

Dear Chairman,

## “Future of Somerset County Council’s Learning Disability Service for Adults-Paper C”

1 In a soft market testing exercise 6 care scene scenarios were sent to other providers to endeavour to discover how the county council learning disabilities service compared financially. Out of the 13 or 14 private providers communicated only 4 or 5 responded. **The county council learning disability service was the cheapest option in 3 scenarios and tied for a fourth scenario.**

***Given the lack of response from other providers and Somerset County Councils good showing in this testing how can cabinet be confident in the interests of other providers given their lack of interest and inability to compete financially with the county council?***

2 In the Service Option Paper put before Cabinet, Paper C, 4.5 “staffing reductions resulting from streamlining of the service as part of the arms length arrangement. This should be able to be managed through turnover and the current V.R process.”

The letter from Sheila Wheeler 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010. 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph states at the end “We are now finding it increasingly difficult to make further decisions on V.R as we wait for the government announcements on its comprehensive spending review later this month. WE ARE THEREFORE LOOKING TO END THIS FORMAL VR PROCESS.” (excluding all staff that showed an expression of interest that have not had any reply so far.)

Does the Chief Executive intend amending Paper C paragraph 4.5, before the Cabinet meets to enlighten them as to her change of mind?

- i) Throughout the Service Option Paper, it is stated that service users, parents and carers have all had “meaningful” consultation, having seen the only letter to Parents and Carers and the S.T.C version sent to Service users, I can only say that there has been no consultation at all, parents are very much in the dark as to Learning Disabilities day services future. It is at least misleading information to put before Cabinet. As for the consultation with staff via the Futures programme, staff input has been very much taken out of context. Having attended every single meeting I feel I can say that with confidence.
- ii) At Pepperall Community Project my colleagues and I have already noticed the detrimental affect that losing the more active, community based sessions we have been pushing for the last ten years is having on the adults with learning disabilities in our care.

Some are already significantly gaining weight which is having a negative affect on their mobility. Studies show that keeping people stimulated and physically active has a positive effect on their mental health and slows down the onset of cognitive illnesses such as dementia. Many service users, especially those with Down's syndrome, have older parents who are not able to support them to stay fit and active meaning that they could potentially cost the NHS more in the future. Surely we have an obligation to ensure that these people are able to maintain physically active lives, especially as the Government are pushing this in the general public in order to lower NHS costs in the long term. These community based sessions are not only good for our service users but for educating the general public too. I have seen such an improvement in people's attitude towards the people in our care over the 18 years that I have worked in the service. It would be so sad to hide these people away again effectively putting a stop to their fulfilling lives - and all for the possible savings on diesel that this may generate. Even local trips out are being stopped despite the fact that the service users' and their carers' contributions more than cover the cost of the fuel used. What most upsets and angers me is that is that all of this is being done under the umbrella of 'Active Lives'. As far as I'm aware, and certainly in the Sedgemoor area, no parents or carers have been consulted or made aware of the changes in day services and how it will affect their loved ones even though they are major stakeholders. Surely they have a right to be consulted about this and to be able to voice their opinions before any major decisions are made that affect the long term future of day services and staff certainly need to know whether there is a long tem future for day services.

- iii) The sentence in Paper C 4.7 "It is considered that on balance it is in the interest of the wider community in Somerset for the Council to agree to the proposals **over and above the interest of the individuals affected**" How does this sit with the statement posted on SCC website 9<sup>th</sup> October .This states "As a Council ..... we try to actively engage with residents across the County; **listening to their views and giving them a real say over decisions that affect them**". Where is the evidence that our service users and their parents and carers have been consulted about this proposal which will have a major affect on their lives?

This statement also implies that people with learning disabilities are **not** part of the community. They were last time I looked and their parents and carers are also tax payers and voters.