

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 15 July 2025

**By:** Director of Adult Social Care and Health

**Title:** Linden Court Day Service for people with a learning disability

**Purpose:** To reconsider the decision made by Cabinet on 25 February 2025 in relation to the future of the Linden Court Day Service, in accordance with the motion passed at Full Council on 20 May 2025

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 1) Note the significant work that has been undertaken in relation to Linden Court;**
  - 2) Agree to retain a day service at Linden Court for Adults with Learning Disabilities, capped at the current, actual maximum occupancy level of 25 adults per day; and**
  - 3) Delegate authority to the Director of Adult Social Care and Health to agree revised session times (if required) for the Linden Court Day Service.**
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### **1. Background**

1.1 Despite maximising lobbying opportunities and driving budgetary efficiencies and savings, across the whole council, for over a decade, the challenge of balancing need against available funding continues to increase.

1.2 This ongoing tension means that we need to consider every possible option to continue to meet eligible need within the resources available, including those that would rather be avoided or will have a negative impact on our residents.

1.3 The Care Act 2014 sets out the requirement to undertake planned, annual reviews for all individuals in receipt of adult social care services, including the adults and their relatives and carers who attend Linden Court.

1.4 This requirement ensures we have a robust and up to date picture of current and future eligible need. We are able to use the insight, together with the nature and cost of the services and support that could meet those eligible needs, to plan provision and manage local markets as well as how needs are met for individuals.

1.5 Having a clear understanding of eligible needs ensures we can meet them and also enables us to explore alternative, potentially more cost effective ways of meeting residents needs within the funding available. The regular assessments are the foundation of the approach we take and by their nature will sometimes reveal

changes in needs. Regular reviews as well as consultation on proposals for Linden Court have all provided valuable evidence to inform decision making.

1.6 At its meeting on 25 February 2025, as part of the Council's Reconciling, Policy Performance and Resources process, Cabinet considered a range of savings proposals relating to Adult Social Care and Health. This included a proposal to close the day service for adults with a learning disability provided at Linden Court, in Eastbourne, and to re-provision the services elsewhere including in the independent sector. As part of the proposal, it was recommended that the existing local authority day service at Beeching Park, in Bexhill, be expanded to accommodate adults currently at Linden Court and to establish a satellite service in Eastbourne for two days per week for up to fifteen individuals. Beeching Park already offers a satellite service in Hastings (from Working Wonders) and the Eastbourne satellite would operate in a similar manner. The Cabinet papers including the Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Summary are contained in Appendix 1.

1.7 Prior to the Cabinet meeting, a People Scrutiny Committee Pre-decision Board was held on 20 February 2025. A summary of comments from that meeting were provided to Cabinet for consideration as part of their decision making process. These are set out in Appendix 2.

1.8 At their meeting on 25 February 2025, Cabinet agreed to close current services at Linden Court and re-provision services as summarised above.

1.9 On 4 March 2025, Cabinet's decision on Linden Court was 'called in' by four members of the People Scrutiny Committee.

1.10 The People Scrutiny Committee referred the decision to Full Council who considered a report from the Committee (Appendix 3) at a meeting on 20 May 2025.

1.11 The People Scrutiny Committee recommended the County Council to:

*"consider the matter in relation to the decision made by Cabinet on 25 February to close the Linden Court Day Service for people with a learning disability and merge it with Beeching Park day service and what action, if any, to take."*

1.12 At its meeting on 20 May 2025 the Council resolved the following:

*"Council wishes to thank the parents and carers of the Linden Court Community for the work that they have done in surveying the families of the users of this facility and for presenting their findings to them. In light of this information and the possible increase in costs to the Authority should Linden Court close, Council resolves this facility should be kept open pending work with the families, to assess the cost implications and that the outcome of these be reported to Cabinet as part of its reconsideration."*

1.13 This report provides Cabinet with:

- an update on the further work undertaken with the relatives and carers of the adults attending Linden Court; and
- further information in respect of the risks and financial modelling regarding savings and potential costs associated with the proposal for Linden Court.

1.14 As a result of this further work, a revised proposal for Linden Court is put forward for Cabinet's consideration. In addition, the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been updated to reflect the revised proposal. This is set out in Appendix 4. Cabinet Members must read and have regard to the potential impacts of the revised proposal when making their decision.

## **2. Meeting with parents / carers of adults attending Linden Court**

2.1 In response to the motion passed by Full Council and the additional considerations and questions fed into the process, officers organised a meeting with relatives and carers of adults attending Linden Court, which took place on 17 June 2025.

2.2 41 invitations were sent to parents and carers of adults attending Linden Court. Of these:

- 23 people replied to say they would attend;
- 32 people attended on the day, including 4 adults who attend Linden Court;
- 21 adults who attend Linden Court were represented at the meeting.

2.3 The purpose of the meeting was to:

- discuss with parents / carers the costings and concerns set out in documents that had been sent to all Councillors (as set out in Appendices 5 and 6) to better understand and explore these concerns; and
- to address any other questions or concerns that relatives and carers had.

2.4 In support of the meeting a presentation was created which addressed the areas of concern raised by some relatives and carers. The presentation was structured setting out information for each area of concern, with an opportunity to ask questions after each section. The presentation is contained in Appendix 7.

2.5 The meeting with relatives and carers was particularly helpful in gaining a more detailed understanding of their concerns and current thinking. Whilst some of these concerns could be addressed by Adult Social Care and Health officers, there were others that might be expected to have a material impact on the current proposal for Linden Court.

## **3. Key messages from Linden Court parents / carers**

3.1 The future of Linden Court has now been under consideration for nine months, since the start of the consultation process in September 2024.

3.2 The outcome of the planned individual and carer annual reviews undertaken so far, suggest that many, but not all, of the paid and unpaid carers remain accepting of the potential for alternative day service provision to meet individuals' eligible care and support needs, if Linden Court were to close. However, some relatives and carers, notably those of adults who attend Linden Court three or four days per week and require full time care at home – have told us that they believe the closure of

Linden Court would cause them to question their continued ability to care for their loved one at home.

3.3 The closure of Linden Court would not, of itself, change the eligible needs of the adults attending or necessarily create a requirement for the greater use of long term residential care. However, some parents and relatives told us that the potential significant change in a key element of their support, combined with other external factors such as ageing, their own long term health conditions and carer fatigue has resulted in them re-considering their ability to provide full time care and support at home. Given the needs of some of the adults, if they were no longer able to be cared for full-time at home, the most likely result is that they would move into long term residential care. Whilst this might be expected to happen over time in any circumstances, some carers and relatives have indicated that the closure of Linden Court would most likely be the catalyst for them bringing forward this difficult decision.

3.4 Three families have stated that they would cease to be able to provide full time care at home if Linden Court were to close and several others have indicated that this would be a significant consideration. The potential costs of the additional requirement for residential care for three or more adults significantly impacts on the estimated savings from the Linden Court proposal.

3.5 In light of the protracted period of uncertainty and this information, alternative options have been considered, alongside the original proposal to close and re-provision the service.

## **4. Financial impact of options for Linden Court**

### **Option 1 – Continue with existing proposal to close Linden Court**

4.1 If a final decision to close Linden Court was taken by Cabinet on 15 July, it would be expected that Linden Court would close at the end of October 2025. The financial consequence would be that the 2025/26 part-year saving would be estimated as £136,000 - a £64,000 shortfall on the £200,000 estimate built into the 2025/26 revenue budget. The full year saving of £327,000 could however, be achieved from 2026/27.

4.2 Proceeding to close any service involves completing adult and carer reviews and until these have been completed it is never possible to have a definitive position of who might move into a residential setting as an indirect result of the closure of Linden Court or what the exact costs of this would be. It now seems likely, given most recent discussions and reviews, that once completed, the increased cost of residential care will make the net savings from closure very marginal.

4.3 A provisional estimated average cost of residential care for the high needs individuals currently attending Linden Court is in the region of £75,000 per person per annum; noting that this could vary significantly depending upon individual need. If three individuals moved into residential settings earlier, as a result of the closure of Linden Court, the estimated full year saving of £327,000 could be reduced by approximately £225,000.

## **Option 2 - Delay decision on Linden Court pending Individual and Carers Reviews**

4.4 A decision on Linden Court could be delayed until all of the adult and carer Reviews and Assessments have been completed and an accurate estimate of the alternative service costs, if Linden Court were to close, ascertained. Whilst this would give a clear picture of needs, intentions, savings and costs, a further delay in the decision would mean:

- Extending the period of uncertainty for individuals and their parents / carers, increasing stress and anxiety and making it more likely that some families will make the difficult decision to cease providing full time care at home;
- Have a further negative impact on the wellbeing of Linden Court staff. It is likely that more staff will leave the service and it will be challenging to recruit to a service facing possible closure;
- The timescales for the reviews and agreeing and costing revised Support Plans mean that it is unlikely that Cabinet would have the information to make a decision before November 2025. If a decision was made to close Linden Court, closure would be expected in February 2026. Consequently, very limited savings would be realised in 2025/26, although there would be potential for full year savings to be realised from 2026/27 onwards. The process of reviews and support planning may identify the need for an alternative proposal to be put forward for Linden Court in November 2025, if the current anticipated savings were found to be unachievable.

## **Option 3 - Retain Linden Court with reduced capacity**

4.5 The most viable option, which is now recommended, is to retain the service at Linden Court with a reduced capacity of 25 adults per day rather than the current maximum capacity of 45 adults per day. This reflects the current actual attendance at Linden Court, which is a maximum of 25 adults on any one day. If this option were pursued, it is likely that there would need to be some relatively minor adjustments to session times but not to the overall opening pattern, running across four days a week.

4.6 As set out in Appendix 6, the relatives of some adults who attend Linden Court submitted an alternative proposal for retaining a service at Linden Court, based on reducing capacity to accommodate 30 adults. As part of reviewing the proposal submitted in Appendix 6, officers reviewed the estimated costings put forward in that proposal. These figures did not reconcile with the cost estimates that officers have identified. Nonetheless, whilst the proposal set out in this report is to retain a service with capacity for 25 adults, to align with current actual attendance rates, this has a high degree of alignment with the relatives' proposal and would address many of the concerns raised by relatives and carers. Further information on this can be found in Appendix 5.

4.7 Cabinet will recall that a similar approach to Linden Court was successfully applied to day services at Hookstead in Crowborough, as part of the Adult Social

Care and Health savings proposals agreed in February 2025. The service at Hookstead was retained but with a reduced capacity which better reflected actual attendance levels. Again, as achieved at Hookstead day service, ASCH is confident that if session times are slightly amended this can be done without disrupting existing routines for adults and their parents/ carers. For example, whilst morning session start times changed from 09:00 to 09:30 at Hookstead, adults were still able to arrive at the centre and be supported from 08:30.

4.8 At Linden Court, this option would deliver an estimated saving of just under 50% of the planned savings, leaving a recurring shortfall of approximately £182,000 per annum which will need to be managed within the Adult Social Care and Health annual revenue budget allocation.

## **5. Conclusions and reasons for Recommendations**

5.1 The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget. As part of the 2025/26 Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources process, a proposal to close and reprovise day services at Linden Court in order to contribute towards the required savings was subject to public consultation (from 3 October to 28 November 2024). As a result of the feedback received through the consultation period, the initial proposal was amended to include a satellite service to be provided in Eastbourne. On 25 February 2025, Cabinet agreed to close the current provision at Linden Court, to reprovise the service at an alternative Council-run day service at Beeching Park in Bexhill (or, where more suitable, alternative independent sector provision) and to continue to provide a day opportunity in Eastbourne via the satellite service, which would help to minimise the impact of the proposal.

5.2 Since February 2025, significant additional activity has been undertaken, both internally and with the relatives and carers of adults attending Linden Court, in order to ensure that the amended proposal would deliver the expected savings. This included answering the key questions:

- Are we confident that the proposal for Linden Court can deliver the projected savings?
- Can we continue to meet eligible needs if Linden Court current provision closes, in ways that are feasible and without incurring additional cost such that it would negate the savings?
- Is there an alternative option that could deliver the required savings?

5.3 Although it is not possible to have a definitive view until all adult and carer reviews have been completed, recent work with relatives and carers has highlighted that the current proposal for Linden Court may not achieve the required savings. Although the closure of Linden Court would not of itself change eligible needs, relatives and carers have clearly stated that the extended period of uncertainty and the potential significant disruption to current care and support arrangements has caused them to re-evaluate their ability to continue to provide full time care at home. Three families have stated that they would not be able to continue to provide full time care at home if Linden Court were to close. Several other families have told us that they may not be able to continue to provide full time care if Linden Court were to close. It is recognised that these are very difficult decisions for families to make.

5.4 The actual cost of residential care would be dependent on the specific needs of the adult. However, using an estimated cost of £75,000 per annum for full time residential care for adults with a learning disability, it is clear that the forecast saving for Linden Court may not be realised as the costs of alternative service provision may be higher than in our current modelling. The estimated full year saving of £327,000 could be reduced by approximately £225,000 if three people moved into residential care, earlier, as a result of Linden Court closing.

5.5 Cabinet is therefore recommended to note the work that has been carried out in relation to Linden Court and agree to retain a day service at Linden Court, but with a reduced capacity, so that Linden Court will accommodate a maximum occupancy level of 25 people per day. There is potential that slight revisions to session times will be required, but the service will continue four days per week, as per existing provision. Cabinet is recommended to delegate authority to the Director of Adult Social Care and Health to agree the session times, if any amendments are required. The recommended approach closely aligns with the proposal put forward by relatives of adults using the service and addresses the concerns that have been raised.

5.6 This proposal will deliver a saving, albeit it will not achieve the full-year saving of £327,000 per annum set out in the original proposal. It is anticipated that this will leave a recurring shortfall of approximately £182,000 per annum which will need to be managed within the Adult Social Care and Health annual revenue budget allocation.

## **MARK STANTON**

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Linden Court Cabinet Papers 25 February 2025

Appendix 2 – People Scrutiny Summary of comments for Cabinet 25 February 2025

Appendix 3 – Report of the People Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 4 – Linden Court Day Services Equality Impact Analysis

Appendix 5 – The Linden Court Community Appendix to submission made for May 20th 2025 Full County Council meeting

Appendix 6 - Linden Court Relatives alternative projected scheme and costs

Appendix 7 - Linden Court Parent Carer Meeting Presentation 17 June 2025