

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Avro / Viking Relatives and Public Meetings

Appendix 5

Q1.

Avro is a purpose built, all on one level, so why are you closing it?

Response:

The Council have provided a good service over the years; however times have changed so we need to do things differently.

Project 49 is introducing a new more modern way to support people with a learning disability to learn and become more independent. One key advantage of Project 49 is its location in the town with easy access to the shops and other activities. The majority of authorities have been looking to provide a more modern approach, better quality of life and best opportunities to be independent.

The opportunities and choices found have surprised the Council during the pilot for the Service Users. They feel more included in their community and can access resources without being reliant on transport. However there is a concern regarding the building on different levels and the ideal solution would be a flat surface better than floored. The recommendation is to convert the current lift into a fire evacuation lift, to use the whole building better.

Originally we started with 10 independent travellers which has increased to 23. There have been concerns that the younger and livelier Service Users opted in for Project 49 and family members have commented that they do not want their relatives to roam the town. People using Project 49 do not roam the streets; they are just accessing community services. There are no plans to thrust people into the community.

Project 49 has the space to develop community based activities. The Council wants to refresh and look at the programme, to improve. It will not make the service worse it will make it better.

Q2.

In the Consultation papers the Alders evaluation and formal Consultation documents only refer to mild and moderate needs, so why have substantial needs been left out?

There are 4 categories – Critical, Substantial, Moderate and Mild and believe 50/60 people in Avro fall into Substantial needs category. Surely there should be an obligation for the Council to consider future responsibilities, there is concern about future situation and that people with Substantial needs will require more support in the future.

Response:

To clarify, all Service Users that have Critical and Substantial needs will still continue to have these met.

Project 49, St. James and Ambleside may be adopted but the needs determined for people will not change and the times that people attend locations will not change. There is no question about the Council meeting people's needs; it's just about how they will be met and making it more adaptable and personal. Opinion given that every person receiving a service has either Critical or Substantial needs.

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Q3.

If Service Users from Viking will potentially use Project 49 then there is only 1 adapted bathroom, where there are 3 at Viking. If Service Users from Viking are expected to use Project 49 they will not have the same personal care facilities. Has thought been given to toilet facilities and is there an option for expansion, as toilets are continuously in use?

Response:

Under no circumstance is Project 49 meant to be a replacement for Viking. After the decision is made on Avro then part of the Consultation process will look at Viking and whether it remains in its current location or re-provided in the community. There is not the capacity to re-provide the service at Project 49. If Service Users are in town and need to use the toilet facilities, then they are available for this use only.

Q4.

Where do Service Users stand when they are adamant that they do not want to attend other services?

Response:

As part of the Consultation process, staff members and advocates are endeavouring to get Service Users views on the proposed changes. There are some Service Users who do not like Project 49 but prefer St James or Ambleside. It is important to identify people who have issues and as part of this Consultation we will carry out full reassessment of needs and how these needs can be met before any change. Part of the process will be to understand why someone feels the way they do about change and work with them to help understand and make full decision.

A number of people receive their services full time at Project 49 by choice and some part time. The fact that Avro is a choice presents a problem to some Service Users, however if it was no longer there, services would be maintained, just at a different building.

Q5.

It is not in the Consultation paper but could it be an option for Viking to expand into the Avro building? Viking offers a fantastic service and feels it needs to expand. Next door to it is a building that is not being fully used and if Project 49 is adopted then Avro building will be empty.

Response:

This has not been thought about and would need to hear the full argument as to why you would want to do this. The service is very good at Viking and staff provide an excellent service, despite the age of the building. We would consider all options and look at costs to provide a better building. The Council need to focus on how to preserve a good service and provide the best opportunities for the future.

Q6.

Has any work been done about looking for a piece of land for a new building? If the perfect piece of land was found, it might lead the Council to think of moving the site.

Response:

It is difficult to do this before the end of the Consultation and agreed outcome. There will be a detailed piece of work on what Viking needs to look like to provide the best service. There is time to do the work, so the Council do not need to rush to look at an alternative site.

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Advice given to complete comments on Consultation paper for these to be added to final report and take on board ideas and opinions to consider the best way forward. There would be opportunity to set up a project group should a new Viking site be considered.

Q7.

Service Users in Avro and Viking would lose the interaction they currently have with each other. If a new location for Viking is needed, will it be big enough for Avro Service Users to visit and interact; do you have this in mind?

Response:

There is no reason that these relationships can not continue. It is easier in the same building but with more planning the opportunities can continue. The Council will need to look at how to continue the interaction, as it's important that key elements of the service be maintained and achieved. Advocates are involved to discuss these concerns with Service Users.

Q8.

Parking space at Project 49 is a major issue when dropping off. There has been discussion about staggering drop-off times, will parking permits be issued?

Response:

Parking issues are a disadvantage of a Town Centre location. There is currently 120 feet of ambulance parking in front of Project 49 and the Councils intention is to reconfigure this space into permit bays, which will stop blue badge holders from parking there. The space needs to be managed better but have demonstrated that with careful management of transport and careful timing, it can ensure safe drop off and pick up at the front of the building with a staggered service. Permits may be issued to parents collecting family to allow drop off and pick up within certain time frames.

There may be the opportunity for some more mature, frailer Service Users to benefit from a shorter day and to balance their needs with transport facilities.

There was an early recommendation to expand parking by 1 space but complaints received from neighbours saying that the parking was underused, and there would be further objection to parking being increased. Parking will not be underused if Avro was to move.

Q9.

It would be ideal for Service Users attending Avro to transfer a week at a time to Project 49 to get used to the service being provided and transport arrangements. Transport has been very good since Southend Passenger Transport took over and receives more regular times.

Response:

During the pilot period, we have been careful not to make anyone do anything but ensure choice as a crucial way to run the pilot. Certain activities have already been moved to Project 49 but this has caused a dilemma in that having people in block to Project 49, empties Avro more and relatives have already commented that the Council have made their decision because Avro appears empty.

Avro can be quite empty at certain times and it is a big space for the number of people. It is offered for people to try. If the decision is made to close building, then a plan will be created for the transition of each individual to engage in activities. From experience it is less disruptive to have a gradual move than to say that from a certain date all are going. Support is available to see people through change.

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Q10.

If there is a prolonged fireman strike can you accommodate numbers safely at Project 49 if unable to safely use the stairs or lifts?

Response:

One condition of the Consultation is that it can not move to Project 49 without ensuring the lift is converted to a fully functioning fire evacuation lift, which can hold up to 8 people. There are also 2 sets of fire evacuation stairs, which can be used.

Q11.

Are there examples of positive feedback regarding progress made in Project 49? Has anyone really benefited from the different location?

Response:

There are many stories of positive experiences with Service Users and staff which will be shared with their permission. A Service User was present at the launch of the Consultation and was interviewed on Essex Radio and told their story.

Action: Eileen and Jo, Advocates, will bring examples to the next Relatives meeting to share.

Q12.

The advantage of moving Viking, is it the same?

Response:

If Viking was to move then we would look at additional capacity and take into consideration those coming through transition, Self Directed Support and Direct Payments. Some Service Users in the future may choose to take their service in a different way for example being given money following assessment to choose a different service.

Q13.

Project 49 is a partnership model, how is that going to work if it is already full?

Response:

It is only potentially that full in worse case scenario at peak times. Local Occupational Therapists are coming back and offering services for Independent Living skills in the kitchen. Speech Therapists are asking if resources are available during the day to run sessions with Service Users and Makaton drop in times using resources. There are pockets of time to maximise use and a new focus of the service to work jointly with other professionals, services and private providers. Parents and Carers will have a central point for contact.

There will be input from Relatives and Service Users as part of the ongoing work to support Project 49 further.

Q14.

Is there a planned date for a decision from Cabinet?

Response:

A report will be sent to the Scrutiny Committee one month after Consultation ends and to Cabinet in March 2014. This is an approximate date but we will keep all informed.

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Q15.

When Service Users go out in the community they are spending more money than they are getting in. This is a concern within Residential Care.

Response:

Work is needed between individual providers and families on how money is spent as Supported accommodation is funded differently. There needs to be balance with Service Users in Supported accommodation who have funds and not discriminate against those in Residential accommodation with less money. There is an Amenity fund from Association Fundraising to support Service Users who may be losing out.

Q16.

If the decision is made to close the Centre, will Viking be purpose built for Special Care? Service Users of Viking are critical need, not substantial. The staff are brilliant and I hope the staff will move with the Centre.

Response:

It is good to hear the positive feedback about staff and I can reassure you that there are no plans to change staffing.
If it's deemed to move Viking then it will be relocated somewhere suitable. At present unable to say if this will be a new build or adapting the existing building, however it will be suitable for all purpose.

Q17.

Has any one looked at the feasibility of moving Viking and in the event of it being sold would the money from the sale of land go to building a new Centre?

Response:

There has been no move to sell the property as we need to wait for the outcome of the Consultation. If the Council sell the property they will want to get the highest possible price to invest in a new facility. It would be logical to think that money from the sale would be put to developments.

Q18.

Assuming that the Viking Centre does move, is there a timeframe for the move to occupation?

Response:

Timeframes will be set once there is a final decision.

Q19.

What other uses/purpose for Avro have been talked about apart from Viking expanding into the space?

Response:

There are no agreed plans at present for the building. It's early days in the process and we need to determine an agreement on a way forward. If other services do use the building for a short term opportunity, the Council will take this very seriously and ensure that people's safety is always put first.

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Q20.

Can you extend Viking into Avro, utilise the space and implement additional things that they need. Is it a cheaper option?

Response:

The feasibility of this has not been looked at in any detail at present.

Q21.

Are you thinking of Viking being located nearer to town?

Response:

Yes, probably. The Council would look at the building being purpose-built and will take on board the needs of people around parking, garden space etc. It is not just about having a building in the centre of town; it also reflects the degree of isolation where the current building is at present. Other things are needed to make the service work so we need to find a balance between need for a location near to the town and other requirements.

If there is a move it will be done in a planned way, and it is recognised how difficult change is.

Q22.

Would be interested to know where the Council can find a building in Southend with space, parking and gardens. It is difficult to give an opinion if we do not know where the new location will be.

Response:

The Council need to look at what is financially viable, which could potentially free up money from the sale of the existing site to build a fit for purpose centre to meet the extra needs.

The Consultation paperwork states if the decision is to remain with the current site, it will need significant refurbishment. Most important is for Relatives, Carers, Service Users and Advocates to provide information and a 'Wish List' of what you actually want from this Consultation so this can be recorded into the final report.

Q23.

Continuity of staff is paramount. Service Users need continuity and familiar faces otherwise they will be stressful.

Response:

We can assure you there will be no change to current staffing.

Q24.

If Project 49 goes ahead and Viking extends into Avro or another site, which will be a lengthy period of Consultation and planning, could this be 5 or 10 years?

Response:

Once a decision has been made, then the Council will plan for it to happen. This would not be over 5 or 10 years, it will be finalised a lot earlier.

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Comments

Several families **hold** the staff in high regards for their services and care they provide.