



Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd

Date: Wednesday, 25 June 2025
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Meeting Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)

Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Steve Robinson, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Interim Chief Executive: Sam Crowe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services
Meeting Contact lindsey.watson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

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Agenda

Item		Pages
7.	DORSET COUNCIL ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE	3 - 8
	To consider a report of the Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning and Improvement.	
	An update report for information will be published as a supplement.	

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Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd

25 June 2025

Commissioners' Update

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report Author: Mark Tyson

Job Title: Corporate Director, Commissioning & Improvement

Tel:

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This update presents the developments on the part of the Council relevant to Care Dorset. This report summarises significant developments in the 2-3 months since the last Shareholder Committee.

Recommendation:

1. For Committee to note the continued progress made in development of the relationship between Commissioners and Care Dorset.
2. For Committee to note the priority areas being addressed and plans in place to further develop Care Dorset priorities in line with Dorset Council 'A Better Life' Commissioning Strategies.

Reason for Recommendation:

Care Dorset is a key part of delivering the Council's 'Commissioning for A Better Life' strategies, and for improving the quality and sustainability of the care and support delivered to adults in Dorset.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on work with Care Dorset since the last Shareholder Report, and relevant developments in the wider commissioning landscape.

2. Significant service developments since the last report

- 2.1 The Council's Cabinet received and noted Care Dorset's annual performance report at its meeting of 28 January 2025.

Development of new reablement centres

- 2.2 Work continues against the programme plan for the delivery of a new, high-specification Reablement Centre on the site of Sidney Gale House in Bridport.
- 2.3 RIBA Stage 2 is coming to a close, and the programme is moving into Stage 3, within which we will be finalising the details of the design in order that planning applications can be initiated and the build partner can begin work. A series of surveys of the site have been completed, and the overall design work has been undertaken. The timeline remains as previously outlined, with opening expected early-to-mid 2028.
- 2.4 The programme has joined up further with the FutureCare programme, so that the eventual operation of this centre (and the others that were envisaged under the programme) has system-wide support and integration.

Day services

- 2.5 The consultation has now closed on the proposals around recommissioning of all of the day centre provision currently operated by Care Dorset. The team would like to pay tribute to the welcome that was received from the centre managers and their teams during the consultation events, and the support that they provided to enable people to engage with us.
- 2.6 It has been a rich and robust dialogue on the future of these services, which has highlighted the extent to which the services that were inherited by Care Dorset had gathered multiple additional functions and over time. Day service places, sublets to groups, lunch visits, outreach and other flexible service offers are all part of the current provision, not merely the sessional placements that the Council deems itself to be purchasing.
- 2.7 We have had hundreds of responses to the survey and consultation, together with petitions on the future of Blandford and Ferndown centres. We are working through the information, with support from corporate consultation team

colleagues, and are pursuing the conversations needed internally to work up a revised set of proposals and decisions for Cabinet in the Autumn.

- 2.8 This has been a substantial piece of work, and the input that the communities of Dorset has been invaluable – both those who draw on support from the centres and those who simply recognise what the service and venue does for others in their town. We are confident that the end results will be different to our original plans, quite markedly so in some cases, but across all of the centres we anticipate this being an opportunity for some degree of change and modernisation.
- 2.9 We continue in discussion with Care Dorset colleagues and, in the spirit of an open commissioning process, we expect there to be an opportunity for further involvement for them and others in the overall co-creation process for a new offer. Crucially, any decision in the Autumn is the start of further work to involve others in how any change rolls out.

Reablement

- 2.10 There is a developing focus on the role of reablement across the health and care system, with community reablement services being reviewed under the Home Based Intermediate Care programme workstream of FutureCare. Care Dorset are engaged in this work, together with Tricuro and as part of a multi-agency partnership approach. The Bed-Based Intermediate Care Workstream is also working up the specifications and quantities of bed-based reablement support that will be needed for the future in a well-functioning integrated care system, and we are working with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council colleagues on developing a system-wide specification for these options.
- 2.11 Reablement is also being increasingly applied to the ‘front door’ of Adult Social Care, so that people are supported to be at their strongest when making decisions about long-term care needs under a Care Act assessment. This pilot work with Care Dorset has already yielded better outcomes and greater independence for the individuals, as well as some significant cost avoidance for the local authority. This demonstrates the importance of this work in driving a more sustainable, preventive, adult social care offer.

Care Quality Commission: local authority inspection

- 2.12 We are still awaiting notification of the dates for our inspection process for the Council’s CQC assessment. Notifications are made at the beginning of each month, and it is intended that all on-site activity concludes by end of December with reports issued by the end of March 2026. It is therefore expected soon.

3. Wider Council and Integrated Care System developments

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan

- 3.1 The Council continues to face a further challenging budget year. The Adult Social Care budgets were substantially invested in in 2025/26, which has allowed some catch-up on increasing demand and costs from 2024/25, where the out turn showed an overspend of over £11m. This sets the context for the next section on finances.
- 3.2 As part of the planning for the current year, with the challenges in mind, Dorset Council offered an uplift to the wider adult social care market of around 2.7%. This was targeted at providers on the Dorset Care Framework 2, with whom we have the long-term relationship and who have invested in the provision that the Council wishes to purchase. Nonetheless, both in this group and for others where no proactive uplift was offered, it is recognised that this is a challenging position for many providers, as they begin to absorb a number of developing costs in the current year, not least the rise in employers' National Insurance rates and thresholds. We remain in active dialogue with the Dorset Care Association, as well as some individual providers, to monitor the situation and the stability of the local provider market in the current climate and provide support where we can.

4. Finance

- 4.1 A revised contract price has now been agreed with Care Dorset. This has concluded a two-year period of resolving a number of legacy issues from previous provider and 'right-sizing' some areas of cost. This builds on both the savings and efficiencies driven out of the inherited business by Care Dorset, but also areas of increased cost that needed to be resolved as services were reconfigured. It is expected that this position now sets a baseline from which further efficiencies can be driven from the business, with a clearer position on costs.
- 4.2 For the coming year, there is a saving of £500k to be made from greater efficiencies in day service operation – this is not explicitly linked to the bigger programme for remodelling the service offer, but recognises the disproportionately high benchmark costs currently in this area of the business. With nearly £4m of savings already delivered, and a further £6m yet to be delivered this year, conversations with Care Dorset will continue to emphasise the need for further efficiency where it can be found.
- 4.3 In particular, the Council will have less access to resources to cover the short-term costs of transformation that delivers longer-term revenue benefits.

Investment costs, redundancies, etc. will need to be met from within Care Dorset resources and defrayed over a period that allows a sharing of the benefits between the company and the commissioner. By continuing to transform and reduce the cost base, the company is also more competitive for the self-funder market, which builds its greater sustainability.

- 4.4 The company is now in a positive place, having agreed the five-year strategy, and with the option agreed through the Council of a working capital loan which can bolster the ability of the company to smooth costs and benefit profiles across extended periods. Through the year, commissioners will want to work on an open-book basis to have a more informed agreed approach to the efficiencies that can flow back into the contract for this and future years.

Purchase of a care home

- 4.5 The Shareholder previously authorised the company to enter into negotiations on the acquisition of an operating care home. After due diligence, and consideration of the balance of risks and benefits involved in the purchase, it was not possible to arrive at a satisfactory position, particularly in view of the obligations that would have applied to the Council as the guarantor of the lease.
- 4.6 The process was, however, a useful opportunity to test the commercial framework that the Council applies to Care Dorset as its wholly-owned Local Authority Trading Company. A review session is planned to ensure that learning from the process can apply to any future opportunities that may arise.
- 4.7 Approval to draw on a working capital loan facility from the Council was given in connection with the purchase but also for application to the wider development of the company's commercial independence and future strategy. As referenced above, this therefore continues to be an important option for the company in the coming years.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 No specific decisions are requested from this report; as such, there are no specific financial implications raised by this report other than to set out clearly the challenges that the Council's adult social care budgets are facing and the context that this sets for commissioner decisions with respect to Care Dorset.

6. Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific implications raised by this report. The work underway on day services, as well as the change to Sidney Gale House, present

opportunities to improve the environmental efficiency of Care Dorset's estate and operations.

7. Well-being and Health Implications

- 7.1 The services described, and their journey of improvement, are significant contributors to the maintenance and improvement in the health and wellbeing of people who draw on support.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 No other implications identified.

9. Risk Assessment

- 9.1 No decision is required; no risk assessment therefore needed.

10. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 10.1 No decision is required. Equalities impacts are assessed in connection with decision made on specific service developments.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 None.

12. Background Papers

- None referenced in this report.

13. Report Sign-Off

- 13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)