

Public Question to the Adult and Health Select Committee – 15 June 2023

Question:

Can SCC remain in compliance with their duty to use public money responsibly and their obligation to safeguard the public if the facility at Greenways is allowed to continue?

Context to question

Greenways, a residential property in the small village of Fox Corner was rented to a company called Applenet Care and Support Ltd around October 2020. The house is being used as a residential care facility for people with a range of mental health needs, including ex-offenders and those with a history of substance abuse. (Surrey County Council Adult Social Care [SCC ASC] email 24/5/23). SCC ASC is financing the operation.

No consultation has ever been held with residents of Fox Corner by Applenet or SCC ASC. Over the last 2 years, there have been a series of extremely concerning incidents, including violent incidents and anti-social behaviour committed by people housed at Greenways. Applenet's management also have a publicly available history of failure in running facilities of this kind (for example Coghlan Lodges, Berkshire).

Incidents include:

- An individual housed at Greenways (described by Applenet management as a 'Problematic Schizophrenic') used illegal drugs and offered them to passers-by. He frightened local residents with his behaviour and endangered his own life by sitting at the front of the property with his feet in the road. Applenet management were unaware of his behaviour until the very alarmed local residents told them. Applenet then failed to effectively manage the situation, which escalated with the individual standing on the entrances to neighbouring houses to use drugs, having a lot of arguments and shouting at others on the front drive of Greenways and finally an incident in which a visitor to a neighbouring house was assaulted. Shortly after this the man was arrested and "**readmitted** to a secure mental health facility" (SCC ASC email 24/5/23).
- An individual who was a known arsonist but who supposedly had an "appropriate risk assessment" (SCC ASC Briefing 12/12/22) in place was able to enter a property in Fox Corner and set fire to a vehicle, causing thousands of pounds of damage and endangering lives.
- Staff at Greenways have been threatened by residents with a knife (ASC email 24/5/23).
- On multiple occasions several police vehicles have arrived at Greenways in response to serious incidents or to arrest people placed there by SCC ASC.

- Verbal abuse directed at young girls waiting for the bus across the road from Greenways by residents of Greenways

The management of Applenet continually show a disregard for laws, proper processes and are dishonest in their conduct. The following are examples clearly visible to other residents of Fox Corner. We can only assume there are a multitude of failures that we cannot see:

- Applenet have never consulted the Planning Authority about the use of the property. Guildford Borough Council Planning have found that the property is being used for a purpose for which it does not have planning permission. (Class C2 use). SCC ASC response to this was: "Guildford do not seem to be unduly concerned and have asked the owners to submit the required information" (ASC email 24/5/23). This is a very misleading interpretation of the findings of misuse by GBC who have concluded that a full planning application must be made.
- Applenet purchased a large 3 bedroomed mobile home which was delivered to the property in November 2022. There had been no consultation with the planning authorities or with neighbours. Applenet told neighbours that they didn't think anyone would mind. The mobile home was only removed after significant volumes of complaints by local residents.
- Applenet have applied for an HMO licence, only after a complaint was raised to the local council by a Fox Corner resident.
- Applenet do not and have never had an adequate rubbish collection procedure, resulting in a build-up of rubbish on the property and the routine misuse of Surrey's domestic bin collection services.
- Applenet have told SCC ASC a number of lies, which SCC ASC have willingly believed. These include claims of "ongoing liaison with the community" and the existence of "a neighbourhood Whatsapp group". Both of which are simply not true but which SCC ASC seem to have relied on to inform their decision making processes

Based on what we know of Applenet's history of failure and what we can see of Applenet's current failures and lack of honesty and based on the response of SCC ASC, we have no confidence that SCC ASC is adequately scrutinising and monitoring the facility at Greenways. The safety of the public is at risk and SCC is complicit in this. The facility must therefore be immediately closed.