

CABINET – 26 NOVEMBER 2024**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Members' Questions:****Question (1 and 2) Catherine Baart**

1. Regarding the sale of the three care homes, how have opportunities to support the County Council's housing strategy, including approaching borough councils and residential social landlords to provide social housing, been explored, before putting the properties on the open market?
2. If the assets are bought by a private care home provider, how does the Council assure itself that the disposal of the asset to a private care home provider will offer value for money to the County Council should the Council place residents in that home in the future? For example, is the sale price linked to a guarantee of unit rates for residents placed in the care homes by Surrey County Council in the future.

Reply:

1. Surrey County Council's (SCC) Housing, Accommodation and Homes Strategy identifies the shortage of affordable accommodation within Surrey, including properties for social rent. The Strategy places firm emphasis on the need for collaborative working with boroughs and districts in relation to the delivery of affordable housing and this is taking place through various forums, including a recent Surrey Affordable Housing Roundtable. Whilst the Council will consider approaches from District and Borough Councils there remains a requirement to openly market all assets to ensure compliance with our best value obligations. These assets have been placed on the open market through the Council's framework consultants, Lambert Smith Hampton, who have a national presence. There were no enquiries nor bids submitted by the relevant District and Borough Councils.
2. The disposals process includes obtaining formal surplus declarations arising from the services confirming that the existing buildings and localities are no longer operationally viable. The original decision to close these homes was approved by Cabinet on that basis.

Redevelopment of the care homes, whether for general needs housing or for modernised care facilities, will need to comply with District and Borough planning policy particularly regarding delivery of affordable units within any scheme. There has been no intent to secure a lower level of capital receipt by seeking unquantified levels of nomination rights from a scheme.

Natalie Bramhall
Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure
26 November 2024

Question (3) Jonathan Essex

1. The three decisions to sell off the care homes on the open market appear to have attracted a lot of private sector interest. Please can you set out what public sector options were considered before opting for the open market sale, including potential use of the site for Extra Care Housing, potential redevelopment of the site by Surrey County Council for a new care home in line with forecast changing care needs or retention of the asset by the Council (i.e. recruiting a developer to build and then transfer the asset into the ownership of the Council).

Reply:

Surrey County Council has undertaken a vacant/surplus wide review and has identified several sites that would be suitable for Extra Care developments. The 3 locations Abbey Wood, Arundel House and Barnfield were not included within the final list as these properties do not support current modelling and service needs.

The sale of the care homes is not linked to any future service need but are anticipated to be redeveloped for general needs housing or modern care use facilities, subject to the outcome of planning by each prospective purchaser. Should the sites be used for care homes in the future, the use of this provision by the Council would be assessed in line with the commissioning policy for older people aiming to place at guide rates to ensure best value for the Council.

Natalie Bramhall

Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure

26 November 2024