

- Any sizeable hub model will segregate and stigmatise clients. It will export any anti-social behaviour to one small area of town. Any sizeable hub model situated a significant distance from central services will not be appreciated by clients. It is unacceptable for local residents not to be consulted by SWT until a decision has been made. The desired end result will not be achieved unless it is set as a clear objective from the start. Therefore, only the Housing First Model can succeed. A plan must be agreed to achieve this objective in a challenging timescale with all agencies and local residents working together on a compelling project which fulfils the long-term needs of all stakeholders.
- Housing First Model with small casual unit back up is best. I know nothing about Canonsgrove but I do know about homeless people. As a priest I worked for forty years in urban parishes which always had a ministry to homeless people. Homeless people need to be seen as people who for a wide variety of reasons are without a home. They are people. The last thing they need is to be herded together in large numbers in accommodation that is well out of town and of course out of sight. The present proposal to use Canonsgrove as a huge centre for the homeless has been done before. It was called The Work House. Our Catholic parish of St George has been a long term supporter of The Open Door and it is this model of a small centre that needs developing with a Housing First priority added. Human scale is what is essential. The Housing First Model is what supplies this. The current scheme looks like an attempt to find an answer to what to do with a building that has lost its use and not an answer to the problem of people without a home. It's a home they need not a refined gulag. Has any one thought to ask them what their preference is ?
- My first thought, when I read last spring of the temporary use of Canonsgrove as an emergency hostel for those with no roof over their heads, was relief that vulnerable people could be brought in from the streets and kept warm, safe and fed. As an active supporter of projects to help homeless people, though, I wonder how those with so few, if any, personal resources are meant to occupy themselves all day somewhere as physically isolated as Canonsgrove, once urban life opens up again? I also wonder how many of the homeless people in SWT's area have been consulted about where, geographically, THEY think they would best be accommodated? The long walk into the town centre from Canonsgrove, for instance, assumes a better state of health and fitness than many who have fallen into homelessness have been reduced to. Last summer, I started thinking about how we in Trull and Staplehay might help the Canonsgrove residents feel welcome and part of our local community, but social distancing prevented that being explored. My wider opinion now is that the various communities within the SWT area – often based on traditional parishes – could, and should, each be open to supporting a small number of needy individuals locally. In comparison with many urban areas, Somerset is well resourced in its longstanding tradition of community support. There are activities and groups already in existence which could facilitate new members joining, and I think there is additional scope to use our community halls and open spaces for family-friendly gentle team games /sports, community picnics etc. My long experience as a social worker in one of our major cities before coming here, as well as in Somerset itself, informs my attitude about the way forward now. I can never support proposals that will effectively 'ghetto' any of society's vulnerable groups: such practice belongs to the Victorian era, and not to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And to house large numbers of people together,

whose only shared characteristic is that they lack a home, is asking to reinforce lowest common denominator behaviour. I witnessed, at work, how keen low-functioning families were to 'fit in', and how successful, when provided with decent accommodation alongside others who had enjoyed a better start in life. On a personal note here, I should say that I have very seldom felt physically vulnerable in Staplehay at night. Previously it was only when groups of drunken teenagers were menacing in the playing field after dark. Like many other local residents, however, I am now retired and live alone, and in view of recent incidents of anti-social behaviour, I no longer feel at all safe walking to or from friends' homes in our unlit streets after dark. This means regrettable additional car journeys (for those of us still able to see well enough to drive at night).

- In my opinion, homeless people should be housed close to the services and assistance they need (accepting their needs will vary.) Re Canonsgrove in particular no particular story but on observation that Trull is not able to provide what is needed (and this won't change)
- As residents of Trull for over 60 years, it is both alarming and intimidating when walking to Trull Stores with the residents of Canonsgrove using foul language and shouting. Trull and Staplehay has many elderly residents who simply have no understanding of some of the problems these people suffer from. We have never felt any need to be scared in our home until now, and whilst these people need help and have rights - so do we!!
- In our view Canonsgrove should be one of a number of satellite centres forming a network around Taunton but the hub should be centred in or near the centre of Taunton. It is revealing that when a development of 170 homes was proposed adjacent to the Canonsgrove site it was rejected (2013) because it was an "unsustainable location remote from the town centre and local services and poorly served by public transport". Planning a hub in that location with up to 180 residents is unsustainable for the same reasons. A central location would enable easy access to the services required by the homeless clients. Placing them in a large facility cut off from local services is more akin to a custodial environment not one where integration is the preferred outcome. SWT should publish a strategy for the district with regard to supporting the homeless and identify the means and resources to achieve it. Then consult with interested ?? And general population.
- I have ticked the third box down on the survey sheet because my understanding is that the rehabilitation of rough sleepers, which must surely be the primary aim of housing them, is best achieved in small units. The location of these units within easy walking distance of the town centre is of considerable importance. Having said that, I feel sure that we would all be better able to give an informed opinion if we were able to be involved in the process of the Options Appraisal which, in spite of multiple requests to SWT, has been denied us. Largely as a consequence, I am afraid that I have no confidence in SWT to conduct the Appraisal in an unbiased and open manner, indeed it would appear that SWT is already predisposed towards the long term use of Canonsgrove. With regard to the forthcoming planning application from Bridgwater College, to review and amend the S106 conditions extant for Canonsgrove, no doubt

advised by SWT, I trust that those of us in the vicinity of the site will receive appropriate and timely neighbour notification of the changes proposed and that the matter will be open subsequently to public response and debate in the SWT Planning Committee chamber; that is where the S106 conditions were agreed and imposed c1995. Anything less should be subject to legal challenge.

- I would not object to Canonsgrove had I not witnessed a robbery in Trull post office when a resident walked out with a box of beer cans and cycled free on his bike, plus regularly seeing residents throw cans and snack packets onto the ground ( I have walked around Trull village with a black bin bag picking up a big increase in litter, including dog bags, since Canonsgrove was populated ). If they don't appreciate being off the street and respect local residents then I cannot agree to them being in the vicinity. My preference would therefore be a centrally located hub in Taunton.
- Evidence points to hostels such as Canonsgrove leading to worse (and more costly) outcomes for homeless people and local councils. At three miles from the town centre, Canonsgrove is self-evidently the wrong location for homeless people, most of whom have few travel options, but need to access services/meet friends in town. It is discriminatory against those with poor health/limited financial means. The original planning consent for student halls was only granted due to a legal agreement restricting activities that could affect the amenity of the local community. It is not reasonable for that protection to be removed. Our family, including young children, have been verbally abused by Canonsgrove residents. We have had drug dealers in our street and have observed other apparent deals (involving young people) nearby. We have seen and reported drunk/drugged residents lying in Honiton Road and been subjected to anti-social behaviours, arguments, noise, excrement in the streets drug/alcohol debris. This has brought crime to the village and undermined our community.
- No to Canonsgrove as a super centre. Reflect on why Tone Vale Hospital was closed. Do not let history repeat itself under the word "homeless"
- A proper re-education programme which includes a trade or new skill with constant supervision. Just before Christmas, while in Trull Stores a group from Canonsgrove came in to buy alcohol. Rude and offensive in the way they spoke to the proprietor - foul language and no masks. As a pensioner I felt threatened and uncomfortable. I believe that the other customers in the shop at the time felt uncomfortable too.
- Have looked at the SWT website and feel sure they have already made their choice - for Canonsgrove. Very few of these councillors live in Taunton and know little about Staplehay. Democracy? They must be joking.
- Avoid using large-scale accommodation, which although no doubt considerably less expensive than multi-occupancy units are a false economy, can be very impersonal and residents easily become institutionalised. Outcomes are better for clients accommodated in smaller units - ref. ARC website which states that due to the use of Canonsgrove, Lindley House is only approx. 50% full (ie about 30 residents) which has resulted in a "calmer environment, fewer distractions, and a highly positive outlook from clients."

***The following is a letter written to the Parish Council in September which was included in the survey response as still representing the Parishioner's viewpoint:***

I should say at the outset that I am aware of the significant difference it has made to some people's lives over the past few months and also that I have heard John Shipley talk about the concept and success of the project which was implemented in very short order. But as a resident of Staplehay, I have a number of points for consideration regarding an extension to the contract and in particular an expansion of the numbers.

My understanding is that the facility was needed not just to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic, but also to reaccommodate those living at Linley House due to the nature of the accommodation there being unsuitable for dealing with situations where people may need to isolate. ARC have run this establishment most successfully over many years and one would hope that once the current crisis is over it will once again become the principle facility in Taunton for helping the homeless. It is better located being closer to the town centre. However, I can see that at present the ensuite accommodation available at Canonsgrove is necessary for the duration of the pandemic.

The success of the operation at Canonsgrove has it seems to me been the result of the unique circumstances in which, under John Shipley's leadership, the statutory and voluntary bodies have come together to make it work. The support from NHS, police, mental health workers, drug and alcohol counsellors, the Salvation Army, the local church and other local people has been both admirable and essential. In my view it is this that has ensured success and not the premises per se. Indeed this level of effort is substantial and needs to be provided and sustained regardless of location. My concern is whether this level of effort is sustainable in the longer term as enthusiasm wanes or services decline due to lack of funding. The danger is that we end up with an out of town facility where supervision, security, control and support services are not what they are today. While I admire YMCA for leading the effort, there are not many people with the experience and energy of John Shipley and I think confidence in the way the place is managed is key in moving forward.

I am concerned about plans to grow the numbers. I believe that throughout the pandemic the number of residents has been in the forties. I assume this is because that is representative of the local demand. I am more than slightly concerned that if the availability of accommodation is increased the extra space will be filled by people from beyond the local area. More people will inevitably cause more problems which I do see as a significant threat to the peace and tranquillity of the local area.

On 2 occasions we have experienced rowdy behaviour on the footpath close to our house involving drinking, shouting and bad language. This was reported to the police and is now several weeks ago and has not happened since. Nevertheless, it is unsettling particularly at the moment when we all have so many other things to worry about.

It is rather depressing to read that SW&T need 6-12mth (or more) whilst they consider long term policy for the homeless. This is not a new problem and one would have hoped that they already have policies in place! However, I am pleased to see that the Parish Council will now have a voice. We need to ensure that the views of local people are taken into account and I am grateful to you for taking this on.

In sum, I would hope that when the pandemic is over Linley House will reopen as the principal hostel for the Taunton area, with the integrated support in place that has been achieved at Canonsgrove in recent weeks.

- Whilst these suggested alternatives might be ideal solutions: given the state of the county and indeed the country's finances I think where they are at the moment they at least have a roof over their heads. There is a distinct possibility of them falling through the gaps in social care at the present time if they are moved.
- Out walking recently I met a Canonsgrove resident, David, who is being helped there. He seemed very appreciative of this but sad that others were upsetting Trull residents and putting the scheme in jeopardy. I feel strongly that those unfortunate people who can benefit from help **must** get the support they need. A 60 unit is MUCH TOO BIG. Maybe it could be put to use for temporary accommodation in bad weather.
- The hedges and ditches around Canonsgrove have now become a dumping ground for bottles, cans and other rubbish thrown there by the residents. Just WHO do the public servants of SWT think they are? They forget who pays their salaries and to whom they are accountable.
- I cannot agree with the sizeable hub model suggested at Canonsgrove. What are these people to do in the middle of the countryside with no facilities nearby and a very limited bus service? There **MUST** be smaller hubs closer to services and a community for them to live in and enjoy.
- Definitely the ideal solution (housing first) but is it long term financially viable??? Alternative smaller multi- occupancy housing. Whilst personally not greatly affected I have great concerns at the constant parade of police and ambulance activity now disturbing the village.
- Whilst there will always be a need for varying types of accommodation to meet homeless needs Canonsgrove is not the right place. Its out of town location creates much dangerous footfall down Honiton Road and has brought crime to this once safe village. I have experienced disturbances outside my door through the night. Shouting, swearing and abusive language. Drug dealing has been taking place at the corner of Sweethay Lane witnessed by myself as Canonsgrove residents wait for a delivery by car. A syringe was found on my neighbour's drive (she is 98) after men from Canonsgrove had walked there.
- Whilst we were happy for Canonsgrove to house a small number of Taunton's homeless community during the Covid pandemic, we always understood it was a temporary arrangement . During this time we have experienced multiple nights episodes of drunken behaviour passing our house sometimes very late at night with aggressive language and on occasion violence necessitating a police emergency callout (20/01/21) being the latest. There has also been antisocial behaviour during the day. For example, on one occasion during the day one person staggered into the road either drunk or high on drugs requiring evasive action while driving. The population of Staplehay is small and includes many elderly, vulnerable residents as well as families with young children. A

major hub here on a permanent basis would be a totally inappropriate environment for Taunton's homeless persons. In addition, we do not think a major hub is a beneficial arrangement for homeless people. Having spoken to homeless people over the years, many are frightened of staying in hostels (analogous to the potential hub at Canonsgrove to be created) due to fear of their possessions being stolen by others and also because of violence and drugs circulating because of bringing such a large gathering of people together in one place. Furthermore, a hub at Canonsgrove would, in effect, remove the homeless people from the community, being isolated at the edge of a small village which does not have the infrastructure required, there being only one small village shop. The Canonsgrove location is situated around 3 miles outside of the town centre, moving the homeless people away from the various shops, medical practices (GPs and dentists) and pharmacies people away from the various shops, medical practices (GPs and dentists) and pharmacies that the town offers. In conclusion, and for the above reasons, we do not think a hub at Canonsgrove is suitable for the existing community in Trull/Staplehay nor do we think it is suitable for the homeless people who would be placed there. The risk would be that these people would become very isolated from the community, with both the homeless people at Canonsgrove and the existing inhabitants of Trull/Staplehay feeling ostracised by the other. We believe that smaller multi-occupancy accommodation dispersed across Taunton would serve much better to reintegrate the homeless people into the community in a safer environment for everybody involved.

- Most of these residents are likely to require specialist support, as well as wanting/needing to be closer to amenities. Therefore becoming frustrated at being so far away. Hence many unsuitable behaviours being exhibited.
- I feel that the old St Augustine's School would be a better location to consider, closer to town and station/motorway links so that they're not so isolated. There really is nothing for young/vulnerable people to do in the countryside unless they have access to other amenities in the area, which they don't unless they have use of a car.
- Have suffered from verbal abuse for no reason. Not all bad, just a few. There are plenty of vacant buildings in town and that would be the best solution.
- I work in a charity that deals(in part) with housing issues for those with moderate to complex needs. It is widely recognised that the optimal solution for such individuals suffering from homelessness is to keep them as close to a normal situation as possible. It is also recognised that concentrating such individuals in large groups, especially "out of town" tends to exacerbate the common risks both to the individuals and the wider community. The wider distribution of the individuals into much smaller local housing solutions normalises their accommodation situation, defuses the risks associated with the creation of a large complex for single homeless accommodation(bullying, harassment, intimidation, anti-social behaviours etc). This reduces the risk to both the individual, many of whom tend to be vulnerable, the local community and the wider community. You only have to look at the level of police intervention required at the local shelter accommodation at the Blackbrook end of East Reach to see examples of the detrimental effect of concentrating individuals. However, it is recognised that whilst many risks are better managed in a dispersed manner, should incidents occur, the distributed proposal makes timely identification of issues more difficult and a timely response to prevent harm, more problematic.

- Firstly, I imagine myself in the position of someone who finds themselves homeless through financial difficulties following job loss/relationship issues. Already vulnerable and at a low ebb you are put into a sizeable hub with others who have dual diagnosis and all the resulting behavioural issues. Unfamiliar with unpredictable behaviour and the inevitable violence that will ensue when alcohol and drugs drown any awareness of what constitutes acceptable social behaviour. You might argue that self-contained accommodation solves that. But in effect what is supposed to be your space becomes a prison. When mixing with others it would be like “walking on eggshells”. I have taught children with behaviour problems and I certainly experienced that feeling on a regular basis. So I think that smaller units of provision for those with less need of support and Housing First for those entrenched rough sleepers who really will never succeed in larger provision. Also those without addiction issues will be separated off so less chance of people being enticed into drug/alcohol use whilst in accommodation. Less problems with controlling behaviour on site as well. Economies of scale some will shout. However, if people are assessed prior to placement there will be less need for 24/7 care with a resultant saving on Housing Benefits. After all, figures show that those with complex needs in the homeless population are in the minority. I believe that there has been a growth in the number due to what I call (based on personal experience) “don’t care in the community”. Resources are so stretched that unless vulnerable people have someone to stand up for them they become lost in the system and lost to themselves and their families. We have witnessed regular drug deals. We now believe them to be linked to county lines which, considering the links with organised crime, is very disturbing. We also know that, contrary to what has been said by SWT, there are people placed in Canonsgrove with a history of violence and other criminal offences. Even so, these people need help. Canonsgrove could be used as a “somewhere safe to stay assessment hub” or a **small** satellite housing option for those wishing to live outside of the town centre.”
- This facility is blighting our lives. Endless incidents of burglary, begging, anti-social behaviour including urinating and defecating in public, drug -dealing, shouting. Living on the main road we are often woken up. Ambulances and police cars going by constantly. Whilst working out the front of the house, my husband had to deal with a resident who challenged him. He was clearly under the influence of drugs/drink. My husband had to de-escalate the situation. Resident minutes later involved in violent incident at the shop and then was aggressive to PCSO. In the last 2 days my son has been woken in the night by loud shouting and then 4 police cars and a police van outside our house (recognisably Canonsgrove residents). My husband has just been out for a cycle round Sweethay Lane, ambulance blocking the road to attend Canonsgrove resident and 3 staff members on walkie-talkies. Young family had to walk past this. We’ve had stolen property stashed in our garden. The list goes on. Too many incidents to report. I am scared to walk my dog when it’s dark. We now lock our door every time we step outside. General ebbing away at our quality of life. Must be very scary and intimidating for a lot of Trull’s elderly people now .
- If there is a need in the local area (Taunton) it should not provide housing for people from outside the area- such as Bridgwater and Weston-Super-Mare. As local residents we do

not want our village to become a repository for other areas' problems. I have been offered drugs by someone walking past our property. My husband has been stopped in his van and asked if he would transport 2 bikes up to Canonsgrove. I have telephoned the police when local Canonsgrove residents were walking in the middle of the road preventing me from coming home to my property.

- As a retired Police officer of 20 years my recommendation is based on previous experience. Now, as a resident of Trull I have seen at first hand, the abuse shoppers at Trull Stores have been subject to by Canonsgrove residents. The residents also seen to congregate at the Trull bus shelter drinking alcohol.
- We are aware helping the homeless is too complex a task . Having a large number of homeless in one area I imagine will be more difficult to rehabilitate people who are negatively impeding others progress. Also more difficult to manage anti-social behaviour being far from support services centrally in town.
- Increased litter (but not all down to Canonsgrove) including blue masks roadside from PO to Canonsgrove.
- Smaller multi-occupancy would seem to suit both residents and local villagers. Sites closer to town would also suit the occupiers and meet their needs. We oppose a sizeable hub at Canonsgrove.
- The current situation is a really bad idea. Canonsgrove is NOT a suitable location for - what appears to be - many troubled people that require full support in smaller groups. Forcing this on local close communities is a recipe for long term failure. Entirely justified nimbyism. Those that are pushing this on to Trull are doing so more out of personal anti-snobbery and not from a reasoned logical perspective.
- Housing First model looks good but would be unacceptable to those making the decisions. Smaller multi accommodation closer to Taunton centre plus own accommodation with support for those with special needs would be a sensible compromise.
- TPC must insist on full involvement in the consultation process with access to all information on alternatives. We should find out and publish the views of all elected SWT council members.
- I understand that this is not a survey regarding alternative sites, but relative to my vote in the attached box, I still feel that use of the ex UKHO facility of Edgell and Beaufort Blocks near ASDA Taunton would provide a much better solution to this problem and would preserve this historic Taunton feature for the future. These buildings were previously used to house circa 300 Draughtspersons, Printers and Management. I am sure that this venue could easily be converted to accommodation for 180+ homeless folk and provide hope and wellbeing for them in the future. It is within walking distance of the town centre where they could meet up with their friends and facilities, and buses run at frequent intervals to and from there. It would be such a loss to the town if these buildings were sold on to developers only to be demolished for private gain, whereas



they could fulfil a much better use for those in need. Housing these homeless people 2.5 miles from the town centre at Canonsgrove seems ridiculous, when they could have an excellent facility closer to their place of recreation.

Page 8

- I saw a Canonsgrove resident urinate in Trull Park, using foul language and being verbally abusive to children, repeatedly, as well as taking drugs openly outside Queens College.
- Each is only a partial solution and a layered system of evaluation and progression, with appropriate support, is essential .
- I can understand how Canonsgrove has positives but needs to be situated closer to Taunton to access services and for emergency services to be able to respond more speedily as I assume they are regularly required.
  - Our house was burgled by a resident of Canonsgrove. My daughter was in the house alone. You can imagine the distress this has caused and that now my daughter does not wish to be alone. I am a nurse and have to work therefore this made it even more difficult for us. The Parish Council already have a copy of my daughter's letter.
- Our opinion, a large hub model is less suitable for homeless people and the neighbourhood in which it is situated. Canonsgrove is too far from town centre amenities, and the anti-social behaviour of a minority of clients has had a significant detrimental effect on some Trull residents. Finally, the potential threefold increase in client numbers could make the impact on our community more serious than it already is.
- It should be clear to all, that to abandon less fortunate members of society at Canonsgrove, 1.5 miles from the nearest shop and 3 miles from our town centre in this day and age is unacceptable. Those in need of shelter also need support, a place to call home, meaningful work and a community with numerous activities, within a bustling community. With the demise of our High Streets and for Taunton the loss of Debenhams, I am of the opinion that the now defunct Debenhams regional office could easily be converted to provide individual accommodation and support offices for those needing help - but this could be too close to County Hall for comfort!
- Firstly, we are disappointed that there is no option to say no to any of the proposals relating to Canonsgrove. Whilst we were broadly in agreement with re-housing of people at the start of the pandemic as it is an ongoing emergency. Our worry all through has been that this accommodation has been found through an emergency and almost by luck. It does not appear that there was any previous thought into the building being used for this type of accommodation. Of course, now people are in occupation it is far easier for the use to be kept. This is the thin end of the wedge, brought about by accident. It is shocking that SWT will not share any information with us or the parish. We will be objecting to the planning application . Why has the section 106 not been enforced? Probably because it's SWT that is contravening it. If it were an individual or company SWT would most certainly be enforcing.
- I am in favour of the support that Canonsgrove has provided to the homeless however I do not feel this should be extended to support any extra people. SWT should be consulting the Parish Council on any decision they make regarding the future of the site.

It is very unfortunate that this survey is worded in a way so heavily biased towards suggesting residents will automatically be against the homeless being resident in Trull. This is certainly not the case.

Page 9

- TPC apply for FOI regarding the other 4 options. Please note: Smaller multi-occupancy should be across Taunton town therefore not burdening other villages.
- Regular anti-social behaviour. Don't feel safe walking in Trull any more. I wouldn't want to continue living here/raise my children here if this is a long term residency.
- We have had 2 incidents in the last year. We found a syringe on the pavement. We were  
sat in the garden one day a camera was put over the fence on chasing the young man it was obvious he was from Canonsgrove. Quite unnerving.
- We are not experts in the best solutions to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. However, common sense (to me) would suggest there should be a range of options, not a single option. If it is to be a permanent solution then our limited research on the internet suggest that a sizeable hub is not the best option. Even if it is temporary. We are intrinsically opposed to sizeable hubs. Smaller supported housing is the way forward.
- I have not had any problems arising out of the Canonsgrove property. I think it is an important incentive to support the homeless in our community. Ideally, to avoid stigma and other issues, a smaller family or group of members across different sites including some with additional support for extra needs.
- Residents cycling to and from clearly under the influence of intoxicants - riding without due care and attention. Residents walking to and from through the park, smoking cannabis in plain sight of children.
- I am torn. I believe an out of town hub takes away some of the temptations which are easily accessible in the town centre. I also believe that some of the residents have benefitted mentally and physically since being housed at Canonsgrove. It works better financially to have one large facility rather than smaller hubs. Without a clearer understanding of the negative impacts regarding crime etc (which I am glad not to have suffered) I cannot make an informed decision.
- I believe smaller areas of housing, dispersed across Taunton would be a sensible solution- as unfortunately the rise in anti-social behaviour is inevitable with 3X the residents and would really negatively impact Trull as a small village with a high elderly and young family population.
- I believe that a hub should be made available for residents like those placed at Canonsgrove but feel that the siting of such a hub should be located in Taunton itself where each person can feel more a part of a community and not stuck out on a limb in a place like Trull.

- Small site accommodation enables better interaction within local community. Wouldn't want a larger site at Canonsgrove.
- I think support and guidance needed 1-1 or smaller groups housed close to support , employment opportunities and not within a sizeable hub.

#### Page 10

- Canonsgrove is some 3 miles from Taunton town centre where most of the current clients want to spend their time. This then involves them walking or cycling through the village, there and back.
- The use of Canonsgrove has been a success in terms of housing the homeless and reducing the risk of coronavirus in this vulnerable group. However, the lack of communication with the local community at the start of the scheme has led to a number of issues mainly affecting a minority of the parish but particularly those living close to the facility. In spite of that, the active support of Canonsgrove by many of the Trull community has been heart warming. Whilst supporting the need to rehouse the homeless, and provide the special care that some of them need, would it not make more sense to set up a number of smaller facilities spread throughout Somerset West and Taunton rather than locate them only at one site. Canonsgrove could be one of those for smaller numbers who would benefit from not having easy access to Taunton services.
- I remember when Canonsgrove was built as a training unit for the police cadets, but it did not last long, in spite of the lovely playing fields. I hate to see it now being used as a dormitory for the homeless 2 miles out of town.
- I must say I am surprised to learn that there are proposals to make it a permanent centre for the homeless, as I thought it was only for the duration of Covid 19. I don't think a sizeable hub model at Canonsgrove is the answer ,as I believe there are varying degrees of problems with the residents. (One size fit all, seems to be applied) There is a danger of creating an institutional type of situation, hiding people away when they don't conform to societal norms. I worked in mental health when there was big institutions and saw how people lost their independence when everything was done for them, so I definitely would not agree to this large hub. I also could see people who are vulnerable being enticed into drug taking or other behaviours they don't feel able to say no to. I would think it would be more helpful to assess individual needs and offer integration back into normal life. People need goals and hope for life to get better, not stuck away where they see no way out of their situation. I propose, following assessment, housing according to their capabilities and state of health, smaller, multi-occupancy to be used appropriately, and for more complex needs, the Housing First Model.
- I have not witnessed personally any antisocial behaviour but I have been told of situations where local people were very frightened and I think it's very mean and shows a lack of insight to push this problem to what is mostly an elderly community and young families with children. My daughter who lives in Blagdon Hill, has children and is aware most parents will not let their children go to Trull park on their own now as they are worried they will come across distressing situations such as reported drug taking/dealing or intoxicated adults. My daughter has seen drug paraphernalia in the park and on a few occasions has had to do an emergency stop in her car as intoxicated people were in the

middle of road, which is a concern for their safety. This was just outside Canonsgrove where it is a national speed limit so cars go fast before entering a 30 mile zone.

- I've chosen the sizeable hub in Taunton in the hope that it would make life easier for social services and policing, and keep residents in the heart of our county town. Negative experiences for me, so far, have been with maskless Canonsgrove residents at Trull Stores

#### Page 11

- I have witnessed Canonsgrove residents at the bus shelter by Trull Stores, drinking, shouting and arguing which would be very intimidating for the elderly in Trull. A 3 mile journey into town is also too far for the residents.
- Canonsgrove is OK for a limited number but not one large centre. We have observed a number of minor anti-social incidents eg swearing and shouting abuse whilst walking/cycling along Trull Road.
- We feel we are not qualified to say how or where the homeless should be housed as with many different problems these poor souls present with. However, we do feel that Canonsgrove is the wrong accommodation for them as too far from amenities.
- We have witnessed and reported considerable instances of anti-social behaviour including drug dealings, noisy exchanges, little social distancing, dangerous Jay walking, human excrements, with excessive emergency visits to the site and increased litter since the institution was opened. This has resulted in a huge increase in the crime statistics in our local area. We are feeling anxious within our own home due to the suspicious activities compounded by a total disregard of social distancing of residents walking up and down Honiton Road at all hours! YMCA/SWT is NOT solving the deep and long term issues of the residents and taking no responsibility for their residents actions once off site, which does not consider the needs of our community. They need to consider the long term rehabilitation of these vulnerable people into the community and provide a dispersed wrap around integrated service within a positive community environment which will aide their progress by breaking the cycle institutions/hubs serve. We fear for the future of Staplehay and Trull if this homeless business hub extends and becomes permanent.
- Buses may become overcrowded for all and the elderly use these regularly. Would probably negatively impact Trull as a village too.
- It is very difficult to establish which option is good for the people concerned without a lot of research. The last option (housing first) sounds good but must be the most expensive and cause council tax or general tax rates to rise. Option 3 (Multi-occupancy) secures a reasonable compromise. That is why I have chosen that as I think it will help the clients best.
- The housing first model would appear to be a good solution especially if there are people who have complex needs. What wrap around support actually means would be helpful to know with this decision tho.

- I have lived in Wild Oak Lane (Trull Road end) since 1989. Over the past few months one often sees men walking up or down Trull Road with cans of alcohol in hand. There are also now discarded cans thrown on to the pavement. Trull Stores is now an occasional spot for begging! Trull Road does not feel quite as safe as before.
- Having had a very personal experience of the negative side to having homeless people at Canonsgrove we are against housing them so close. A chap was behind our house photographing the back of our house and next door - no possible explanation for this. It is also very unsettling to have groups walking to and from Taunton (with cans of beer) at all times of the day and night. We feel very vulnerable.

## Page 12

- We both believe that one centre is much better than many. We accept that being so far from other amenities is not ideal but the space locally does lend itself to the unit here. We personally have not experienced any anti-social behaviour.
- Another solution would be , to convert some of the empty public houses in and around central Taunton as a “temporary accommodation” to give support and encourage residents to try and find permanent accommodation of their own. This could be done by having houses of 10-15 people as well as the house having guardians (permanent professionals) to provide the support and help they need. This could then also help to educate with various daily life skills which will help them gain confidence and learn new skills. My understanding of the Halls of Residence is that it was built for the use of housing students and medical staff, However, if this is to change, maybe a better solution would be for the halls to be used for other public services, for example as a day surgery or a place patients from the hospital can go for final recovery after their treatment. Since our own personal experience with the current residents at the beginning when they moved, we are left feeling unsafe and unable to relax properly in our own property. I believe we are not the only ones that feel this way and leaving the halls to continue in the same way will cause more anxiety within the community.
- Homeless people need to have their own place to enable them to have the chance to get back into society through the chance of getting back into the workforce.
- As a council tax paying resident in Staplehay we are dismayed that SWT are seemingly making decisions without consultation of residents in Trull and Staplehay. As we are immediately affected there should be an open meeting to discuss the future of Canonsgrove especially as there appears to be an undercover movement to expand the number of residents. We had initially thought this was a temporary situation just for the Covid time. In the present situation of lockdown there appears to be fewer problems in the village, but for those Canonsgrove residents who have drug and alcohol problems we are not advised how they are managed, only a “feel good” letter. If the number of residents are increased it will be a too far out satellite hub with more associated problems to be resolved. Therefore we strongly feel this is not the way forward to helping these persons. Individual personal help is needed in their own area, rather than putting them all together as in an institution.
- Given that most of the residents will walk into town in the morning and back to Canonsgrove in the late afternoon/evening surely the best place for them to live is

actually in Taunton town centre. There are a number of buildings currently unoccupied that would be suitable.

- It is ironic that it used to be a police training centre and now they are visiting on a regular basis! Surely with the regular footfall of the residents they would obviously prefer to be in Taunton, so why not locate them there.
- Best solution is to provide sizeable hub near centre of town where support services and access to facilities can be provided. More rubbish, can and bottles on verge outside house. Occasional instances of aggression towards bus driver on local route.

### Page 13

- Canonsgrove seems to have served a very useful purpose in response to the Covid 19 threat to homeless people. But it should be a stepping stone to a long-term dispersed service.
- I am unable to select any of the options as I do not believe that the answer fits into a simple tick box. I lean toward the principles of the Housing First Model and feel that Canonsgrove would provide an excellent place where this could be applied ie: giving people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives. However, it is not clear from Question 4 of the questionnaire that Canonsgrove is seen as a provider of that accommodation. I must say that I feel uneasy with the wording of this document which seems to imply a bias against making permanent provision for people who have experienced homelessness at Canonsgrove.
- The best solution is not to relocate the homeless to a site that requires even more stretching of resources such as Police. Similar schemes for “trouble making households” have been used and all it does is spread trouble across a larger area. I have personally witnessed 3 fights in the middle of the street, on Honiton Road, between Canonsgrove residents. Two whilst with my young children
- A combination of 2 and 4 should be used because a “one size fits all” approach won’t be right for all. For **complex needs clients** the housing first model. For others a **small** hub in Taunton with benefit of being in a social group and close to services whilst presumably being more economical.
- One of our neighbours had a break in and items stolen which I gather was related to Canonsgrove.
- I live half a mile from the Canonsgrove Homeless facility and I object to the council setting this up as a permanent facility for the homeless. This would not be a good outcome for the homeless or for local residents. To locate between 60 and 120 homeless vulnerable people from all over Somerset in a quiet village so far from town and without adequate transport is problematic. The communities of Staplehay and Trull have experienced serious problems with the residents from Canonsgrove impinging on the enjoyment of their village. It is not normal to expect burglary, street violence or drug dealing at all hours of the day and night in a small community like Trull and Staplehay. This is usually a big city problem. This facility has had an impact on elderly residents

who are fearful for their personal safety on the street and at home. With drug dealing and the arrival of County Lines, local parents are obviously concerned for their children's security in a village that is unexpectedly no longer safe. Canonsgrove is having an adverse effect on our quality of life. We do not elect and fund the Council to impose this homeless facility that negatively impacts our local community in so many ways.

- I consulted my friend who has first hand experience of this type of challenge in her experience. A sizeable hub would be a disaster leading to drug dealing, addiction, theft, burglary and local conflict. She saw option 3 (multi-occupancy) fail in a "nice town" and had to be closed down. Truth is we do not want any of this in the Taunton area. The homeless here is not a major problem and is dealt with by charities. Option 1 (sizeable hub) smacks of a business project; is there money in this for the council from government grants?

#### Page 14

- Intimidating behaviour by drunks at the bus stop. I have been afraid to use the bus because I cannot wait at the stop.
- A village is not a suitable location for a homeless hub; it's simple. As parents of two young children who play and walk to school we worry about interaction between homeless residents and our children in our quiet village. We continue to witness drug dealing and anti-social behaviour by Canonsgrove residents.
- Most of the people would probably prefer to be more centrally accommodated we should imagine as there are more facilities in Taunton town centre. We also believe the facility could be used for better purpose. For example adults with learning difficulties or as a tranquil sanctuary for young people in care who could enjoy the quiet environment and farmland. We believe it would bring a renewed security to the village. I have worked extensively with homeless people and I am not being judgmental - it is painful and horrific to imagine their stories.
- I do not believe crowded living like this works. Multi-occupancy when people have challenging and difficult lives can lead to them being influenced by others and then unable to change habits and behaviour. I have witnessed groups of 2/3 Canonsgrove residents walking to and fro from town. On their return journeys they often appear "under the influence", walking in the road, shouting and swearing. I have also been witness to residents being abusive and aggressive towards the shop owners, refusing to wear masks. This demonstrates that Canonsgrove is not set up to get people off the streets. It is not there to influence and change behaviours. Large group living will inevitably lead to greater problems as they feed into each other. This then has an impact on the village, the police and young people living here. It is not a good model of support the resources will always be too stretched to meet demand.
- Separate the substance abusers from the rest as they are the cause of local discontent, with anti-social behaviour, drug-dealing and solvent and alcohol abuse. This is not welcome in a residential area with a primary school and elderly residents.
- As a mental health nurse Canonsgrove is definitely not the best position. Vulnerable, homeless people need to be in smaller accommodation with resources on hand to support them best. As a result of the current venue there have already been several

burglaries, a huge increase in litter, especially alcohol bottles/cans. Close by a 16 year old girl has been traumatised by a burglary when she was in her home alone. In an enlightened society we really should be treating people as individuals and not taking part in this kind of social cleansing. We should have moved on from the "leprosy" mentality. It would be helpful to know how many people are currently rough sleeping in Taunton and how many of them would be prepared to use the Canonsgrove facility - night and day. The proposed "consultation" by SW&T is neither Liberal or Democratic and is obviously designed to limit discussion to the impact of the decision only. "One way of avoiding needless scrutiny I suppose" but it is sure to rebound on them.

- From what I've seen and read I thought that grouping people together, some with issues, was universally seen as a very poor solution to this problem. Canonsgrove's only qualification is that it is empty. The distance from the town centre is a huge negative and is already causing problems locally with drug dealing and defecation on the road side. Not nice!

#### Page 15

- The Canonsgrove homeless accommodation was never an ideal situation but one I believe most residents understood as a short term measure in light of the pandemic and the wider challenges that we all have had to endure. It has also taken far longer than any of us really imagined to get to this point where just maybe we are seeing the end. I respect those involved for finding this solution and the members of the local community that have reached out to support. Sadly personally I have far too many stories to relate about varying bad behaviours and as it became clear early on there was no recognition of this from the local Council or the management of Canonsgrove it felt fruitless to say anything and frankly many people were concerned to raise issues in case they became a target. I personally heard extremely abusive language, excessive swearing, drinking on Trull Green which went on well into the early hours, clear indications of drug dealing on Honiton Rd and on one occasion I found someone skulking around in my garden in the dark minutes before my daughter was to arrive home and it was only by chance I went outside and found him. He was not in a state that was acceptable to anyone but more so was clearly a danger to himself and others from his subsequent behaviour. It is clear that this is a totally inappropriate site for the homeless shelter and whilst as I indicated earlier I understand the short term need this is a totally unsuitable site for any future long term use even at its present size but anything larger will be far worse and I don't believe will fulfil its aims. I understand more than most from my time in local Govt and as an Executive Councillor for Housing that the best solution always is one of smaller multi occupancy accommodation throughout our community with the housing first model as a priority to get them individually in their own accommodation with the necessary support. It is here the Council should focus. Any plan to continue the use of Canonsgrove as a large scale long term solution to the housing crisis will be ineffective and create far more issues for the local community it must be resisted.
- Smaller multi-occupancy would enable better separation of clients with different needs or level of dependency and would avoid institutionalisation or creation of a "ghetto". As residents of Staplehay, we would like to be consulted about the future use of the vacated accommodation, if the residents are dispersed. E.G. continued use for education and training, potential for developing skills amongst homeless people for more general training purposes, or for sale as a residential development.



- The clients need access to specialist support. The hubs are unlikely to offer the sort of accommodation that the clients would find beneficial. Whatever location is selected, needs to have easy access to the services the clients require.
- Even if a “sizeable” hub was the best solution Canonsgrove is entirely unsuitable because the residents have to walk through the village to get to and from Taunton. If the hub was the Taunton side of Trull there would be no legitimate reason for the residents to be wandering round the village shouting, swearing and leaving empty cider cans in gardens and hedgerows. I’ve come across residents outside my house who pretend they can’t speak English when challenged. No one would plan a facility like this in a village and to use it just because it is there is lazy and inconsiderate to residents.
- The site is too far from Taunton and incidents reported are to and from town and drug dealers are driving out to the village to drop off which just spreads the problem everywhere. There are so many empty premises in town it seems nonsensical to have them based at Canonsgrove.

#### Page 16

- The Housing First model would be my first option but I doubt whether it is practicable given the numbers being considered across Somerset. I believe strongly that the “sizeable hub” (what exactly does “sizeable” mean? How big is it?) models are not in the best interests of this client group unless the primary aim is containment rather than rehabilitation. I see the potential for creating a ghetto at Canonsgrove.
- I have seen tents in the grounds well away from the house - sanitation?
- Concerned about the drugs introduced to the community our children no longer feel safe walking to the park on their own. We feel very let down that there has been no formal consultation on the change of use of the site because we have intentionally moved to the area to bring up our family away from the effects of drugs, poverty and criminality. Myself and my wife favour the housing first model. We are very strongly opposed to the siting of the vast homeless and rehabilitation encampment at Canonsgrove, Trull/Staplehay. We are concerned that the parish is being backed into a corner to accept the illegal encampment, compounded by the difficulty faced by parishioners to accurately express their views for fear of appearing unsympathetic to the plight of the homeless. Our reasons for not supporting the illegal rehabilitation and homeless encampment are:-our community has made provision for the homeless of the parish through the parish alms houses charity. To our knowledge no additional requests for public subscriptions to the charity have been made, indicating satisfactory current provision. Indeed if there is a need for further parishioners to be offered housing we would welcome the expansion of the alms housing charity. Can the Parish Council confirm whether the alms houses charity have received requests for housing of parishioners that they have been unable to house which would indicate unmet demand? And if so, have these parishioners gone on to be housed at the Canonsgrove encampment? -the council appears to have operated in an unacceptable and opportunistic way to establish the encampment under emergency measures, then to continue its use whilst having illegally bypassed planning law and due process-there have been no published inclusion or exclusion criteria that inhabitants should meet to gain a place at the encampment. We are therefore concerned that inhabitants are not just the 'primary homeless' but also those who are criminals with unspent convictions,

criminals on licence, and criminals in rehabilitation. -as a primarily residential area there is minimal provision for sheltered employment or adult education locally. The absence of which will encourage reoffending and antisocial behaviour, which has already been witnessed.-it has brought the complex and dangerous issues associated with people on the fringe of society to our area, which is ill-equipped to control or manage it despite the efforts of probation officers at the encampment. -we are angry that our 3 young children have been party to unacceptable and distressing scenes and behaviour from the inhabitants of the illegal encampment over the last 9 months. We are supportive of any action the Parish Council can undertake to close the illegal and inappropriate encampment.

- There is not a “one size fits all” solution. The ideal might be “Housing First”, but given the very long waiting lists for social housing in Taunton area, where would all the unallocated housing be found, unless purpose built? Funding? Recognising that many of the clients at Canonsgrove have additional needs either physical, emotional/mental health or addictions, “sizeable” hubs do not provide a calm, supportive small-group environment. Where there are sufficient professional staff to build effective relationships with

#### Page 17

individuals and they can gain confidence to make life changes without fear of bullying, peer pressure or anti-social behaviours from those who need extra support. This applies to any “sizeable hub” in any location. A smaller than present group, with enough professional support, might suit some who need calm and to be away from town at Canonsgrove while other smaller groups would be better served nearer town and amenities, medical centres, possible work training opportunities etc. Staff at Canonsgrove and local police have been responsive to contact re some anti-social drunken incidents, but to increase the numbers at Canonsgrove or any other hostel is both unfair to clients, those supporting them and the neighbourhood, It is NOT a case of “not in my backyard”!

- There have been some amazing testimonies of lives changed and transformed in the clients at Canonsgrove. It is sad that there are those who don't appreciate the facilities and have not responded to all that has been invested in their welfare. Some have been abusive. We feel that the two should be separated.
- I don't feel able to tick any of the options suggested, due to lack of definite information. Homelessness is a national, even worldwide problem, also very emotive, with no easy solution. It can affect anybody, sometimes as a result of adverse circumstances and not just through alcohol or drug abuse. I was very sad to read the report in the County Gazette ,which I felt was grossly exaggerated. Yes there have been some incidents of "antisocial behaviour", but not affecting the whole village. There have been, I am sure, positive outcomes for some residents which of course we do not hear about. Is this an official Parish Council survey or from the Trull Residents Group mentioned in the paper ? I fear this could become a very divisive issue in the village.
- I have heard many stories about abusive language and I do not let my children go to the shop area out of daylight hours now. I feel strongly that homeless people need input and support but being placed in a rural location miles from town does not benefit them or sort their futures.

- I'm sorry to say it but our lives at Canonsgrove have become a daily nightmare since the hall was given over to housing these clients. We suffer noise, day and night; insult; frequent trespass on our property. Rubbish including bedding, clothing and even a bicycle thrown over into our garden etc and worst of all, when unruly clients are evicted, they hang around our property.
- Not to have a hub in this village. I do have 2 stories to tell:

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS AT CANONSGROVE HALLS OF RESIDENCE.

### 1. SEPTEMBER 2020.

I had driven down to Trull Stores to pay a paper bill. On leaving the shop a resident was stood in the queue behind me. As I was going out the door, I heard Mr Patel telling him words to the effect 'I've told you, we're not allowed to sell you that.' I believe this was a reference to lighter fuel which some residents had been sniffing leading to other issues around abusive behaviour directed at secondary school children waiting at the bus stop.

#### Page 18

When I walked outside to my car, I noticed another resident sat on the window sill. I replied to a text message on my phone and at that point the first resident came out, punched the glass window and then kicked the van parked behind me. He was swearing at the fact Mr Patel had refused to serve him.

I then watched as the two of them walked on the pavement back up towards Canonsgrove. However, they were deliberately walking backwards and forwards across the road and for some stretches in the middle of the road.

At the stage when they were on the pavement I drove past only to see my son coming the other way with his partner and my eldest granddaughter in the car. I slowed to warn him about the two residents who were heading towards him. Minutes later he returned home to say one of them had jumped on the bonnet of his car.

When I arrived home my wife was in the house, despite the good weather, as one of the same two residents, heading towards the shop while I was driving down, had sworn at our dog and entered on to the driveway to our house to so do, after it had barked at him.

I then noticed a PCSO in a police car outside attempting to intercept the two residents still walking towards Canonsgrove who had just passed the front of my house. He was attempting to remonstrate with them and was told he was 'Just a f\*\*\*\*\*g dickhead' and he 'couldn't do anything.'

A neighbour then walked towards me on the pavement as we watched this and informed me the same two individuals had been spotted by him behind the garage where they appeared to be trying to break in. They noticed him watching them from up a ladder where he had been painting the front of the house and he informed me they had verbally abused him while stood at the bottom of the ladder, when he felt very vulnerable.

On that occasion, the PCSO took our details but the incident was not followed up subsequently. However, the two had shattered the peace of a quiet Sunday afternoon on a number of occasions and at various points between the halls and the shop.

## 2. THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY, 12.15AM

I was woken by the sound of two individuals talking in raised voices with one saying: "You owe me money" and the other responding: "I've told you I'll pay you when we get back."

The initial voice, which sounded menacing, then insisted: "I want my f\*\*\*ing money, I want my f\*\*\*ing money." I believe the second man then tried to run down the side of our house, where the dogs were in the kitchen and were going berserk, barking and jumping up at the back door.

At the same moment, my younger son who was staying with us in lockdown while his own house was being built walked out on to the landing where I was already standing. At that point we heard a scuffle and it sounded like one man had the other in a headlock as he was shouting "Get off me" but it was very muffled. We then clearly heard the sound of punches landing. I then opened the landing window and shouted out: "Oi, cut it out." I was worried there was the possibility of a potentially serious violent incident and I could not stand by and do nothing.

Page 19

Next, the second man was stood in the middle of the road in a very distressed state screaming at the top of his voice: "Help me, help me." I could not see another individual at this point but he was on the phone to the emergency services and telling them there was another individual in the road up ahead, between our house and Canonsgrove, and he was blocking his way and he was afraid he would attack him again. He said he had been struck on the head and the blow had drawn blood. He then shouted out: "What's the postcode" and wanting the emergency services to attend as soon as possible, I shouted out: "TA3 7HF."

My son continued to watch while I tried to find an emergency contact number for Canonsgrove. I then considered going downstairs and going out accompanied by our big black Labrador on a lead to investigate further. But at this moment a white riot van sped past en route to Canonsgrove and two other patrol cars were parked outside with three officers, one a woman, who was restraining against the boundary wall or our house the man claiming to have been assaulted. Another officer had walked up our driveway and knocked on the door, by now it was 12.3am, and the sound of the disturbance had woken up not just the two of us but my wife, my son's partner and my one-year-old granddaughter had unusually woken up and was crying. She had clearly been upset by the sound of the man screaming. I was warned never to intervene but to dial 999 as there was the possibility such disagreements were either over drugs or involved individuals under the influence of drugs and they might be carrying a weapon.

The police officer took my details again and said I might be contacted by the local PCSO who might want to take a statement for me. In the meantime, I had also sent an email that night to the Canonsgrove emergency contact address and was contacted to discuss the incident the following day by Pat Collins, one of the managers. I felt we had a constructive discussion but I explained why I was so upset at the incident and she accepted it was unacceptable.

Personally, this was the straw which broke the camel's back. We have tolerated late night noise as we live on a main road and in the past we have been woken in the early hours by students making their way back to the halls and on occasions by late night shouts and disturbances by homeless residents returning. The tone and style of the two is very different. I had heard allegations from other villagers of petty crime, anti social behaviour and alleged drug dealing by residents but had not experienced any serious issues until the first described.

But this incident was beyond the pale. It was extremely upsetting and it was the threat and use of violence which took things to a different level.

I am happy for this account to be circulated to other interested parties and to speak further with anyone who wishes me to do so in order to ensure our voices are heard – and listened to.

We had been broadly supportive of this initiative when it was launched during the first lockdown. However, over the summer as restrictions were eased, the behaviour of residents became worse and sadly we do not wish for this social experiment to continue. On no account would we countenance it becoming an even bigger operation. It is the wrong idea in the wrong place and being executed and monitored in an inadequate fashion.

#### Page 20

- As previously advised to the Parish Council there have been numerous reasons to report anti-social behaviour and potential criminal dealing in the area.
- We have been genuinely concerned about the change that has taken place in the area since Canonsgrove has taken in the Homeless, because of Covid 19. We feel that Canonsgrove is not the place for the Homeless, most of them seem to walk into Taunton and then come back later causing disruption on their 3 mile walk or cycle back from the town. The Housing First Model seems to be a way of helping them move on and could give them more responsibility to be independent. There is now drug dealing in the area which we never had a problem with. I have lived here for nearly 32 years and have felt very safe walking around the area until last year. Elderly people who live in Staplehay and Trull, are now scared to go out on their own, in case of meeting someone. If you do meet someone, they can be worse for wear from drink or drugs are are sometimes quite frightening to pass as they are muttering obscenities under their breath and shouting at you as they walk by. I have been approached for money a few times, just keep my head down and walk as fast as I can, without looking back, hoping they are not following me. Here are a few examples: In the summer we had two women sitting on our drive which is hidden from the road, for about 20-30 minutes. One of the ladies was very agitated and kept getting up and walking around, while the other was on the phone most of the time. We were observing this from a window and did not feel safe to intervene. When they left, we went to the end of the drives and they were walking up towards Canonsgrove. We telephoned Canonsgrove and spoke to security who confirmed they were residents and that one of the women had been threatened with her life earlier and they were hiding from someone. You can imagine this made us extremely nervous and questioning the type of persons living in this area. Have been in a queue outside the village shop when a resident tried to barge his way into the shop, he was approached by a man who asked him to go to the back of the queue, the language was very threatening and made us all very aware of what is happening to our neighbourhood. We have since heard the this behaviour was happening regularly. While walking with a friend in Sweethay Lane I noticed lots of blue

plastic, like plastic gloves in the ditches and in the hedges. Told that is what they wear when passing drugs. Also, the ditches had lots of empty bottles and cans. Something we never have had to deal with before. Have been genuinely concerned about the drug dealing, especially in the area near the telephone box at the end of Sweethay Lane and Bradbeers. We have never had a problem with drugs in this area and it is not nice for anyone who witnesses the deal taking place, or obvious that they are waiting for a car to arrive. In the mornings between 7 and 8am you can quite often see someone staggering back towards Canonsgrove. If they are staying out all night, do they need to have accommodation to go back to in the daytime. Would have thought that checks were made that everyone was in by a certain time. Finally, I had to make an emergency stop near the village stores as a resident from Canonsgrove was walking one foot on the pavement and the other on the road, very drunk and unsteady. I waited for him to pass my car before continuing. Later heard that he was found lying half on the road and half on the pavement near Southwells.

- Sustained a smashed garden door to our property September 2020 during the night. Noisy groups returning to Canonsgrove swearing and shouting leading to disturbed sleep. My nephew found an individual in the middle of the road at 10:30pm whilst driving from Taunton to Trull - appeared drunk or stoned or both - unable to walk properly dressed in black clothing - Nov 2020

#### Page 21

Unfortunately we have experienced an increase in shouting and screaming whilst walking up the centre of the road. Break ins at a friend's house has caused distress and anxiety. Surely there are better places to house in the centre of Taunton especially with so many empty premises e.g. police station.

- In the past 12 months the stats don't lie, crime is up, there have been plenty of complaints, the police presence has increased, and even simple trips to Trull stores has become an issue for a number of residents. Canonsgrove is not fit for purpose, its location encourages the residents to roam about at all hours being so far from town and disrupt village life that we all seemed when we decided to move here. Locating them centrally in town would give access to the services they require to function and provide much better job prospects for them to improve their lives.
- No 2 choice would be smaller multi-occupancy. Best solution in Taunton. Why? Public transport access, shops, medical facilities. Occasional walking on road and pavement drugs affected or other. Witness to burglar leaving Amberd ???(not able to read this)
- It is of my opinion that Canonsgrove was suitable for an emergency situation however, it appears evident that for a multitude of reasons it is not suitable in the medium to long term. Canonsgrove is accommodation which separates people from society both in its location and in its high occupancy status. Once people live in accommodation with others with significant difficulties / mental health issues we know that they are more likely to suffer harm. The difficulty is that people are unable to separate themselves from the dominant culture set by those who have the most power, e.g. the drug dealers. Residents are not afforded the opportunity to be part of a positive group within society and therefore have little if any chance of surviving the dominant culture which has proven to prevail within the grounds of Canonsgrove. It would seem fair to argue that people's life chances are reduced from spending time in high occupancy living accommodation, and that low occupancy accommodation where people are not intimidated by other residents would be more favourable if, it is our desire to improve the

lives of disadvantaged individuals. This of course goes hand in hand with the negative effect that Canonsgrove has had on the local community. People are frightened, intimidated and concerned for their safety. If people had smaller houses where they could be given the opportunity to be a part of their local community it would seem better all round.

- The Housing First model should be the primary option but does not work for everyone. This should be supplemented by smaller multi-occupancy accommodation dispersed across Taunton rather than sizeable hub models.
- It is good that the Parish Council is keeping an eye on this, but it is far too soon to ask for votes on a set of options, which are not necessarily the full set to be considered and are not accompanied by the relevant information. You are rather unfair to Simon Lewis's report SWT146/20, as he is indicating that he will develop a set of options with information about each. He seems to be setting himself the target of doing that by this month (Feb) which seems a bit challenging considering the complexity of the task. We should at least wait for his analysis and report before expressing our preferences. Failure to do that is likely to undermine our credibility.

#### Page 22

- Thank you for putting this survey together. It's difficult to give a very informed answer to the questions above as I'm not an expert in this and best outcomes for homeless people. We feel that having a large number of homeless people housed together may not be a good idea and smaller units and support available near to services and community likely to be the best model. Canonsgrove is not an ideal location due to distance from services and community and not equipped to support large numbers of homeless people (smaller numbers manageable and I believe there have been some positive as well as negative experiences in the community). Presence of those smoking drugs has put my children at unease around the village that's always felt so safe.
- I think either the 2nd or 3rd would be better because they are a long way out of Taunton where there is more interesting things to do than in this lonely isolated house with poor transport.
- I find it quite difficult to give an opinion on "homeless" - a very mixed selection - genuine, mental, drugs etc. So a location, close to services and communities rather than a remote fine setting, as Canonsgrove, seems quite inappropriate. I have contact with two policewomen because of concerns and their tel nos!
- I have lived in Trull for 30 years and this past year is the only time I've noticed people hanging around drinking and looking quite intimidating. I can only assume these are residents of Canonsgrove.
- It seems to me that the council is trapped between owning sizeable, dated, expensive buildings such as Canonsgrove, and having too few financial resources to a) generate tenancies suitable for individual homeless people, and b) provide the necessary practical support to enable them to manage independent living and hopefully move on with their

lives. But that is surely the model we would all want for ourselves, had we similarly fallen through the net and become homeless?

- We feel that the modern way is to disperse the needy across the community in Taunton rather than making something big in one location. We are against making a sizeable hub. We have heard of a break in at Amberd Lane that was due to someone at Canonsgrove and seen a couple of drunken men from Canonsgrove in Trull Stores and on the road.
- Having numerous occupants at Canonsgrove will potentially cause more crime/ disruption within the Trull/surrounding areas especially once Lockdown is eased. Residents will more than likely experience problems due to pure size of numbers.
- As a Parish Councillor I was responsible for making sure that a Housing Association did not run Somerset College Resident at Canonsgrove. This is an upmarket area where entrepreneurs will choose to live and supply jobs for those in Taunton. It must not be down graded and Somerset College has found that it is too remote from the centre of Town for their required residential use. Hence, a planning application was granted to demolish and reuse as housing. There are plenty of spaces more suitable for this requirement. Volvo garage site at Prior Bridge Road. Drugs are becoming a problem at Canonsgrove and no increase must be permitted.

#### Page 23

- Canonsgrove should be put to better use e.g. NHS training school. It was designed for a police training school and is ready for a training facility.
- I am a Trull resident and have not been aware of any antisocial behaviour or crime. I think Canonsgrove is an excellent location for the residents out of town and near to lovely countryside walks. I believe plenty of bikes have been provided so an occasional trip into town by bike could be a healthy lifestyle. The MOST important thing, wherever they are located would be the support services on offer to include counselling.
- Thank you for contacting residents, but there really isn't enough information on which to make an informed choice - some options will simply be unrealistic due to cost/budget constraints. In the circumstances Canonsgrove remains a good option, using an otherwise vacant premises. There will, no doubt, need to be alternative provision for those - and any provision needs to be properly funded and managed. I am delighted that David Taylor can be a point of liaison with TPC and others for the church.
- We are not opposed to single homeless people residing at Canonsgrove. We recognise that they need help and support and we financially support ARC from time to time.  
We raise two questions:  
1) Could Canonsgrove be converted to provide say 10 multi occupancy units in each of which say 5 singles could be self supporting with their own good kitchen facility and a communal area? This would mean that Canonsgrove would continue to accommodate 50 people.



2) Also, could there be some selection process, to place at Canonsgrove those who would benefit from or prefer a rural location in smaller unit accommodation, and would be aware that essential services are 3 miles away?

If the above could be developed, we would hope it would provide better accommodation for the Canonsgrove residents and we hope provide some assurance to the Trull and Staplehay residents of better social behaviour.

- Somewhere in Taunton must work better for the homeless. It is unsafe for my children to be out on their own.
- Distance from physical and mental health facilities and support, as well as policing is not conducive to a safe facility for both residents of the facility itself or local residents.
- It would seem to be more logical to have a central property located closer to services and community giving a better chance for re-integration into society. We have had no adverse experiences , but then we have spent most of the last year isolated anyway. We do feel anxious at our age (late 80s) in the present situation.
- Canonsgrove is definitely not suitable being too far out of town and when pubs and shops are fully opened again there will be more and more trouble with these residents.

Page 24

- We favour one of the more distributed which we feel would be better for the homeless people and avoid clusters attracting undesirable activities including drugs. We are quite close to Canonsgrove and have had several bad and intimidating experiences while out walking in the daytime. This was mainly during the first few months of the homeless being housed at Canonsgrove. The situation seemed to improve when more controls were introduced (including police intervention) but we are concerned whether it could be maintained over a substantial period.
- ref proposed change of use for Cannonsgrove we are extremely concerned after our experiences in the last few months the idea of having Canonsgrove used for such a purpose is very much the wrong thing both for the community and the poor souls who are homeless we are a small residential village of largely retired people combined with the younger members of the community with children in the primary school age group all who have been traumatised by the events that have taken place obviously not enough supervision at Canonsgrove surely they would be happier nearer the centre of the town ? Its a long walk to the centre there is a bus but do they qualify for bus transport passes ? could they look again there are so many places in the town the old railway hotel and now Debenhams about to be converted to flats etc
- Central hub which can be managed and policed efficiently within the town centre, close to more services. We have too many stories to tell but they have been reported. 1 being drug deals and drop offs within our neighbourhood.

- A well-managed facility is needed where the needs of the homeless can be assessed and treatments put in place tailored to individual needs. Smaller units are easier to manage and give the “clients” more of an individual sense of belonging. For some, there would be the aim to assist them to re-join society. They need to be nearer the town or in the town to feel more connected with life. Perhaps some of the closed down shops could be converted into suitable residences. The focus of Taunton planners now seems to be to build endless blocks of flats in the centre; an ideal place perhaps to home the homeless. Here in Trull anti-social behaviour is too much of a threat to families, children and the elderly. Their criminal behaviour which has been recorded during the past year is not wanted. We choose to live here and want to feel safe, not threatened.
- Some of Canonsgrove residents do not share the same social capital as some of us in Trull evidenced by the litany of anti-social behaviour problems. Trull falls into the 10% of least deprived areas in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. I would have thought that the individual needs of Canonsgrove residents could be better met by placing them in satellite properties run by Arc based in Taunton and surroundings. It will be a mistake to fill Canonsgrove with homeless from across the district and make it a ghetto of hopeless and helpless residents with little opportunity for betterment.

Page 25

- This is my personal response to the survey delivered to my address. I am sorry that I have not completed the survey form itself as no one would be able to easily read my writing.!

**Opinion boxes:** I am unable to tick any box as explained below.

**Other: What do you think might be the best solution?**

This is very difficult to say on the information available. I fully support the provision of accommodation and services for homeless people. I recognise that homelessness is a product of many separate pressures on individual people. As such “the homeless” cannot be put into one category nor should it be assumed they all have the same needs. The “best solution” must take into account these individual needs (which will vary in complexity) and it is unlikely that any one facility would be able to meet all of these individual needs in one location. The homeless population need to have a voice in what is to be “provided for them” by others. The local community where any facility is located must also have a voice as to how that facility can safely and appropriately be incorporated into the community. I support Somerset West and Taunton working constructively and openly with locally elected representatives, service providers, church and community groups and the homeless themselves to develop an appropriate response-- whether this is at Canonsgrove or elsewhere.

- I cannot admit to knowing the best solution for the homeless. I realise that help is needed and the Housing First Model sounds like a good option but it is probably cost prohibitive. My gut feeling is that large hubs are not appropriate as those that are trying

to improve their lives do not want to be mixed with the more challenging and needy. This means that smaller multi-occupancy accommodation would be the best option.

- Accommodation needs to be homes for people (even if temporary). Living with 60 residents sounds too big already! Can't expect people to walk from Trull to town centre (52 mins walk/bus journey).
- Although the Housing First would appear the best model I recognise that Canonsgrove provides an adequate solution. Realistically we will have to work with the staff supporting the residents to work towards a long-term solution.
- Lack of education to homeless = bad behaviour, lack of respect, drug dealing.
- Canonsgrove has already proved itself as not suitable. Inadequate or total lack of pavements causing danger to both pedestrians and drivers, un-acceptable unsocial habits and disturbances at the Post Office etc and the Trull residents often feel intimidated. From various sources it is evident that the intent would be to increase numbers, and, not only would we be housing our own, but would see an influx from a wider area. We have enough to contend with. Smaller units nearer the town must surely ensure that adaptable, like minded groups, could be persuaded to look towards being more useful citizens, whilst those inclined to be more of a problem, housed separately, where they would not be bad examples.

Page 26

- I cannot respond as these questions are not suitable for a non-involved lay person to be able to answer. My preference is that those members of society in our area of Somerset West and Taunton are provided with best possible housing and support. If that, after due diligence is found to be at Canonsgrove then I would support that.
- I feel we should be asking the people who have currently been placed at Canonsgrove what they think would be the best option for them as they are the people that need the help and are therefore best placed to state what would be the best option.
- With several smaller units it would be possible to move people if there is conflict. It may also be if some accommodation was also in other towns within the district so that people can stay in the areas they are familiar with. This could also lead to them becoming part of the general community.
- The former YWCA building in Billetfield would seem to fulfil the objectives of proximity to services and community and be a far better location for the residents than Canonsgrove. We are not happy at the prospect of 3x the number of residents.
- Option 4 is a no brainer to the unqualified! Story NO. Point of intrigue YES. As to why the FOOTPATH LINK, conditional by planing, just up from Bradbeers junction to the Canonsgrove private land was not chosen (instead of the wider pavement in Staplehay village) for a Canonsgrove "event": this would have had the double benefit of it being easier for a H&S inspection of its levels/gradients/general surface condition by the

*current party responsible* for this PATH on (purchased for road improvement) highway land for its use by Canonsgrove residents and others. THEIR footpath could then have been PHOTOGRAPHED !!(once fully ?) Which highway officer, if any, approved the work methods involving the dumping of the detritus cleared in a position most likely to wash or work its way ultimately into the drainage gully at the point of the start of the blocked system locally? Review required in event of new planning application.

- I would like Canonsgrove to continue to be used to house a similar number of homeless people as at present. My late husband was a staff member when it was a police cadet training centre, and we lived there for 9 months until we bought our own house in Trull, 40 years ago. It is in a beautiful location, on the fringe of a village with a great community spirit, so is ideal for those having experienced a lot of difficulties and ugliness in their lives. Hopefully local residents will not adopt a “them and us” mentality but welcome those at Canonsgrove into village activities. Perhaps there could be a “buddy” scheme to offer help with transport, cooking, sport etc. There may be problems, but overcoming them is so worthwhile!
- I think the accommodation is too close to the quiet residential areas of Staplehay and Trull, (and the houses nearer to it) meaning crimes such as house break-ins can be more easily committed unseen. The Canonsgrove residents need to walk through these areas to reach the town or shops. Surely Canonsgrove is too far out of town for the people to live. A much larger permanent hub would be bound to mean an increase in these problems. Vulnerable older people living in this area may not be aware of the above concerns or if they are, not able to make their worries about the situation known. I believe putting them in danger like this is a very bad move.

Page 27

- No single model is right - sizeable hubs should be avoided for COVID security reasons and to limit impact on local communities: **COMMENTS ON CANONSGROVE**

#### **PROPOSALS – FEBRUARY 2021**

#### **Planning Requirements**

The current use of Canonsgrove as a facility for homeless single people is unlawful as it contravenes a Section 106 obligation. I have not been able to view that S106 agreement as it does not appear to be on the SWAT database/planning register. Even in the current Covid-related situation, the correct procedure would have been to review and if justified, remove the S106 obligation. This would have allowed proper local community involvement. If the original reasons for imposing the S106 (i.e., to make the development acceptable in planning terms) still exist, there are no grounds for removing it.

I have not been able to obtain on-line access to the existing planning permission for the Canonsgrove halls of residence so have assumed that it was originally granted for Class C uses. The existing planning permission is not relevant to the current situation anyway as the use of the buildings as accommodation for the homeless is sui generis and hence a planning application must be made because it constitutes a change of use. There have been many proposals in other parts of the country which support this point. Oxford City Council Planning Permission 19/00128/CT3 is just one example.

I note that when this point was originally raised with our local councillor we were informed (incorrectly) that planning permission would not be required.

The Trull Parish Council "UPDATE" says that a planning application will be put forward in the very near future because the present use of Canonsgrove is contravening a S106 agreement. That is not correct. A planning application must be put forward because the use of Canonsgrove as a homeless facility is not permitted by the existing planning permission (see above). In addition, a S106 agreement is a land charge; it runs with the land. Unless it is reviewed and removed, it will remain in place even if a new permission is granted.

### **Matters of principle**

The recent Canonsgrove newsletter alleges that the Government have "required" rough sleepers to be taken off the streets, recognizing this group as "particularly vulnerable" to Covid-19. I find it difficult to believe that any of that is true. It is difficult to comprehend how "kettling" homeless people in a building renders them less susceptible to the risks of Covid or how they are particularly vulnerable. I am not aware that they have featured in the upper categories of those being given vaccine as a priority.

Whilst any feeling that the homeless should be removed from the streets may have been a knee-jerk reaction in the early stages of the pandemic, I believe it was groundless. The issue of the homeless is a significant one and deserves to be dealt with in a properly considered manner, not dealt with hurriedly in reaction to the wrong stimuli, whether financial or otherwise.

### **Page 28**

If there was an urgent need to protect those who are particularly vulnerable to Covid-19, then surely any special financial support should be directed at care homes where the effects of the pandemic have been felt the hardest and staff have put in such extraordinary efforts in the face of terrifying mortality rates.

We have been led to believe that the need for a renewed approach to homelessness in Taunton is because existing facilities do not allow measures to be taken to deal with Covid. Full justification should be sought for that assertion before any thought is given to a completely new facility in any location. As I understand it, existing organisations in Taunton, many of them supported by charitable funding, have been doing an admirable job in helping the homeless for many years. I would suggest that providing them with the funding that would otherwise go to Canonsgrove would represent a far better investment, not least because they understand fully the nature of the problem that they are dealing with.

### **The Current Situation**

The Trull Parish Council "UPDATE" states that "We [the Trull Parish] are sure that most residents will have supported the initiative as a temporary response to the Covid crisis....". I have no idea how the Parish Council could be so sure. My experience is that the vast majority of local residents did not support the temporary initiative and certainly do not support it as a permanent response to the homelessness situation.

Low-cost housing has been built in the parish in recent years but even that is principally available only to families with a local connection. If that is an essential qualification for such housing then why should the local community readily accept proposals to accommodate those from further afield at Canonsgrove?

It is my belief that many in the local community share my view that the sudden appearance of unfamiliar people in the community behaving at times in an inappropriate manner, is unsettling. In the centre of Taunton such behaviour would go unnoticed but in a small community like Trull, small groups congregating and conversing with raised voices at places like the bus shelter, near the telephone box book exchange and various street corners, is intimidating and for some frightening. I have observed young adults with hoodies cycling erratically and dangerously on a number of occasions.

There has certainly been a heightened state of anxiety since the homeless have been at Canonsgrove and that has impacted upon my own family. A young family member was stopped by plain clothes police in the village, questioned and handcuffed. The family member was told that the police action was in response to a spate of break-ins in the area. When we checked with the Trull PCSO they were not aware of any such increase in crime locally. I understand that an apology was eventually forthcoming from the Police Authority. I also understand that there have been break-ins locally, a situation which I have never been conscious of in nearly thirty years as a resident in the village. It is unnerving that the response of the PCSO did not accord with that of the Police Authority. This could well point to an issue with transparency of crime data since the homeless have been at Canonsgrove.

Page 29

## SUMMARY

I do not believe that a sizeable hub model for a homeless facility is justified or in any other way desirable. For COVID protection of the homeless and those they may come into contact with, small units should be the basis for provision.

I believe that the sociological impact of any such facility on a small village location such as Trull which has a large proportion of elderly residents, is unacceptable. Local residents' perception of fear and possible crime is established as a valid planning consideration (e.g., Flintshire 2016) and must not be ignored. The homeless should be accommodated as close to the centre of Taunton as possible where they are close to the amenities they require and where their presence would cause less of an impact.

- As an older woman living on my own in Staplehay I find the current Canonsgrove homeless accommodation extremely worrying especially at night as there have been break-ins and burglaries committed in my local area by Canonsgrove residents. I take my mobile phone upstairs with me at bedtime now in case I need to make an emergency call because of a break-in to my house or an assault on me in the night. There is a problem too with numerous incidents of extremely serious antisocial behaviours by Canonsgrove residents, in Staplehay and Trull. Local press reports indicate that Canonsgrove residents have been in the courts for offences including multiple breaches

of criminal behaviour orders and threatening/abusive/racially aggravated behaviour. Currently I quite frequently hear police cars with sirens on rushing towards Canonsgrove.

- We are not opposed to a small number at Canonsgrove within use currently. Larger numbers would overrun the villages of Staplehay and Trull and be unfairly disproportionate on the local community.