

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## DELEGATED DECISION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER

22 JANUARY 2015

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Charging for Assistive Technology and Extra Care</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All Wards</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Director of Adult Social Services</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>Councillor Christine Jones</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>Yes</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Two consultations have recently been undertaken on proposed changes to charging for Assistive Technology and for 24 hour support provided within Extra Care schemes. The purpose/aim was to recommend a change to the charging policy to ensure equity across services and in the application of the Fairer Charging Policy.
- 1.2 All feedback received by the Department as part of the consultation has been considered and as a result an alternative charging model is recommended for the 24 hour support provided within Extra Care schemes.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The proposal to charge for Assistive Technology was one of the Council's budget options for 2013 to 2016 and was consulted upon as part of the 'What Really Matters' consultation exercise which commenced in September 2012. The savings options were approved by the Council in March 2013.
- 2.2 A further report was presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2013 on 'Charging for Services – Adult Social Care' which included a revised Fairer Charging Policy. The Policy was approved by Cabinet Members subject to a further 8 week consultation process with individuals directly affected by the proposals.
- 2.3 The report to Cabinet recommended a charge of £2.50 per week for Assistive Technology and a standard charge for Extra Care based on an average of 5 hours care per week.
- 2.4 A financial assessment will determine the amount each individual person will be liable to pay. The Fairer Charging Policy ensures that the amount charged does not reduce a person's disposable income below basic levels of Income Support, or the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit, plus a 25% buffer.

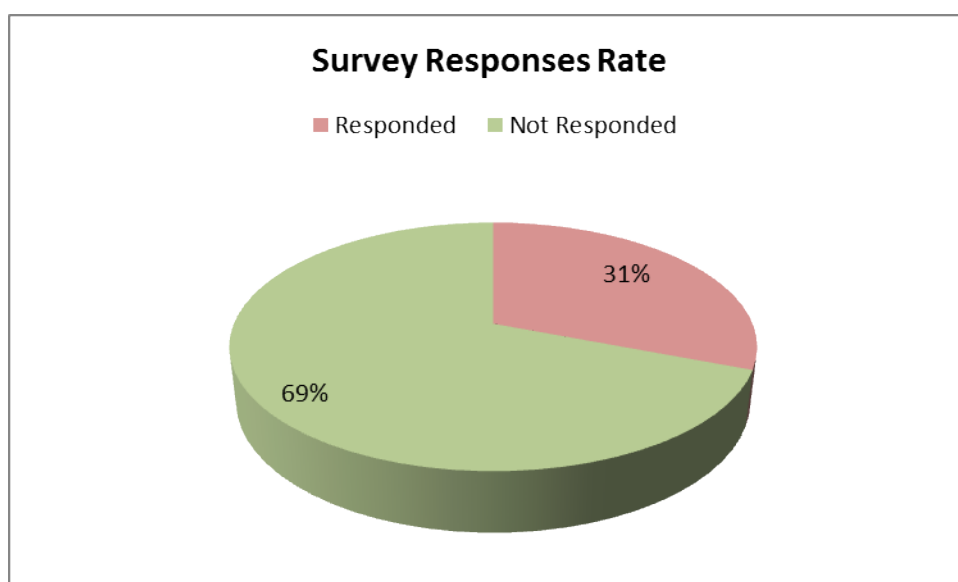
### 3.0 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

#### 3.1 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

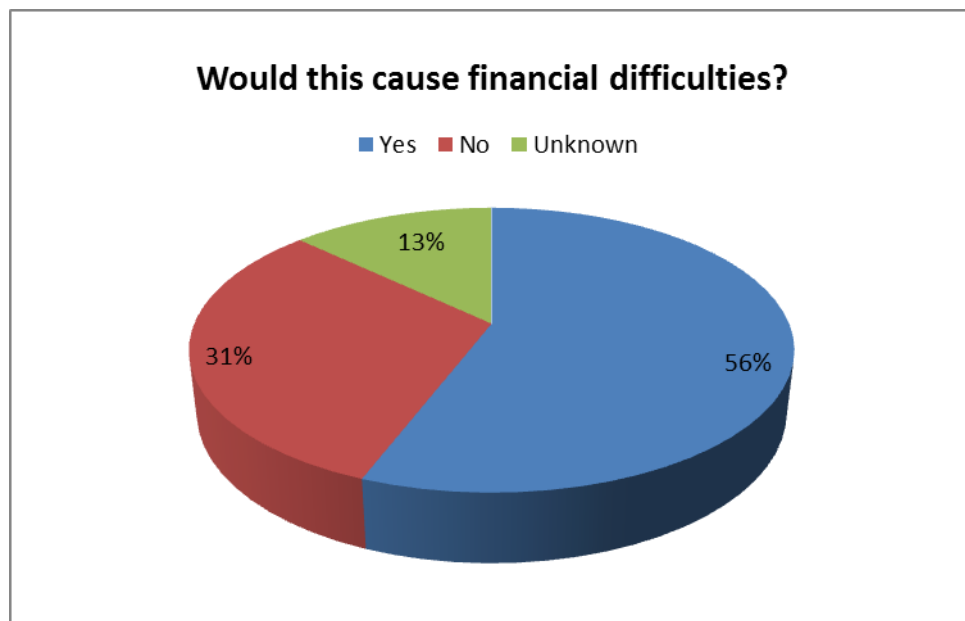
3.1.1 The proposed charge for Assistive Technology of £2.50 per week contained in the Fairer Charging Policy is as a contribution to the monitoring and response element of the Assistive Technology service.

3.1.2 An eight week targeted consultation process commenced on 24 September and closed on 19 November 2014. A total of 4,972 people who use the Assistive Technology service were contacted and asked to complete a short questionnaire with regards to the proposal to implement a charge for this service. The questionnaire gave individuals the opportunity to tell us if paying the charge would cause them financial difficulties.

3.1.3 1,534 responses were received during the consultation period. The chart below illustrates the response rate.



3.1.4 Over half of the respondents (56%) believe that the charge would cause them financial difficulties. The chart below illustrates the response rate.



3.1.5 A number of common themes have emerged from the consultation exercise. These include:

- Many respondents reported that they did not use the equipment
- Other respondents reported that they were encouraged to have the equipment as it was free of charge
- A significant number of respondents asked for the equipment to be removed
- Many individuals requested additional items of equipment if a standard charge is to be applied

## 3.2 EXTRA CARE

3.2.1 There are a number of Extra Care schemes where the domiciliary care provision has been commissioned as a Block contract. This provision has previously not been chargeable which is unfair to other domiciliary care users who are financially assessed for their services.

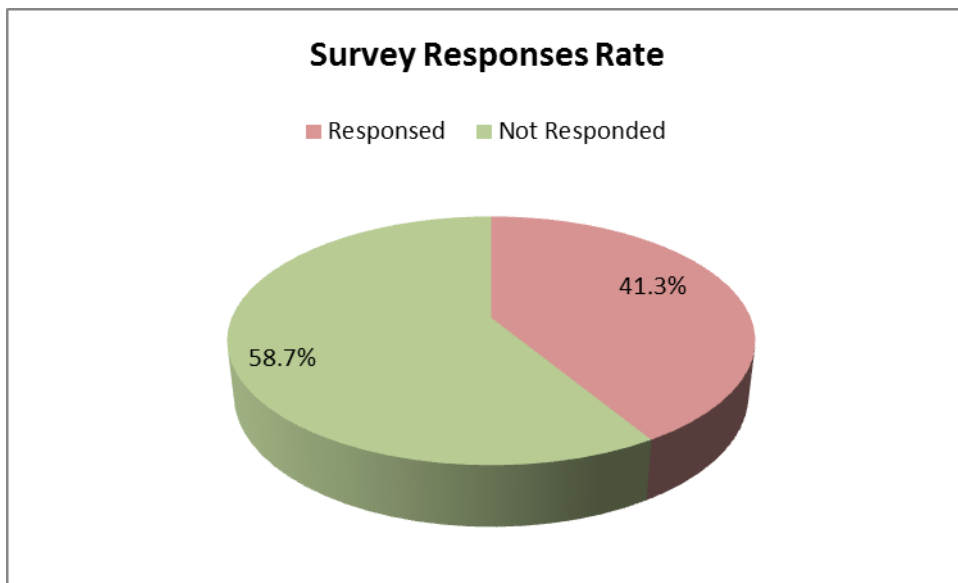
3.2.2 Some residents also receive additional domiciliary care, over and above the Block arrangements as part of their support plan. These hours are purchased as part of a Spot contract arrangement and are currently chargeable. 35% of existing residents are in receipt of additional services and already have a financial assessment in place.

3.2.3 The proposal is to implement a charge for the 'Block' element based on an average of 5 hours care per week which equates to a charge of £57.40 per week. One of the Extra Care schemes, Cherry Trees, supports people dementia and the proposed charge for this scheme is £67.25 per week.

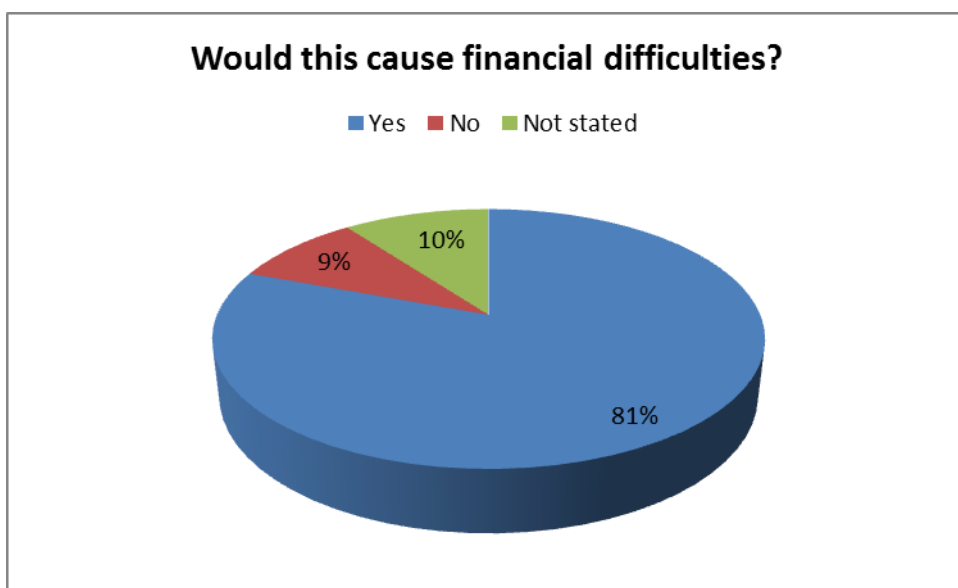
3.2.4 An eight week targeted consultation process commenced on 3 October and closed on 28 November 2014. A total of 213 people living in Extra Care schemes were contacted and asked to complete a short questionnaire with regards to the proposal to implement a charge for this service.

3.2.5 A meeting was also held with residents at Mendell Court to explain the charging proposal and answer any questions following a specific request to meet with them.

3.2.6 A total of 88 responses were received during the consultation period. The chart below illustrates the response rate.



3.2.7 Of the 88 responses received, 71 respondents believe that the charge would cause them financial difficulties. The chart below illustrates the response rate.



3.2.8 A number of common themes have emerged from the consultation exercise. These include:

- Many respondents reported that they did not access the 24 hour support service and as such felt they should not have to pay for it.
- Many indicated that when they accepted and entered into a tenancy agreement at no point were they told a requirement of the tenancy was a care package or that any further charges would be introduced.
- Residents have emergency pull cords in their property and are under the impression that the response service is provided by the Landlord and covered by a Support Charge that they pay as part of their rent.
- Some people have purchased their flats outright and are concerned that the market value may reduce because it will be more expensive to live in the scheme
- Some respondents are concerned that they may have to move out of their home if they can't afford to pay the charge.

#### **4.0 RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

4.1 After consideration of the feedback from residents in the Extra Care schemes and information obtained from the landlords of the schemes, the care providers and other North West Authorities an alternative charging proposal has been developed.

4.2 The proposal is to introduce a banded approach to charging based on level of need as set out in the table below.

Proposed Model	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5
Hours per week	0.00 - 0.50	0.51 – 5.00	5.01 – 10.00	10.01 – 15.00	15.01+
Hours Charged	0.5	2.5	7.5	12.5	17.5
Charge per week	£5.47	£27.35	£82.05	£136.75	£191.45

4.3 The charging model does not differentiate between 'Block' and 'Spot' hours. All hours of support will be charged in accordance with the above model.

4.4 The original proposal was to charge a higher rate for the Cherry Trees Extra Care scheme which supports individuals with dementia. The Council's intention is for all new Extra Care schemes to be dementia friendly and it is therefore proposed that the charges set out in 4.2 above will be applied to all schemes. This will ensure equity across the service.

#### **5.0 APPLICATION OF CHARGES**

5.1 The charges will not be applied until a full financial assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the charges reflect the service users' personal financial circumstances.

- 5.2 The charge will be based on an individual's ability to pay and those currently financially assessed in line with the Council's Fairer Charging Policy may not see an increase in their charge if they are already paying their maximum weekly contribution towards their overall service costs.
- 5.3 The amount charged will not reduce a person's disposable income below basic levels of income support plus a 25% buffer. The buffer provides an additional safeguard to prevent users' independence of living from being undermined by charging policies
- 5.4 If individuals are in receipt of disability related benefits and incur any extraordinary expenditure in relation to their disability then an allowance can be included in the financial assessment to reflect this.

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

### **6.1 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

6.1.1 The Department is in the process of awarding a new contract for the Wirral Independence Service, which includes the Assistive Technology service. The contract will be awarded March 2015 with implementation of the new service by mid June 2015. A project plan is being developed to ensure a smooth transition to the new service from April onwards.

6.1.2 It is therefore proposed that the charge for Assistive Technology of £2.50 per week is implemented from 1 April 2015. Any reviews requested by individuals can be undertaken between now and April in advance of the new service and capacity to do this can be built into the project plan.

### **6.2 EXTRA CARE**

6.2.1 The Department will need to undertake a review of each individual's care needs to determine the applicable charging band. Information on the number of hours accessed by each individual under the current block contract arrangements is not held by the Department; only 'spot' hours are recorded.

6.2.2 As identified in 3.2.2 above, 35% of existing residents are in receipt of additional services and already have a financial assessment in place. A review of the financial assessment will be undertaken but individuals may not see an increase in their charge if they are already paying their maximum weekly contribution towards their overall service costs.

6.2.3 The Director will arrange to meet with residents at each of the Extra Care schemes to discuss the charging proposal and support arrangements.

6.2.4 It is proposed that the charge, based on the banded approach, is implemented from 1 April 2015 after a review and financial assessment has been completed for each resident.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The purpose of the proposal is to ensure equity, eliminate the financial risk of challenge to financial assessments and to maximise income.
- 7.2 There is a risk that increased charges could lead to individuals withdrawing from the service.

## **8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 Not to charge for these services was considered, however for equity reasons this was not considered feasible and would have left the Council vulnerable to challenge from those using services and being charged for them.

## **9.0 CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 The Department has undertaken a targeted 8 week consultation process with individuals who are directly affected by these proposals.

## **10.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

- 10.1 None.

## **11.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 11.1 None

## **12.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 12.1 It is anticipated that the revised charging arrangements for Assistive Technology could potentially generate up to a maximum of £150,000 a year.
- 12.2 The new model of charging for Extra Care has the potential to generate approximately £150,000 in a full year against the original target of £250,000. The Department will identify alternative actions to address this shortfall.

## **13.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 None.

## **14.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 The Policy is in accordance with Fairer Charging and Fairer Contributions guidance issued by the Department of Health. The proposed change relates to the uniform application of approved charging principles.
- 14.2 An equalities impact assessment was prepared during the preparation of the 2014-15 budget proposals.

## **15.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 None.

## **16.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 None.

## **17.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

17.1 That the feedback from the consultation is noted.

17.2 The alternative charging model proposed for the Extra Care schemes is agreed.

17.3 That the Department progresses the charging process for Assistive Technology and Extra Care as set out in Section 6 of the report.

## **18.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

18.1 To ensure equity across the service and in the application of the Fairer Charging Policy.

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## **APPENDICES**

N/A

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL**

## **BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY**

<b>Briefing Note</b>	<b>Date</b>
N/A	

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet	10 December 2013