

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE STANLEY CENTRE



Report Reference C-23-08
Meeting Date 12th June 2023
Agenda Item 8
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

On 9th May, Cheshire East Council commenced a consultation on the proposed closure of the Stanley Centre. The Stanley Centre provides day opportunities for adults in Knutsford and surrounding areas, providing services for people who have a learning disability, people with physical disabilities and older people.

In January, as part of the consultation on the borough council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS), the proposal was first publicised. This was approved as part of the borough council's budget for the 2023/24 financial year and the financial allocation for the centre removed from the budget, though the borough council stresses that "this was not a decision to say the Stanley Centre will definitely close, however a decision that says the council wishes to consult on the future of learning disability day opportunities in Knutsford".

The consultation closes on 6th June, but the borough council has confirmed the Town Council submission will be accepted after this date.

2.0 CONSULTATION INFORMATION

The executive summary of a high level business case for the closure of the centre, published as part of the consultation, states that prior to COVID the centre had a capacity of 40 people and a client base of 27 people. It reports that there are 17 people currently attending the centre¹, with between 8 and 12 attending on any one day (Mon-Fri).

The consultation states that the current cost of running the Centre is £435,000 per year and that alternative services for people currently using the Stanley Centre is estimated at an annual cost of £206,000, generating a potential saving of £229,000. Alternative Care4CE building based support is available at Redesmere, Handforth and at Mayfield Centre, Macclesfield

The borough council is seeking to develop the commissioned day opportunities market in Cheshire East and provide more choice and range of services to meet the needs of individuals outside of traditional building-based services - offering a more outcomes focused, personalised service offer and more opportunities to get involved in the local and wider community. Individuals could also be offered a direct payment to purchase their day opportunities service.

If the Stanley Centre is closed and then deemed surplus to requirements, a decision on the future of the physical asset would be made

¹ The consultation reports 20 regular users

The Town Clerk raised a number of initial queries in relation to the consultation, to which Cheshire East Council has provided answers:

The consultation states “alternative Care4CE building based support is available at Redesmere, Handforth and at Mayfield Centre, Macclesfield” – can you advise why the Stanley Centre has been selected for closure over those?

The Stanley Centre was one of the last day services that re-opened after the lockdown due to the ability to facilitate safe social distancing. The current numbers attending the Stanley centre is significantly lower than the two other centres that have been highlighted as alternatives.

How would a direct payment to purchase day opportunities work in practice? Is there a wide availability of such services for users to purchase from?

A number of people who access the Stanley Centre already use direct payments to purchase care and support. Many other individuals use a direct payment to purchase day opportunities from the independent sector too.

The consultation mentions CEC is keen to develop the market for day opportunities, what timescale is there on this vs the closure of the Stanley Centre

We currently have a framework of 18 providers in Cheshire East, as well as Care4CE provision. This is developing over time and we expect more providers to join in the next 3-12 months.

When is it proposed the Stanley Centre would close?

No decision has been made in terms of whether the Stanley Centre will close.

Can you detail how the £229k saving is generated e.g. savings on staff costs, building costs etc

The savings would be based on building operational costs and staffing costs should the service cease. – It is not intended that there would be any redundancies as a result of any closure as staff would be offered roles in services which currently have vacancies, or where vacant hours are currently covered by agency staff.

The consultation refers to the borough council’s 2022 Day Opportunities Strategy which notes that there are 499 individuals using day services in the borough and that “long-term building-based provision will provide the best service for those with the most complex needs, whilst for some individuals, short-term enablement and skills development may support a move into a more community-based environment.” The user consultation which informed this strategy notes that, across the borough:

- there is an even split of those who do and don’t use a direct payment to purchase day opportunity services, with over half of people stating they would not consider using them in the future.

- Rated 'important' by more than 90% of respondents were five factors: staff, activities, a safe place, friends, and being in the local community whilst the most important factors for choosing day opportunities are the staff and having a safe space away from home.
- The most important aspect of the service is access to social interaction

3.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

Council should determine how to respond to the consultation.

Should the council wish to object to the closure of the Stanley Centre, it should agree the specific reasons why.

It would also be recommended that Council depute a member to attend the Cheshire East Council Adults and Health Committee to speak against the closure when the committee considers the consultation report².

² Current dates listed for this committee are 26th June, 24th July, 25th September and 20th November. Meetings commence at 10am.