5pm. If this is not possible call the above number and a message will be passed on etc.

Kind regards

**The Limes Focus Group**