

Campaign Newsletter Sunday 8 March 2009



Following our relatives' meeting on Tuesday last week the executive members met the next day and formalised our constitution. We have also made application to open a bank account in the name of CARE with the Alliance and Leicester, Port Street, Stirling in order that we attract donations to help us with our administration and other costs. Currently, the majority of our expenses are being funded by personal donations within the group.

A small number of CARE members attended a meeting held by the ruling SNP/Conservative executive at the Council Chambers on Thursday evening and some of us sat in on the meeting with our T-shirts and logos. This provided a good opportunity for the local press who turned up. More importantly the Conservative Councillors were extremely conciliatory towards our group, perhaps not unsurprisingly as they had issued the following press statement earlier that day.

CONSERVATIVES CALL FOR DELAY ON CARE HOMES CLOSURE

Conservatives on Stirling Council today announced their intention to revisit the issue of care home provision. This is as a result of information that has become clear since the Council Budget Meeting On February 19th.

Despite administration assurances during the budget process, there is no clear plan for reprovision of places for elderly residents of the Wellgreen and Beech Gardens homes.

Consultation with the residents has been crass and insensitive with leading SNP Councillors using the closure to make Party Political points. The shambolic nature of these consultations has led to distress and uncertainty amongst Stirling's most vulnerable people.

Speaking on the issue Conservative Group Leader, Councillor Alistair Berrill said:

"In these hard economic times, the council needs to live within its means, but this is the wrong way to achieve this. The SNP administration's high handed implementation of the care home closures is unnecessary and insensitive."

"The Conservatives have found potential savings in back-office bureaucracy, contained in the same report that recommended the care home closures, that can halt the closure of these vital front line services."

"If these care homes must be closed in the future then it must be handled sensitively and suitable alternative provision must be put in place."

The Conservative Group is calling for an emergency council meeting to discuss

taking another look at these home closures. They will be working together with all parties in the council to ensure services are delivered and budgets are met.

Ends

You will see that they appear to be distancing themselves from the decision to close and while on the face of it this seems to be extremely good news we still have to keep the pressure on until we achieve our agreed aim and not assume that this has been attained on the basis of one press statement.

Hopefully, you will have seen that Scotland Today picked up on our campaign thanks to the efforts of one of our group member's who had contacted a reporter there. We were given over 2 minutes of interview coverage on the 6pm Thursday evening news. This prompted the issue of the following statement from Councillor Graham Houston which was shown on the same news item. He advised that there would be a pause in the process and went on to say.

"Hopefully once we have had a chance to discuss members' concerns we can all understand the reasons why the council had to take this difficult decision."

It does not yet suggest a climb down by his group so we must keep the pressure on.

The local papers Stirling Observer and the free Stirling News and Allanwater News continue to give our campaign positive coverage. The local radio station Central FM is also showing increasing interest in our campaign.

NB

In terms of what comes next we have called a public meeting to encourage wider public debate on the proposed home closures. Given the level of interest being generated in our campaign we have had to move this meeting from the Lesser Albert Halls to the Old Allan Park Cinema in Stirling. The public meeting will be held there on Thursday 12 March, 2009 at 6.45pm for a 7pm start. The old cinema has a seating capacity of around 350 so please make the effort with your friends and relatives to come along. We will only get one chance at this and a poor attendance will reflect badly on our campaign.

We have made flyers up for this meeting and your committee and friends have been tireless in blanketing Stirling and surrounding communities to promote

awareness of the public meeting. This will continue over the next few days.

We have invited all the local councilors, the Chief Executive and Director of Community Care. The local MP Anne McGuire has also advised that she will be in attendance.

As you see much is being done and we also continue to work on drafting up a petition and a template complaint letter relating the decision to close Wellgreen and Beech Gardens.

We look forward to seeing you at the public meeting.

Kind Regards

Lorna Smith
Secretary
CARE