

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Sheltered Housing Scheme at Langley Court and Langley Close, St Ives.

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 21 November 2013

Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite

Report by: Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Ward(s) affected: St Ives (South)

Executive Summary:

This report outlines details of a petition presented to Council on 13th November 2013 concerning the potential closure of the Sheltered Housing Scheme at Langley Court and Langley Close, St Ives together with a Motion by Councillor K J Churchill on the matter which had been referred, by the Council to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet is also being asked to consider a request for a loan from Luminus to enable them to develop a new Extra Care scheme for frail older people at Langley Court, St Ives. (Item 7 refers).

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Cabinet consider the contents of this report.

1. PETITION

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 13th November 2013, a petition was presented on behalf of 52 signatories concerning the potential closure of the Sheltered Housing Scheme at Langley Court and Langley Close, St Ives. The petition read as follows:

"This petition relates to a statutory function of the Council in that the District Council is ultimately responsible for housing.

We are a group of over 50 elderly people who live in this Sheltered Housing Scheme at Langley Court and Langley Close in St Ives. We have Assured Tenancy Agreements and the Scheme is administered by the Luminus Group based at Brook House in Huntingdon.

We are petitioning the District Council to ask for your help in our campaign to prevent the Luminus Group (our landlords) from demolishing our homes in order to build an extra-care facility on the site.

On July 22nd of this year we the residents were invited to a meeting in the communal lounge to hear "some exciting news about the future of Langley Court and Langley Close". The meeting was well attended. We were indeed excited (new bathrooms perhaps?). Imagine our shock and horror when we were told that Luminus intended to demolish the building in order to replace it with an extra-care facility, that our building was old (Langley Close was built in 1978 and Langley Court was added in 1990) and that 95% of the ageing population lived in the community and only 5% were in assisted housing. So we didn't count? We were informed that this was a Government initiative propelled by the need to get elderly long-term patients out of hospital.

While we understand and support the need for such care we cannot see the sense of destroying the homes of one lot of elderly people in order to build to provide for a different set of elderly people in the future. The common sense solution would be to have both - keeping the sheltered housing and building the extra-care facility on another site, we understand that there are other suitable sites available within the county.

We are all friends and neighbours who value the safety and security in which we live as well as the lively community of which we are a part. We wish to stay where we are, where we have lived for many years and where we have put down roots. We do not wish to be hustled off to who knows where as we have come to rely on each other for support and help which is not always available elsewhere.

For all their assurance, Luminus cannot provide like for like as they can only provide places as they become available and we will be separated from our friends, families, neighbours and some will be even sent to different towns within the county.

We have all been under great stress since the announcement. Elderly people are easily frightened and this whole affair has been and still is like a sword hanging over our heads. Many will agree to go because they cannot cope with the uncertainty.

So we are begging you to use whatever influence you may have and your humanitarian instincts to save us from this fearful infringement of our human rights."

1.2 Following questions from Members, it was RESOLVED that the petition be referred for consideration to the Cabinet.

2. MOTION ON NOTICE

2.1 The following motion was moved by Councillor K J Churchill and duly seconded at the Council meeting on 13 November 2013:

"(a) that the Council notes:

- that residents of the Sheltered Housing Scheme at Langley Court and Langley Close, St Ives, Cambridgeshire may be faced with possession proceedings to be issued by their landlord, Luminus;
- that the nature of the said redevelopment of the site would be the provision of extra-care type housing designed for elderly people with a range of dependencies (for which substantial Government support is available) but for which only a small number of the current residents may qualify when the new facility is completed. The remainder would be rehoused at various locations through the District;
- that the current dwellings are structurally sound and some of the residents have expended substantial amounts of their own monies in improving their homes over time. Many have been resident there for a number of years and there is a strong community among them;
- that Huntingdonshire District Council has already given its support to develop extra-care housing in St Ives.

(b) the Council considers:

- that it is not in the best interests of the residents, both individually and collectively, for them to be subjected to the trauma of being uprooted and settled at varying locations throughout Cambridgeshire; and

(c) that this Council calls upon the Cabinet to:

- withdraw any support, financial or otherwise, from Luminus that would in any way cause or contribute to the breakup of this sustainable retirement community; and
- explore every possible alternative to provide the extra-care facility that will be required in the future."

2.2 Mindful of ongoing consultation with residents and Luminus on these issues, the Council agreed to refer consideration of both the petition and the motion to the Cabinet.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Agenda 13 November 2013.

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