

## **MEETING THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE IN ESSEX - CONSULTATION**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report appraises Members of a consultation being carried out by Essex County Council in respect of its remaining care homes for older people, and invites comments.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 A Best Value Review of Older Person's Services has been undertaken by Essex County Council which has highlighted a shortfall in domiciliary care provision and a shortage of residential and nursing home beds. In some cases, there are specific locality issues concerning provision of specialist care beds.
- 2.2 The review has also highlighted issues that would arise if the National Minimum Standards in relation to residential care homes were reintroduced.
- 2.3 Some Members may recall that in recent years the County Council has transferred 17 care homes to the independent sector. At the time this was being discussed, this Council expressed the view that some local authority provision should remain, to provide choice for older people and their families. At the present time, Sweyne Court in Rayleigh remains County operated.
- 2.4 Essex County has now decided to undertake a consultation process on transferring, either through leasehold disposal or sale of the freehold, the remaining County care homes and day care centres, including Sweyne Court.
- 2.5 A copy of the consultation document is appended and arrangements have been made for a representative from Essex County Council to attend the Committee meeting to present the proposals, answer questions and take back this Council's response.

### **3 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

the Council's response to the consultation from Essex County Council.  
(HHHCC)

G Woolhouse

Head of Housing, Health and Community Care

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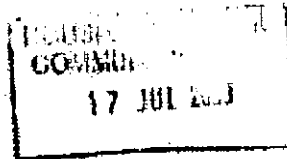
**Background Papers:**

Letter from Essex County Council: Meeting the needs of older people in Essex, dated 16 July 2003.

For further information please contact Graham Woolhouse on:-

Tel:- 01702 546366 Ext: 3300

E-Mail:- [graham.woolhouse@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:graham.woolhouse@rochford.gov.uk)



**Consultation Document**

**MEETING THE LONG TERM NEEDS**  
**OF OLDER PERSONS IN ESSEX**

16<sup>th</sup> July 2003



### Introduction

On the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003, Essex County Councils Cabinet made a recommendation that a two month period of consultation would start in respect of the 12 remaining care homes under its management. As part of the consultation, views are to be sought from a number of stakeholders including service users, service users families, Primary Care Trusts, District/Borough councils, MPs and voluntary agencies. This consultation document includes the recommendation put forward by Cabinet, the background to the proposal, and how you can respond.

The consultation period will be from Wednesday 16th July 2003, until Wednesday 10th September 2003.

Once the consultation period has concluded, the outcome will be considered by the Cabinet member for Community Care who will make a recommendation to Cabinet on the way forward.

I will write to you soon after the consultation period has ended informing you of its outcome and the action to be taken.

### Background

Last year, a comprehensive Best Value Review was undertaken in Older Persons Service. During the course of that review, concern was expressed about the shortfall in domiciliary care provision within the county, together with concern regarding the shortage of residential and nursing home beds. At the last analysis, Essex was able to access only 3,300 beds out of a total of 6,107 registered beds within the county, with the remainder being utilised through private admissions or purchased by other local authorities.

To compound the difficulty, the analysis also demonstrated a deficit of specialist beds in some localities, and as a result it was recommended that each of the 12 remaining care homes should be developed for specialist provision in accordance with locality need. The commissioning approach in each locality was to be developed in conjunction with the Primary Care Trusts, District and Borough Councils, and independent sector providers, having regard to the demographic pressures and the availability of specialist beds from the independent sector. The introduction of the dementia category of registration has led to a scarcity of provision and delays in hospital discharge.

The review also highlighted the possible capital implication of remodelling the remaining 12 homes to meet the aspirations with the National Minimum Standards in relation to premises, if it was determined that the standard relating to premises that was originally scheduled for 2007 should be reintroduced.

Whilst no specific action is needed at this stage to plan for the premises requirements, to attain 12 square metre usable floor space, specific plans need to be submitted shortly, as to how the County Council intends to deal with those rooms which are currently below 9.3 square metres (single room). It is clear that a costed proposal needs to be submitted by the County Council, for implementation over a 2 year period as to how those rooms which are deemed not fit for purpose can be addressed.

A difficult Government settlement on Essex has placed significant pressures on securing additional care beds.

Estimates at the time of the Best Value Review Improvement Plan, September 2002, suggested that by 2006 another 310 beds would be required across the County. This projected figure could be reduced to 243 if improvements in domiciliary care services are sustained. Considering further demographic pressures, the projected deficit could rise between 2006 – 2011 to a further 659 beds, which could reduce to a further 484 if the impact of alternative services is realised. It is clear that there are significant variations across the county as to the anticipated shortfall. Further needs analysis work is being undertaken to strengthen our understanding here.

At a national level there is increased emphasis in strengthening intensive domiciliary care as well as enhancing the role of extra care housing of allowing people to continue to live at home. Trends in Essex mirror this with a drive to increase our performance in intensive home care, increasing the number of older people helped to live at home and developing local extra care housing/intermediate care schemes. It is anticipated that residential care will remain an important service in the short to medium term but developments will need to recognise the longer term movement away from residential care.

#### Recent Developments

Essex County Council has now transferred 17 care homes to the independent sector with contractual arrangements which retain access to all of the beds at the declared rates. Improvements in facilities have begun in most of these homes at the new owners expense, and, more significantly, over 320 additional beds have been secured through expansion/extension. Existing contractual arrangements enable the County Council to access at least 50% of these additional beds (sometimes more through negotiation). This is an important consequence of a policy which initially sought to secure revenue savings and to reinvest them in accordance with the Age Matters policy.

The prospect of closures of independent sector homes in Essex has not materialised in any significant way, largely due to the rescinding of the 2007 premises requirements of the National Minimum Standards. However, growth has only been possible in any real terms through the further development of the former County Council care homes.

In April 2003, it was decided to commission a survey of the potential for increasing the number of available beds in the remaining County Council care

homes. The approach involved site visits to six of the homes to explore the potential for extension, either beyond the existing footprint of the home, or upwards. In relation to the remaining six homes, the approach adopted involved a feasibility study utilising site plans.

In broad terms, it has been concluded that a further 210 beds could be generated from the existing sites.

It has been recognised that a possible increase in the price paid by Essex County Council to the independent sector might improve access to existing registered beds within the County. Price WaterhouseCoopers have recently been engaged to undertake an in depth study on the levels of residential and nursing home fees in Essex, and the degree to which they currently reflect the operating costs faced by operators in Fair Care costing. The outcome of this survey is likely to be available at the end of July and will inform the budget setting process for future years.

It would be possible to protect the recommendation for specialist care which arose from the Best Value Review, as well as addressing the projected residential and nursing home shortfall, by outsourcing some or all of the remaining homes with a specific contract condition that the proposed mix of specialist beds, as outlined in the commissioning preference, is delivered. Where beds are provided for specialist types of care, this is sometimes at bed fees above the current declared rates. The potential new operators could also be encouraged to develop increased provision on each of the sites, by a combination of measures, and utilise the potential of the existing homes more effectively. Capital programme constraints would appear to prevent the County Council from pursuing such an approach. There is also the need to develop a strategy that responds to the requirement to address those single rooms below 8.3 square metres, which are the chief concern.

If after consultation the decision is made to transfer the homes, service users within the homes will continue to receive the same quality of care from the same care team. Staff will transfer with full TUPE rights, including the same holiday entitlements and pension arrangements. The homes will continue to be inspected by the National Care Standards Commission, who regulate both public and private sector providers.

#### Recommendation

In view of the need to increase residential capacity across Essex in order to meet increasing demographic demand, it is recommended that consultation over a period of two months begin in relation to transferring either through leasehold disposal or sale of the freehold of the following care homes and day care centres to the independent sector:

Ashtyn  
Goldenlay  
Greenways  
Wilfred Dell House

Lime Court  
Longfield  
Okeley  
Sherrell House  
Stanley Wilson Lodge  
Sweyne Court

It is recommended that further discussions should take place with Basildon District Council to agree a way forward on the future of Queens Park Court which is a joint project with Basildon District Council.

It is also recommended that discussions take place with Braintree, Witham and Halstead Care Trust about the feasibility of transferring Millard House within the principles of Best Value and in order to achieve the additional capacity required from the existing site.

During the course of the consultation, the recommendations in relation to the provision of specialist care arising from the Best Value Review of Older Persons Services will be revisited and consideration given as to how such commissioning requirements can be written into any transfer (if such is to occur).

The option for closure is not included

How to contact us

To assist the process, I would be pleased to make arrangements for a representative of the County Council to explain these proposals in more detail if you would welcome this please contact me.

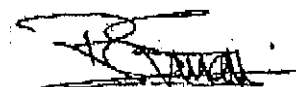
You can respond to us in two ways by Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2003.  
Either write or E-mail to:

Mr Roger Sinden  
Head of Community Care  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
CM1 1YS

Or

E-mail: [roger.sinden@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:roger.sinden@essexcc.gov.uk)

Kind Regards



Roger Sinden  
Head of Community Care