

SUBJECT: REPORT OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: CALL-IN OF TUDOR STREET DAY CENTRE

MEETING: Council

DATE: 19th January 2023

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To refer the Individual Cabinet Member Decision taken on 30th November 2022 on Tudor Street Day Centre to full Council, as the formal outcome of the calling in of the decision and the subsequent scrutiny undertaken by the People Scrutiny Committee at the Special Meeting held on 3rd January 2023.
- 1.2 To provide the Council with an overview of the public contributions to the scrutiny process via the Public Open Forum, prior to presentation of the Call-in and the subsequent debate by the committee held on 3rd January 2023 (provided in Appendix 1).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Council considers the discussion held at the People Scrutiny Committee and makes a decision whether to:
 - i) Accept the Individual Cabinet Member Decision; or
 - ii) Refer the Decision to the Cabinet Member(s) for reconsideration (with reasons)

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 A decision was taken on 30th November 2022 to decommission the property on Tudor Street as an accommodation base for day support services for adults with learning disabilities in the north of Monmouthshire. The site has not been in use for service delivery since March 2020 and the decision did not affect the ongoing provision of the service.
- 3.2 The strategic direction for learning disability services has been in place since 2014 and seeks to support people with a learning disability to pursue their individual interests and aspirations within community settings. This had led to a reduction in the number of people accessing Tudor Street Day Centre and a gradual reduction in opening hours before it closed temporarily in 2020. A wider review of the service is underway, and it had been determined that the building on Tudor Street was no longer fit for purpose and could be sold.
- 3.3 The decision was called in for the following reasons:
 - There has been no scrutiny and it was not included on the planner.
 - The building is situated on a flood plain.
 - There has been no consultation with users/groups. The facility is vital for the users/groups, and they have severe special needs.

The People Scrutiny Committee held a debate on the matter on 3rd January 2023, in line with the Call-in Process outlined in the Council's Constitution.

3.4 Monmouthshire's scrutiny process allows for a 15-minute Public Open Forum on every scrutiny agenda, which can be extended at the committee's discretion. It also allows for the submission of written public contributions and videos in advance of the meeting which are circulated to the committee and an opportunity for people to attend in person or remotely and speak at the Public Open Forum. There was significant interest in public participation on this issue and the committee therefore extended its Public Open Forum to enable people who had notified the Council in advance of the meeting of their wish to speak, to do so.

3.5 The committee heard the following key points made by the public:

- a) People stated that prior to March 2020, the centre had offered a central, safe, warm environment for vulnerable people with learning disabilities to socialise with friends and undertake a range of activities, which helped them to learn valuable life skills and gain qualifications. People told the committee that following the pandemic, they had expected the centre to reopen. They spoke of how Tudor Street Day Centre meant much more to them than a physical building. They felt it acted as a hub, a place where carers and service users could have vital respite, which was felt to be lacking in-county and they spoke of the centre being a place where meaningful lasting friendships were formed.
- b) Those in attendance told the committee that the Tudor Street Day Centre being centrally located in Abergavenny town centre, was easily accessible to them and that it had the appropriate facilities, such as a changing bed and disabled toilet facilities that suited many people with learning disabilities, but not those with profound complex needs. Several people told the committee that their relatives had not been users of the day centre prior to its closure, as it couldn't cater for the needs of people with severe disabilities, particularly those needing hydrotherapy, tracking hoists and sensory spaces. They advised they needed to travel out of county to access more specialist provision even when Tudor Street was open.
- c) People told the committee that they felt "abandoned" and "lost" since the closure of the centre, which they felt was at the heart of the community and they advised the committee that it had negatively impacted the mental health of service users and carers. People highlighted the importance to them of having the choice of day services and/or being in the community, explaining that community-based activities alone didn't support the building of friendships in the same way. They suggested that a community base could be used to welcome the wider community, highlighting that people with mental health issues also frequented Tudor Street Day Centre. People reported increased isolation and loneliness during the centre's closure during the pandemic and they explained the difficulties of attending to the needs of people with learning disabilities in community-based facilities such as cafes and supermarkets.
- d) The public told the committee that the Council needed to give greater thought to its decision and to consider how services could be improved, involving service users in shaping the offer. People spoke of the need for dedicated facilities and a central base that could be extended to the wider community, such as the

approach submitted to the committee titled “The Gathering Pitch” (listed as a background paper to this report).

3.6 Appendix 1 provides a more detailed account of the substantial public contributions to the meeting, which were welcomed and appreciated by the committee and the formal outcome of the debate by the People Scrutiny Committee.

3.7 The following key points were also highlighted by the public under the Public Open Forum:

a) People were very disappointed that the decision had been taken to close the day centre in advance of the conclusions being drawn from the overall review of services. They suggested that the lack of detail as to what alternative provision may be offered in place of what was being withdrawn was unhelpful.

b) There was a suggestion that the decision for Tudor Street Day Centre to be re-purposed to support the Council’s policy aims in providing affordable housing within the county prioritised the needs of one vulnerable group of people (homeless people) over the needs of another (people with learning disabilities). It was suggested that the intention to progress the planning application to avoid legislative changes relating to flooding was not in line with the philosophy of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, nor its aim to ‘involve people in decision-making as equal partners’. The committee was advised that an integrated impact assessment including Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 was completed as part of the decision taken on 30th November 2022. There was also a suggestion that there was a need for online engagement about the decision.

c) The elected members who had called in the decision raised their concerns about how the decision had been made without any pre-decision scrutiny and they questioned the thoroughness of the integrated impact assessment. They also expressed concern about the consultation process undertaken with service users.

3.8 Relating to the specific matters raised in the calling-in of the decision, it was accepted that the decision should have been scrutinised in advance, with an explanation given as to why the decision had not featured on the Cabinet and Council Forward Planner that the committee had received at its previous meeting. It was also confirmed that the building is not located on a flood plain. It was furthermore accepted that there hadn’t been effective consultation on the decision to close the Tudor Street Day Centre.

3.9 The debate that took place following the Public Open Forum led the committee to confirm its intention to refer the decision for reconsideration, and following a vote, the majority agreed to refer the decision to full council for the following reason:

Much greater clarity is needed on future service provision. Robust engagement needs to be undertaken with service users and thorough pre-decision scrutiny should be conducted prior to any decision-making.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 There are no direct considerations from this report.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.1 Not applicable.

6. REASONS:

6.1 To refer the decision taken on 30th November 2022 on Tudor Street Day Centre to full Council, following scrutiny undertaken by the People Scrutiny Committee on 3rd January 2023.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTEES:

Head of Policy, Performance and Scrutiny
Chief Officer for People and Governance and Monitoring Officer

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Report of the People Scrutiny Committee on the Call-in of Tudor Day Centre

'The Gathering Pitch' ~ Submitted to the People Scrutiny Committee

10. AUTHOR:

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644233, E-mail: hazelilett@monmouthshire.gov.uk