

HEALTH AND WELL BEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 28 March 2013

Present: Councillor S Mountney (Chair)

Councillors M McLaughlin A Brighthouse
C Povall B Mooney
M Hornby
R Abbey
T Norbury
D Roberts
M McLaughlin

Co-optees: D Hill S Sagaar
R Moula

Apologies: Councillor A Leech

68 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members of the Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests, in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

In relation to the items on the agenda, Members declared following interests.

Councillor Hornby declared a personal interest by virtue of his appointment as a trustee/Director of Voluntary and Community Action Wirral.

Councillor Roberts declared a personal interest by virtue of her appointment on the Management Committees of Arch Initiatives and Wirral Council for Voluntary Service.

Councillor Mooney declared a personal interest by virtue of her work with Age UK.

Councillor Norbury declared a personal interest by virtue of his employment at Merseytravel.

BUDGET OPTIONS

The Committee considered the Budget Efficiency Proposals that were considered and agreed by Cabinet on 20 December 2012 and Budget Council on 5 March 2013.

Mr Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Adult Social Services introduced the following proposals which formed the three year efficiency plan.

- **Review of Contracts and Grant funding to the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector including Review of Drugs and Alcohol Assessment and Rehabilitation Services**

In relation to the grant payments to voluntary organisations as detailed within the report, Members raised concern regarding the high grant payments given to provide Advocacy Services, In response, Mrs Chris Beyga, Head of Delivery, Adult Social Services Department indicated that the Department had to acquire a lot of voluntary services to provide support for a whole range of disabilities. Mr Hodgkinson indicated that advocacy services now came under a new contract which meant one overarching service for adults. A Member commented the role of advocacy needed to be looked into to ensure that they were fit for purpose and that currently there was a gap in the market for people that older people and vulnerable people could trust to assist them with day to day activities such as banking, collecting pensions etc. It was suggested that Committee could assist the Department to look at the role advocacy. In response to comments, Mr Hodgkinson indicated that clarification was needed as to exactly what was needed to enable the right services to be commissioned to meet those needs.

Mr Hodgkinson reported that the Department had negotiated and consulted with Age UK and all other organisations detailed within the report regarding the reduction in funding and that there would be renewed list of reduced funding payments made available for 2013/14. In relation to ARCH, the Council had a service level agreement for them to provide services in relation to drugs and alcohol and along with Age Concern had been served notice on the reduction in funding. Mr Hodgkinson indicated that the Department had to look at all associated costs and had identified and challenged those services that were no longer needed.

- **Transformation of Day Services and Daytime Provision**

In response to Members regarding the decision to close a large day centre with a small unit of cost, Mrs Beyga indicated that consultation was undertaken in 2011/12 and that the recommended closure was considered due its size and design of the building which was no longer fit for purpose, these factors were balanced against the savings, and the needs and wishes of the service users, the consultation document in relation to the proposal had also been circulated to MP's, elected Members, service users, carers and staff affected.

Mr Hodgkinson indicated that in response to the consultation, strong feedback had been received from the carers groups in relation to the neighbourhood link in Moreton which hadn't been captured within the report; therefore the proposal to close Moreton was now under review to enable the proposal to be managed more effectively and

build on the links already in existence in the community. Mrs Beyga indicated that she would be look into retaining services at Moreton, with the possibility of a small site being provided combined with a community centre etc. A site visit was to be undertaken with Asset Management to ascertain whether the Department could provide services and also meet the required savings.

Mr Daulby, representing the Carers Association indicated that they along with the carers had the challenged the decision to close the day centre and had met with Mrs Beyga to discuss the options around retaining and not closing the centre, it was hoped that working with the Department and the carers a better stronger service for Moreton could now be provided with developed links to the other three centres.

Mr Hodgkinson indicated that the Department had received positive feedback on the progress made to date; consultation would continue with all carers on planning for the decision to be taken in June 2013, it was reported that each family would be supported by a designated Social Worker and advocate to assist them during the transition. Consultation would also be undertaken with staff at the same time regarding the restructuring of teams. Members reiterated the importance of meaningful dialogue between carers and the Council during the implementation of the proposals.

Mr Hodgkinson reported that there would be a reduction in staffing levels in year 1, consultation on this was currently being undertaken. At present there was space in the present teams to accommodate those staff whose work was flexible. Mrs Beyga indicated that work was being undertaken to identify staff and that the Department was confident that working alongside carers they would be able to deliver the savings within the timescales. Officers were confident that with the reduction in staff, a high level of care could still be achieved. Full consultation would be undertaken with staff, carers and service users and all feedback fully evaluated.

In relation to the impacts on services due to the closure of Moreton, it was reported that at least 20 places would need to be found per day to support those who used the Centre, which would have an impact on the other sites would have to run on full capacity with the demand for services to be provided. It was hoped that the extra capacity could be managed with the use of additional resources.

Mr Daulby indicated that the Association had been undertaking work planning on how to assist service users and carers during the transition as there was some concerns and anxiety amongst the services users of Moreton about having to use another centre, this would need to be appropriately managed to enable a smooth and stress free transition, this was an area of work they were looking at.

In relation to the organisational structure and the reduction in management layers it was commented that the staff who remained within the Department would need support and training to help and advise them in their new roles and responsibilities.

In response to concerns raised in relation to transport, Mrs Beyga indicated that the Department was currently reviewing this and working alongside Merseytravel on initiatives, such as, travel training. In relation to the St Helens project referred to by Members, Mrs Beyga indicated that she had been very impressed by the project run by St Helens to enable service users to travel independently and form friendships whilst doing so.

In relation to under utilised centres, Mr Hodgkinson indicated that the Department would be looking at utilising these and working alongside Leisure Services with the possibility of providing services from these centres.