

**CONSULTATION MEETING  
FOR SERVICE USERS AND RELATIVES  
NEWENT HOUSE  
2.30PM, TUESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2007**

**Present**

Cllr Derek Osborn  
Cllr Penny Shelton  
Cllr Denis Doe (representing Ms Hunt and Ms Smith)  
Simon Pearce –Head of Community Care Services  
Fiona Connolly – Principal Manager, Resource Centres  
Alaine Dixon – Assistant Manager, Newent Day Centre

10 Newent House staff

40 + service users and relatives

The meeting opened at 2.30pm by Simon Pearce (SP), he introduced himself, Cllrs Derek Osborne and Penny Shelton and Fiona Connolly, Principal Manager Resource Centres for Older People and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

SP explained that the closing date for consultation to consolidate Day Service on a single site consultation was 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007 and the final decision would be announced at a public meeting on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm. The re-structuring process would be phased in over a period of time and expected to be complete by March 2009. It is proposed that the single site would provide 55 places for frail and elderly with high care needs. Those requiring a lower level of care would be supported via the voluntary sector.

SP emphasised that consideration would be given to friendship groups and where possible clients would still attend on the same days as they do now. He hoped that clients would be moved on to the single site some time this calendar year. There would be more transport for clients to minimise time spent on buses to and from the Centre.

SP reiterated that current clients would continue to receive their current service, albeit at a different site maybe, but the changes will only affect future clients.

SP said staff affected were highly regarded and anticipated absorbing staff into the amalgamated service.

SP opened the meeting to question from the floor.

BC, husband of JC read a letter raising her concerns over the closure

DE asked if there would be more activities.

TM commented that the proposal was leading to a “them and us” situation with regards to Hobkirk and that also the number of people in wheelchairs considered to have high needs would potentially create a traffic jam in the Centre.

SP said the Council had to move to a model of service they can fund in the long term and can only provide this with the resources available.

KC asked why the Council spends so much on the fountain and book magazine for example and not on services for the elderly.

BC commented that he can't believe that Kingston is regarded as a richer borough than Kensington & Chelsea.

SP invited Cllr Derek Osborne to respond.

Cllr Derek Osborne explained that Kensington & Chelsea had a relatively small area of prosperity and a fairly large area of deprivation. However Kensington & Chelsea are able to generate enormous amounts of revenue through parking charges to subsidise their income, something Kingston is not able to do. Cllr Osborne went on to explain in more detail the funding for the fountain and book magazine.

Bernard Meade queried the increase in home care charges but not the service. BM also commended staff and their dedication but was concerned that vacancies were not being filled, adding an extra burden on existing staff.

Cllr Osborne said he could not comment on home care charges nor challenge it. Cllr Osborne responded regarding vacancies saying that many vacancies throughout the Council had been held open in line with budgeting. It would be unfair to fill a post which may shortly lead to a job loss. The aim is for when the service is re-shaped the level of staff would be okay but recognises the short term pressures.

D B asked if the Council will take money from homeowners.

SP responded that property and savings were Government rules and that maybe these assets would be taken into consideration

Cllr Denis Doe, representing Ms H and Ms S commented that the two Day Centres should remain open as a priority, especially as we were one of the highest taxes in London. There have been tremendous strides towards young vulnerable people but not the elderly vulnerable.

AS, daughter of SR addressed Cllr Osborne and she had written to him and other Councillors and disappointed not to have a response from any of them. She was very concerned about the possible closure of Newent House and said it was imperative that both Day Centres remain open.

AS asked what criteria was being used to decide which Centre should close, was it location, cost, staff, size of building, number of signatures on a petition?

SP responded and said both Centres were highly suitable. They were in the process of drawing up a table which would consider the building, services, usage, adaptability etc and this would be presented to Councillors making the decision.

AS asked what other things would have been considered cutting prior to Day Centre services.

SP said all parts of RBK is being scrutinised and his job as an Officer is to try to get the best deal for a sustainable future.

AS asked Cllr Osborne if it was more important to keep a library open than a Day Centre and commented that Day Centre clients are too old and frail to protest about the closure unlike those protesting against the library closure.

Cllr Osborne said all services were being scrutinised and council services re-prioritised and therefore probably won't look the same in three years time. The Council are also looking at other ways of increasing income and reducing expenditure.

BM asked how long it would be before the Council privatised their four residential homes

Cllr Osborne responded that there were no plans and this was last considered in 1991. Privatisation would be a bad financial decision as the Council would have no control over the cost of care.

SP reminded everyone about the Council Executive meeting on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm. SP thanked everyone for their time and patience.