

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee held at Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 19th September, 2024.

PRESENT: Ms L Parfitt (Chair), Ms L Wright (Vice-Chairman), Mr N J Collor, Ms S Hamilton, Mr J Meade, Mr A Kennedy, Ms J Hawkins, Ms J Meade, Mr H Rayner and Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE

ALSO PRESENT: Mr Dan Watkins and Mr Mike Whiting

IN ATTENDANCE: Richard Smith (Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health), Simon Mitchell (Senior Commissioner), Richard Ellis (Director of Integrated Commissioning), Sydney Hill (Director Adult Social Care), Helen Groombridge (ASCH Performance Manager) and Hayley Savage (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

205. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item. 2)

Apologies were received from Mrs Game, Mr Lewis and Mr Ridgers. Mr Rayner was present as substitute for Mr Ridgers.

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that Mr Lewis had replaced Mr Brady on the committee.

206. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the agenda

(Item. 3)

Ms Meade declared that she was an unpaid carer.

207. Minutes of the meetings held on 15 May 2024 and 18 July 2024

(Item. 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 15th of May 2024 and 18 July 2024 were correctly recorded and that paper copies be signed by the Chair.

208. Verbal Updates by Cabinet Member and Corporate Director

(Item. 5)

1. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Mr Dan Watkins provided a verbal update on the following:
 - a. The progression of the social care reforms had been discussed during the general election campaign, however, the Chancellor subsequently announced these plans had been cancelled. The Council was supportive in principle of the reforms and remained ready to support the government in due course.

- b. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance visit was scheduled for the week beginning 30 September. This would provide an independent assessment for the public of the quality of care in the local area and how the Council had met its duties under the Care Act 2014.
 - c. Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy service delivery plan had been signed off by the Integrated Care Partnership and had now moved into the delivery phase.
 - d. Mr Watkins presented an award at the Kent Integrated Care Alliance Awards.
2. In response to a question regarding the number of complaints received about the charging policy and the amount of Disability Related Expenditure Assessment claims (DREAs) requested since it began, Mr Watkins stated that some of the complaints went straight to the customer support team, but he had received very few. He did not have information on the DREAs but proposed to find out and update the Member.
3. Mr Richard Smith, Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Health, provided a verbal update on the following:
 - a. Inspections had started with the CQC and the context setting meeting and interview with the Principal Social Worker had taken place. The formal report would be issued at the start of December.
 - b. The importance of the CQC inspection was reiterated by Mr Smith, along with the subsequent action and improvement plans it would generate.
 - c. Mr Smith attended the Staff Ethnic Diversity Forum in response to the far-right attacks which occurred locally. In addition, a visit to the Gravesend Education Centre to meet with the North Kent Caribbean Society provided insight into the types of hypertension. He shared this as an example of the good work carried out in the communities.
4. In response to a question from the Chair concerning an update on the recent self-assessment, Mr Smith said the results would be available on 25 September.
5. RESOLVED to note the verbal updates.

209. Petition Scheme Debate - Blackburn Lodge
(Item. 6)

Cllr Dolley Wooster (lead Petitioner) was in attendance for this item.

1. The lead petitioner, Cllr Dolley Wooster, provided a verbal statement which included the following:
 - a. After two public consultations, the people of Sheppey had demonstrated their opposition to the closure of Blackburn Lodge.
 - b. Regarding the building itself, taxpayers felt that it had been neglected and that areas that had been used by organisations were no longer used. Families identified that KCC would have saved money if the water issue had been fixed and were disappointed that the building was left to fall into disrepair.

- c. Concerns were raised over the eviction of long-standing residents of the Lodge.
 - d. Reassurance was sought that all avenues were considered regarding the possible alternative uses of the building before the closure was decided.
 - e. The welfare of vulnerable residents was questioned in relation to the move to new accommodation, as well as the hardship experienced by families.
2. Mr Mike Whiting, Local Member, noted the following:
- a. There was a lack of communication with residents, their families and the day centre users after the emergency closure of the building, as well as with the wider public.
 - b. A restriction on a previous closure order from some years ago had stated that Blackburn Lodge would not be closed until a suitable alternative had been found, however this restriction was not included on the new closure order.
3. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
- Members referred to the Accommodation Strategy and questioned why Blackburn Lodge should be closed. Concerns were raised regarding the potential problems arising from the option of sale of Blackburn Lodge to a company who would profit from it.
 - Mr Watkins explained the challenges regarding the communication within the tight timeframe of the emergency closure. Priority was with the most vulnerable, however subsequent communications were delivered through digital means as well as through hardcopy documents. The decision to proceed with the emergency closure of Blackburn Lodge was based on professional opinions regarding the safety of the water.
 - Members questioned whether a plan had been in place to maintain the building and the high cost of the quotes received to bring the building up to standard.
 - Daycare services would be provided through the Crawford Centre.
 - The thirteen residents of Blackburn Lodge were rehomed in new locations, and none had subsequently moved on. Formal reviews were carried out after six weeks of the new placement to ensure welfare. There was a potential care home scheme in development in Minster-on-Sea and potential developments in the pipeline in Sheerness which would provide complex specialised care.
 - The public consultation contained details of the money spent on Blackburn Lodge prior to the closure.
 - To get the lodge up to CQC standard would cost a substantial amount.
4. The Chair thanked Cllr Wooster for submitting the petition and attending the meeting.
5. RESOLVED to note the Petition.

210. 24/00053 - The future of Blackburn Lodge Care Home, Isle of Sheppey
(Item. 7)

1. Ms Sydney Hill (Director of Adult Social Care), introduced the report on the proposed decision to permanently close Blackburn Lodge Care Home, Isle of Sheppey.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - A new booster water pump was installed in August 2023 which rectified the water pressure issues but appeared to have accelerated the deterioration of the steel pipework.
 - No illness had occurred as a result of water contamination, and it was the discolouration that first suggested a problem. Subsequent testing and water sampling took place after which it was deemed unsafe.
 - Advice from cost consultants was sought in relation to the repair costs. This covered a whole range of issues, including subsidence, and the cost of upgrading the building to accommodate, for example, en-suites and lifting equipment and to meet fire safety standards.
 - Blackburn Lodge provided low to mid-level residential care as opposed to complex nursing care. It was important to get the right mix of provision to meet the current and future needs of residents.
 - The Council runs day services at the Crawford Centre in Sheerness for adults with learning disabilities. Adult Social Care have been able to expand the use of the building and open a Day Service for older people at the Crawford Centre, including for people who previously attended Blackburn Lodge.
 - A care home in Minster-on-Sea could provide up to 50 residential care beds on the Isle of Sheppey, which was more than previously available before Blackburn Lodge closed.
 - Clarification between the type of bed was important and there was a need for a range of residential nursing care needs. The number of beds was not the only consideration.
3. Mr Streatfeild proposed and Ms Meade seconded that the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee recommend to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health that reassurance be provided to the committee that there were sufficient residential care home beds, of all types, on the Isle of Sheppey before Blackburn Lodge was permanently closed. The motion failed.
4. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to:
 - a) PERMANENTLY close Blackburn Lodge Care Home, Isle of Sheppey; and
 - b) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to take relevant actions to implement the decision.
5. In accordance with paragraph 16.31 of the Constitution Mr Streatfeild, Ms Meade and Ms Hawkins wished for it to be recorded in the minutes that they voted against the motion.

211. Adult Social Care and Health Performance Q1 2024/2025
(Item. 8)

1. Ms Helen Groombridge (Adult Social Care and Health Performance Manager) introduced the report and provided an overview of Adult Social Care performance and activity for quarter one, April to June 2024.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - Regarding the care needs assessments, and priority listing for people with motor neuron disease, Mr Watkins said that assessments were being prioritised and made a note to include a list of diseases being treated as a priority.
 - There was an end-of-life pathway and care needs were managed by a risk management tool.
3. RESOLVED to note the performance of adult social care services in Quarter 1 2024/25.

212. Adult Social Care Accommodation Strategy (Presentation)
(Item. 9)

1. Mr Richard Ellis (Director of Adult and Integrated Commissioning) presented the Accommodation Strategy to Members by way of a series of slides. The presentation was published in the agenda pack.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - There would be an overarching plan by April 2025 to improve housing for people with disabilities. However, there were staffing resources to resolve as well as understanding the district's plans.
 - The shape of local plans included a mix of housing, and the Disabilities Facilities Grant covered retrofitting homes so that people could continue living in their own home for as long as possible.
3. RESOLVED to note the presentation.

213. Work Programme
(Item. 10)

RESOLVED to note the work programme.