

**Richard Burden MP**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

Cllr Sue Anderson  
Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities  
Birmingham City Council  
The Council House  
Birmingham B1 1BB

Our ref: WDS\050509\AND

05 May 2009

Dear Sue

Thank you for your acknowledgment to my recent letter.

I saw the press reports about the Day Centre closures last week and I am concerned by what has happened – especially considering the issues I raised in my letter – the nature of consultation and how it should be phased. I am also conscious that the consultation ended on the 17th April and that final proposals for a cabinet decision were both compiled and made public less than two weeks later. That seems an astonishingly short space of time for all the responses received to be analysed, further information sought, options formulated and definitive proposals drafted.

Unfortunately, although the proposals that have been drawn up have apparently already been released to the press, they do not yet appear to have been sent to me either as a local MP for one of the constituencies affected or as someone who responded to the consultation.

Please would you kindly send me a copy of the proposals being put to Cabinet. I would also be grateful if you could let me have a summary of the responses that were received to the consultation, the department's views on those responses, information about when the proposals published last week were actually drawn up and by whom the proposals were drawn up. It would also be useful to know when those proposals were put to you as Cabinet Member for approval for submission to Cabinet.

Finally, I would be grateful for a response to the issues I raised with you in my last letter and to know whether you feel able to accommodate any of the points I put forward.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Burden'.

**Richard Burden MP**

**LABOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR BIRMINGHAM NORTHFIELD**  
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Sue Anderson  
Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities  
Birmingham City Council  
The Council House  
Birmingham  
B1 1BB

19 April 2009

Dear Sue

### **Consultation on the future of Collingwood and other Day Centres**

Thank you for your letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

Unfortunately Parliamentary business prevented my attending the meeting at Collingwood on March 31<sup>st</sup>, but I was able to send a representative.

Several issues came out of the meeting and I would appreciate it if these concerns could be fed into the consultation process. My office contacted the Adults and Communities Department last week to alert the Department to the fact that I would be forwarding this response to the consultation process this week.

Firstly, if any day centre should close, has Birmingham City Council ensured that its departments have the resources necessary to prepare personal assessment plans for all the clients who will need alternative provisions in a timely manner? Should Collingwood be earmarked for closure, the clients of the day centre must have alternative provisions *in place and active* before the centre is closed.

This leads me onto my second concern. I understand that Adults and Communities are currently mapping what day services are available around the city and where they are available. What if enough suitable alternatives do not currently exist for day time activities for Collingwood service users? Will any proposals to close the centre be put on hold until all clients' needs are suitably met elsewhere?

It is absolutely imperative, should Collingwood close, that there is no gap in provision for these families. And no family should feel pressurised into accepting a service which is not suitable, even in the short term, to accommodate closure.

I understand that there is a commitment to provide funding for whatever travel may be necessary for ex-Collingwood service users, to their new place of care. My constituents have expressed anxiety that distance to the new place of provision will not be considered in their personal assessments, and that people will be expecting to travel very much larger distances. The importance for these families of keeping services local must be seriously taken into consideration.

All of these issues must be taken into consideration when Cabinet meets to consider the possible closure of day centres. Cabinet must not simply assume that all needs can be met as well elsewhere, but be sure in this, and know it has the resources to carry out an action plan in a timely and sensitive manner, before any day centre is earmarked for closure.

It cannot be emphasised enough how the service users at Collingwood, and their carers, must be at the heart of any decision made over day care provision within this city. This cannot be allowed to be a budget cutting exercise with token consultation with clients and carers thrown in.

I am also conscious - from what has been said by officers so far - that the City Council does not currently consider Collingwood as "fit for purpose". Should Collingwood not be closed, therefore, I hope there will be a commitment to invest in the centre to make it so. Similarly, should other day centres be closed, and Collingwood take on extra users, then Cabinet must also recognise the investment requirements of this.

I am sure that you are aware of the stress that the threat of taking away such a provision causes to clients and carers alike. In modernising day centre for older adults, Birmingham City Council must not run rough shot over current users of day care provisions, but must act with extreme sensitivity and understanding.

Finally, I wonder if I could raise a few issues about the sequencing and nature of consultation and decision-making being undertaken by the City Council in relation to Day Centres. I hope the range of concerns I have outlined above underline the fact that many people, myself included, would want there to be much greater clarity about the nature and extent of alternative provision proposed by the City Council before we are expected to give a considered view on whether Collingwood - or any other existing day centre - should close. Having gathered together the responses from the current consultation, therefore, I would hope that the City Council would then seek views on the detailed *options* for the future - ranging from those closest to the status quo to more radical alternatives. The options could include scenarios in which day centres such as Collingwood could remain open and others in which particular centres would close, with a financial and service appraisal of each option.

Unfortunately, your letter to me of 19<sup>th</sup> March implies that something different is going to happen. You suggest that Cabinet will make a *decision* in May with service users and carers only being involved further in the *implementation* of that decision. If I have understood you correctly, service users, carers and other interested parties will not have any chance to consider or comment on any package of options or proposals that are to be considered by Cabinet. All they will have been able to comment on will be the outline issues circulated for discussion following the Cabinet meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> December.

I really do not think that is good enough in that it appears to exclude key stakeholders from an important part of the process, and it denies Cabinet Members the opportunity to make decisions with knowledge of what service users, carers and others feel about the actual options they are considering.

What I am suggesting here would certainly insert an extra stage into the consultation, but if it improves the quality of the decisions that are finally taken, and public confidence in those decisions, I think it would be time well spent.

I look forward to hearing further from you on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

RICHARD BURDEN MP  
Birmingham Northfield

Cc Peter Hay, Strategic Director of Adult & Communities  
Cllr Len Clark  
Cllr Barbara Tassa