

5 February 2015

Dear Councillor Morton,

I am writing to you as Cabinet member for Health & Wellbeing in advance of the Cabinet meeting on 10 February 2015. I am also copying this to Cllrs Connor and Bull, respective chairs of Adult and Health Scrutiny Panel and Scrutiny and Oversight.

I read the Cabinet agenda and papers expecting to find answers from Adult Services Officers to questions from the Adult Scrutiny Panel in their role of generating further information to enable Cabinet to reach an informed decision on the MTFS proposals for social care savings, in particular proposals for further closures of residential homes and daycentres (following closures of 6 daycentres and 6 residential homes since 2011). The implications of moving from policies for the most vulnerable based on residential and daycare assets to asset-less care in the space of 4 years is unquestionably radical and demands serious consideration and scrutiny of evidence. It will leave a legacy for the Borough that is irreversible.

With these considerations in mind, Adult Scrutiny asked four factual questions:

- How these closures will impact on the current users of these day care services
- How these closures will impact on carers, and if there are any other alternative sources of community based support
- A loss of specialist staff and continuity of staff if the day care centres are shut
- The potential for long-term additional costs to the Council should customers be less able to access community based activities

But Cabinet papers make clear that instead of answering these questions senior officers have repeated what can only be termed an inspirational rhetoric, devoid of factual evidence, heard throughout the recent consultation process. Cabinet members are no better informed now about the impact of these closures than when they were first announced in early December.

Officers' failure to provide answers to these questions undermines the Council's decision making process and the legitimate business of Scrutiny panels, Cabinet and full Council.

Like many carers and users, I appreciate that the papers show the Council has withdrawn its proposal to introduce care package cuts of £5.7m, presumably because of the questionable legality of such measures. You have heeded the concerns of many residents and investigated the implications for the Council of pursuing such policies.

It is therefore more dispiriting that you have not heeded the concerns of carers and users about the impact of residential and daycare closures on their lives and have not undertaken a rigorous investigation of the suitability of the alternative approaches officers advised. Whilst offices have now clarified that reablement is not suitable for all social care user, and that the established approach of enablement will continue to be used for adults with learning

disability, we are still left with the unanswered question of what new approaches will replace building-based provision.

As the Lead Councillor for Adults and Health, I am asking you to request that the panel's questions are answered – openly and clearly – before the Cabinet meeting on 10 February. It is particularly important that the Cabinet be given this full information ahead of their meeting on 10 February. The decision about closing day centres is life-changing and potentially devastating for hundreds of people.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Hewitt