

P-04-366 Closure of Aberystwyth Day Centre - Correspondence from the petitioners to the Chair, 05.06.2013

FOR THE ATTENTION OF MR. WILLIAM POWELL:

Martin Shewring, Chairman of SPADCC has asked me to relay the following:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Ceredigion County Council called a meeting on 15 May, to discuss Sheila Wentworth's Independent Review, and the Basement Day Centre. At this Meeting it was decided that the Chairman and the members of the Committee are to visit the Day Centre to form an opinion; the meeting to take place "in the next 2/3 weeks" (this was said on 15 May). Hopefully you will receive a response.

The Scrutiny Committee will meet again on the 20th June. Have you requested a copy of the Scrutiny Report? The Scrutiny Report will be relaid to CCC, which is important, in line with our Petition concerns. Are you, as a Petitions Committee, able to obtain the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee, as I feel that the comments made are important to the first Scrutiny meeting, for you to understand concerns?

We, as a SPADCC have concerns regarding the recommendations from Sheila Wentworth's Report. Have you viewed these recommendations in full?

Many thanks,

Martin W. Shewring  
Chairman

Dear Sian,

I hope that Pam Ellis has already sent you the information below. As I will be away for a few days, I have sent it directly to be sure you get it in time for the meeting.

As it is easier to get blood from a stone than information from Ceredigion County Council, I have submitted the following questions [ in blue ] under FOI to them:-

1. Is the "Wentworth" Report on Aberystwyth Day Centre now in the Public Domain?
2. Did Sheila Wentworth attend the Cabinet meeting on 21st May 2013 to present her report?
3. Where and how often was the tender for performing the Review advertised? A copy of the advertisement would be appreciated.
4. Does Sheila Wentworth have any qualifications, or has she had any training, in the design and analysis of questionnaires?
5. If the answer to Q4 is no then did she consult an expert in these matters? If so who?

David and Meg Kirby

Dear councillor

I read your piece in the Cambrian News in which you asked people to contact their councillors if they wanted to discuss the Day Centre. As you know I used to do the Tea Bar there. I'd been away all week due to family illness away. On Friday I came home and met a gentleman who goes to the Day Centre walking in Terrace Road he'd just come from there. I asked why he was walking when he looked so hot? He said he needed fresh air because the Centre was boiling hot

2 P.P.S

because it was a nice day out,  
The basement was like an oven  
with no air or windows open  
and that at least two people  
needed to use their pumps to  
help them breathe. Last year  
I was talking to two gentlemen  
I knew from the old Day Center  
and they told me they'd come  
out because it was too  
stuffy in there on a nice  
day. I'm all for the New Shops  
we need them. But not for  
putting our elders below  
ground before their time.

I'm not a mourner usually  
but thank you for sorting  
the bridge out.

sincerely

Anne Maynes

**Response to the Review of the Day Centre**  
from  
**Gwenda Williams**  
**Eurwen Booth**  
**Members of Save Park Avenue Day Centre Group**  
**May 2013**

**1. Save Park Avenue Day Centre Group (SPADC)**

Save Park Avenue Day Centre Group (SPADC) was set up in November, 2011, to oppose the closure and demolition of the Park Avenue Day Centre. It has never claimed to represent the current users of the Day Centre or their carers, although its members include previous users, carers of current and previous users, ex-members of staff, and potential users since the majority of its members are over 65. Its concern is to ensure that a good quality day care service is available for all who need it in the area. This concern was reflected in the 6,000 signatures collected on the petition to save the Day Centre in 2011.

**2. The remit of the Review**

The remit of the Review was "to review the day centre provision at the Town Hall, to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the service users." **This has limited its scope** to the needs of current users and, to some extent, the needs of their carers. Therefore, the Review does not look at how well the Day Centre is meeting the needs of all vulnerable older people in the area and makes only passing reference to future needs as the numbers of older people rise.

**3. Sources of Information**

Its main sources of information were questionnaires to the current service users and their carers, meetings with the service users, discussions with relevant Council officers and employees, plus several visits to the Town Hall facility. **The Review has taken little or no account of the views of the many other stakeholders** who no longer have access to day care services or have been affected by the move to the Town Hall basement. Examples include:

- Those who have chosen not to attend and their carers
- Previous users of the Park Avenue Day Centre who are no longer eligible because of changes in criteria for attendance
- The non-referred drop-in users who went to the old Day Centre on a Wednesday for lunch, social contact and access to the services and facilities provided. For some, this was the main outing of their week. The Report dismisses this group on the basis of information provided by the Older People's Strategy Co-ordinator that they attended "primarily for the midday meal". The Report does mention, however, that several of the user's responses to the questionnaires commented that the change in the

- arrangements for the Wednesday Drop-in "was a loss to them and also to the people who attended".
- Organisations concerned with older people such as Age Concern and the Aberystwyth 50+ forum.
  - The organisations concerned with older people who met in, or provided services to the Park Avenue Day Centre such as Arthritis Care, the Darby and Joan club and the WRVS.
  - The SPADC Group who asked to meet the Reviewer but were refused.

Without these views, the Review cannot be comprehensive and its conclusions are likely to be unrepresentative of those needing some kind of day care service.

#### 4. The questionnaires

The questionnaires consisted of a number of basic, mainly open-ended questions. As with all questionnaires, **the wording of the questions is crucial** as a question worded in one way may elicit a different response from the same question worded slightly differently. For example, Question 7 on the questionnaire to service users asked what they liked best about the new Day Centre while Question 8 asked whether there were any things that they did not like about the Day Centre. The answers may have been different if the same form of question had been asked each time, for example, "What do you like about the new Day Centre?" and "What do you dislike about the new Day Centre?"

**The answers** to the questionnaires are **by no means wholly positive**. Nearly one fifth of service users responding to Question 7 said there was nothing they liked about the new centre or made reference to preferring the Park Avenue Day Centre and just under one-third of those responding to question 9 wanted a return to the Park Avenue centre or another location. The Review itself says that the loss of a purpose built facility was keenly felt by some of those who had attended the old Day Centre.

The Review also points out that the issue which gave rise to most adverse comment from all service users was **the access to the building** "with many finding **the uncovered ramp** unsatisfactory". The purpose built Park Avenue building did not, of course, have this problem.

Members of last week's Scrutiny Committee pointed out that **the Review contravened Ceredigion Council's own Welsh language policy** in that the Reviewer was not a Welsh speaker and the questionnaires and the Review Report were in English only. In relation to the questionnaires, older people, in particular, find it much easier to talk about personal issues in their first language and this may have affected the responses they gave.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee also pointed out that **19 of the 40 service users preferred to respond to the questionnaires anonymously**. Questions need to be asked as to why.

#### 5. Patterns of use

The Review implied that there were 64 service users but gave **no breakdown as to how many days these service users attend, how many hours they spend there each day, and how this compares with their attendance at the Park Avenue Day Centre**. This would have given some idea as to whether they are receiving an equivalent service in terms of time spent at the new Day Centre and whether the facility is being fully used. There is a reference to the staff considering that it should be "utilised to its optimum, providing services to those with highest needs" but no information is given as to whether this is the case.

#### 6. Referrals

The Review mentioned that **the number of referrals has not fallen** since the move to the Town Hall but gave **no information about waiting lists or the numbers of those refused a referral**, the reasons for those refusals, and whether or not some form of rationing has had to be introduced. It also gave no information as to the source of referrals and whether this has changed since the move. At a time of increasing numbers of older people, requests for referral would be expected to rise.

(The Review refers to the change agenda required by Sustainable Social Services and the Social Services and Well-being Bill (when passed and implemented) which should lead to the voice of all older people being heard. The Social Services Bill aims to ensure that older people's needs are assessed but does not specify how these needs are to be met. The Town Hall Day Centre is not future proofed to meet the needs of an increasing older population who may require this kind of day care service.)

#### 7. Facilities and services

The Review glossed over **the decrease in facilities and services** provided by the Town Hall Centre compared with those provided **all in one place** in the Park Avenue Day Centre. Some of these are now scattered to various venues around the town and elsewhere, making access more difficult for service users eg assisted bathing, retinopathy. The questionnaires that were given to the current users and their carers did not ask them to rate the new facility against the old one but, interestingly, respondents did make comparisons.

**8. Costs and savings**

The Report mentions that staffing levels are now '**commensurate**' with those in the Park Avenue Centre. Presumably this means that the staff/service user ratio has not changed, rather than the total of number staff, and only refers to support staff, since there is no longer a functioning kitchen? Questions need to be asked about the costs of the new centre and whether significant savings are being made, particularly if a restriction in numbers leads to the need for extra care services in the home and elsewhere.

**9. Comparisons with other parts of the County**

Several members of the Scrutiny Committee said that Aberystwyth was better provided for than many of the rural areas they represent. Scattered rural communities present a different set of problems for the provision of day care for older people than more compact urban areas. Have needs assessments been undertaken for the rural areas or estimates of money spent on day care services per head of older people been made between the urban and rural areas in order to make such comparisons?

**10. Finally**

The current provision does not really need a 40 page review to assess its suitability. It can be summed up in one sentence "Fewer services for fewer people in a smaller, less appropriate space with lousy access."