

PETITION OBJECTING TO THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF PHOENIX DAY CENTRE FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Philip Corthorne
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Social, Services, Health and Housing
Officer Contact(s)	Sharon Townsend, Head of Disability and Mental Health Services
Papers with report	None

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	This report is in response to the petition of 1,800 signatures objecting to the proposed closure of Phoenix Day Centre in South Ruislip. The organiser is Mrs Betty Fabb of 11 Hinkley Close, Harefield, Uxbridge, UB9 6AA.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	This relates to the Disabilities Commissioning Plan 2011-2015
Financial Cost	
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Social Services, Health and Housing
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member:

- 1) notes the views of the petitioners; and
- 2) ensures that the views of petitioners are incorporated into the consultation feedback on the Disabilities Commissioning Plan 2011-2015, which will form part of the report to Cabinet on 26 January 2012.

Reasons for recommendation

The Disabilities Commissioning Plan 2011-2015 was approved in principle by Cabinet on 29 September 2011, subject to full consultation. The proposals relating to the decommissioning of the Phoenix Day Centre are an integral part of the Disabilities Commissioning Plan and should be seen in the overall context of the Plan which includes the proposal to develop a resource centre for people with complex needs at the Queens Walk site in South Ruislip.

A further report will be submitted to Cabinet on 26 January 2012 providing feedback on the consultation undertaken, identifying any proposed changes and seeking approval for

recommendations. The Cabinet agenda and this report will be published on or after 18 January 2012.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The consultation programme for the plan has been extensive and has comprehensively considered all feedback provided by stakeholders.

Policy Overview Committee comments

None at this stage.

INFORMATION

Supporting Information

Phoenix Day Centre

1. The Phoenix Day Centre is a single storey, purpose built facility (1997) situated on the Bourne Court site in South Ruislip. The Bourne Lodge residential home was located next door but the building has been empty since alternative accommodation was developed in autumn 2008. The Wren Club (a Mencap service) occupies a building to the rear of the site.

2. The Phoenix Day Centre offers a service to adults with severe and profound learning disabilities, a range of physical disabilities and who need assistance with most activities of daily living. The Centre provides a range of facilities including an adapted 'snoozlum' room with lights and sensory stimulation, various activity rooms and a dining room. It has changing and showering facilities for service users and is fully accessible for people with physical disabilities. It has outside space and a garden which is popular.

3. When fully utilised, it had 30 service users attending over the course of a week, with a daily capacity of 28. Of these, 19 people were living in residential care and 11 were living with their families. Usage has reduced, with older service users retiring from day services and those living in Council provided residential care receiving personalised day opportunities programmes direct from their home. Currently there are 13 service users attending, with a daily attendance of approximately nine people.

4. The Council's draft Disability Commissioning Plan has made a number of proposals which relate to the petition:

- Buildings based services will be focussed on supporting those with the most complex need and/or to provide respite for carers where no other service is available.
- A new resource centre will be opened at Queens Walk, South Ruislip for people with complex needs.
- Existing day centres at Parkview, Phoenix and Woodside Day Centres will be decommissioned with service users supported to use personal budgets to access community based services or supported at the new Queens Walk facility depending on their needs.
- There will be a dramatic increase in supported housing options. Approximately 279 homes will be developed for disabled people as part of a programme of supported housing development in the Borough. The Council will work with third sector providers of residential homes for people with learning disabilities to convert them to supported living

where this is appropriate. The sites at Parkview and Woodside will be used to develop accommodation for people with learning disabilities as part of the overall programme of supported housing development.

The Petition

5. The petition was submitted to the Council on 13 December 2011. The 1,812 signatories to the petition are responding to the proposals to decommission the Phoenix Day Centre made within the Draft Disability Commissioning Plan reported to Cabinet in September 2011. The petition is stated as follows:

“Hillingdon Council is planning to close the Phoenix Day Centre in South Ruislip. Phoenix is a day centre for severely disabled adults in the borough. We the undersigned believe this centre should remain open and be expanded into the adjacent Bourne Court facility to make the 70 place centre that the council have planned for the isolated Queen’s Walk site. If you agree please sign our petition and return to me at the address below by 5th December so that it can be presented to cabinet before their meeting to decide the fate of this centre.”

6. In a covering note to the petition, the lead petitioner makes a number of additional points:
- The Phoenix Day Centre was purpose built 14 years ago and is in a much better location and environment than the Queens Walk site.
 - The Queens Walk site is a prefabricated building, is not purpose built and has limited access, no garden or outside usable space.
 - The general location of the proposed resource centre has no bus or train links close.
 - The nearest train station at South Ruislip is not wheelchair friendly and has many stairs from platform to ground level.

Response to the points raised within the petition

(a) Suitability of the existing building

7. The petition is focused on the comparison between the current provision at Phoenix and the alternative provision proposed at Queens Walk. The concerns raised by the petitioners are however based on a number of assumptions which need to be examined closely.

8. One assumption appears to be that the building on the Queens Walk site will remain as it is. The Council’s proposal is to redevelop the existing building as a high quality resource centre for service users with severe learning disabilities.

9. The consultation process was an opportunity for stakeholders to say what would be most valued in a new resource service. Many service users have put forward views about what they consider most important. During the recent consultation on the Disabilities Commissioning Plan, the Council received a range of comments on the ideal design of Queens Walk as well as the type of services that could be provided at the new facility. The Council was requested to:

- Involve service users and carers at every stage of the process in relation to the design and development of the new facility.
- Make certain that the new facility enabled service users with different abilities to access services and activities.
- Consider the needs of service users with complex behaviour.
- Ensure that the following provisions were included within the design of the building:

- Accessibility: ramps, doors and space for wheelchairs.
 - Equipment: hoists, lockers, showers, changing rooms.
 - Cooking facilities: kitchen, cooker and a microwave.
 - Toileting facilities: changing tables, washing machine and dryer for soiled clothes.
 - Staff: sufficient numbers to manage the centre safely.
 - Hydro therapy pool, sensory room and snoozalem.
 - A café open to the local community and staffed by volunteers.
 - Outside area with parking facilities.
- Ensure that service provided within the facility included therapies (such as physiotherapy, music and drama), information and advice on employment and training, and outside activities.

10. The design of the building will reflect the needs of the people who use it and the Council is committed to involving a range of stakeholders in the design and development process including service users and carers. It is likely to be totally reconfigured, both internally and externally, and tailored to meet the needs of service users. For example respondents to the Council have made clear that a garden space is essential and this will be incorporated into the proposals for the new facility. The external appearance can also be much improved by cladding, new windows and an improved entrance area.

11. Discussions have taken place with architects to prepare an outline scheme within the existing footprint of the current building. The building is larger than the Phoenix and provides an opportunity to develop a greater range of more up to date facilities to meet changing needs. For example, it will be possible to have rooms dedicated not only to computer use but also to accommodate new interactive ways of working with service users, appropriate for the user group. The amount of space will also allow for improved exercise and equipment facilities adapted to improve service users' physical movement as well as quiet space to 'chill out'. A café and kitchen will become a meeting area and to socialise and could be used flexibly. Garden space will be provided to the side of the building in what is currently a large car parking area. It will have full disabled access with changing facilities.

12. Whilst stakeholders have been asked to contribute their ideas for the new service as part of the consultation, draft plans are being developed in order to provide a basis for discussion in terms of what could be achieved on the site, and parent-carers will have an opportunity to contribute to these.

(b) Suitability of the site

13. The location of the proposed new facility has been chosen following a full review of all the Council's available sites:

- The cost of the 4 year supported housing redevelopment programme is £27.4m and only £3.4m is funded by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The rest of the programme will be funded from the Council's own resources - including land - and from partner housing associations who will identify sites and provide funding as part of the normal planning process for affordable housing.
- The closure of Phoenix Day Centre enables a large site (Bourne Court) to be sold which will contribute towards generating the capital required to fund the Council's capital programme. This includes much needed supported housing which will benefit people with physical and learning disabilities.
- The disposal of the Bourne Court site means that the Parkview and Woodside sites can be retained and these are most suitable to develop supported housing for people with

learning disabilities. There are a range of needs the Council must consider including older people, people with physical disabilities and people with mental health needs. This has led to the need for a difficult choice to be made concerning the most appropriate sites that need to be sold in order to fund the modernisation programme.

- Queens Walk is not suitable for developing affordable housing due to planning restrictions. It does however offer a good sized piece of land on which to develop a state of the art resource centre for people with learning disabilities. The grounds around Queens Walk will be remodelled to increase the space available and develop a garden.

14. Subject to Cabinet's decision on 26 January 2012, the closure of Phoenix, Parkview and Woodside would be phased over a period of time. The number of services would reduce from three to two and the new resource centre at Queens Walk would open before the closure of the remaining services. Current day centre users would be fully supported to access services in the community, leaving approximately 70 people per week requiring a building-based service provided at Queens Walk. The actual timetable will be developed once Cabinet has made its decision on the Disabilities Commissioning Plan.

(c) Transport issues

15. In terms of transport links, Queens Walk is in the same locality as the Phoenix Centre and South Ruislip station is the closest station to Phoenix, so problems with the station will not be unique to Queens Walk. Queens Walk is further from South Ruislip station and bus stops but, as with Phoenix, it is not anticipated that service users would be travelling independently to the Centre and they will be assessed on a case by case basis to ensure that suitable transport arrangements are in place.

16. There have been a number of people living in the north of the Borough who were attending Parkview Day Centre without undue problems.

17. In addition, the location of the two schools for people with severe learning disabilities in the Borough has some relevance. The primary school (Grangewood) is in the north of the Borough with the secondary school (Moorcroft) in the south. While young people with learning disabilities have had to cross the A40 north-south divide at some point in their school life, there is no evidence that this has resulted in significant hardship. It is also important to be aware that 25% of the current users of Parkview (located in Farriers Close, Hillingdon) have to travel from the north of the Borough to use the service; 45% of the current users of Woodside (located on the Uxbridge Road in Hayes) travel from the north of the Borough and 47% of the current users of Phoenix (located in South Ruislip) have to travel from the south. The current proposals are not significantly different from that faced by a large number of users and their carers at the present time.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The views of the petitioners will be taken into account in the report to Cabinet on 26 January 2012.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

Consultation on the Disabilities Commissioning Plan has been extensive and included all stakeholder groups, amounting to over 350 individuals. A meeting specifically for parent-carers from Phoenix was held on 9 November 2011 but they have also had opportunities to attend other meetings, such as the Disabilities Assembly.

As well as the concerns raised by the petitioners relating to location and the existing building, note has been made of other concerns such as the issue of disruption to service users and the need to plan any transition properly. It was seen as important that the new service opened prior to closing all the day centres. There were also requests that stakeholders be further involved in planning the new service

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Whilst there are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations of this report, it should be noted that assumptions within the MTFF for financing the Council's capital programme, including the redevelopment of Queens Walk, are reliant on the sale of the wider site on which Phoenix Day Centre sits. The MTFF and associated capital programme would need to be revised if the value of this site was not realised.

Legal

The Cabinet Member has before him recommendations that:

- (a) the Cabinet Member notes the views of the petitioners; and
- (b) the Cabinet Member ensures that the petitioners views are incorporated into the consultation feedback on the Disabilities Commissioning Plan 2011-2015 which will form part of the report to Cabinet on 29 January 2012.

Under Article 7.08(d) (28) of the Council's Constitution, there is a general Cabinet delegation for the Cabinet Member to deal with petitions in their portfolio area in accordance with Council procedure. The recommendation therefore falls within the Cabinet Member's delegations.

Article 13 of the Council's Constitution requires that all key decisions follow the seven principles set out therein. This would minimise the risk of legal challenge/judicial review of the decision made by the Cabinet Member.

Corporate Property and Construction

At present, the existing Bourne Court site consists of three buildings; the Phoenix Centre, Bourne Lodge and the Wren Centre. Bourne Lodge has been closed for some years and an alternative use has to be found for the land. By moving the Phoenix Centre and the Wren Club off the Bourne Court site, the land becomes significantly more valuable, not only because the available land increases in size, but because it becomes a self contained development plot that has its own entrance.

The Queens Walk building has a floor area of 1,000 square metres. This is significantly larger than the Phoenix Centre. Queens Walk will therefore comfortably accommodate the needs of the service users from the Phoenix Centre, Woodside and Parkview. The building will be completely reconfigured internally, the appearance of the outside elevation will be completely changed, and some outdoor garden space will be added.

In terms of the use of Council land as a corporate asset, the proposed use of Queens Walk is extremely efficient. A newly created centre here has greater potential for more flexible use. The land that is released at Bourne Court would be sold for residential development, for a high value, which would generate a receipt that the Council can use to re-invest in local communities and residents. At a time when capital is scarce, the Council has a duty to use its land and property assets in the most efficient way possible.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Draft Disabilities Commissioning Plan 2011-2015