



SPECIAL HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY, 16TH OCTOBER 2014 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E.M. Aldworth, L. Binding, Mrs E.J. Gale, 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), C. Evans (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, Mrs. P. Griffiths, G.J. Hughes, Miss L. Price (Users and Carers) and Mrs. B. Bolt (ABUHB).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors L. Ackerman and Mrs E.M. Aldworth declared an interest in Agenda Item 4- Day Services (in that they have close family members who receive this service) and left the meeting during its consideration.

3. SHOPPING SERVICE

The report provided additional information on the discretionary shopping services along with an update on the optional ceasing of provision of the service, (unless there are exceptional circumstances) prior to being presented to Cabinet.

At a previous Scrutiny Committee on 17th July 2014, Members requested to receive further information on the development of options to provide low/ no cost services to meet people's needs for a shopping service and for consideration to be given to an option of tendering for a specific shopping service.

Members noted that, subsequently, work was conducted to validate the number of people in receipt of a shopping service. The previous information gained from the SWIFT IT database, which indicated 976 people were in receipt of the service, was incorrect. The data demonstrated that only 125 were in receipt of a commissioned service, the remainder were service users with an identified need for shopping. Therefore, proposals would generate lower levels of savings and impact on a smaller number of people.

In addition, a fixed term Engagement Officer has been appointed until 31 March 2015. Their role will be to gather knowledge of local communities and the services available from local shops, large supermarkets and local eateries to provide individuals with a range of options to meet their needs.

Officers highlighted that, those people currently in receipt of a shopping service would be reviewed and assisted to utilise other networks to meet their needs. If there were exceptional circumstances shopping could still be commissioned on a spot contract.

Members expressed their disappointment that the original report demonstrated such significant inaccuracies for potential savings. Assurances were given that officers endeavour to provide accurate information; the reason for the discrepancy came as a result of manual validation of the data. This highlighted that the Swift system had also provided information on Service users having shopping provided through other means.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the User Survey, and it was noted that the survey was conducted anonymously, across a large number of Service Users, in receipt of various discretionary services, provided by the department. Members raised concerns that the survey results could not identify responses from users in receipt of the shopping services. It was felt that, in order to form a decision and make a recommendation about the future of the shopping service, the impact of ceasing a service to those users should be ascertained. Officers explained that a service would be provided to those with an identified need, and would not be withdrawn unless an alternative provision was in place. In addition, service users with exceptional circumstances may continue to be able to receive the shopping service.

Discussions ensued in which a Member suggested that reviews be conducted with each of the service users in receipt of the service. Concerns were raised that conducting a full review of each of the 125 service users, in receipt of the service would be hour intensive, costly and impractical and would not be concluded before the decision was required for the budget. It was clarified that Members felt that they could not make a recommendation about ceasing a service until an assessment had been conducted to demonstrate the impact of withdrawal of service on the service user.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that consideration of the proposal be deferred pending an assessment being conducted. By a show of hands, and in noting there was one abstention, this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that consideration of the proposal for the discretionary service to cease and people to be sign posted to appropriate options (unless there are exceptional circumstances), be deferred pending an assessment being undertaken to determine the impact of withdrawal of service on the 125 Service Users.

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.

Following this, Mr C. Luke, queried the quorum of the committee and was advised that, with the 6 remaining Councillors present, the meeting remained quorate; therefore the item and any recommendations could be fully considered by the Committee.

The report provided, as part of the agreed budget strategy for 2015/16 and as requested at a previous Scrutiny Committee on 17th July 2014, additional information on the option to reconfigure the provision of day services by reducing the number of bases used and ceasing to use the satellite bases at Glyn –Sifi, Ffwrn-Bryn and Fitzroy Lodge. The bases would be reconfigured geographically by combining centres in one location. Thereby resulting in economies of scale through reduced building and staffing costs and enabling services to continue to be provided for individuals and their carers at their current levels.

The report proposed that Llanfabon, in the south of the county borough and Min-Y-Mynydd in the north of the county borough would become the main centres for provision of day services. Members noted that the current day services provided at Llanfabon would continue and Caerphilly Day Centre and the Retirement Group would relocate to this centre. Min-Y-Mynydd would provide services for people with learning disabilities and services for older people would be centralised at the Rhymney Integrated Health Centre.

Members noted that some minor adaptation works would be required to ensure that facilities at both centres were suitable for the increase in users level of need and by making the residential homes the hub for day service provision, the model becomes sustainable in the longer term. All other day services would remain in their current locations and format at this time.

The report highlighted that the proposed relocations for the north of the county borough would save around £10k in non-staff costs and £94k in staff costs, and the proposed relocations for the south of the county borough would save around £19k in non-staff costs and £162k in staff costs. In total, these proposals would result in a saving of £285k. However, only £255k of this saving would be released in the 2015/16 financial year as around £30k is required to deliver the balance of a £100k savings target for direct care management that was built into the 2014/15 budget for strategy for Social Services.

Members thanked the officer for the report and discussions ensued.

In relation to the location of the centralised day centres, Members raised concerns around the additional travelling distance and accessibility to the sites. Officers took on board the concerns, however it was noted that some of the current sites were in a poor state of repair or required considerable work to accommodate additional users. Members were asked to note that in respect of transport the maximum additional distance anyone would travel is 1.4 miles and some people will travel less.

Members sought clarification on the integration of service provision at the day centres, highlighting that there are varying needs between groups, which would cause significant issues for integration. Officers highlighted that like for like provision would be integrated where possible and meeting the needs of the service users remains paramount in all decision making.

Members sought further information on the personnel implications of the proposal. Officers highlighted that a net reduction of 280 care hours (10-15 posts) across the county borough would be expected, however, this would not impact on the level of care provided to service users. It was noted that vacancies have been held across provider services to assist with any potential redeployment requirements and any staff affected by the changes would be fully supported by the authority using appropriate policies and procedures.

The Scrutiny Committee was pleased to note the public consultation conducted, which included comments from carers and service users. Concerns were raised around the

increased pressure on local authorities to maintain levels of care provision with significantly reduced budgets. It was noted that officers have worked hard to identify the savings levels required with minimal impact to service users.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report Members of the Scrutiny Committee considered and commented upon the option to centralise day services as set out in part 4 of the officers report.

5. REVIEW OF MEALS DIRECT

The report provided members with additional information on the discretionary Meals Direct Service and potential increases in charges, as part of the agreed budget strategy for 2015/2016.

The Scrutiny Committee noted that meals are currently provided to 336 individuals (85 receive Meals Direct Services only) in their own homes following an assessment by Social Services.

The Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider a variety of options for increasing the current charge of £2.60 for the provision of Meals Direct and Members were mindful that an increase in charges could result in Service Users seeking alternative meal providers, thus impacting on financial sustainability. Consideration was given to the following increases and savings amounts: -

- Increasing the charge from £2.60 to £3.10, a rise of 50p would generate income of £44k at existing meal numbers
- Increasing the charge from £2.60 to £3.60, a rise of £1.00 would generate income of £88k at existing meal numbers
- Increasing the charge from £2.60 to £4.10, a rise of £1.50 would generate income of £131k at existing meal numbers
- Increasing the charge from £2.60 to £5.10, a rise of £2.50 would generate income of £217k at existing meal numbers
- Increasing the charge from £2.60 to the full cost of providing a meal at £5.40 would generate income of £243k at existing meal numbers.
- Any price increase may meet resistance and could mean some existing customers may choose not to continue with this provision which could impact up on the financial viability of the Meals Direct Service as economies of scale are reduced.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Members sought further information on the average number of meals purchased by service users. Officers highlighted that this was dependent on the needs of the users as some will have family providing meals or attend centres etc.

Concerns were raised as to the potential impact on the savings proposals as a result of the Governments increase in minimum wage. Members were assured that, as a result of the Authorities commitment to pay a Living Wage rate, there is no impact to the Local Authority with the increase.

Members discussed expansion of the service to other Local Authorities and it was noted that Caerphilly currently has contract to provide frozen meals to Blaenau Gwent, which is due to expire in March 2015. Members noted that such contracts would have an impact on the decision-making process and viability of the service, however Officers from the Directorate of the Environment are looking for various options to sustain the service.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved that the preferred option of increasing the charge from £2.60 to £3.60, a rise of £1.00 would generate income of £88k at existing meal numbers, this was not seconded. It was then moved that an increase of £1.50 for the Meals Direct Service be applied, this was seconded and by a show of hands, was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report, it be recommended to increase charging from £2.60 to £4.10 (a rise of £1.50), which would generate income of £131k at existing meal numbers.

6. SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR 2015/16

The Scrutiny Committee were presented with a report for consideration, which provided details of a range of 2015/16 savings proposals within the Directorate of Social Services to support the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), prior to being presented to Cabinet.

Members noted that the Divisional Management Teams and Senior Management Team within Social Services have reviewed budgets in detail to identify a range of savings options to support the MTFP. Savings proposals were presented specifically for the 2015/16 financial year and were categorised into the following areas: -

- Discretionary Service Reviews
- Budget Realignment
- Structural Reviews
- Service Redesign
- Demand Management

In addition, Members noted that the MTFP that was agreed by Members covering the financial years 2014/15 to 2016/17 included £1m of growth money in each year to respond to demographic changes. However, as a result of anticipated cuts in Welsh Government funding, the growth previously earmarked for 2015/16 is unlikely to be affordable.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and full discussion ensued.

Members discussed the Budget Realignment proposals and sought reassurances that budget reductions would not significantly impact on service provision, which would continue to meet the needs of the Service Users. Officers highlighted that the proposed reductions removed any surplus places within the services and members were assured that the needs of the Service Users are paramount and therefore would continue to be met.

A Member sought further information on the income from Service Users. Officers highlighted that the figure is obtained from the payments made by Service Users for the non-residential services they are in receipt of. It was added that Welsh Government Guidance and the decisions taken by a Task and Finish Group to increase the maximum charges for the services determine the costs of these services.

Members were asked to note that a percentage saving amount has been applied to each of the service areas, with an expectation that the units will find the savings, thereby reducing budgets to a minimum level with more direct cuts anticipated in coming years. Members queried whether budgets have been over generous in previous years, in order for savings to be found, whether it would have been more effective to regularly review the service and spends. Officers highlighted that there have been changes to funding and expenditure this year, with the reduction in the demographic growth funding and the Luncheon club budget changes. The Director credited staff for working hard to determine the level of savings with little impact to services.

A Member added that the report does not show what is discretionary and what isn't. This was clarified for the Members.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the officer's report: -

1. Members of the Scrutiny Committee considered and commented upon the range of savings proposals outlined in the report.
2. Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the anticipated withdrawal of demographic growth funding for 2015/16.

The meeting closed at 7.29pm.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2015.

CHAIR