



CABINET – 19TH APRIL 2016

SIGNPOSTING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICE PROPOSALS FOR CRISIS AND EMERGENCY SUPPORT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval for the continuation of the Signposting and Community Support Service (SCSS) which provides emergency support to people in crisis in Leicestershire. The Service replaced the Leicestershire Welfare Provision (LWP) Service in April 2015 and was trialled as a pilot scheme during 2015/16.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that provision of the Signposting and Community Support Service as set out in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the report is approved.

Reason for Recommendation

3. To enable ongoing and effective support to people in crisis in Leicestershire.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. Proposals for a future SCSS were considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 6th April 2016 and its views will be reported to the Cabinet.
5. Approval of the proposed service model by the Cabinet will enable effective recommissioning and ongoing delivery of the Service.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. Implementation of the pilot Signposting and Community Support Service (SCSS) was approved by the Cabinet on 6th February 2015.

Resource Implications

7. The SCSS is funded from a County Council earmarked reserve created through underspends from Local Welfare Provision Grant, received

from the Department for Work and Pensions in 2013/14 and 2014/15. The County Council also approved £100,000 of on-going growth from 2018/19 onwards at its Budget Meeting on 17th February 2016.

8. The projected funding profile for the new service as at February 2015, was;

Budget (£)	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Earmarked Reserve funding	£300,000	£250,000	£225,000	£100,000	£25,000	£900,000
On-going funding	-	-	-	£100,000	£100,000	£200,000

9. The 2015-16 (Year 1) cost of the SCSS was circa £315,000; £15,000 more than programmed but still significantly (by circa 30%) cheaper than the previous (LWP) model. Savings have been generated by ceasing to use an external provider to administer and manage the public interface and by providing people with reused, rather than new, furniture and white goods.
10. On the basis of the pilot scheme, the proposed funding profile for future years is now as follows;

Budget (£)	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Earmarked Reserve funding	290,000	290,000	0	0	900,000
On-going funding	-	-	100,000	100,000	200,000
Total	290,000	290,000	100,000	100,000	1,100,000

11. It is expected that the above profile will enable service provision at broadly existing levels for the next two financial years. This will be achieved by delivery of savings and efficiencies currently in place or being piloted, such as increased use of funding from Charity Link partners and providing reused goods. From April 2018 onwards the currently allocated funding would be sufficient to resource a limited baseline service and, in the absence of any additional funding, service reduction and redesign would need to be implemented in consultation with delivery partners.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources and County Solicitor have been consulted on the proposals.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

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PART B**Background**

13. In October 2014 the Cabinet considered a report on the proposed Signposting and Community Support service to replace the LWP, enabling it to continue to support vulnerable people. This was to be funded via the LWP underspends for 2013/14 and 2014/15. Following consultation, the Cabinet agreed (in February 2015) a six-month trial of the SCSS. The trial was subsequently extended to cover the winter of 2015/16.
14. Around three quarters of the earmarked reserve funding has been allocated to provide immediate and material support for food, fuel, white goods and furniture and one quarter has been allocated to support preventative advice and signposting services through First Contact Plus, Bridge Housing, Citizen's Advice Leicestershire and Citizens Advice Charnwood.
15. The results of the SCSS during 2015/16 are summarised below;
 - Between April 2015 and March 2016, 343 Leicestershire residents have been signposted by First Contact Plus to practical and material support and advice across the county. First Contact Plus is an internal scheme where if one partner visits a person's home they check a range of issues and if necessary pass these on to partner organisations in order to safeguard vulnerable people. A phone line signposting service is also provided.
 - 88 residents have been supported through financial advice from Citizen's Advice Services, helping them to manage in excess of £981,889 worth of debts through the Leicestershire Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB). Charnwood CAB is run separately and has supported 28 people to manage £318,257 worth of debt.
 - In the 11 months to the end of February 2016, Charity Link helped 1,324 people with grants to the total value of £133,952.
 - Between April 2015 and January 2016, district councils and the Bridge (a registered charity which helps the most vulnerable people with housing issues) have helped individuals and families receive emergency food on 388 occasions and helped individuals and families receive emergency fuel on 454 occasions.
 - The Bridge's Housing Law Advice Service has assisted 110 people with housing related advice and support between April 2015 and March 2016.
 - Via the referral and direct payment arrangements between local authorities and the consortium of furniture re-use charities, individuals and families have been helped with the provision of

white goods and furniture on 334 occasions - for example enabling a move into permanent accommodation and out of crisis.

16. The SCSS is both working with a greater number of people and delivering support at significantly less cost than the previous, eligibility criteria, call centre based LWP model. From April 2015 to January 2016, approximately 1176 individuals or families have received support compared to 832 successful applications under the previous model (1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015). It is worth noting that the 1176 figure referred to above might not always represent separate individuals or families.
17. The SCSS has also supported people, via frontline social care, family support or housing workers, in a more immediate and targeted manner in people's homes and has provided residents with previously unavailable housing and debt advice to provide longer-term support.
18. A voluntary sector Big Lottery bid to the Help Through Crisis Fund was submitted in autumn 2015 for £750,000 to provide advice and support services relating to debt, benefits, employment, housing and homelessness that would have complemented the SCSS. The bid was unsuccessful but the partnership of support organisations will pursue other funding opportunities that might arise in the future.

Equalities and Human Rights implications

19. An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been carried out for the replacement of the LWP with the SCSS model and was appended to the report considered by the Cabinet in February 2015. Implementation of the Equalities and Human Rights Improvement Plan is ongoing and includes development of equalities analysis of SCSS users.

Background Papers

Leicestershire Welfare Provision Proposal from April 2015, Report of the Chief Executive, Cabinet, 6th February 2015

<http://cexmodgov1/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4359&Ver=4>

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2016/17 – 2019/20, Budget Report of the Cabinet, County Council, 17th February 2016

<http://cexmodgov1/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=4427&Ver=4>

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