

SOCIAL CARE AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY & PERFORMANCE PANEL

THURSDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2013 AT 6.00 P.M.

Panel Members Present: Councillor T. Oliver (Chair)
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor J. Rochelle
Councillor D. Coughlan
Councillor D. James

Officers Present: John Bolton, Interim Executive Director
Peter Davis, Head of Community Care (Operations)
Suzanne Joyner, Head of Community Care
Tracy Simcox, Commissioning Lead
Dan Mortiboys, Senior Finance Manager
Tracey Evans, Lead Accountant, Finance
Matt Underhill, Committee Governance & Business Manager

Portfolio Holders Present: Councillor McCracken – Social Care & Inclusion
Councillor Towe – Finance & Personnel

300/13 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received for the duration of the meeting from Councillor Nazir and Councillor Rattigan.

301/13 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor James substituted for Councillor Nazir for the duration of the meeting.

302/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

303/13 MINUTES

The Panel considered the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

304/13 PETITION REGARDING BROADWAY NORTH RESOURCE CENTRE

The Interim Executive Director introduced the update. The following is a summary of the introduction and subsequent discussion:

- The Interim Executive Director explained that he had met with the petition representatives and held a discussion regarding a whole range of concerns. It was hoped that it would be possible to deal with some of the key issues raised

going forward. It was agreed to re-establish a proper service user forum so this group could be included in the process of determining future strategy;

- In relation Broadway North it was explained that officers will be working with service users to ensure a proper and appropriately managed closure of the centre. This will include personal support for service users during the transition. In addition, outstanding issues from the process will be considered in conjunction with service users. However, he emphasised that the decision taken by Cabinet to close residential services at Broadway North had been correct;
- The Chair explained that he had attended Cabinet and was concerned remarks made by the Portfolio Holder for Social Care and Inclusion suggesting that the Scrutiny Panel had been mischievous in its comments regarding the proposals. The Chair explained that he felt obliged to react to these comments as they were a challenge to the credibility of the Panel particularly given that the Panel had voted five to one in support of a recommendation to delay the closure of Broadway North while the suitability of the replacement provision was confirmed. The Chair further explained that the Panel had always acted on behalf of local residents particularly in relation to services that were vital to people in difficult circumstances. The Chair re-stated his previous concerns regarding the effectiveness of alternative provision at Lonsdale House. He explained that a number of Members had visited Lonsdale House and many felt that it was not a replacement in terms of capacity and provision for Broadway North. He added that these were concerns that the majority of the Panel had felt since proposals for the closure of the residential service were first made two years earlier. The Chair explained that he had been provided with a copy of a letter from Caldmore Accord Housing that was intended to provide reassurance regarding its capacity to deliver the same of level of support of Broadway North. He explained that in fact the letter had not provided confidence in the alternative provision at Lonsdale House as it confirmed that in practice beds for those in crisis would have to be found across Caldmore Accord Housing sites when capacity was reached at Lonsdale House;
- The Portfolio Holder for Social Care & Inclusion explained that she recognised that the Panel was sincere in its work on behalf of service users. She explained that she deeply regretted that the report to the Panel at its previous meeting hadn't provided the confidence and reassurance sought. She explained that she felt it was not appropriate for her to visit Lonsdale House as this was the responsibility of officers. However, officers enjoyed her full support regarding the proposals which centred on the provision of an effective service which was value for money. She expressed shock that the Panel had not felt reassured by the proposed alternative provision and made a personal commitment to work closely with officers to safeguard these services. She emphasised that crisis and respite care provision would continue to be delivered in Walsall but it would not be provided at Broadway North;
- The Chair explained that a function of the Panel was to be confident in the delivery of effective services. He further explained that he resented the comments that had been made at Cabinet regarding the Panel, noting that the Panel acted in good faith at all times. The Panel continued to be concerned that Lonsdale House did not have sufficient capacity to replace services at Broadway North; The Interim Executive Director explained that officers took the concerns expressed by the Panel very seriously and recognised that they had not given the Panel sufficient reassurance regarding the suitability of the replacement provision. A Panel Member felt that while officers had asserted that Lonsdale

House was fit for purpose Broadway North was a “palace” by comparison. The Interim Executive Director explained that he had personally involved himself in this matter to ensure proper provision was in place. This has included a trial of crisis beds at Lonsdale House which had ultimately demonstrated the suitability of provision. He further explained that officers had fully understood and reflected on the needs of those who used residential services at Broadway North and acknowledged the challenge faced by individuals who might be at a time of crisis during the transition of services to Lonsdale House was undertaken. He also explained that there will be four crisis beds available at Lonsdale house at all times, this would ensure provision above the average required over the last two years of three crisis beds. The Chair noted that such an explanation had not been provided at the previous Panel meeting. A Panel Member expressed the view that there had been overcapacity at Broadway North and it was important that value for money services were provided. However, the Chair disagreed. In response to a Panel query officers explained that while crisis beds would be based at Lonsdale House, Caldmore Accord would be able to determine which services from across the housing association would be most appropriate when seeking the most effective way to support someone in addressing their mental health needs;

- The Chair explained that this was an issue to which it would be important for the Panel to return. This would include the receipt of progress updates on the new model of service delivery.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

305/13 QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2013/14

The Lead Accountant introduced the update. The following is a summary of the introduction and subsequent discussion:

- It was explained that the current revenue forecast year-end position was an overspend of £1.090m after the use of reserves. In relation to the capital position an under spend of £1.769m has been forecast. It is planned to request that this under spend is slipped to the next financial year;
- In response to Panel queries it was explained that effectively the forecast revenue over spend was £4.9m. It was also explained that senior officers were identifying appropriate action to ensure that the budget is brought into balance. The Interim Executive Director explained that key challenges included a considerable increase in the cost of domiciliary care. This was in part a consequence of his view that the hourly rates paid for domiciliary care were unrealistic and so these have been increased since early 2013. However, he emphasised that action was being taken across the directorate in seeking to bring budgets into line. The Chair noted that the position which the council found itself in was very worrying. He added that the council was also faced with the challenge of enormous cuts to expenditure from central government, with a £7m reduction in the draft budget for the directorate coupled with a projected overspend of £5m equating to an overall reduction of £12m;

- In response to a Panel query it was explained that risks to delivery of services totalled £3.057m. However, while these risks were not definite officers believed it important that these were reflected in the budget setting process. Highlighted risks included possible increases in commissioning costs of domiciliary care, residential or nursing packages in 2013/14 due to changes in need. The Interim Executive Director explained that this was in part a consequence of the NHS experiencing unprecedented demand at its front door which as a result meant that the council is having to meet the care requirements of a very high number of individuals following hospital discharge.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

306/13 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15 FOR SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH PORTFOLIO

The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- The Chair raised a query relating to the proposed removal of social care recruitability payments. He observed that this was an important issue and invited the views of a number of members of the public who were in attendance. The sister of one regular attendee at Links to Work explained that the payments received by her brother and others gave them a sense of value and purpose and was recognition for the work undertaken. A further speaker emphasised the importance of Members visiting Links to Work to understand its value. A service user also spoke to highlight the importance of Links to Work for him. The Portfolio Holder for Social Care and Inclusion acknowledged that many people benefitted from the Links to Work service and it formed part of a set of services that were important to many people. She emphasised that the budget was still at the draft stage and it would be possible to seek to identify alternative budgetary reductions that might be more palatable;
- A Panel Member also highlighted the importance of the Links to Work service to many people and expressed concern regarding the proposed removal of the payments. He emphasised that he considered Links to Work an excellent service. As a consequence he proposed the following statement and recommendation to Cabinet: "The Panel note the proposed budget changes in Social Care and Inclusion as a result of the financial constraints with concern at the potential impact on service delivery in several areas. The Panel view with concern the emerging issue of the proposed removal of £110k of funding from recruitability payments, including Links to Work, Recruitability and Recruitability Plus services. Further to this the Panel would recommend that further consideration be given to retain the payments, allowances and other expenses for those who use the Links to Work service". The Chair seconded the recommendation and it was unanimously supported by the Panel. The Chair also expressed surprise that the Links to Work featured prominently in the Adult Social Care Local Account 2011-13 given the budget proposals. In response to a Panel query the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel explained that the council had self-funded its apprenticeship scheme. However, it would not be possible for funding to be taken from that scheme to support recruitability payments. Officers explained that Links to Work service users received a mixture

of payments which included payments for ten hours per week work. It was further explained that £66k of payments were received by eighty-nine Links to Work service users, with £44k being received by those within the Recruitability Plus scheme which assisted individuals in finding work either within the council or the private sector. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel also pointed out that £2.2m of funding for apprenticeships had been found by the council from its own budgets and that it had not received funding from government. The Interim Executive Director explained that he was a proponent of the work undertaken by Links to Work. However, he pointed out that a number of those who benefit from the service would not in fact be entitled to social care support. The proposal to cease the payments was taken in order to enable the service to continue operating. He also explained that a further issue existed in relation to the wages received by those at Links to Work. Those who attend the day service receive the minimum wage for ten hours per week, the remaining twenty-five hours of attendance are unpaid and on a voluntary basis. This overall position effectively means that individuals receive less than the minimum wage and ultimately that may be illegal. It was also his view that the solution could be to create a social enterprise to enable Links to Work to continue and be sustainable. In response to a Panel query it was explained that the service costs £600k to operate and produces income of £300k;

- In relation to preventative low priority services it was explained that this was a set of services that did not fit within the directorate's preventative agenda. This would include bereavement and advocacy services which individuals would continue to be able to access elsewhere;
- In relation to the proposal to review care costs in extra care housing it was explained that the council had faced exceptionally high costs in the borough. This was in part a consequence of the council operating an expensive model. The intention was to continue to provide services to those who are eligible, However, those who are not eligible to receive social care services will no longer receive housing related support services;
- In relation to the proposal to reduce the number of community satellite bases for day services it was explained that a set of criteria were being devised for determining which bases should be retained. It was further explained that it was intended to reduce the number of bases from seven to five. It was also explained that those with the highest care needs attended Goscote which would not be directly affected by the rationalisation proposals. A Member noted that Neighbourhoods Services funding was received in the Moxley Area. He explained that it would be important for the existence of this additional resource to form part of any process to determine the centres where day care services will no longer be operated. He also requested that the Panel receive guidance regarding the criteria being applied in this process. Officers also agreed to provide Members with a map detailing the spatial distribution of bases across Walsall;
- In relation to Access, Assessment and Care Management it was explained that a £800k saving would be achieved through a reduction in the number of social workers. This represented a 20% reduction in the total number of social workers. In response to a query from the Chair officers explained that there was a potential risk that a reduction in the number of social workers could result in an increase in waiting times for assessment which could impact on an individual's ability to regain their independence. However, changes made to the operating

model will mean that the assessment and support will be delivered more effectively and minimise this risk;

- In relation to Strategic Development it was explained that reductions would be made in a number of areas totalling £489k. This includes a reduction in staffing although there had been a significant improvement in First Stop Shop responses had been reduced from thirty-nine to twenty-four days. A Member also highlighted the improvements made in response times. It was explained that a review of the apprenticeship scheme was also taking place with the proposal to reduce the commitment by £250k. It was further explained that the directorate does not have the capacity to continue to offer this opportunity in its current form. It was intended to move forward with an apprenticeship scheme that was operated jointly with the National Health Service whereby individuals receive training across health and social care. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel explained that significant investment in apprenticeships had been delivered by the council including £450k for public sector and £375k for private sector opportunities. It was also explained that there were currently seventy people in the social care apprenticeship scheme and they would be supported through to the completion of their apprenticeships. In addition, it was explained that most apprentices were under twenty-five, although a number of apprentices over twenty-five undertaking a career change were also on the scheme. It was further explained that the apprenticeship was a two year scheme which included placements in service areas and classes at Walsall College;
- In relation to Commissioning the Interim Executive Director explained that it was intended to reduce the use of short term placements and increase usage of re-ablement. This objective will be supported by investment in intermediate care support. In relation to Housing21 it was explained that there was to be renegotiation of the contract as it had been acknowledged that the price paid for placements was too high for respite care. A further issue exists in relation to other services delivered by Housing21, including day care which the council had determined it was not appropriate for it to continue funding. It was explained that this would not affect the delivery of these services as individuals will have alternative care provided elsewhere, including self-directed support. The daughter of a service user who regularly attends the Aldridge site highlighted the importance of the service at that location, particularly given the significant distances her mother would be required to travel across the borough to access alternative provision should the Aldridge site close. Officers acknowledged that the Housing21 site at Aldridge was a special case and they were very keen to give further consideration to its continued operation. This focused on working with Housing21 to determine if the site could continue to operate with funding from day attendees personal budgets. However, Housing21 have expressed some doubts as to whether this would be viable. In response to the issue of regarding the effectiveness of the council's billing arrangements for managed personal budgets it was explained that work was being undertaken to improve the related IT systems;
- In relation to Mental Health service provision officers explained that proposed savings include the removal of a number of staff posts, including user empowerment and welfare rights posts. The Chair explained that it was his understanding that the welfare rights post that was proposed for removal had a number of specialist elements that would also be lost and this was a matter of concern. A number of Members also stressed the value of the welfare rights service. Officers explained that specialist guidance would be retained as this would be delivered in partnership with mental health partner organisations.

Resolved:

That the Panel note the proposed budget changes in Social Care and Inclusion as a result of the financial constraints with concern at the potential impact on service delivery in several areas. The Panel view with particular concern the emerging issue of the proposed removal of £110k of funding from recruitability payments, including Links to Work, Recruitability and Recruitability Plus services. Further to this the Panel would recommend that further consideration be given to retain the payments, allowances and other expenses for those who use the Links to Work service; &

the report be noted.

307/13 MARKET POSITION STATEMENTS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

The Interim Executive Director introduced the report. The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- It was explained that the purpose of the market position statements was to provide guidance to potential providers of social care services in the borough. The position statements would ensure that the council is clear about requirements;
- It was also agreed that officers would provide the Panel with further guidance regarding the revised operating model.

Resolved:

That officers will provide the Panel with further guidance regarding the revised operating model; &

the report be noted.

308/13 SUPPORT FOR LIVING AT HOME CONTRACT – FURTHER UPDATE

- Officers explained that council had been determined to learn the lessons from previous exercises and procure domiciliary care services on a local basis. It was recognised that this was the most cost effective and efficient approach. Officers intended to establish block contracts with a restricted number of providers which was not anticipated to reduce choice but instead enable the council to ensure the delivery of a high quality service. In addition, providers would operate in a maximum of two from a total of six zones across Walsall. Officers agreed with Members that the use of locally based carers would assist in achieving the most effective services;
- The Chair raised a number of issues in relation to the framework contract, these included whether the contract would use the Living Wage rather than the National Minimum Wage, the issue of minimum fifteen minute visits to care recipients, together with the issue of zero hours contracts. In relation to visit times officers explained that the time a carer will spend visiting a care recipient would be determined by the individual's need which will be based on a social worker led assessment. The Interim Executive Director explained that there was

currently no provision in the contract regarding the use of the Living Wage and zero hours contracts. However, he acknowledged the importance of specifications in relation to travel time and minimum time to be spent with care recipients. In relation to costs the Interim Executive explained that he had been staggered by the hourly rate paid in Walsall of £10.40, this was below the regional average of £12.50 and the LGA level of £11.50 - £12.00 and this would now rise. The Chair and other Panel members emphasised their view that the use of the Living Wage was very important.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

309/13 PROPOSED CHANGES TO DAY & RESPITE CARE SERVICES (HOUSING 21)

The Chair explained that this issue had been considered as part of the budget item.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

310/13 ADULT SOCIAL CARE LOCAL ACCOUNT 2011-13

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

311/13 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

It was agreed that the final report of the peer review of the council's social care services would be considered at a future Panel meeting.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

312/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair informed Members that the date of the next Panel meeting would be 9 January 2014.

The meeting terminated at 8:02p.m.

Chair:

Date: