

HEALTH AND WELL BEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4 DECEMBER 2012

39. BUDGET OPTIONS

The Committee received a presentation from Kevin McCallum, Marketing and Engagement Manager, Chief Executive's Department, on the process of the consultation and the progress made on Stage 2 of the consultation to date. Kevin McCallum reported that over 70 budget options had now been published and the savings identified were 25 per cent more than what was needed, giving Members and the public a real choice as to where they should be made. She also went on to outline the role of Overview and Scrutiny members in the process.

At the suggestion of the Chair the Committee then considered the 14 budget options relevant to its own remit in turn.

1. Assessment and Care Management

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services, introduced this option. Responding to comments from Members he stated that the Department needed to be reorganised, remove specialisms and develop professional activities; Staff were working on a significant amount of projects which were not easy to deliver. Mr Hodkinson indicated that Social Workers were working closely with colleagues in the NHS.

In relation to joint working with Health, Dr Abi Mantgani, Accountable Officer Designate, NHS Wirral CCG indicated that he welcomed the idea of Social Workers being practice centred, working closer geographically, this was something that had been raised previously. He raised concern regarding the potential delays in relation assessments which may affect the pressures on the NHS and budget; He felt further discussions and a joint approach was needed. Graham Hodkinson indicated that the Department would be looking into joint investment with NHS, with Social Workers providing adequate support to assisting in getting people out of hospitals. This would require a detailed piece of work to look at how systems work.

Mr Hodkinson indicated that with the reduction in staffing and increased demand for services, this would prove a challenge but it was essential to undertake joint working with colleagues in Health.

2. Targeted Support

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option. Responding to comments from Members he indicated that currently this was a system that was reactive but needed to be proactive to help and support people to manage their conditions and health to ensure they are being hospitalised for the right reasons.

Dr Abi Mantgani supported these initiatives which could assist in ceasing unnecessary admissions, which was why concern was raised regarding the delay in

assessments. A number of initiatives were being undertaken to help people manage in their own homes.

In response to Members, Mr Hodkinson indicated that in relation to assistance from the multi community and faith sectors this was an area that both the Department and Health were looking at. In term of outputs Mr Hodkinson indicated that more focused outcomes along with performance were needed, people leaving the care system with less needs.

In response to Members, in relation to Dementia care, Dr Mantgani indicated that carers needed a lot of support and health was currently looking at this along with the Carers Champion to offer assistance to those carers. Dr Mantgani agreed to submit a report on this to next meeting of the Committee.

The Chair, in summing up, expressed the Committee's general support for the department in working jointly with the NHS.

3. Support for Carers

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option. Responding to comments he stressed the need to improve services for carers and distribute the funding more effectively. In response to concerns raised, Mr Hodkinson indicated that the policy had yet to be implemented. Carers will get a different approach to access services this will sit alongside the Carers Strategy. A range of services are to be commissioned to meet their needs this would replace personal budgets.

Funding is to be allocated to GP for short breaks; referrals can be made for people to access this

In summing up, The Committee expressed concern regarding the Department's ability to make the saving and indicated that individuals may loose out which may cost the Council in the long term.

4. Non-Residential Care Charges

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option. Responding to comments indicated that the charges where in line with the National Criteria, people will be asked to contribute towards the services they access against their disposable income. This would be a stepped approach to help people adapt to the changes.

In response to Members, Mr Hodkinson agreed to provide case studies on the effect of changes to the charging policy. It was indicated that that disposable income would not include utility and food bills

With regards to hardship, Mr Hodkinson indicated that at present it was unclear as to what impact this would have; fair processes would be put in place and the Department was able to use its discretion when dealing with individual cases.

5. Assistive Technology

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option. Responding to comments Mr Hodkinson indicated that the charge was quite low which would cover the cost of equipment. The charge would need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

6. Community Meals

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option. Responding to comments Mr Hodkinson indicated that social isolation was a big issue and the Department was not looking to cease funding to luncheon clubs which offer a bit of contact for older people. At present the service is not being fully utilised as there were better options in local supermarkets etc. the service had some flexibility but this was a service in need of improvement. Consultation with services users was to be undertaken giving them the options.

The Chair, in summing up, stated that the Committee generally supported the option but raised concern regarding the rising costs. Members asked for the administrative costs to be highlighted within the proposal.

7. Day Services

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option. Responding to comments Mr Hodkinson indicated that there had been a big shift in demand and some of the buildings were not fit for purpose. Currently undergoing the first stage of the consultation process and it was recognised that detailed consultation was need with day services but there was a need to downsize the service.

Mr Hodkinson indicated that the Department would be looking at utilising leisure services facilities to offer different approaches i.e. sports and leisure activities. Ms Chris Beyga, Head of Personal Support, Adult Social Services indicated that although the demand was there, people wanted something different.

In response to Members suggestions, Ms Beyga indicated that discussions were being held with West Kirby Concourse, Beechwood and Leasowe Project to use their facilities for activities.

Members commented that it was pleased the Department were looking at this issue, as the Committee had done a lot of work on this with the Care Quality Commission. There was a need to increase choice and dispose of poor quality buildings.

Mr Hodkinson indicated that some of the services were linked in with communities; these would need to be built on when working well. Members indicated that there was a need to raise the aspirations of services users and change the perception that day centre services were the only options available. Examples of this had been shown at Best Bites, Birkenhead College.

In relation to training Ms Beyga indicated that the Department had received a grant from sector led trainers Skills for Care who had given support to help those staff to fill the skills gap.

Impacts to services users were not yet known, needs would need to be re-assessed on an individual basis; this was a huge piece of work to be undertaken. The needs of carers would also need to be assessed as it was recognised that the day services were a respite for some carers.

In response to Members, Mr Hodgkinson agreed to circulate the full Impact Assessment in relation to the proposed option.

The Chair, in summing up, stated the Committee's support of the proposed option.

8. Help and Advice for Older People

Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option. The Committee agreed to postpone discussion on this option to allow for further information to be circulated.

9. Residential Care for Learning Disabilities

Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option.

The Chair, in summing up, indicated the Committees support for the option

10. Review of Contracts

Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option

The Chair, in summing up, indicated the Committees support for the option

11. Review of Emergency Duty

Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option

The Chair, in summing up, indicated the Committees support for the option

12. Equipment Services

Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option and answered questions thereon.

The Chair, in summing up, indicated the Committees support for the option

13. Short Breaks (Respite)

Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option

In response to Members comments, Mr Hodkinson indicated that work had been undertaken with the independent sector which was currently on-going. There was a need to ensure the respite centres were of a decent condition.

Members expressed concern in relation to Fernleigh, in that services currently provided were not available in the independent sector last year and sought assurances that it would be in the future.

The Chair, in summing up, indicated the Committees support for the option but sought assurances that services provided at Fernleigh were made available in the independent sector.

14. Voluntary Sector Contract Review

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced this option in relation to investment with ARCH initiatives, Mr Hodkinson indicated that this would need negotiating and commissioned by the NHS.

In relation to the ESF funding impacts, Mr Hodkinson indicated that meetings were to be held with key voluntary sector agencies to gain a full a picture of the impacts.

Mr Brian Donaldson, representing the Carers Association asked about the transport policy for children and adults as this did not appear in the budget options. In response Mr Hodkinson indicated that this was detailed in the options for Children and Young People as it included the adoption of a new transport policy relating to home to school transport. For adults we had already started (from September) implementing the transport policy that was there but had not been implemented. This was not subject to consultation.

The Chair thanked the Members for their input and congratulated the Director of Adult Social Services and his Department on a clear, concise and transparent approach.