



SPECIAL HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY, 17TH JULY 2014 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Ackerman - Chair
Councillor Mrs P. Cook - Vice Chair

Councillors:

Mrs E.M. Aldworth, Mrs E.J. Gale, N. George, C. Gordon, S. Morgan, J.A. Pritchard, A. Rees

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

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director Children Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), M.J. Jones (Senior Accountant), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer)

Users & Carers: Mr C. Luke, Mrs J. Morgan and Mrs M. Veater MBE

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors A.P. Angel, Mrs. G. Bevan, L. Binding, Mrs. P. Griffiths, G.J. Hughes, Miss L. Price (Users and Carers) and Mrs. B. Bolt (ABUHB).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were received:-

Agenda item 3(1) - Shopping Service

Councillor C. Gordon declared an interest in this item (in that he has a close family member who receives this service) and left the meeting during its consideration.

Agenda item 3(2) - Review of Meals Direct

Councillor N. George declared an interest in this item (in that he has a close family member who receives this service) and left the meeting during its consideration.

Agenda item 3(3) - Day Services

Councillors L. Ackerman and E.M. Aldworth declared an interest in this item (in that they have close family members who receive this service) and left the meeting during its consideration.

3. SHOPPING SERVICE

Councillor C. Gordon left the meeting during consideration of this item in that he has a close family member who receives this service.

Mr D. Street, Corporate Director Social Services, referred to the letter dated 24th June 2014 received from Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Local Government and Government Business, informing local authorities of a significant shift in the likely financial settlement for 2015/16 and beyond. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) agreed by the Council on 26th February 2014 identified an estimated savings requirement of £6.5m for 2015/16 and £6.9m for 2016/17. This was based on an indicative reduction in WG funding of 1.34% for 2015/16 and in the absence of further guidance from WG, an assumed reduction of a further 1.34% for 2016/17. The level of potential savings required for future years (on top of the £14.2m already agreed for 2014/15) takes the Authority into uncharted territory and its budget strategies will need to be reviewed.

The first report on the agenda for the meeting set out options for the future of the discretionary shopping service to support the Council's MTFP. The provision of a shopping service is discretionary i.e. the Directorate is under no statutory obligation to provide such a service and other Gwent authorities do not provide or commission a shopping service unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There are currently 976 people in receipt of this service and the demand for the service has increased year on year. Shopping is not provided as a stand-alone service, individuals receive the service as part of a larger package of care provided in their own home. Care providers undertake the service for individuals with the service being primarily commissioned from the independent sector at a cost of circa £13.50 per hour. In 12 cases the service is provided by the in-house Home Assistance and Reablement Team (HART). The annual total cost of the service is circa £690k.

Members' views were sought on the options set out in the report. During the course of the ensuing debate, strong concerns were raised for the future of care in the community and the implications for those in receipt of these services. The Director explained that it was intended to undertake more detailed work and consultation and that no decisions would be taken at this stage.

Consideration was given to each of the options set out in paragraph 4.4. There was no support received for Options 1 and 2 and the majority of Members present voted in favour of officers exploring the feasibility of a mix of the remaining options which would ensure the service is delivered where absolutely necessary. A further report would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

4. DAY SERVICES

Councillor L. Ackerman left the meeting during consideration of this item having declared an interest at the beginning of the meeting in that she has a close family member who receives this service. Councillor Mrs. E. Aldworth also left the meeting for this item in that she has a close relative who receives this service. Councillor Mrs P. Cook, Vice Chair, took the chair for this item only.

Mrs. J. Williams, Assistant Director Adult Services, presented the report, which provided information on the provision of discretionary day services and outlined options for the future of this service to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Day service provision is again a discretionary service and is currently provided for all client groups across Adult Services. The service is provided to a number of service users in single locations and as such can be a more cost-effective approach to service provision than one to one care in the community.

Day care is provided in-house from established bases and is also commissioned from the independent sector. As at the beginning of June 2014, 811 people attended day care as part of their care plan. Individuals can attend for one or more sessions and can attend more than one centre.

The numbers attending in-house services totals 697 and there are 114 people receiving day services commissioned from a range of independent sector providers. The majority of people who attend day centres are living in their own homes. There are 71 people who live in supported living, extra care or residential homes, who also receive the service. Day care is the primary vehicle for reducing social isolation and/or supporting informal carers in their caring role. The total budget for day care provision is currently £4.26m.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider a range of options, which had been prepared for the future of the service in order to support the Council's MTFP.

With regard to Option 2, Members were advised that consideration would need to be given to providing considerably less than the current average of 7 hours per week per service user. Option 3, which seeks to reduce the number of premises used in respect of satellite bases would result in circa £51k savings. However, this option would have staffing implications with the potential for redeployment or redundancies. In terms of Option 4 i.e. provide to targeted day services only. Officers advised that a review would need to be undertaken of the service users involved. Option 5 i.e. transfer services to the third sector or social enterprise. Members were advised that this option would ensure that the services would be maintained for individuals and carers but that there would be complexities in relation to TUPE Regulations around staff transfers to the alternative providers and also issues to address around pension liabilities.

Assessment and Care Management staff would continue to explore alternative options to traditional day care when undertaking assessments and reviews to achieve positive outcomes for people and reduce costs wherever possible. The Director advised that since the report had been prepared, Corporate Management Team had received guidance about two tier workforce regulations which might impact on potential savings.

Mr Cyril Luke, representing users and carers, presented a detailed list of questions and suggested measures in relation to the report and the various options contained therein.

Mr Luke's first two questions referred to the cost of service users staying at home instead of attending a day service and the impact on carers, who rely on a day service for respite care. The next question referred to the monitoring of private providers and the cost savings if private providers were used. Questions 4 and 5 queried whether the current total budget for day care provision of £4.26m includes transport costs and sought clarification regarding the additional transport costs referred to in Option 3. Mr Luke suggested an amalgamation of options 4 and 5 would provide an exit strategy and would support people with moderate needs to enter into more mainstream services. Questions 7 and 8 asked whether people wishing to attend a day service could pay for the service by means of attendance allowance and whether the Direct Payments is open to everyone. Question 9 highlighted that for many people attending day services; this might be the only social contact they receive. Question 10 asked about the future of experienced skilled staff who support the complex service users in day care and cheaper less experienced staff possibly not being trained. Mr Luke stated that Options 2-5 go against everything in the All Wales Strategy and Fulfilling the Promises documents and Person Centred Planning. He concluded his address with a number of suggestions for potential options for savings.

In terms of the issues raised, the Assistant Director confirmed that there could be increased costs in staffing if service users remained at home rather than attending day centres and the implications of future decisions would clearly need to be spelled out in terms of the impact on carers. It was confirmed that the £4.26m does not include transport costs and that it was unlikely that Option 5 would generate any savings having regard to the complexities around

TUPE regulations and the two-tier workforce. In terms of increasing the charge to attend day centres, it was noted that the costs rose in accordance with the recommendations of the Members' Task and Finish Group. Confirmation was received that direct payments are open to everyone, however, Members were advised that there is not a high take up in the County Borough. With regard to the use of mobility vehicles, it was noted that a report on the eligibility criteria for transport Adult Services had recently been presented to the Scrutiny Committee. Officers confirmed that the feasibility of using cheaper purchasing sources was under constant review.

Following a full discussion on the issues raised and having considered all the options available it was moved and seconded that officers explore the feasibility of a mix of Option 3 (Reconfigure provision of day services) and Option 4 (Provide targeted day services only). By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed. A further report, including cost implications, would be prepared for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

5. REVIEW OF MEALS DIRECT

Councillor N. George left the meeting during consideration of this item in that he has a close family member who receives this service.

The Assistant Director Adult Services presented the report, which provided details of the Meals Direct service currently provided to people in their own homes and outlined options for the future of this discretionary service. It was noted that as at the beginning of June 2014 a total of 336 people were in receipt of this service. Of this number, 85 people receive the Meals Direct Service only, with no other service being provided by Social Services. These people may also be supported by family, friends and the third sector and can choose to have the service on one or more days. The demand for meals has been relatively stable over the last five years and the current Social Services budget for the service is £252k.

There were four options set out in the report for Members to consider i.e. Option 1 - Maintain the current service provision; Option 2 - Cease provision of the service; Option 3 - Meals Direct to provide frozen meals; Option 4 - Increase the charge for meals.

Members were asked to 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 County Borough.

Under Option 2 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 e.g. local delivery from cafes, public houses etc but this would need to be paid for by service users. There would be a proportion of people in receipt of the service who would require care provision to cook or heat a meal. Therefore the full budget saving of £252k would not be realised. Cessation of the service would also have a significant impact on staffing within the Meals Direct Service with the potential for redeployment or redundancies.

In terms of Option 3 existing service users would be provided with frozen meals only. A proportion of people who are currently in receipt of the service would require care provision to reheat their meals. Frozen meals are generally perceived to be less desirable than a freshly prepared meal, which may result in reduced demand. 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 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. Based on the current number of meals provided by CCBC, additional income of £46k could be generated at a charge of £3.10 per meal, which would increase to £217k at £5.10 per meal.

Members discussed the pros and cons of each of the options set out in the report and various suggestions were put forward in terms of the provision and cost of the meals. It was acknowledged that in view of the level of savings that needed to be made to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, an increase in the charge of the meals would have to be made. Following further discussion it was agreed that this would be one increase rather than incremental rises in the charge. Officers were asked to prepare a further report providing a breakdown of the potential savings that could be generated at different charges bearing in mind that reduced demand following a substantial increase may impact on the figures and could also impact on the financial viability of the service, with the potential for redeployments or redundancies.

Having fully considered the options available, it was moved and seconded that Option 4 (increase the charge for meals) be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed. A further report would be prepared for Members' consideration.

6. ANNUAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2013/14

Members were advised of the key issues that had been identified in the preparation of the fifth Annual Director's Report on the Effectiveness of Social Care Services.

In terms of this year's report, CSSIW have specified three specific areas that they expect to see covered viz: preparedness to respond to the requirements of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Bill; progress with the plans for the integration of health and social care services for older people with complex needs; summary of the budget for 2014/15 and any proposed reductions or realignment of service provision.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and noted the contents of the Annual Director's Report on the Effectiveness of Social Care Services 2013-2014 and its submission to Council on 22nd July 2014 for adoption.

The (Draft) Annual Director's Report on the Effectiveness of Social Care Services 2013-2014 will be made available to Members as soon as possible. Comments on the report were welcome throughout the period between the Scrutiny Committee and the report's presentation to Council on 22nd July 2014.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2014.

CHAIR