

Cabinet – 20 December 2006

Community Meals Service

Portfolio: Councillor Alan Paul, Social, Care, Health and Housing

Service: Social Care & Inclusion

Wards All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No.

Summary of report

The Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel (the Panel) met on 30 November 2006 as result of which it submitted a report to Cabinet requesting that

the process for the selection of provider(s) for the new community meals service be re-tendered or alternative means be found to guarantee an outcome whereby the hot daily meals service be delivered by the method of a prime cooked meal only.

The Panel considered a report, 29 September 2005, outlining the outcome of a review of community meals and proposals for remodelling the service. The report identified that the model would include:

- (a) Delivery of a daily hot meal
- (b) A frozen food delivery service and
- (c) Safe and well checks at the time of meal delivery.

The views of the Panel were included in the report to Cabinet of 19 October 2005, i.e that it *“repeated its recommendation for the inclusion of the Panel’s preference to retain a freshly cooked meal option.”*

The report to Cabinet recommended that

“the option to provide the service as either a hot meal cooked on the same day or a cooked frozen ready meal should remain open and subject to the tendering process”.

This option was based on the outcome of service user consultation which clearly indicated that some service users would value the extra choice. Cabinet approved the recommendation that the tender would proceed on this basis.

The service specification sets high nutritional standards that have to be met regardless of the method of delivery. Furthermore, the selection process will include tastings by older people, so if freshly cooked food is competitive and high quality it will not be disadvantaged in the process.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet notes the concern raised by the scrutiny panel.
2. The concerns previously expressed in the panels recommendations to cabinet were also noted.
3. That Cabinet reaffirms its original decision, that the option to provide the service as either a prime cooked meal or a regenerated frozen meal should remain open and subject to the tendering process and that the tendering process already commenced will be completed.

Resource and legal considerations

The council has legal powers and duties for the provision of community meals under the National Health Service and Public Health Act 1968, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the National Health Service Act 1977 and all related guidance.

When tendering for services the council has legal obligations under the Public Services Contracts Regulations 2006 to ensure that all procurement is undertaken in an open, transparent and fair basis. In addition, as the tender is being undertaken in accordance with EU legislation, once the scope and nature of the service has been published it is not possible to change the scope of the service that was indicated in the contract notice.

To stop the tendering process at this stage could result in the council incurring additional costs, and leave the council open to legal challenge if it was deemed that the decision to re-tender was with the purpose of favouring one or more bidders

Consultation and Citizen impact

The delivery of a modernised community meals will provide a wider choice of service to older people and those with disabilities. Four consultation events have already been held and the views of service users have helped inform the review of the service leading to the current tendering process. There will be further consultation during the selection process.

Performance and risk management issues

The remodelled service will ensure that performance improves. The service impacts on:

PAF indicators:

- C26 - Admissions of supported residents aged 65 or over to residential/nursing care.
- C32 - Older People Helped to Live at Home.

Vision 2008

The proposed development of the community meals service impacts and contributes to:

- Priority 5 - Make Walsall a healthy and caring place;
- Priority 9 - Listen to what people want;
- Priority 10 - Transform Walsall into an excellent authority.

Background papers

'Modernisation of the Community Meals Service' report to Cabinet 23 March 2005

'Community Meals' report to Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel 20 September 2005

'Modernisation of the Community Meals Service' report to Cabinet 19 October 2005

'Community Meals Services' report to Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel 30 November 2006

Author

Kathy McAteer
Acting Executive Director for Social Care & Inclusion

☎ 652700

✉ mcateerk@walsall.gov.uk



Kathy McAteer
Acting Executive Director
7 December 2006



Councillor Alan Paul
Portfolio Holder
8 December 2006