

Report for Resolution

Report to	Executive 24 February 2010
Report of	Councillor Brenda Arthur – executive member for housing and adult services
Subject	Proposed closure of the Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms day services for older people draft response to consultation

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Purpose

To agree a response to the Norfolk County Council consultation regarding the proposed closure of the Essex and Silver Rooms day services.

Recommendations

To agree the draft response attached as Annex A to the report, and to submit it by the close of the consultation on 8 March 2010.

Financial Consequences

There are no financial consequences regarding the response to the consultation.

Risk Assessment

The response to the consultation will state the authorities' position on this sensitive issue and is likely to impact upon its reputation.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "Opportunities for all – communities to be able to access the wide range of services in the city".

Executive Member: Councillor Brenda Arthur – executive member for adult services and housing.

Ward: All

Contact Officers

Robin Hare	Project & policy officer	01603 212412
Russell O'Keefe	Transformation programme manager	01603 212908

Background Documents

None

Report

Executive response to the consultation on the proposed closure of the Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms day services for older people

Background

1. During November 2009 Norfolk County Council social services announced a proposed re-organisation of their countywide day service provision. This involves refocusing their day service efforts on dementia and re-ablement provision.
 2. The impact for current day service users in Norwich will be the closure and de-commissioning of two of the four existing day centres and the loss of 300 weekly traditional day centre places. The main supporting reasons stated to justify the closure of the premises were that neither facility was suitable for use as a day centre for providing dementia or re-ablement day services and both were in need of upgrade to comply with statutory regulations, at a total cost £73,000.
 3. In their proposal social services stated their intention to consult with current service users and assist them to provide alternative service provision within the third sector.
 4. This has caused concern as:
 - There doesn't appear to be enough spare capacity within local third sector service provision to absorb the current service users of the Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms or provide continued.
 - There are no clear plans on how future preventative and early intervention day services are going to be delivered for older people who need them in the future.
 - Two established iconic day service centres providing high quality traditional day services to vulnerable local people will be lost to the community.
 5. At it's meeting on 18 November 2009 executive resolved to:
 - (1) note the report and agree to further research on the county council's proposals with the findings being reported to the full council meeting on 24 November 2009 and Executive on 25 November 2009;
 - (2) submit a considered response to the county council's proposals by the end of the consultation period
- At it's meeting on 24 November 2009 full council resolved to:
- (1) ask the executive to respond to the consultation putting forward the views that;
 - it is vital to maintain public sector social services;

- privatisation of social services fundamentally undermines the ability of society to care for the vulnerable;
- these centres provide a cost-effective, accessible and high quality model of care which complements existing provision and impacts positively on the health and well-being of service users;
- the Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms are well-placed to meet existing and potential demand for day services within the Norwich area and they should remain in use for as long as that demand exists.

(2) write to the managers of the Essex and Silver Rooms, and to the staff union, pledging its support for keeping the centres open.'

Proposed response to the consultation

6. It is recommended that executive use the overall theme of full council's resolution of 24 November 2009 and submit a response that:
 - Identifies and evidences the need to provide access to preventative and early intervention day services for vulnerable older people on a neighbourhood basis
 - Identifies that the two day centres have effectively provided this service for vulnerable older people over a long period of time.
 - Proposes that the two centres are not closed until alternative provision of these services has been properly consulted upon and planned.
 - Proposes that the authority works in partnership with Norfolk County Council and other service providers to ensure that access to the required preventative and early intervention day services for vulnerable older people continue to be provided.

The main advantages of this are that as well as being a measured and rational basis to start planning the provision of future day services it also fits in with the overall strategic direction of adult social care transformation, partnership working and our new model for delivery of services at a neighbourhood level.

7. The proposed response, contained in appendix A, has been developed in consultation with the corporate management team. It has been carefully constructed so that it can both address the concerns of councillors, but also recognise the need to transform social care provision in the city, which is being driven by an increased older person population and reducing resources.

Appendix A

Proposed closure of Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms day services for older people – Norwich City Council's response to the consultation.

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 24 November 2009 Norwich City full council resolved to:

“Ask the executive to respond to the consultation putting forward the views that;

- it is vital to maintain public sector social services;
- privatisation of social services fundamentally undermines the ability of society to care for the vulnerable;
- these centres provide a cost-effective, accessible and high quality model of care which complements existing provision and impacts positively on the health and well-being of service users;
- the Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms are well-placed to meet existing and potential demand for day services within the Norwich area and they should remain in use for as long as that demand exists.”

The need for preventative services and early intervention

2. The 'Our health, our care, our say' white paper (2006) outlined the key elements of a reformed adult social care system; a system able to respond to the demographic challenges presented by an ageing society and the rising expectations of those who depend on social care for their quality of life and capacity to have full and purposeful lives.
3. As a result the framework for cross sector reform was set out in 'Putting People First: A shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care', the Ministerial Concordat launched on 10 December 2007. Included in the values of the framework is the provision of a mainstream system that focuses on a number of key elements of social care, including prevention and early intervention.
4. The need for prevention and early intervention in relation to the provision adult social services is acknowledged and accepted throughout various county council committee documents, policies and strategies.
5. The 'Norfolk older peoples strategy – living longer, living well – the next steps 2009 – 2011' recognises that we need to focus more on preventing ill-health by supporting and developing a wide range of services that keep people active and involved in their communities.

The need for day services to provide prevention and early intervention opportunities

6. An established, recognised and effective way of preventing ill health and promoting well being amongst older people has been the provision of day services as a means of early intervention and prevention by providing

'socialisation' opportunities to prevent isolation and maintain skills for daily living and mental health.

What local people want from day services

7. The Norfolk County Council consultation 'More Choices, better choices' (2008) identified a number of factors and a diverse range of activities that older people would like to undertake as part of a day service. These included:

Factors

- Having company of older people
- Having accessible transport
- Having trained staff/volunteers
- Keeping mentally active
- Being able to afford the opportunity

Activities

- Lunch or social clubs
- To take up exercise
- Support groups
- To join community activity groups
- To have the chance to socialise
- To be able to use local amenities
- To learn new skills such as computing and wood working
- To be able to do voluntary work
- To go shopping

A number of these factors and activities are currently addressed by the traditional day centre services that exist within Norwich. Four of these traditional day centre services are run in-house by Norfolk County Council and offer 522 places per week – on average approximately 337 (64%) of these places are taken up. This is not necessarily a sign of over capacity as given the background of the client group not everyone is well enough to attend on all occasions.

9. A number of other day centre services are run by third sector organisations; many currently receive social service grants to help cover operating costs.
10. The consultation also identified the need to develop day service provision outside of the 9am to 5pm period.

The proposed changes to day services to meet locally identified needs

11. The findings of the 'More choices, better choices' consultation were then used to inform a set of proposed changes that were consulted upon in the 'Making your day' consultation (2008/9). The proposed changes consulted upon included:

Increasing choice

- Recruiting an outreach worker to help people find and take part in other activities.

- Developing existing services so that they can cater for people with higher needs.
- De-commissioning traditional day centres if an increase in the take up of personal budgets results in reduced demand for these services.
- Research why there is low take up for day services by black, minority ethnic groups.
- Pilot 'Home share day care' scheme.
- Extend services such as befriending.

Services for people with dementia

- Work with partners to develop a day centre that does assessments, has supported day opportunities and can provide support for carers.

Services for physically or mentally frail older people

- Work with providers to offer services outside of normal 9-5 hours.
- Draft a clear route and guide to services for older people with mental health problems.
- Continue joint working with partners to develop Marion Road day centre to better meet the needs of older people.

Prevention services

- To work with existing providers and partners to provide more low level preventative services.
- Find out whether housing with care schemes can provide these services in areas of high need.
- Look at ways to support the belvedere centre which is going through a period of change.
- Develop a directory of supported day opportunities in Norwich.

Transport

- Improve transport by working with partners to better meet the needs of service users and carers.

12. The results of the 'Making your day' consultation have been used to inform the report 'Future commissioning models – community care in house day services' which was presented to the county council's adult social services overview and scrutiny panel. The report contains details of the proposed 5 year interim strategy to re-model the provision of in-house service provision to focus on the following two main areas:
 - Dementia for those with high dependency needs regarding personal care.
 - Re-ablement day service for older people with social care needs.
13. This proposal will necessitate the staged de-commissioning of day services for frail older people and redirecting some current and future service users either to the independent and voluntary sector for alternative places, or to new opportunities using a personal budget.
14. The main proposed changes to day services in the Norwich locality include the following:
 - Retention of the Vauxhall Centre as a community resource and engagement with strategic partners to develop the future delivery of services, including re-ablement.

- De-commission and cease providing any services at the Essex Rooms due to the poor quality of the building. Upgrading the building is not seen as part of a cost effective plan to provide future dementia or re-ablement services. This will affect up to 113 physically and mentally frail older people who currently use this high quality traditional day service.
- De-commission and cease providing any services at the Silver Rooms due to; the cost of work required in the kitchen (£46,000) to ensure it meets regulatory standards, and low attendance rates – down to 50% on some days. These two considerations contribute to making this a non cost effective service. This will affect at least 75 physically and mentally frail older people who currently use this high quality traditional day service.
- Continue the day service at Mousehold Day Centre with re-location being considered with health partners. The premises would not be suitable for re-ablement services as they occupy the communal space for Heathfields car home and re-ablement could be offered more appropriately at the Vauxhall Centre.

Norwich City Council's views regarding the proposed changes

15. The council accepts that there is a fundamental need to transform the delivery of day services for older people. This need is well researched, evidenced and documented in a series of central government reports.
16. However, the council does have significant concerns regarding the proposals for this transformation within Norwich. These are summarised as follows:
17. Approximately 200 physically and mentally frail older people currently receive the benefits of the high quality and traditional day services from skilled and established staff at the Essex and Silver Rooms. The proposals do not contain enough detail on how their needs are going to be met once the two day centres are closed.
18. The report proposes that one option for providing future service provision would be through five other existing day centre services run by the third sector in Norwich. However, a provisional check has revealed that these centres have little existing spare capacity and no imminent plans to expand their services. This will leave a shortfall in the number of places available.
19. We have been made aware that people currently receiving assisted third sector day services are going to have their needs re-assessed against a set of tighter criteria. Whilst this will no doubt free up places in existing assisted third sector day services for people with greater needs transferring from the Essex and Silver Rooms day service, the council are concerned that this strategy will cause a reduction in available services for another group of older people.
20. The 'More choices, better choices' consultation revealed that one of the main factors for people choosing day services was transport. This is supported by the views of Age Concern who feel that one of the main factors restricting choice of activities by older people is transport. Removal of established day service provision from two neighbourhoods in Norwich is likely to cause transport issues for people from the neighbourhoods wishing to attend activities elsewhere. These issues are not addressed in the report.

21. The proposal consulted upon in the 'Making your day' consultation was "When people have personal budgets, many people may choose not to go to traditional day centres, If that happens, and demand falls, some day centres may no longer be needed, especially if there are several similar centres that close together". The report and proposals do not contain evidence that an increase in personal budget uptake is currently leading to a reduced demand for traditional day services. It is noted that the attendance levels at the Silver Rooms are as low as 50% on some days but it is not clear that this is linked to the uptake of personal budgets.
22. The need for the preventative and early intervention services and activities currently provided by traditional day centre services was identified by the 'More services, better services' consultation. The proposals in the report do not contain much detail on how these services and activities will be provided once the two day centres are closed.
23. Both the Essex Rooms and the Silver Rooms are located adjacent to two of the fifth most deprived ward areas in England. There is a significant risk that removal of this facility and the services it offers to the local community, will make matters worse for those who live in this area.
24. Both the Essex and Silver Rooms are located in areas where there is a higher concentration of older people, as identified by the 'Making your day' consultation. Removing these conveniently placed local services, without proper planning to provide alternatives, is likely to have an adverse affect for older people living in those areas.

Conclusion

22. Norwich City Council accepts the need for reform of day services across the city. We also accept that the existing facilities, including the Essex and Silver Rooms, are in need of significant updating.
23. However, we are concerned that the proposed closure of these facilities would significantly reduce services in areas of the city where there is already a shortage of services, and where there are high levels of need.
24. We would therefore expect to see a range of alternative provision provided by Norfolk County Council for elderly people in the city, and there should be absolutely no closures of any facilities until these alternative services have been agreed. In the absence of a robust plan to stimulate the growth and capacity of third sector day services, or a plan to support and enable older people to engage in other community activities, Norwich City Council feel that it is premature to de-commission two day centres that currently provide much needed day services and activities for vulnerable older people.
25. We are very clear that the provision of these services is the statutory responsibility of Norfolk County Council. However, we are keen to work with the County Council and its partners to stimulate growth and capacity within the third sector and local community to provide lower level social services and activity opportunities for older people.

26. Until this has been achieved, and a sustainable delivery model adopted, the council feel strongly that the existing day service provision at the Essex and Silver Rooms should continue. To do otherwise would adversely affect vulnerable older people.

Unitary status

27. The Norwich and Norfolk (Structural Changes) Order 2010 is in the process of passing through Parliament. Once the order is made Norwich City Council will start transferring to unitary authority status. The order is expected to be made during Spring 2010.

28. During this process these 2 day centres will transfer to a new unitary city council with effect from 1 April 2011. The city council advocates keeping these 2 centres open until that time, and in the meantime working closely with the County Council, service users and other interested parties to determine what pattern of day services provision would operate in the city from April 2011 onwards.