

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2014**

**QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS  
OF STANDING ORDER 10.1**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE**

**(1) MR GRAHAM ELLWOOD (GUILDFORD EAST) TO ASK:**

The forthcoming closure of Redwood Care Home in Merrow appears to have been forced upon elderly and vulnerable patients and relatives alike with indecent haste by Shaw Healthcare. This has caused distress to patients and anxiety to relatives.

In appreciating that the home is run on a commercial basis I nevertheless seek, on behalf of residents and relatives, clarification of the following issues please:

1. Why did Surrey County Council (SCC) not insist on Shaw fulfilling their contractual obligations until the end of July instead of the now target date for closure of 31 March 2014?
2. Why did SCC staff come across as badly briefed, according to relatives, and not in possession of all the facts at the meeting on 9 January 2014?
3. Why is a replacement provider not being sought? The building being unfit for purpose has been quoted but it's the same building used for several years or is this a side effect of the poor Care Quality Commission (CQC) reviews in recent years.
4. Why can more reassurance not be given to patients and relatives that every effort to relocate these vulnerable adults, including dementia sufferers, to the Guildford area will be a priority?

Unfortunately, one effect of the way this closure has been handled has been to generate negative responses from many relatives and patients.

In consequence, I seek assurance that every effort will be made from now on to explain clearly to patients and relatives what is going to happen and that this will be done with the utmost care and understanding.

## **Reply:**

### **Question 1 response:**

- 1.1 The Redwood Contract was awarded to Shaw on the basis of a competitive tender in June 2011. The company tender was evaluated by a panel of Surrey County Council officers as well as representatives from user and carer groups. The company bid for the tender with a price that they believed was viable. The contract price per bed is in excess of the price that SCC usually pay for a nursing home bed. The contract was awarded on tender evaluation criteria of 50% quality and 50% price.
- 1.2 Shaw's actions were taken on the basis that they believed they were unable to provide an ongoing quality service to safeguard residents' welfare, as required in their contract. This arose, inter alia, from their continued inability to attract and retain staff of a suitable calibre resulting in the Care Quality Commission's Inspection report on Redwood instituting Enforcement Action on Shaw.
- 1.3 Shaw were unable to provide assurances or confidence that this breach would or could be rectified in order to allow the contract to continue.
- 1.4 Given that the home is currently failing to meet some essential standards and remain financially viable, there is a balance of risk between prolonging the process of closure and securing the ongoing welfare and quality of the home as both residents and staff choose to leave. Shaw will need to balance this risk against the ability to sustain a quality service care from remaining experienced staff.
- 1.5 We are working with Shaw towards a proposed closure programme that reflects best practice guidelines for home closures.

### **Question 2 response:**

- 2.1 Surrey County Council was invited to the meeting by Shaw Healthcare as observers on 9 January 2014, to understand the announcement to residents and representatives first hand. The Adult Social Care (ASC) service was not expected nor in a position to present at the meeting.

We fully understand that relatives wanted immediate guaranteed outcomes from the announced proposal to close the home, including confirmation that residents would be placed in a nearby home in the centre of Guildford, and the exact numbers of beds that were available for them.

We believe that it would have been inappropriate and irresponsible at that time to give a blanket guarantee answer to individual questions without detailed discussions with each family member and the residents impacted by the closure.

- 2.2 ASC did respond to the overall questions, by guaranteeing that, we would meet with all residents on an individual basis to undertake a

reassessment, irrespective of their funding sources. We also assured residents that, as far as it is possible, we will support them to achieve an alternative home of choice that meets individual needs and preferences.

**Question 3 response:**

- 3.1 The process of finding an alternative provider does not guarantee better outcomes for residents. The recently published Care Quality Commission report, and the reports from Shaw themselves have indicated a number of different reasons for the proposed closure including attracting the right calibre of staff and having to recruit a large number of agency staff. The recent Care Quality Commission's Inspection Report means that Shaw cannot guarantee a quality of excellent care that is the primary outcome essential to residents' welfare. Shaw has also advised that in managing quality risks the home has been unable to sustain full bed capacity resulting in significant financial loss.
- 3.2 Surrey County Council, through its safeguarding and quality assurance processes and our provider closure protocol, believes it is in the best interest for the welfare of residents to offer support to find an alternative home at this time. The ongoing welfare of the residents at this time is our primary consideration. Surrey County Council would not be seeking to commission nursing home beds from the home until we are sure that a quality service can be sustained.
- 3.3 Redwood is a nursing home, and unlike a residential care home, the residents' needs must be met by an appropriately registered health provider.
- 3.4 With regard to the building, general site reports indicate that although the facilities have been maintained in a good state of repair the property does not meet the standards and current design recommendations of a modern quality care home and as such has difficulty competing in the nursing home market ratio of assisted bathrooms is 10:1 falling short of current regulation standard of 8:1.

**Question 4 response:**

- 4.1 Where family members were unable to attend the residents and families' meeting on 9 January 2014, Shaw and ASC ensured that a family representative was contacted by phone or in person following the meeting to inform them of the consultation. Shaw sent a joint letter to residents and a family representative following the meeting.
- 4.2 Since 9 January 2014, a staff member from ASC has been on site to meet with residents and their families several times a week including evenings and weekends. ASC now have a member of staff there every day who is also available to meet with residents and relatives after work and at weekends at a mutually convenient time. Shaw have allocated ASC some office space at Redwood and there is a sign on the notice board listing times that ASC staff are on site and contact details of ASC staff.

- 4.3 Dedicated key workers have also been on site to discuss individual care needs with individuals and their families and review any change in needs. Friendship groups have also been mapped to minimise any distress that may be caused by separating friendships groups.
- 4.4 There has also been regular contact with many family members to answer their individual queries, discuss their options and support them in looking at a new care home and in some cases organising a move to a new provider.

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR ASSETS AND REGENERATION PROGRAMMES**

### **(2) MRS CAROL COLEMAN (ASHFORD) TO ASK:**

Under Item 7 at the full council meeting on 10 December 2013, I asked a supplementary question to question number 6, regarding the equipment used in council properties to aid the disabled, namely hearing loops to assist the hard of hearing.

I brought to the attention of the Cabinet the importance of having the equipment properly maintained, and that the staff that were expected to use them should have appropriate training, which in my experience was not always the case.

I asked that whoever had responsibility for equalities within the council, to investigate my concerns and that the issues highlighted were resolved. To date, I have not been contacted by anyone on either point. Could the Cabinet Member please advise me of what, if anything, has been done with regards to this issue, and what importance this council places on making themselves accessible for those Members of the community (1 in 6) who are hard of hearing?

### **Reply:**

The specific incident cited of a Surrey library hearing loop equipment failure, which was raised as part of a supplementary question at the County Council in December 2013 is currently being looked into.

We can confirm that hearing loop equipment is on a cycle of maintenance, in accordance with that recommended by the supplier. As this equipment is specialist, this is not something that Surrey County Council do in-house. However, Surrey County staff are trained in this equipment usage such as to assist customers on site.

In terms of this as a wider issue, we will look at the equipment inspection process to see if it is resilient enough or if there are additional inspections that need to happen. The training available for staff working in public facing areas will also be considered for review.

To help inform officers of how to best support those with accessibility issues, a meeting is scheduled for 10 February 2014, with the Surrey Coalition for

Disabled People. This is primarily to understand if we can do more to support those with specific difficulties especially around accessing services within our core public facing buildings.

## **LEADER OF THE COUCIL**

### **(3) MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:**

Of the 58 Conservative councillors elected to Surrey, how many are in receipt of an additional allowance, over and above the general allowance paid to all Members?

#### **Reply:**

Details of the roles within the Scheme of Allowances which attract a Special Responsibility Allowance are published on the Council's website. Allowances are currently received by 37 of the Conservative councillors.

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **(4) MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK: (2<sup>nd</sup> question)**

Has the Council leadership been able to research and study the findings after previous floods in Surrey - in particular 1968. If so, what lessons have been learnt and or ignored? Why was no-one from Surrey County Council (SCC) prepared to go on BBC Radio Surrey to defend the County's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment plan?

#### **Reply:**

Although many residents in Surrey remember the significant flood event in 1968 technology and resources at that time were not as focused on recording, maintaining and sharing data and knowledge as we are today. In these circumstances the Surrey Local Flood Risk Strategy is informed and influenced by the still significant events that initially occurred in autumn 2000 and continued throughout that winter. During that period, currently considered the worst flood event for which records are held, over 500 properties were flooded across Surrey. In the winter of 2002/03 the Chertsey area experienced severe fluvial flooding and in August 2006 two months of rainfall fell in just six hours in north-west Surrey, again affecting over 500 properties.

The council used the information and knowledge from all these severe weather events to better plan and manage its various responses and, working with other risk management authorities, deal with identified priorities throughout the county. Our efforts at that time were further enhanced by the Pitt Review in response to further serious flooding that occurred across England in the summer of 2007. The subsequent report, in June 2008, made 92

recommendations that helped change the way that local flood risk is managed and ultimately led to the introduction of The Flood and Water Management Act in 2010.

This Act made the County a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) responsible for managing the flood risk associated with surface water runoff, ordinary water courses and groundwater. These responsibilities are in addition to the duties also imposed on the council as Highway Authority.

The LLFA has a duty under the Act to:

1. Produce a local flood risk management strategy
2. Create an asset register
3. Carry out an investigation where significant flooding occurs
4. Create a Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (not yet enacted)

In these circumstances, the County Council has and will continue to respond to flooding issues throughout the county providing practical support and assistance with partner organisations where possible. The Council is also ensuring that flood information is obtained, maintained, shared and communicated widely with other flood risk management authorities, and internal and external stakeholders, for future reference and action where appropriate.

Following the flood events over Christmas and in the interim the council has been evaluating the data to confirm whether official 'investigations' are required at approximately 20 sites across the county where significant flooding has occurred. Any individual investigation of this nature will require the involvement of all the relevant flood risk management authorities concerned in order to provide appropriate conclusions.

The Council's operational response to the severe weather events and emergency situation over Christmas and the New Year included officers from a variety of services, together with staff from our service provider partners who successfully delivered on the ground. Many of the individuals concerned worked throughout the holiday period and over subsequent weekends, and continue to do so, to ensure services to Surrey residents were generally maintained. I would like to acknowledge the work done by all parties and thank the individuals and services concerned.

I can also confirm that, following a public engagement exercise, the Surrey Local Flood Risk Strategy has been updated and Cabinet will receive my report on 25 March 2014. In these circumstances I, and officers, support the aims and objectives of the strategy and I am always available to respond to requests for information.

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **(5) MRS CAROL COLEMAN (ASHFORD) TO ASK: (2<sup>nd</sup> question)**

Residents in the division that I represent, Ashford in Spelthorne, are very concerned about the plans to replace the two current fire stations with a new station which would lead to the loss of one full time crewed fire engine for the borough.

Can they be assured that all options to make the required financial savings were investigated, and that the decision to make savings by reducing the fire cover in Spelthorne was the only possible one that could be taken?

Front line services should be the last place to look for savings, so can the Cabinet please tell me what other options were investigated, as that is not clear from the papers at the Communities Select Committee nor the Cabinet meetings that I attended.

- How many staff are employed in Surrey Fire & Rescue, and how many of these are front line staff (fire fighters)?
- How many vehicles in the service are front line operational, along with the total number of vehicles, and what is the cost and value of those that are not i.e. managers cars?
- At the Cabinet meeting, a fire officer asked if the Cabinet would consider making the required savings by terminating the contract for outsourcing SF&RS work, but that was not addressed by the Cabinet. Could we please have a response to that question?

These are the questions that residents need to know have been looked at before the decision is taken to reduce the fire and rescue cover in an area.

### **Reply:**

I would like to thank Mrs Coleman for taking the time to raise these points.

Whilst I note the contents of the questions that she has raised it must be remembered that the matter to which she refers which is the changes to the deployment of fire engines in Spelthorne was, in fact, presented to the Cabinet on 4 February 2014. The Cabinet is responsible for all executive decisions and leads on the preparation of the Council's policies and budget and makes recommendations to the County Council on the major policy plans and the budget. It is the role of Cabinet to take decisions within this framework of plans and procedural rules approved by the Council, including key decisions, of which this was one. To that effect therefore, this matter has progressed through that established framework which has allowed scrutiny (at both Communities Select Committee and Cabinet) and for due diligence and consideration of the matters pertinent to the matter at hand to be fully considered.

Our values are crucial in delivering our corporate strategy, and are what we draw on to make a difference for Surrey residents. During the Cabinet meeting, it was stated that the revised proposal was as a direct consequence of the Council actively listening to what people had said during the consultation and in particular the fact that whilst one fire station was acceptable, one fire engine was not which is why there will now be two 24/7 fire engines remaining in Spelthorne to support a Surrey wide response. The provision of a new and modern, fit for purpose fire station and the creation of 18 new part-time jobs in Spelthorne is a significant investment in the borough.

In coming to a decision on this issue the Cabinet has taken account of all relevant matters. The relevant matters in this context included the statutory requirements (the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004) the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, the Public Safety Plan, the policy considerations, the impacts of the options proposed on service provision, the medium term financial plan, any relevant risks, the results of the consultation and the public sector equality duty. All five options were clearly laid out in the Cabinet paper.

With regards to the bullet points listed, the total number of personnel employed by SFRS is 797, of which 720 are frontline staff which provide an operational response. This includes officers at various levels of the organisation, all of which provide a blue light response to emergencies. These can be broken down further:

Wholetime fire officers	591
Retained / on-call fire officers	101
Control operators	28
Support Staff	77

For bullet point 2 regarding the number of vehicles in SFRS, this information is available but does require a detailed briefing which is available to all Members should they wish to avail themselves of this.

With regard to the question asked by the fire officer as to whether the contract could be "*terminated... for outsourcing SF&RS work*" my colleague Kay Hammond, in her capacity as Cabinet Associate Member for Fire and Police Services, answered the question at Cabinet and rightly stated that it is a statutory requirement for the Fire and Rescue Authority to be able to discharge its functions under all foreseeable circumstances, including times when there are employment disputes. That is why there is such a contract in place.