



SPECIAL HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY, 11TH DECEMBER 2013 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Ackerman - Chairman

Councillors:

A. P. Angel, Mrs G. Bevan, L. Binding, Mrs P. Cook, L. Gardiner, N. George, C. Gordon, G.J. Hughes, S. Morgan, J.A. Pritchard.

Cabinet Member: Councillor R. Woodyatt, Cabinet Member for Social Services.

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services), J. Williams (Interim Assistant Director Adult Services), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director Children Services), C. Forbes Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

Users & Carers: Mr C. Luke and Mrs M. Veater.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors E. Aldworth, Mrs .J. Gale, Mrs B. Jones, Mrs P. Griffiths and K. Dawson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillors G. Hughes, L. Ackerman, C. Gordon, L. Binding, J.A. Pritchard, Mrs P. Cook and Mrs M. Veater (Co-opted Member) - Agenda Item 3(1), details are minuted with the respective item.

Clarification was sought with regard to declarations of interest as it was felt that all Members would have some form of interest in this item whether personally, professionally, through a family member or friend. Members were advised that as the item presented was only being discussed in general terms as part of the consultation process they should declare their interest but would not be precluded from taking an active part in the discussions.

3. PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT 2014/15 - SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Councillor G. Hughes declared an interest as his mother receives residential care services at Valley Manor Nursing Home, Councillor L. Ackerman declared an interest as her mother receives homecare services, Councillor C. Gordon declared an interest as his mother receives homecare services, Councillor L. Binding declared an interest as he is employed by Rhondda Cynon Taff Council that provides day services to Caerphilly residents, Councillor J.A. Pritchard declared an interest as she is a trustee for CHAD, Councillor P. Cook declared an interest as she is a trustee for Disability Can Do and Mrs. M. Veater declared an interest as she is a trustee for the Cancer Care Line.

Mr D. Street, Director of Social Services presented the report which outlined the potential areas of contribution from Social Services towards the Council's savings requirements for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17.

The savings requirements for the Council were detailed and Members were advised that £28m would need to be delivered over the next three years with £14.5m required in 2014/15. The need to ensure the deliverability of the 2014/15 savings was emphasised and those options were highlighted for Members consideration and comment.

The impact of the proposed savings were categorised as low, medium or high impact in relation to service delivery and those considered to have a low impact were outlined in the first instance. With regard to vacancy management Members were advised that £761,000 of savings could be achieved through the deletion of 16.5 full time equivalent posts. The gradual move to externalise the HART service at a rate of 100 hours per annum could achieve £31,000 of possible savings. It was noted that the service currently operated at a mix of 72% external provision and 28% internal provision and it was proposed that rather than recruiting to any forthcoming vacant posts the associated hours be transferred to the independent sector, which would gradually increase the proportion of the service commissioned externally over a period of time.

The tendering exercise at Cefn Glas and Plas Hydfryd Extra Care had already secured savings of £70,000 and a proposed increase charge of £1 per meal to £3.35 for the Meals on Wheels service would secure a further £80,000. In relation to the Meals on Wheels service Members were advised that the service was currently operating at a loss and the proposed increase was the only option available to ensure the viability of the service.

Further savings could be achieved by reviewing the staffing rotas at Blackwood Resource Centre, making a recharge to Aneurin Bevan Health Board for medication only calls and terminating the contract with Cancercareline. £17,000 could be achieved by stopping attendance payments for Learning Disabilities Day Opportunities. Members were advised that efficiencies of 5% would also be sought from voluntary sector partners and if achieved would secure savings of £99,000.

The final proposed low impact savings were confirmed as £11,000 by withdrawing the provision of staff meals from Community Support Services, £89,000 by realigning staffing budgets in Older People Residential and Day Care establishments with actual spend and £100,000 secured as a result of the full year effect of the Enterprise House closure. This provided savings of £761,000 through vacancy management and £710,000 from other low impact sources.

The medium to high impact category savings were then presented for Members consideration and the Director confirmed that these options would have an affect on service levels. It was noted that ceasing to provide domestic support for service users in receipt of a Supporting People commissioned service would achieve £183,000 of savings, this was noted to be a discretionary service to 341 service users. Reviewing the structure of the Children's Service Locality Team, Senior Management structure and Direct Care Management structure and their associated potential redeployments could secure £81,000, £94,000 and £100,00 of

savings respectively. The high impact savings proposed concerned reviewing Social Worker posts and could potentially achieve £219,000 of savings.

Members were advised that in order to achieve the level of savings proposed working practices would need to change and business process realigned to cut through bureaucracy, review mechanism needed to become more succinct and proportionate and by doing so this would enable Social Workers to concentrate their efforts on front line service provision.

Members were advised that the total savings for 2014/15 should all the proposed options be put forward as detailed was £2,139,000, however this would still mean a £3.8m gap to be found from other Directorates.

In relation to the required savings for 2015/16 and 2016/17 Members were advised that these would be more difficult to achieve going forward and would mean securing efficiencies against essential and statutory services. It was noted that even if a 3% efficiency was applied it would only generate £5.1m of the £14m requirement for those financial years. There would need to be a fundamental change to service delivery, discretionary services would need to be reviewed and a very different budget strategy considered going forward. Further externalisation could be required and certain services could be lost. The staffing structure review could be continued on from 2014/15 but in doing so there would be implications for social care provision and business model design in order to strip away any inefficiencies.

Members were reminded that the impact of the forthcoming Social Services Health and Wellbeing Bill must also be considered in the context of the saving requirements and would be subject to a further report to Members in the New Year. The Bill requires local authorities to respond to people's well-being needs as well as maintaining preventative services, however the viability of these measures would need to be considered against the level of savings to be made. This would require some extremely careful planning going forward.

In conclusion the Director of Social Service acknowledged the difficult times ahead and invited Members to comment on the proposals presented and highlight any specific areas of concern. However should a particular option prove to be unacceptable to Members, that they then offered an alternative efficiency area for consideration.

The Chair thanked the Director of Social Services for his presentation and Members comments were welcomed as part of the consultation process.

Clarification was sought in relation to the externalisation of Homecare services. The Officer confirmed that efficiencies were achievable through reducing administration and back office costs with further savings to be achieved through the gradual externalisation of the service. It was noted that TUPE and other issues would be taken into consideration should full externalisation be required.

Mrs Veater raised concerns with regard to the impact of the savings on care in the community and the risks associated with reducing services to such a point that safety nets and systems could fail leaving people vulnerable. The importance of maintaining networks between the different sectors was emphasised in order to safeguard the service user.

A Member expressed his support for the administration and back office efficiencies suggested as long as they did not equate to redundancy measures however he could not support any further externalisation of the service. The Member referred to Appendix B and item SS2 and sought clarification in relation to the externalisation/reconfiguration of current in-house Elderly Residential Homes. The Officer confirmed that although in house provision was well occupied at the moment, there were substantial elderly frail bed vacancies and this would need to be addressed going forward. It was noted that many providers were considering selling off elderly frail services and if this vacancy trend continued a remodelling of residential services as a whole would need to be undertaken. The Officer confirmed that this type of review required much longer lead in times hence the 2016/17 timeframe.

Members referred to SS8b and SS10 and the proposed savings against the domestic and shopping services and sought clarification as to any eligibility criteria and when it was last reviewed. The Officer confirmed that he did not have that information to hand but agreed to would forward to the Member concerned after the meeting. Members asked that consideration be given to reviewing charging options and eligibility criteria rather than losing those particular services.

Clarification was sought with regard to Meals on Wheels and whether the service was provided on assessment or through individual choice. The Officer confirmed that the service had been reviewed 12 months ago and its provision was subject to an eligibility criteria. However there were now a whole range of alternative options for meal provision available to individuals and the current Meals on Wheels service was experiencing a year on year decline in numbers. Members acknowledged the changes in people's shopping practices including online and telephone ordering facilities and queried if assistance could be provided in this area. The Officer confirmed that alternative models would be looked at and advised that the long term sustainability of the current Meals on Wheels model required further review due to its falling numbers.

The proposed changes to Homecare provision was discussed and a Member expressed concerned that the balance between the externalisation of the service and providing continuity of care to the service user should not be lost. The Officer recognised the impact that the proposed savings could have on service provision models and advised they would flag up potential risks to ensure that Members were aware of any associated performance issues.

Members agreed that the increased charge for Meals on Wheels was acceptable and that other options for this type of service provision be investigated. Members also agreed that withdrawing the provision of staff meals from Community Support Services was acceptable.

Members discussed the disparity in charges for Caerphilly services when compared to other local authorities and suggested that this be reviewed. Officers referred to the recent Task and Finish Group that reviewed charging levels for non-residential social services in detail, and stated that the recommended increases will be implemented shortly, however they reminded Members that there is a £50 per week charging cap imposed by Welsh Government. It was agreed that the use of Task and Finish Groups to look in detail at some of the savings proposals would be the beneficial.

Clarification was sought with regard to out of county placements for children and an Officer explained the different reasons for securing an out of county placement and the balance between filling vacant in county beds against offering the most appropriate placement possible for the child concerned.

Clarification was sought in relation to the four levels of the eligibility criteria and whether this needed to be realigned in order to safeguard the most vulnerable within the community. Officers confirmed that a National Eligibility Criteria for Wales was under consideration as part of the Social Services, Health and Well Being Bill and this could mean substantial changes for the Authority. However these changes would not necessarily equate to savings and most people coming through the system were already at a moderate/high eligibility level.

Members expressed their support for the quality of services currently being provided by this Authority and their confidence in the recommendations of Officers going forward. In terms of the externalisation of services Members sought assurances that providers would be subject to rigorous checks to ensure the quality of the service being provided. The Director of Social Services confirmed that robust mechanisms would be put in place to hold providers to account with regard to quality.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contributions and acknowledged the very real need to review deliverability and methods of working in order to provide the best platform

going forward. The establishment of Task and Finish Groups as part of the process of change was welcomed as was further detail on the impact of the Social Services Health and Well Being Bill and the National Eligibility Criteria for Wales.

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered the report supported the list of proposed savings as detailed in Appendix B of the report subject to the above comments and further detail on the impact on service delivery and further reports to Cabinet and Council and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

The meeting closed at 18.01 pm.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2014.

CHAIRMAN