

# **Craigshill facility could become part of new elderly care centre**

**Councillors have agreed the closure of one of three remaining West Lothian council owned care homes first mooted a year ago.**

Talks are underway with NHS Lothian for the Craigmair care home building in Craigshill to become part of a new care of the elderly hub for the county.

The plan will streamline services and see the closure of two hospital sites in Linlithgow and Armadale.

Following a decision at West Lothian IJB in June 2023, Craigmair formally closed as a care home on 31 March 2024. Councillors have now agreed the property is surplus to council requirements.

West Lothian Council continues to operate three care homes. There are no plans to close any of the remaining care homes.

The council report confirmed that discussions have taken place with the NHS to explore opportunities for the NHS to lease the building and to utilise it for NHS purposes. These discussions will continue.

Craigmair sits adjacent to existing care facilities for the elderly at Maple Villa in Larch Grove. Plans announced last August could see the creation of a single unit replacing the existing hospital sites.

The IJB proposals will see Tippethill Hospital in Armadale and St Michael's in Linlithgow, which has been shuttered for three years, close as community hospitals offering elderly care beds and dementia care.

These will now be concentrated around a single campus, including existing facilities at Maple Villa and the redesigned Craigmair care home site.

Councillors who had voted to delay the hospital closure decision accepted the proposed option to provide complex dementia care on one site through the co-location of Tippethill's Rosebery Ward with Maple Villa on a new Craigshill Care Campus.

It will also provide frail elderly community hospital provision on the same site as Maple Villa in the Craigmair building, a care home which will be converted.

The move comes as the Integration Joint Board (IJB) has to make savings of more than £13m in the next three years.

Councillors on the IJB, which oversees social care services provided by NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council, initially voted against approval of the hospital closure proposals in June last year.

They were concerned that they did not have enough information on future provision to agree to the closure of two community hospital facilities – fearing a growing elderly population would see a resurgence of demand.

Health officials produced statistics to show that changes based around a Home First care of the elderly model showed that hospital beds were needed on fewer occasions and that, in most cases, care of the elderly can be managed with the home setting.

A report to the Executive said: "Officers recommend that

discussions with the NHS should continue over a potential lease of the premises, with a further report to be presented to a future meeting of the Council Executive should lease terms be agreed between officers and NHS colleagues.”

The report added that should no agreement be reached the building should be sold in accordance with surplus property rules.

Rather than keep unused buildings, West Lothian Council uses the proceeds from the sale or lease of unused properties to help to fund future investment in infrastructure projects, such as schools, parks, roads and care services for vulnerable people. The sale or lease of unused assets is therefore an important funding stream that allows us to continue to invest in other services.

A meeting of the Council’s Executive also agreed to the demolition of a former nursery building in Broxburn.

Kirkhill nursery is no longer required, with modern, new nursery facilities having been built at Kirkhill Primary School. Because of its location and age, officers recommended that the former Kirkhill nursery be demolished as there is no opportunity for commercial use or development.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter