

DATE: 15 July 2010

**Report: Links to Work: Preparation and Supported Employment Service
– Update on future of the service.**

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Barbara McCracken – Social Care and Inclusion

Summary of report:

This report provides an update in respect of Links To Work as a response to the direction provided by Cabinet July 2009

1. Cabinet approved the approach to restructure Links to Work, specifically the reduction from 32 to 17 posts
2. Cabinet also directed that we should do all we can to maintain a service for those service users with a learning disability who currently attend Links to Work.
3. Cabinet instructed Social Care and Inclusion to explore opportunities available to the Council and its partners to provide sustainable employment opportunities to people with disabilities and for this to include a review of the future role of Links to Work.

Background papers:

Links to Work - Work Preparation and Supported Employment Service - Decision on the future of the Service – Cabinet Report July 2009

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – October 2009
Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – November 2009
Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – January 2010
Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – February 2010
Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

Health Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny Panel – March 2010
Links-to-Work work Preparation and Supported Employment Service. Update on the future of the Service.

Reason for scrutiny:

The Scrutiny and Performance panel requested this update to assess and understand the impact of the restructuring of Links to Work, specifically the impact of changes, the number of posts at risk and any impact on service users. *Reference; Scrutiny and Performance Panel update January 2010*

In particular the Panel requested an updated on the continued provision of services.

Citizen impact:

The agreed approach is the development of future services designed to minimise the impact on service users who attend Links to Work.

Maintain a service to provide employment related activities, modernising the approach to maximise service user's strengths and develop social inclusion.

The proposals also facilitate the long term stability of the service which should re-focus on creating real employment and employment related experiences / activities.

Environmental impact:

There are currently none.

Performance management:

There are key performance indicators that are affected by the operations at Links to Work. *Reference; Scrutiny and Performance Panel update January 2010*

Equality Implications:

Links to Work offers support, tackles inequalities and encourages independence through the acquisition of skills and progression to open employment. This service is intended to be in line with key government directions outlined in 'Our health, our care, our say – a new direction for community services', 'Putting People First' and 'Valuing People Now'. *Reference; Scrutiny and Performance Panel update January 2010*

Consultation:

The panel requested an update to assess and understand the impact of the restructuring of Links to Work, specifically the impact of changes, the number of posts at risk and any impact on service users.

The Panel requested an update on the provision of services. The agreed approach is the development of future services designed to minimise the impact on service users who attend Links to Work. This report highlights the work in progress to consolidate the future model.

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1. Current Position

1.1 Impact of Change

- 1.1.1 24 at risk posts will be replaced by 9 new posts resulting in the reduction from 32 to 17 posts agreed by Cabinet July 2009. The 9 new posts are directly responsible for the supervision of the 80 people per day who attend Links to Work, 147 in total.
- 1.1.2 The workforce has now been downsized by 13. The remaining 4 people at risk have undertaken a four week skills match / evaluation process to determine who would be most appropriate to assimilate into the post of Supervisor. The 2 unsuccessful candidates are still subject to the Local Authorities Redeployment process. We are continuing to explore redeployment opportunities for these remaining employees.
- 1.1.3 The 29 week redeployment process has been extended by a further four weeks to aid this process.

2. Service provision

- 2.1 Following the reduction from 32 to 17 posts at Links to Work, consideration has been given to reducing building / site capacity. The service currently operates from 3 sites; a reduction to 1 is the preferred option.
- 2.2 Consolidation of the service to one site will enable staff and service users to develop potential work streams that are vital to the future of Links to Work and support commissioning plans for employment outcomes.
- 2.3 A report was presented to Social Care and Inclusion Property Services on 20th June 2010 requesting consideration for the above proposals. This report will be reviewed by the AM2010 Project Board in early August.
- 2.4 The next review of three year clause rental agreement for Unit 1 Access Point is May 2011; therefore if we do not wish to renegotiate a further 3 year rental agreement. We need to give 6 months notice to end the lease, so the latest date for this would be 1st November 2010.

Closure of the Stephenson Avenue site; large premises designed for light / heavy industrial work only. Formally used for recycling plastics, collection, sorting, bailing, operations ceased 2009. Now considered unfit for purpose, there are estates liability issues regarding fabric of the building (prefabricated).

Retain Electrum Point; current use light industrial packing and assembly support industries such as Squires, Yale, Author Hough's and Icon etc. (Walsall, Wolverhampton, and Telford). Provides a range of office accommodation for Links to Work staff and potential to introduce administrative, employment related activities, adult learning and vocational activities.

- 2.5 A review is underway to consider the viability of all work streams; this will identify opportunities to create potential Community Interest Companies. These could then be developed in partnership with the voluntary sector and provide real employment opportunities for our service users, in line with current Government Strategy.

- 2.6 A formal reassessment of all service users has commenced to ensure that the transition and remodelling of the service meets their needs, this would include new individual profiles, a review of permitted earnings, appropriate referral routes and monitoring of placements.
- 2.7 Human Resources and Organisation Development along with the Project Management Team have developed a staff training programme designed to meet the changing needs of the service, focusing on employment initiatives to meet local and government requirements and the need to develop a socially inclusive service creating better choice and opportunities for service users.
- 2.8 The Strategic Commissioning Manager is to create a specification for employment services and test the market place to identify potential outsource solutions. Closer links with existing mainstream employment services should be developed. Government funded services have the professional capacity to improve employment opportunities for vulnerable adults.
- 2.9 The result of changes to the staffing structure removes the unacceptable levels of recurring deficit; however the service needs to establish a robust financial framework to ensure continued service delivery and regular meetings have been established to monitor current and future financial outcomes.