

U- Turns and Deception, Budget Cuts - Selling Off of all the EPH's.

During the last 2 months I have attended 5 out of 13 visits to Devastated and Betrayed staff and Residents at the County Councils Elderly Persons Homes(EPH).

There was Conservative outrage less than 2 years ago when the Labour party placed 3 options open for debate.

This administration have placed only 1 option, that is to Sell off All the EPH's to the highest bidder at what appears the lowest price !!

With extremely weak, commitments, few if any **concrete** guarantee's for staff or the resident and relatives, this is a case of delving into the deep unknown, and the sinister world of profit.

The newspaper delivered by hand to my door yesterday in rural Notts states clearly that selling off the EPH's will mean a saving each year of 1.6 **million**.

However the meetings Cllrs, Kay Cutts and Cllr Shepherd when sharing the question and answer session with David Pearson, stated that they have recently given the Independent Homes (Private sector) an extra **2.3 million extra, in increased charges**.

The Freezing of Council Tax costs 9 million pounds of valued services per year!

Unless they now intend to withdraw the extra funding for places within those homes this means that Nottinghamshire will not be saving a single penny, in fact it would appear that as they sell off the homes **the charges will increase**.

Once there are no Council run homes, the independent sector will hold the council to ransom in UNISON's view.

This isn't just my view, it is the experience of other councils across the country that have taken similar actions, and in some cases are returning to provide an In House service.

U-Turn's-

During the last major consultation which must have cost the Council a fortune, these were the views of Conservative Cllrs:-

Councillor Lonergan (Conservative stated)

*"That option 2 (selling the EPH's to the private sector)- to **withdraw from providing was a step too far, too quickly**. He believed, therefore that the only option was 3, which was to retain a strategic share in the market and re-invest some savings into extra care"*

Councillor Girling - (Conservative, potential MP candidate!)

*"That if the number of vacancies in care homes were reduced places may not be available when they were needed quickly .He thought it was important that **options were available to families**"*

Withdrawing from Nottinghamshire County Council Provision leaves **NO OPTION !**

If that was not acceptable to the Conservative opposition, then why is it acceptable no?.

Mick Tinkler – Chief Executive Age Concern Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, May 2007.

At the meeting held 16th April 2007

ACNN believes that the key factor that should be borne in mind during this review is that older people who have care and support needs should be able to exercise choice about how and where those needs are met.

“We believe that many older people choose local authority run homes because of the high standards of care that they provide”

Selling Off all the homes does not provide choice in UNISON’s opinion and is Immoral.

The Full consultation document which was published on the 3rd September 2007, and UNISON would advise that this consultation which took well over 6 months to complete is still valid.

The over whelming view was that, a sell off was not a viable option!

It was UNISONs and the views of other agencies and the department that to withdraw from the market would place significant risks to the Local Authority.

(outlined in point 7, in the consultation document 2007 below)

Impact for services users- *“There would be uncertainty while homes transferred .New providers may provide a better or worst service. There would be no choice of a local authority home in the future.”*

Financial implications- *“Market rates for care services could increase further as a result of there being no local authority presence.”*

Major Risks- *“Reductions of numbers of available beds.
Loss of the guaranteed capacity and flexibility which council services provide.
Reduce public confidence in the council once not a provider.*

UNISON , the general public, other agencies and Keith Dodd from the Independent sector, “Nottinghamshire Care Association” pointed out that a presence of Council Provision provided a “Bench Mark” for the private sector to try and achieve comparability for pricing, staff wages, care provision, and training required etc.

During the whole of the consultation UNISON made it extremely clear we opposed any extensive closure plans or the sell off of the treasured family silver.

We have not changed, and will do **NO U –TURN.**

The sell off of all our County Council excellent Elderly Persons Homes, is a betrayal, to the recent “Official Public Consultation.”

How much more will the Private Sector charge if there is no legitimate Market Bench level

UNISON will continue to support our members and attend all meetings.

Our members do not want selling off and neither does UNISON believe the service users, tax payers and the most vulnerable people of Nottinghamshire want to be left to the mercy of the Private Sector.

If there are emergencies (Flooding, Cold/Snow spells, Flu Pandemics etc) urgent required placements, the Local authority would have no control.

Will the profiteers be prepared to put People First!

The Tax Payer deserves choice and Loyal Staff deserve to be treated with respect after their hard work throughout the ASC&H Sector has help the Local Authority gain the highest Care awards possible and place the Authority within the top 5%.

Budget Cuts should be measured to reducing inefficiency not Services.

A comparison of Public Services to the most vulnerable in society is the “Single Farm Payment” which is a benefit for Farmers and Land Owners.

The Tax Payer pays for both!

I challenge the political view to sell off the Elderly Persons Homes as a step to far for the voters of Nottinghamshire, and the members of UNISON staff.

Please re-think this strategy.

Grace Perry ASC&H Convenor for UNISON 16/01/2010