

ALBERT JONES COURT - UPDATE

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the ongoing work to try and identify a viable use for the benefit of the local community for this former older persons' home, to recommend to Essex County Council.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following a Member's Notice of Motion at Council on 19 December 2000, it was resolved that Essex County Council be requested "to establish Albert Jones Court as a community based resource centre, in conjunction with the Primary Care Group, to provide facilities for the local community based on the experience of the Tyrells Centre in Castle Point."

- 2.2 The work to investigate potential future uses for the building has, at the request of Essex Social Services, been led by the Rochford Primary Care Group (PCG). They have sought views from a range of potential users including

- Southend Hospital NHS Trust
- Essex Social Services
- South Essex Mental Health & Community Care NHS Trust
- Rayleigh Association of Voluntary Services
- Y.M.C.A.
- Rochford District Council

- 2.3 A site visit to view the building was arranged by Essex Social Services, and was attended by representatives of a number of organisations and Members.

- 2.4 So far, there has been a disappointing response from the various agencies and organisations to the invitation to explore use of the building. In particular, the PCG believe that it is unlikely that the location will be suitable for development of outreach clinics from Southend Hospital, which had been one of the key ideas explored in the early stages of the discussions. These are more likely to be located in Rayleigh as this is furthest from the hospital. A Working Group is currently investigating possible venues for outreach clinics (including Albert Jones Court) and a clear direction on this will be forthcoming by the end of December 2001. Furthermore, developing a Rochford version of Tyrells could lead to duplication, for instance, Day Care is already provided at St Lukes Place. The PCG have now advised that they will not be considering Albert Jones Court any further,

except to formally conclude their investigation of its use for outreach hospital clinics.

- 2.5 Essex Social Services have recently expressed concern about increasing vandalism at the site, the escalating costs of security and the deterioration of the building. A number of adverse concerns have been raised by neighbours.
- 2.6 Following the recent indication from the PCG that they were unlikely to consider the building suitable for outreach clinics, discussions have taken place between the Head of Housing Health & Community Care and the South Essex Mental Health and Community Care NHS Trust who anticipate being able to indicate during September whether, in principle, they wish to use any of the space, perhaps for staff accommodation. Essex Police have expressed an interest in exploring use of part of the building as have the Y.M.C.A, a housing association which provides accommodation primarily for young, single people. These are being followed up.

3 DISCUSSIONS

- 3.1 Albert Jones Court is a large building and the greatest likelihood of bringing it back into community use will be by involving several organisations all of whom require space, either for their own use, or to provide facilities and services.
- 3.2 From the work so far carried out, it appears that there are not many organisations who consider the building suitable for their needs, although discussions are continuing. For any potential uses, there are a number of considerations:
- Compatibility of prospective occupiers and uses.
 - Capital and revenue costs.
 - Planning issues.
 - Management of a multi-occupied building.
 - Proximity to communication links.
- 3.3 Officers will continue to explore potential uses for the building.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL/CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The building closed in late 2000 and is deteriorating. It is important that a decision on future use is made as soon as possible.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These cannot be assessed until potential uses have been finalised. The Council has committed £375,000 towards housing for the

homeless, to reduce bed and breakfast hotel usage. This may be considered as part of any composite scheme for the building.

6 RECOMMENDATION

6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That this progress report be noted. (HHHCC)

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