

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 25 February 2025

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: Proposal to close the Linden Court Day Service for people with a learning disability and merge it with Beeching Park day service

Purpose: To consider the outcome of the public consultation and to make a decision on the proposal to close the Linden Court Day Service for adults with a learning disability and merge it with Beeching Park day service.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) **Agree the proposal to close the Linden Court Day Service for people with a learning disability in Eastbourne;**
 - 2) **Agree to re-provision the existing Linden Court Day Service with the Beeching Park Day Service for people with a learning disability in Bexhill and to revise the days of opening and opening hours, as set out in paragraphs 5.13 to 5.15 of this report;**
 - 3) **Agree to establish a satellite day service in Eastbourne as part of the Beeching Park Day Service offer, to be provided two days per week and to delegate authority to the Director of Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer, to determine the final location for this satellite provision; and**
 - 4) **Delegate to the Director of Adult Social Care and Health authority to take all necessary actions to give effect to the above recommendations.**
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Cabinet agreed on 26 September 2024 to launch a consultation exercise relating to the potential closure of Linden Court Day service in Eastbourne, which provides services for adults with a Learning Disability, and to merge this with the existing Beeching Park Day Service in Bexhill (the papers are available: [here](#)). By expanding Beeching Park to open five days a week, and through maximising its current capacity, all adults who attend Linden Court Day service could be offered their day service provision at Beeching Park where this meets their assessed needs; or at alternative provision elsewhere where necessary. This proposal, as well as other potential service changes being explored by Adult Social Care and Health, is to help close the Council's funding gap.
- 1.2 The consultation ran between 3 October and 28 November 2024. The impact of the new funding settlement for the Council has been taken into account when making the proposals in this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Linden Court Day Service is run by the Council and it is based in one of our buildings in Eastbourne. The service currently has 19 members of staff, although there are some vacant posts. The staff are all employed by the Council.
- 2.2 The service delivers support to people with a learning disability and has several aims including to:
 - prevent social isolation;
 - enable vulnerable adults to learn and maintain skills; and
 - provide respite for parent/carers.
- 2.3 There are two sessions a day based in the building, from 9am to 12pm (known as 'AM sessions') and from 12.30pm to 3.30pm (known as 'PM sessions') on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, as well as a community based session from 4pm to 7pm on Thursdays (known as 'the twilight session'). The service has capacity to provide space for up to 45 people at each of the sessions. The service is closed on a Tuesday.
- 2.4 The building-based daytime sessions include art, cookery, music, sport, multimedia, and gardening with some community sessions utilising the local library. Community sessions include exploring the local area on public transport.
- 2.5 There are currently 44 people regularly attending the day service, with around 60% of available spaces filled during day time sessions. The twilight session has low attendance, with approximately 10% of available spaces filled. Some adults require a smaller, quieter setting as they struggle with large groups and noise, and Linden Court has been used to meet the support needs of such people.
- 2.6 The majority of people who attend the day service at Linden Court live at home with their family. Most of them live in Eastbourne or the surrounding area.
- 2.7 If the proposal to close Linden Court Day Service is agreed, the Council will still have a duty to meet the assessed needs of adults that use the service. The Council will support all affected adults to access alternative day service provision. The proposal is, wherever possible, to support the adults attending Linden Court to access another Council Day Service, Beeching Park, in Bexhill, where they wish to do so.
- 2.8 Beeching Park day service is run by the Council and is based in Bexhill. It has a satellite provision, Working Wonders, in Hastings. The service currently has 32 staff with few vacancies. All staff are employed by the Council.
- 2.9 Beeching Park has sessions across AM, PM and seven twilight sessions a week and community based sessions utilising Working Wonders as their starting point. The service is currently closed on a Wednesday.
- 2.10 The service at Beeching Park has the capacity in the building to support 85 adults a day. There is an average attendance of 56 people a day and a total of 75 adults attending each week. By expanding Beeching Park to open five days a week, and through maximising its current capacity, all adults who attend Linden Court Day service could be offered their day service provision at Beeching Park.
- 2.11 Appendix 3 shows where the adults currently attending Linden Court live in East Sussex. Noting that this shows data for 47 adults, 44 of which are regular attendees.

3. The Proposal consulted on

- 3.1 The proposal consulted on was to close the Linden Court Day service for people with a learning disability, and to merge with the Beeching Park day service, or to support people to access alternative services in the community.
- 3.2 The estimated annual revenue savings for a full year for this proposal are £327,000.
- 3.3 To determine the potential savings we took the overall gross budget for the service and subtracted any ongoing costs of providing alternative services. One-off costs, including the costs of restructuring staff, have been considered in the context of the ongoing saving but not included in the figures presented.

4. Insight

- 4.1 An eight-week public consultation on the proposal ran from 3 October to 28 November 2024. We asked people for their views on the proposal and how they would be affected if it went ahead.
- 4.2 All the feedback received during the consultation is available within the Members' and Cabinet Rooms for Members' consideration.
- 4.3 373 responses were received across the survey, consultation meetings and other feedback methods.

Respondent method	Total
Survey	203
Email and letters	16
Consultation meetings (attendees)	154

- 4.4 The majority of respondents across all response methods disagreed with the proposal to close the day service at Linden Court and find people places in alternative services. The table below shows how much survey respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposal:

Answer	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	4%
Agree	5	2%
Neither agree nor disagree	8	4%
Disagree	9	4%
Strongly disagree	164	81%
Not sure	7	3%
Didn't answer	2	1%

- 4.5 The full consultation results report can be found in Appendix 1, but the key messages included the following themes:
- Linden Court is a vital service, and people are full of praise for the service and its staff. It provides a safe environment and opportunity to socialise;
 - Those who attend love seeing their friends and taking part in activities, while it allows families and carers to continue in their caring role and to maintain their employment;

- Family and carers are angry and worried by the proposal, which they feel targets vulnerable people. It would be devastating if Linden Court closed and they want to know why Beeching Park isn't being proposed for closure as there are alternative services in that area;
- Linden Court is a nicer building than Beeching Park and it is local to where people live. It is also better able to support those who need a quieter service;
- Families and carers feel that Beeching Park isn't a realistic alternative, with the biggest concern being the journey, which would be much longer and more complicated;
- People who attend the service are particularly concerned about being able to: attend on the same days for the same sessions, and continue taking part in the activities they like and see their friends;
- The routine change would be very disruptive for people who attend the service, as well as increasing the burden on families and carers. It would lead to poorer mental health for those affected and could lead to more challenging behaviour;
- People's needs wouldn't be met and their links with their local community would be lost. Future school/college leavers in the area wouldn't have a local service they could transition to;
- Family and carers challenged the Council to provide detailed figures setting out how the savings would be achieved and questioned how much would actually be saved due to the cost of providing alternative support, transporting people further to access support and the risk that people may have to go into residential care if there is no day service for them;
- People said the proposal should not go ahead and instead the service at Linden Court should be enhanced and more widely promoted.

Equalities Considerations

- 4.6 In considering these proposals, Cabinet must have due regard to the need to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,
- as required under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.7 To better understand the likely impacts of the Proposal on those who have one or more protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out, a copy of which can be found out in Appendix 2.
- 4.8 The responses from the consultation were used to inform the analysis carried out in the EqIA. Cabinet members must read and have regard to the EqIA when making the decision about this Proposal.
- 4.9 The Equality Impact Assessment told us that all of the people accessing the services included in the original proposals have a learning disability or have recognised additional needs. Some people may have other complexities such as sensory impairment, physical disabilities and other health conditions which may impact on them further. A change in routine may cause adults anxiety and provide less opportunity for social interaction/ ongoing skills development.

- 4.10 Carers of working age who are employed may be negatively impacted if they have structured their working hours around day services at Linden Court. This may result in carers not being able to maintain their current employment and potentially experience a reduction to their income. There could be a financial impact in terms of increased travel costs to Bexhill (although noting that where people attending Linden Court moved to alternative services, transport arrangements, where necessary, would be part of the Adult Social Care and Health support planning process).
- 4.11 All people who are affected would be offered an individual review to consider whether their support package continues to meet their assessed needs. Considering carers' respite will be part of these reviews.
- 4.12 The full equality impact assessment can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

5. Revised Proposal

- 5.1 Our priority in Adult Social Care and Health is to meet our legal duties under the Care Act. To help us to do this, we have identified funding areas that we think need to be protected when we are looking at savings options.
- 5.2 These priority areas are the community care budget, carers support services, funding for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, and funding for staffing frontline and care market roles.
- 5.3 While we recognise the importance of these services, the budget pressures we face mean that we have to make difficult decisions about how we spend our money.
- 5.4 The pandemic reduced the number of people attending learning disability day services. Since the pandemic ended, attendance has returned to previous levels at most of our day services. Linden Court is the exception, where attendance levels remain relatively low. For example, we currently have 44 adults using the service, but before the pandemic we generally had more than 60 people using the service. The service has therefore been used to provide a day service to adults who need a quieter environment.
- 5.5 Given the financial pressures we face it is important to get the best value from the services we run. The fact that we can potentially accommodate everyone from Linden Court at Beeching Park means we can make savings by reducing both staff costs and building-based costs, whilst continuing to fulfil our statutory duties and meet people's assessed needs.
- 5.6 For those who do not wish to move to Beeching Park, Bexhill, there are also alternative day services in Eastbourne and other parts of the County that people could attend, please see appendix 4. This provision may be especially useful for those adults requiring a quieter environment.
- 5.7 The need to deliver day service provision whilst making significant savings informed the proposals to reduce from the current four Learning Disability day services in the County. With this in mind, Beeching Park in Bexhill offers a better location for a day service serving the east of the county, with the location of adults covering not only Eastbourne and Bexhill but spanning as far as Lydd in the east and Wadhurst in the North. In addition, Beeching Park has the capacity, along with Working Wonders, to provide a service for all adults attending Linden Court, should they wish to attend.
- 5.8 Nevertheless, the consultation responses have highlighted a number of potential impacts for those currently attending Linden Court, and a number of alternative options were proposed. Details of the alternatives proposed are including in the Consultation Summary in Appendix 1. Following the consultation, the Council has considered whether there is scope to retain day service provision in the Eastbourne area.

- 5.9 Unfortunately, it is not possible to retain Linden Court as-is, or with reduced capacity and/ or reduced hours of operation, and still achieve the required level of savings.
- 5.10 However, the savings can be achieved by having Beeching Park as the main day-service provision offered to people living in the East of the County, but with sessions also being delivered from Working Wonders in Hastings (as is currently the case) as well as an additional location in Eastbourne.
- 5.11 The Eastbourne location has not yet been confirmed. As a temporary measure the existing building at Linden Court may be used as a smaller satellite centre, pending a long term base being established and whilst the future use of the Linden Court premises is being finalised.
- 5.12 Within the proposed staffing model and budget for Beeching Park, it would be possible to deliver a service in Eastbourne two days a week, initially for up to 15 adults. Whilst this wouldn't accommodate all adults who are currently at Linden Court, this would reduce the potential disruption for some adults currently using Linden Court.
- 5.13 To ensure sufficient capacity at Beeching Park, if the proposal to close Linden Court is agreed, it is proposed that the opening hours for Beeching Park be extended, returning it to a five-day a week service (Monday to Friday). This would increase the number of adults who could be supported at the service by 25% (increasing the number of sessions available by 200). This would allow us to offer a place at the day service to everyone currently attending Linden Court, if the service can meet their assessed care needs.
- 5.14 Beeching Park would continue to offer three sessions a day. However, the timings of those sessions would need to change to manage the increase in adult numbers. Changing the times of the sessions would ensure people have the support they need over lunchtime, as well as providing enough non-contact time for staff to do admin tasks and attend team meetings. We would continue to have a standard adult to staff ratio of five-to-one and provide one-to-one support to adults where they are assessed as needing this. Transport to the day service would continue to be provided by ASCH, as part of the adult's support plan, where required.
- 5.15 The table below sets out the proposed changes to session times at Beeching Park:

Session name	Current times	Proposed new times
AM session	9am to 12pm	9.30am to 12pm
PM session	12.30pm to 3.30pm	1pm to 3.30pm
Twilight session	4pm to 7pm	4pm to 6.30pm

Adults attending Beeching Park would still be able to arrive from 08:30.

6. Impacts and risks

6.1 This section explores the impacts and risks of going ahead with the proposal, including those outlined in the EqIA.

6.2 Financial implications:

	Current Budget	Revised Budget		Total Savings
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Expenditure budget	692	482	355	
Income budget	(40)	(30)	(30)	
Net budget	652	452	325	
Net savings	0	200	127	327

The calculation of the revised budget assumes that:

- Services will be provided at Beeching Park with an additional day of operation, which form the basis of the revised budget;
- One-off costs to remodel the service will be absorbed in current ESCC budgets or met corporately.

6.3 The table below explores the potential impacts the proposal would have on the health and care system, organisations, services and residents.

<p>Health and care system</p>	<p>All adults who attend Linden Court have an assessed eligible Care Act need and whilst the proposals are not a reduction in services, there would be a change to how services are provided. This would have an impact on Adult Social Care and Health which will need to review all of the adults, alongside offering a carers assessment or review to unpaid carers.</p> <p>The change in service delivery could impact on some adults' emotional wellbeing and there is a possibility this could increase demand on health settings, particularly specialist provision such as the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust Community Learning Disability Team.</p>
<p>Organisations and services</p>	<p>As above, the proposal could generate an increase in demand for health input.</p> <p>If adults currently attending Linden Court choose to have their day service provision met somewhere other than Beeching Park, there could be an increase in demand for independent day service provision or for Personal Assistants. ASCH would work with adults and carers to identify Personal Assistants where possible. It is anticipated that it would be possible to find personal assistants for the number of adults who choose that option. However, where it is not possible to find a suitable Personal Assistant, ASCH would secure alternative provision to meet the adult's assessed eligible needs (this is a statutory duty under the Care Act).</p> <p>Some contributions to the consultation have indicated the closure of Linden Court could result in the need for alternative residential or supported living placements – were this to be the case there would be increased demand for social care providers who deliver those types of service.</p>
<p>Residents</p>	<p>The adults who attend Linden Court, and their parent/carers, are East Sussex residents. This proposal has caused a degree of anxiety already and, if agreed, could cause further anxiety and disruption as the service provision would change.</p> <p>This change could put additional stress on adults receiving a service and unpaid carers, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By impacting on their ability to maintain existing routines and work; • Increasing travel time to an alternative day service; • The emotional impact of managing this proposed change; • The potential that adults attending Linden Court are no longer able to stay in their family home and require an alternative place to live; • Adults who require a smaller, quieter day provision may not have their needs met.

6.4 The main risks of going ahead with the proposal are:

- The alternative options for day provision do not meet the needs of adults attending Linden Court due to location or the set-up of the service;
- For those choosing to attend Beeching Park there could be further disruption through changes to the pattern of attendance. This can be a pressure for adults who may find change difficult, and parent/carers who may have pre-existing commitments;
- The pressure on unpaid carers could mean that some adults could not remain in their family home. In this instance Adult Social Care and Health may need to provide a 24/7 service to meet these people's needs;
- For some adults and their families there would be an increased journey time where they choose to access Beeching Park;
- The estimated cost savings are not achieved as the result of the above.

Mitigation

6.5 To mitigate the risks identified above:

- The Day Service at Beeching Park is a good provision. The management teams of Linden Court and Beeching Park work closely together, and they are confident they can meet the needs of adults attending Linden Court at Beeching Park;
- If agreed, the revised delivery model at Beeching Park, i.e. the satellite provision in Eastbourne, will mean it is possible to reduce the need for a number of adults (approximately 15 adults) currently at Linden Court to travel to Bexhill, thereby reducing some of the stress the original proposal could cause;
- Through having a bespoke service to support the transition of adults with more complex needs we can ensure they receive the level of service that they require;
- If the proposal is agreed, the staff at Beeching Park are committed to minimising the disruption caused by a change of day service and would aspire to offer a like for like service where possible.

6.6 Even under the revised proposal, it is acknowledged that there will still be disruption for people currently using the day services at Linden Court and Beeching Park. To minimise this, the Council will put a team together for one year to support people in adjusting and/or finding alternative independent provision if they either chose not to move to Beeching Park, or opt to move but the service provided is unsuitable for them.

7 Outline implementation plan

7.1 If the revised Proposal is agreed, as set out in section 5, the implementation plan will look as follows:

- 25 Feb 2025 – Cabinet Decision.
- March 2025 - Adults reviews will commence and take place over a 4-week period.
- April 2025 - As reviews identify alternative provision, adults will be supported in the transition to their new service, either Beeching Park or an alternative service.
- June 2025 - Linden Court closes.

7.2 In addition, the property department will lead on identifying proposals for an alternative use, or disposal, of the building.

7.3 To ensure the timescales for delivering savings can be met, we have taken steps to begin consulting staff affected by the proposed closure of Linden Court and the merger with Beeching Park; however, the final proposals for staff consultation won't be known until after Cabinet have made a decision on the future of both Linden Court and Beeching Park.

8 Conclusions and reasons for recommendations

8.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget. The 'State of the County' report presented to Cabinet in June 2024 set out a projected £55m deficit on the 2025/26 budget. Savings proposals requiring public consultation that would help to close this gap were presented to Cabinet in September 2024.

8.2 The total savings proposals for the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2025/26-2027/28 set out in November 2024 were £20.628m, across all Council departments. The Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH) contribution to the savings total is £11.455m. In addition to these savings proposals, in order to achieve a balanced budget, the Council is also drawing on its financial reserves.

8.3 The original proposals put forward were designed to contribute to the savings required for the County Council. It is clear from the contributions to the consultation that the proposal for Linden Court and Beeching Park is not welcomed, with the vast majority of respondents disagreeing. We have considered all the feedback to the consultation and explored how we can modify and mitigate the proposal where possible to address the concerns raised.

8.4 Whilst it is recognised that closing Linden Court would cause an element of disruption and potentially increase travel times for some adults that attend the service, and the parent/carers involved, the alternative provision at Beeching Park would be able to meet the needs of most adults, with alternative options to Beeching Park being available where required.

8.5 As set out above, the Council will take steps to mitigate any adverse impacts of the proposal, by offering bespoke support to adults with more complex needs to help them manage this transition. This is designed to meet the specific needs of adults who would need additional support to access an alternative provision.

8.6 Cabinet are therefore recommended to agree to close Linden Court Day Service in Eastbourne for Adults with Learning Disabilities. Cabinet are also recommended to agree to merge the existing Linden Court Day Service with the Beeching Park Day Service for people with a Learning Disability in Bexhill, and to revise the days of opening and opening hours of Beeching Park, to operate five days per week (Monday to Friday) between the hours of 09:00 and 18:30.

8.7 Cabinet are also recommended to agree to the establishment of a satellite service in Eastbourne, which will operate as part of the Beeching Park Day Service offer, two days a week. It is anticipated that this will initially have capacity to support up to 15 adults per week. If agreed, this would ease the impact for several adults and parent/carers, offering a flexibility to how their day service provision could be provided. In the interim, this satellite provision will be offered from the existing Linden Court site, but Cabinet are recommended to delegate authority to the Director of Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer, to determine the final location for this satellite provision.

8.8 Cabinet are recommended to delegate to the Director of Adult Social Care and Health authority to take all necessary actions to give effect to the recommendations set out in this report and in order to deliver Adult Social Care and Health Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) requirements.

8.9 Cabinet members must read and have regard to the EqIA when making decisions related to this proposal.

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Local members

Councillor David Tutt, Councillor Nuala Geary and Councillor Ian Hollidge

Background Documents

Consultation responses

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultation Report

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 3: Map of Linden Court Attendees Locations

Appendix 4: Map of Alternative Day Service Provision