

Public Meeting: The Future of Wayfarers 15th December 2015, Sandwich Guildhall

Present

- Cllr Mrs Jacqueline Dunay, Deputy Mayor - Sandwich Town Council (in the Chair)
- Mr Graham Gibbens, KCC Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health
- Ms Christy Holden, KCC Head of Strategic Commissioning Accommodation Solutions as the responsible Officer for the proposal for Wayfarers, Sandwich
- Mr Leyland Ridings MBE, KCC County Councillor for Sandwich
- Cllr Sue Chandler, Chairman of DDC (attending the meeting in her capacity as DDC's representative member of the Canterbury and Coastal Area Health and Wellbeing Board)
- Cllrs Carter, Franklin, Miller, Watts & Wood – Sandwich Town Council
- Mr Dick Perry (Friends of Wayfarers)
- Approximately 30 members of the public

Introduction

The Deputy Mayor welcomed all those attending to the meeting, and introduced Mr Gibbens and Ms Holden before inviting them both to say a few words.

Graham Gibbens: This is a consultation regarding how we can best plan for the development of Wayfarers and secure a strong future for it with an independent provider as we move into the future. There is no issue regarding closure – it's not on the agenda, and it's not being consulted on. KCC has had many residential homes over the years but is looking to be a commissioning authority, performance managing providers to maintain the highest standards of care. We're no longer a primary provider of care. Local authority finance has changed – authorities can't borrow money as they used to. We're looking at the ongoing development of Wayfarers (maybe even its expansion) going forward to ensure there is a strong service in the Sandwich area that meets current needs and people's needs in the next 20 – 30 years. This is very important, as in the next twenty years the number of people over 85 is expected to treble and within that, the number of people with dementia aged over 85 will also treble. So we need to look at providing the right support in the long term for older people with health needs. The process now is that the consultation ends on 20th December 2015, and then there will be a meeting of the KCC Adult Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee (which is a cross-party committee) on 14th January 2016 to discuss the outcomes of the consultation. Only after that will I be called upon to make the decision regarding the future of Wayfarers.

Christy Holden stated that she had nothing more to add to what Mr Gibbens had already said.

Leyland Ridings: I am delighted to hear that closure is not on the agenda, but am concerned to make sure that we get the right person or organisation in to ensure the right care for older people in this area.

Dick Perry: I would like to thank Mr Gibbens for his introduction – I'm delighted to hear that our dear Wayfarers will not be closing. It is dear to many of us, as it provides personal, dedicated care and is run efficiently. At previous meetings, KCC stresses that the buildings need to be replaced – surely that isn't the case? A lot of us find them very

satisfactory and the residents do too. Wayfarers holds a lot of activities, including activities at the moment for Christmas, and the CQC have classified it as a good home – it's well run by KCC. KCC has over the years been responsible for many things, including many homes – Mr Gibbens did not mention that KCC is looking at closing some homes –

(At this point, Mr Gibbens clarified that the current consultation is looking at closing two homes and reprovisioning another, on Sheppey, but stressed again that Wayfarers is not for closure)

Dick Perry (cont.): We need to look at how the future of Wayfarers can be secured if it is sold to a private provider. At a recent meeting with KCC, it was stated that KCC has a statutory responsibility to provide care and is hoping that a provider will come forward for Wayfarers, which seems to me an odd sentence – KCC is not standing up to its responsibility. Local authorities have been given permission to raise council tax by up to 2% this year, I am happy to pay that to ensure Wayfarers remains in KCC's hands.

Question & Answer Session

Cllr Watts: We value Wayfarers greatly. You say that you're not preparing to close it, so why are you emptying it and not accepting new permanent residents? The situation seems like déjà-vu, KCC couldn't sell Wayfarers five years ago so why do you think you can sell it now, if it's uneconomical to run? I believe that in Sandwich we need a state-of-the-art home which can be run on an even keel, probably offering about 60+ units. What will you do if you can't sell Wayfarers?

Christy Holden: We were here five years ago and said that if we couldn't sell under the right conditions, we wouldn't sell Wayfarers – and we didn't plough ahead. In the meantime, it's not fair to house people at Wayfarers permanently, except in exceptional circumstances, as it is up for long-term review. As a commissioning authority we have a lot of intelligence about successful providers with considerable resources. The design of the building as it stands can't accommodate people with more complex needs.

Graham Gibbens: We are not seeking to close Wayfarers or run it down.

C. Hopper (Friends of Wayfarers): I've never understood the financing. The standard of care at the moment is excellent, how can KCC privatise Wayfarers and ensure that standards are maintained? Why can't KCC run it and make a success of it?

Graham Gibbens: We're no longer able to get finance like we used to, so it's important to commission services from quality providers and performance manage them strongly. There is no issue here regarding the quality of care, but we're looking at the long-term improvement and development of the service to deal with future demand. Regarding the 2% on council tax which Mr Perry mentioned earlier, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) have expressed grave concern that in the short term, this is a drop in the ocean of need. 2% on council tax produces about £11m. Adult Social Care costs for 2015/16 are already overspent, and there's real concern nationwide about the situation. We hope that as we move forward the money situation will improve. At the moment, though, what we're proposing regarding Wayfarers is not particularly a money-saving issue, we're looking to make the best provisions for the long term.

Unnamed lady: What is the current percentage of bed occupancy at Wayfarers?

Christy Holden: It is running a 71% occupancy for 2014/15.

Same unnamed lady: Recently I read an article about so-called 'bed-blocking'. If Wayfarers could take people from hospitals, this would help the NHS, it would be guaranteed money for Wayfarers, and so it could be refurbished.

Christy Holden: On 3rd December 2015, only one person across the whole East Kent Hospitals Trust was experiencing a delayed transfer of care, and that person needed a nursing bed. The delays are in the provision of nursing care, not residential care, and KCC can't employ nurses to provide that kind of care.

Graham Gibbens: Across the UK and in Kent, since December / January 2014/15 there has been a marked increase in the number of very frail and sick people arriving at A&E departments. Maybe we've been successful at keeping people out of hospital for five years or so but now they're getting older and frailer. We can't take people with complex needs into our residential care homes. Most people want to stay independent as long as they can and when they get to the point that they do need a care home, they need more complex care than we can offer.

Diana Osborne (Friends of Wayfarers): As council taxpayers and voters, we feel we have a certain security in Wayfarers. What if, in five years, the private care provider can't make the home pay and closes it?

Graham Gibbens: There's no evidence of that happening elsewhere in the county, for example Connors House in Canterbury has been expanded, improved and is thriving since it was taken on by Abbeyfield. They have even redeveloped some homes in Tonbridge & Malling (although the size of the Wayfarers site might be an issue in that respect).

Christy Holden: We would take this into account in the conditions of sale.

Lorraine Sandford (Wayfarers employee): I feel you are very misguided. We just turned out a lady aged 99 who had lived in Sandwich all her life, as we're not taking permanent residents – so she had to go to Deal. We are taking on nursing care to fill our beds, and we've been telling you that.

Christy Holden: I can't comment on individual cases but all cases go to the Assistant Director for consideration.

Lorraine Sandford: We have just taken on one permanent resident, so why can't we take more? You say that residents in care homes want things like internet cafés, but you won't let us have wifi, despite CQC saying that wifi is essential. You don't know about individual cases but you should know what you're talking about.

Julian Stowell: You say you're not taking permanent residents into Wayfarers as it's up for review, but you also say here's no intention to close it – there's a contradiction there. I think there's a financial issue here. Instead of huge, financially viable conglomerates, why not look at smaller, more intimate care homes? Also, regarding en suite bathrooms, very few houses in Sandwich have them, and I think the Wayfarers residents aren't bothered about them.

Graham Gibbens: We must look forward over the next twenty years – more people's needs will become more serious and complex. I'm reliably informed that for a person with dementia, having an en suite bathroom is important as they need as much support as possible to manage their own bathroom needs, to help prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs). Use of dark fittings for contrast assists them.

Julian Stowell: If the stats say that one in five people over 80 will have dementia, then for four-fifths of the population what you've just said won't be relevant. The percentage of people requiring dementia care will remain the same.

Graham Gibbens: But it will be a greater number of people, as the overall population ages.

Revd. Pashley: To say that en suites are de rigeur is un-thought through. UTIs may be a risk, but better a UTI than a broken hip sustained using an en suite bathroom.

Cllr Wood: Is the future of Wayfarers as a residential care home secure?

Graham Gibbens: Yes – we’re looking not to close it, but to sell it on to an established provider.

Cllr Miller: Please can you be clearer about why KCC can’t make Wayfarers financially viable, and how you will put a framework in place to ensure high standards?

Christy Holden: KCC commissions 90% of social care services, therefore we’re used to monitoring provision, including monitoring conditions of sale. The revenue costs for our services are higher than the costs for the private sector, for example our salary costs are higher as our salaries are level across the board. There would be no immediate savings from a transfer of Wayfarers though as staff would move across on the same terms and conditions. The unit costs of Wayfarers are about £600 - £700 per week, the Council has decided that the maximum any person can be asked to contribute to care is £463 per week, so effectively we’re subsidising people with capital.

Tim Summers: Can we know what’s happened to the profits from land sales and sold homes, please? Also, staff in the private sector have nowhere near the same level of training as KCC staff – otherwise the private sector would have to charge more. Can KCC ensure that any private sector employees at Wayfarers have the same level of training?

Christy Holden: I’ll take on board your point about staff training. Historically, I don’t know what happened to the profits from sales, but recently we have been reinvesting into older persons’ services, particularly extra care sheltered housing.

Graham Gibbens: We have sought to reinvest as Christy just outlined. Our accommodation strategy reveals that across Kent, we have a shortage of extra care sheltered housing and a shortage of nursing homes, but no shortage of standard residential care. People say that they want extra care sheltered housing moving forward (but I am not saying extra care sheltered housing or nursing care will be coming to Sandwich) – in fact, extra care sheltered housing can work for people with a low level of dementia. We are partners in several new schemes with Housing 21 and with district councils.

Lorraine Sandford: You’re selling the building as not fit for purpose, and the staff are to go with the building. As a business person, why would I take on a refurbishment / rebuild project and staff I’d either have to pay more, or would have to pay redundancy to?

Christy Holden: Redevelopment can be done in a phased way, or by doing only part of the building at a time.

Graham Gibbens: As an example, Connors House didn’t have to shut down at any point while redevelopments were being carried out. We are seeking to encourage further development.

Lorraine Sandford: Why didn’t a provider want to take on the staff last time?

Christy Holden: Last time, they didn’t have the finance to meet the terms and conditions. In the decision report, we will have the outcome of expressions of interest from providers. If there isn’t a suitable expression of interest, then we’re back to the six other

options mentioned in the consultation paper, or any other suggestions that have come out of the consultation process.

Graham Gibbens: But we're not looking at closure – if you think Christy's response left that option open, it didn't.

Julian Stowell: You've talked about Connors House, etc. – but Wayfarers doesn't have a large footprint so there's not the scope to develop outwards. Also, do Wayfarers residents want to move into a large care home which isn't like the setting they're used to?

Graham Gibbens: Connors House only has one extra wing – it's not massive.

Julian Stowell: People like Wayfarers as it is. So why not leave it as it is?

Graham Gibbens: Over the next twenty years, needs will change. So we need to look forward proactively.

Lorraine Sandford: So tell us what you are doing?

Graham Gibbens: We're developing extra care sheltered housing (*at this point Lorraine Sandford said not in Sandwich*) – we have a good track record across Kent and want to work with providers to meet changing needs.

Julian Stowell: The population is definitely getting older. Wayfarers won't ever be the solution for everyone but is appropriate for those who need from home into residential care within Sandwich.

Graham Gibbens: I agree, and we're not jeopardising it.

Unnamed lady: What is the minimum number of years that you will accept through the covenant as a guarantee that Wayfarers will remain a residential care home? Also, KCC staff should have seen the increased, more complex needs coming twenty years ago and should have started planning for it then.

Christy Holden: At the moment, we haven't specified the number of years – we need to talk to the market. Our commitment is that we want it to remain a care home for as long as possible.

Graham Gibbens: You're right to say that we should have been looking at this a long time ago, even as far back as the 1950s it should have been obvious that by 2015 there would be a large number of people retiring and getting older. All I can say in my defence is that I have been in this role for eight years and over those eight years, I have done my best to advance the needs of the most vulnerable across the board so they can become and/or remain independent, and to ensure that facilities are fit for the future.

Cllr Wood: If you can't find the best possible provider to meet the challenges presented, is there still an option for Wayfarers to remain in KCC control?

Graham Gibbens: Yes, that is still an option – but I need to look at it in the light of where we are now and where we need to be. Also, I need to look at the results of the consultation, and to take advice. We are consulting on one option at the moment – to sell Wayfarers as a going concern – and I'm not prepared to consider closure.

Tim Larkfield: You've skirted around the covenant issue again. I think the minimum time specified for Wayfarers to remain a residential care home should be 35 years or more – no discussion of 5 or 10 years to test the market. So where are we on that minimum number of years?

Christy Holden: The contract is still forming – we can't come to you with a finalised contract, we are obliged to consult as views are forming and before the contract is drawn up.

Tim Larkfield: I would like to hear that you would accept 30 years upwards, and wouldn't accept 5.

Christy Holden: We wouldn't accept 5. In my experience, we're looking at 10 – 20 years, as care provision is changing and so we can't tie down forever to one form of care. The covenant would include a discussion about any future changes.

Graham Gibbens: There are legalities involved too. I think I've made a clear commitment that we are looking at maintaining residential care but that people's needs are changing and so we need to be circumspect.

Tim Larkfield: Another inconsistency is that at a recent meeting at Wayfarers, someone asked where the proceeds of sale would go, and we were told they would go into the general KCC 'pot', which contradicts what you've been saying.

Graham Gibbens: We've said that in the last five to ten years we have reinvested proceeds in Adult Social Care – we have a strong track record on that.

Christy Holden: That response, about the KCC 'pot', was regarding capital receipts from any of the sales – if we need to build for Adult Social Care, we make a bid to that 'pot'.

Graham Gibbens: And KCC has (since I've been there) been generous in ensuring that money set aside for Adult Social Care goes to Adult Social Care.

Cllr Watts: Can I ask Leyland Ridings to clarify how he will represent our views to KCC?

Leyland Ridings: We've clarified that Wayfarers is not for closure. KCC has had to save around £50m per annum each year for the last five years and that's getting worse. I'm satisfied at how KCC handles demands on the capital 'pot', for example there is a need for more classrooms for primary and secondary education. Graham Gibbens is a very committed advocate for Adult Social Care, I trust him and I think you should.

Graham Gibbens: Leyland has been very supportive of the people of Sandwich, and has spoken to me and expressed what people think. I do understand that change is a challenge, but we do need to look at our services now and in the future.

Cllr Franklin: My sister worked for KCC for years, as did my mother – both at the care end of Adult Social Services. I think we do need care in the community like Wayfarers, but I also think developments like Cornfields and Sampson Court are great. Why not build extra care sheltered housing on the old Highways depot up the Ash Road?

Graham Gibbens: I'm aware of the old Highways depot - we can't borrow money like we did in the past but we're working with providers across Kent to develop extra care sheltered housing schemes.

Richard Linning: I'll take at face value what you say about Wayfarers not being up for closure. But you have said going forward there will be three drivers: extra care sheltered housing, nursing care and more complex needs. Have you come up with a desirable mix for Wayfarers – how much of each will be provided?

Graham Gibbens: Across Kent standard residential care is over-provided, whereas extra care sheltered housing and nursing care are underprovided. We're looking at the balance as we move forward.

Christy Holden: I provided the numbers for the district at the last public meeting, I can provide the numbers to the Town Clerk's office for Sandwich and Ash so they can be published with the minutes¹.

Cllr Carter: Something that's come across here is a lack of confidence in KCC – this stems from having 'seen it all before' five years ago. Graham Gibbens is talking about provision in 20, 30 years' time, but what have you done over the last five years to come up with another option? Why are you coming back with the same, failed options? KCC needs to put forward a viable option for Wayfarers. If you look at the finance issue, we see KCC spending money in other areas and not in East Kent – apart from extra care sheltered housing. I think you need to build people's confidence by putting more viable options on the table.

Graham Gibbens: When we started this five years ago, it was being done differently – we couldn't come to terms with a provider, so the process stopped. We're doing it differently now, selling Wayfarers as a going concern with all staff TUPEd across on the same terms and conditions. Dover has the highest number of extra care sheltered housing schemes anywhere in East Kent. On the learning disability front, we have a strong track record of developing smaller hubs in town centres in East Kent so people can be really part of the community. We're looking at the moment at a learning disability centre in Margate, working in Dover and Walmer – these are all significant investments. We know that health inequalities are higher in Thanet and Dover than, say, Tonbridge & Malling and so we're making significant investments in East Kent to address those inequalities.

Unnamed lady at the back: Please can you stick to talking about Sandwich and its surroundings?

Graham Gibbens: I was asked about East Kent and responded to that.

Cllr Sue Chandler: I'm sure everyone will know that before this last year, I was involved in schemes for housing in Dover and in extra care sheltered housing to replace Sampson Court in Deal. It's true that Kent as a whole is oversupplied with standard residential care, but that's not the case in this district, there's not an oversupply locally and that's part of the reason assurances are being given tonight that Wayfarers won't close. I would like to give people more choice – we can't have nursing care at Wayfarers and Ms Holden has said that people in Sandwich can't get extra care sheltered housing. The Health & Wellbeing board will look at how we can get that choice for people in this area, and the difficulties of this won't mean that we and KCC won't carry on considering it. It won't happen overnight but we can all look to how it could happen. It's not just about residential care but about all the care people will need close to their homes and families.

Graham Gibbens: Ash and Sandwich are part of the Canterbury Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) area. We're very fortunate in that the area has been granted Vanguard status by the Government – one of only fourteen in the country – which is all about getting better and more proactive care in the community. The CCG wants to develop

¹ Ms Holden subsequently provided the following information: "At the meeting on Tuesday, I said I would provide the data that the Accommodation Strategy predicts for the Sandwich and Ash local community. The Accommodation Strategy refers to the future provision of beds which includes projected forecasts, type and design. The strategy states that there is a requirement for the reduction of 13 beds for older people general frailty, an increase of residential care for people with dementia of 37 units, an increase of 58 units for people with nursing needs and an increase of 41 units of extra care housing" (email to the Town Clerk dated 18th December 2015).

hubs to deliver very specific local care – there’s lots of investment to support this initiative – and in the context of tonight’s discussion, that’s very important.

Lorraine Sandford: You will sort out free wifi then?

Graham Gibbens: Yes.

Closure

The Deputy Mayor thanked Mr Gibbens and Ms Holden for attending, and thanked everyone for coming. She reminded people that the consultation would close on 20th December and suggested people make their views known via the KCC website.