

APPENDIX ONE

BUDGET OPTION: COMMUNITY MEALS

1.0 OUTLINE OF PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Community Meals, or 'meals on wheels', have been a traditional part of adult social services for many years. It involves hot meals being delivered to a number of vulnerable residents every day. At the moment, people receiving community meals pay £2.68 per meal. The cost to the Council is £3.47 per meal.
- 1.2 The proposal is that the Council should increase the charges so the price paid covers the current cost, which would work out at 79p per meal, and replace the current contract with a smaller contract reflecting anticipated demands for the service.

2.0 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The Community Meals service is currently delivered by an independent sector provider under a contract which expires in June 2013. Since the contract was awarded in 2008 there has been a significant fall in demand for the service from 2,600 meals per week to 1,900 meals per week and this trend is continuing.
- 2.2 The development of personalisation and introduction of personal budgets and direct payments has undoubtedly had an impact in this area as individuals are making personal choices regarding their nutrition and food provision.
- 2.3 Currently the Council charges £2.68 per meal and this is a subsidised rate. The full cost of providing the meal is estimated to be £3.47 based on the original contract for 2,600 meals.
- 2.4 The fall in demand means that it is unlikely that the Council will need to have in place a large contract for community meals. The current subsidy is therefore no longer appropriate and it is proposed that the current contract is replaced with a smaller contract which reflects anticipated demand for the hot meals service over the next 3 years.
- 2.5 The current provider offers a range of meals to meet dietary requirements including diabetic, vegetarian, gluten free etc. However there are alternative providers of ready meals and a variety of competitive alternatives that people can access in the community. There are now lots of alternative providers of ready meals that can offer much greater choice to people at a reasonable cost to the individual.

3.0 ACCESSIBILITY OF PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The option in relation to Community Meals was published alongside a series of other options from the Chief Executive on November 9th 2012. These options were published following an extensive period of

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consultation during September and October 2012, which focussed on broad principles of policy to gather initial views on how options should be developed.

- 3.2 Residents, staff and stakeholders were provided with a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for this and all other options. This information included:

Questionnaire: Split into three sections, the questionnaire provided a one paragraph summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of three choices indicating their opinion on the option.

Summary Paper: Three summary papers (one per 'theme') were produced and were available online, at Council buildings and at consultation events. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.

Option Paper: For each of the published options, a detailed option paper was available. This paper provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.

- 3.3 The Questionnaire was the primary research tool used in this consultation, and as such it was essential that the document was designed in a way to ensure robust, clear and actionable results. It was also vital to the success of the project to ensure that the questionnaire was produced in a fashion that was accessible, clear and neutral. To ensure that this was the case, Council officers took a number of steps to ensure the questionnaire was externally validated as an effective research and consultation tool.
- 3.4 A draft version of the questionnaire was analysed by an external agency through the Market Research Society. The final draft of the questionnaire was also presented to the members of the Children in Care Council and a group of people with learning disabilities at a Council Day Centre who made further suggestions as to the design and wording of the document.
- 3.5 Further work was also done to ensure accessibility including publishing an interactive Easy Read version, and developing three individual videos, which were used at consultation events, on the Council website and also played through the network of 30 LCD screens in One Stop Shops and Libraries. These videos were designed to more fully explain the context of the options and also provide guidance for how to complete the questionnaire document.

4.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

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- 4.1 An extensive programme of public consultation was completed in relation to all options which were published in November 2012. This programme included over 100 community events at locations such as libraries, supermarkets, cinemas, community centres and children's centres.
- 4.2 Extensive online promotion of the consultation was also completed, with emails being sent to over 13,000 residents, and the consultation also featured prominently on the Council's website which receives in excess of 1,000 hits per day.
- 4.4 A series of detailed meetings, covering all budget options, was also held with key organisations. These organisations included the Carers' Development Committee, Carers Association and the Enabling Fulfilling Lives Group among others.
- 4.5 A full programme of presentations and workshops were held in Council Day Centres and residential and respite facilities, which were extremely well attended and involved a full discussion of the proposed options, its potential impact and the mitigation which could be implemented.
- 4.6 At a series of meetings scheduled to discuss budget options people were provided with a detailed presentation. This provided people with the rationale for proposing the options, the potential impact of the option and proposed efforts to mitigate this impact. These meetings are listed below:

Group / Centre	Date
Carers Association	28.11.12
Carers Development Committee	30.11.12
Highcroft	14.12.12
Eastham Day Centre	7.1.13
Heswall Day Centre	10.1.13
Highcroft	14.1.13
Moreton Day Centre	17.1.13
Enabling Fulfilling Lives Group	18.1.13
Beaconsfield	29.1.13
Fernleigh	30.1.13
Sylvandale	4.2.13
Girtrell Court	7.2.13

- 4.7 People using services were also assisted throughout the consultation period to complete the online and paper based questionnaire, in easy read format, with help from other people using services, staff and the videos which were produced.

5.0 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

- 5.1 In terms of the public consultation process, the response to the questionnaire demonstrated strong support from Wirral residents, staff and other stakeholders as to the implementation of this option. The table below shows the response to the public consultation:

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Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I support this under the circumstances	48.5%	2334
I accept this if it is absolutely necessary	31.8%	1531
I find this completely unacceptable	19.7%	946

- 5.2 At the series of consultation meetings at key sites as described above, people attending were provided with a detailed presentation related to the budget options involved. This presentation provided people with the rationale for proposing the options, which is outlined in section 2.0 of this report.
- 5.3 People were then given the opportunity to ask questions of Council officers and also to have those questions fed into the consultation process; either through completing a questionnaire or by having their comments noted at the meeting, or with any Council officer they worked with at any convenient time.
- 5.4 It is clear from the notes from these meetings that the only major concern around this option was the person's ability to pay, and the potential impact of increasing charges on the person receiving care.

6.0 POTENTIAL IMPACT IDENTIFIED

- 6.1 The assessment of need of an individual who is eligible under Fair Access to Care must take account of their need for nutrition and meal provision and this will be included in their support plan. Adult Social Care will ensure that the range of available choices is discussed with the individual and a suitable arrangement put in place.

7.0 PROPOSED MITIGATION

- 7.1 It is important that due regard is shown to the concerns highlighted throughout this consultation process from people using the services, their families, carers, and our own workforce. It is proposed that, should this option be considered and recommended by Cabinet and approved at Council that the following factors should be taken into account in the implementation of the option.
- 7.2 There is now greater choice for people to buy affordable meals, including supermarkets who deliver ready meals to the door and specialist companies who deliver affordable frozen meals that meet all dietary requirements, such as Wiltshire Farm Foods. No subsidy is provided for these alternatives to the home delivered hot meal service. There are also at least 40 luncheon clubs in the Wirral, 9 of which receive a grant payment from the Council.
- 7.3 The Council will ensure that comprehensive information is available to the public on the range of providers of this service, and further ensure

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that people using this service are fully involved and consulted on its future development.

8.0 SUMMARY

- 8.1 The rationale for this proposal of this option is outlined within this report, together with an outline of the extensive consultation process which followed its publication. Concerns raised through this process have been highlighted and mitigation has been identified.
- 8.2 Therefore, it is felt appropriate that the decision can be taken to implement this option, while ensuring that due regard is shown to address the concerns highlighted by people during the consultation process.