

SPECIAL HEALTH SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 17TH JULY 2014

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF MEALS DIRECT

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 As part of the agreed budget strategy for 2015/16 and 2016/17 this report seeks the views of Members in relation to the current provision of a discretionary Meals Direct Service.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides details of the Meals Direct service currently provided to people in their own homes and outlines options for the future of this discretionary service.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council's MTFP currently requires estimated savings of £6.5m for the 2015/16 financial year and £6.9m for 2016/17.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Currently meals are provided to individuals in their own homes following an assessment of need by Social Services. These meals, which are nutritionally balanced and meet all dietary requirements, are prepared and delivered to service users by the Environment Directorate.
- 4.2 As at the beginning of June 2014 there were a total of 336 people in receipt of meals. Of this total, 85 people are receiving the Meals Direct Service only with no other services being provided by Social Services. These people may also be supported by family, friends and the third sector. Individuals can have the service on one or more days.
- 4.3 The demand for meals has been relatively stable over the last five years and the current Social Services budget for the service is £252k.
- 4.4 The following options have been identified for Members to consider: -

Option 1 - Maintain current service provision

Under this option the existing service will be maintained at a cost of circa £252k per annum to Social Services. However, Members should note that the Meals Direct provision within the Environment Directorate has made financial losses in recent years and this will need to be addressed if the service continues. Efficiencies have already been made in terms of purchasing, contract hours, use of promotional material and marketing the service to other

Local Authorities in an attempt to increase financial viability. The Meals Direct Service is currently in the process of finalising a one-year Service Level Agreement for their drivers to deliver to customers outside the Borough.

Option 2 – Cease provision of the service

Under this option the service would cease from an agreed date and this would impact on all existing service users. Where appropriate, alternative options would need to be explored, for example local delivery from cafes, public houses etc. but this would need to be paid for by service users. However, there will be a proportion of people currently in receipt of the service who will require care provision to cook or heat a meal. Therefore, the full budget saving of £252k would not be realised. To give this some context, should more than 60% of existing service users require a 15-minute call then re-provisioning costs would exceed the current budget.

Cessation of the service would also have a significant impact on staffing within the Meals Direct Service with the potential for redeployments or redundancies.

For information, seven other Local Authorities are currently considering this option for the next financial year.

Option 3 – Meals Direct to provide frozen meals

Under this option all existing service users would be provided with frozen meals only. This could lead to efficiency savings within the Meals Direct service as a number of meals could be delivered in a single visit. However, there will be a proportion of people currently in receipt of the service who will require care provision to reheat their meals, which will impact on any savings arising.

Frozen meals are generally perceived by customers to be less desirable than a freshly prepared meal. This may result in reduced demand, which in turn could impact on the financial viability of the service.

This option would have a lesser impact than option 2 on staff in the Environment Directorate but further work would be required to determine the specific staffing requirements for a service based on frozen meal provision.

Option 4 – Increase the charge for meals

This option would increase the income for the service but may result in reduced demand, which would impact on the level of net additional income that can be achieved. The current charge per meal is £2.60, which is low in comparison to other Welsh Authorities. Responses to a recent survey identified a range of £3.10 to £5.10 per meal across Wales.

Based on the current number of meals provided by Caerphilly CBC, additional income of £46k could be generated at a charge of £3.10 per meal and this would increase to £217k at £5.10 per meal. However, reduced demand may impact on these figures, particularly at £5.10 per meal as service users may pursue alternative options at a lower cost. A significant reduction in demand could also impact on the financial viability of the service, with the potential for redeployments or redundancies.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An equalities impact assessment will be completed for the preferred option.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As identified throughout the report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Should employees be placed at risk through any of the options, they will be supported via the appropriate Council policies relating to redeployment and ultimately redundancy if necessary.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.
- 8.2 A consultation process will be undertaken on the preferred option.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider and comment upon the options set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure that the views of the Scrutiny Committee are considered prior to this matter being referred to Cabinet.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 1972

Author: Jo Williams, Assistant Director Adult Services
Consultees: Social Services Senior Management Team
Cllr Robin Woodyatt, Cabinet Member Social Services
Adult Services Divisional Management Team
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection
Marcia Lewis, Contracts Manager
Gail Williams, Interim Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, HR Service Manager
Shaun Watkins, Acting HR Manager
Steve Harris, Acting Head of Corporate Finance
Mike Jones, Senior Accountant
Andrew Watkins, Assistant Senior Accountant