



ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 JANUARY 2010

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2010/11 TO 2013/14

MINUTE EXTRACT

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Adult Social Care and Health and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2010/11 to 2013/14 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it relates to the Adult Social Care Service (ASCS). A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr D A Sprason CC, the Cabinet Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health, to the meeting for this item.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

1. Adult Social Care and Health

General

- (a) The Director of Adult Social Care and Health indicated that he was confident that the 2010/11 budget would be delivered but over the four years of the MTFS there was a risk that, given the magnitude of the change required, the continuing demand and cost pressures on adult social care and future uncertainties such as free personal care, the savings might not all be delivered in the later years. However, a great deal of work was taking place to build capacity, firm up on project plans and mitigate risks to reduce these as far as possible. The position would be reviewed at the end of each year.
- (b) Provision for inflation had been made centrally; this was not usual practice but was a result of the current financial climate and the uncertainty regarding the future levels of inflation. In this regard the Committee was advised that the Local Government Employers had indicated its view that there should be a public sector pay freeze in 2010/11. This was currently with the unions for consultation.

Growth

- (c) The growth provided for independent home care over four years would equate to approximately an 11% increase in the budget whereas the demand for this service was growing at 13% per annum. Managing

this would be challenging. However this growth in demand should, to some extent, be met by growth in direct payments and supported living which would help to meet the level of need. It was important to note that there were various provisions in the budget to ensure overall balance.

- (d) The modest growth in supported living for people with mental health difficulties of two placements per year was based on historical evidence and a prediction of future trends. Officers were confident that this prediction was accurate.
- (e) The County Council provided minor adaptations but was working with the district councils to help them deliver major adaptations more effectively. The Audit Commission and Care Quality Commission had both recommended that an integrated approach was taken to the provision of adaptations and community equipment. This would involve joint working with both the district councils and NHS and would make the service more efficient.
- (f) Members were pleased that a growth bid had been made for occupational therapy services. It would be important to ensure that opportunities for partnership working with the NHS in this area were explored.

Efficiency Savings

- (g) The savings that would be made by ensuring the robust application of existing eligibility criteria would not result in anyone currently receiving a service becoming ineligible. It was intended that an additional layer of challenge would help services to be delivered more efficiently and ensure that service users received the minimum amount of funding for the services they required. Over the next four years all service users would be reassessed through this process, starting with those currently assessed as moderate. It was hoped that the roll out of personal budgets would lead to further savings in this area.
- (h) The Electronic Home Care Monitoring system would deliver efficiency savings because it was a more accurate method of recording the amount of care delivered than the previous, paper based system and it enabled officers to review the level of care provided, for example if it was clear that less care was being provided than commissioned then the payments to the providers would be reduced. Additionally, electronic returns could be processed more efficiently.
- (i) The introduction of the Electronic Home Care Monitoring System would not change the process for commissioning care. It would not affect the number of hours that home care was provided for; tolerances were built in to allow for extra care to be provided and paid for during a week. If the electronic monitoring highlighted instances where significantly more time was being spent with a service user than had been commissioned

then the provider and/or service user could require a review of the care package.

Increased Income

- (j) The new charges following the fairer charging review would be phased in from October 2010 to allow time for changes to be made to existing systems. Service users would be assessed to see if they needed to pay for services; charges would only be paid by those that could afford to. It was expected that the income from day services would be £200,000 per year and the income from charging for carer services would be £100,000 per year.
- (k) The removal of the weekly maximum charge for home care would only affect service users with a significant amount of capital. It was estimated that 47 service users would, under the new system, pay between £180 and £199, 98 service users would pay between £200 and £299 and 7 service users would pay between £300 and £399. The numbers of service users represented only 2.6% of those affected; 40% received a service free of charge.
- (l) The County Council currently paid £5 for each freshly delivered meal to a service user. However, there would soon be a new provider for community meals. The new contract had an enhanced specification and it was hoped that it would deliver better value for money.

Service Reductions

- (m) The change in eligibility criteria, which meant that services would no longer be provided for people with 'moderate' needs, was seen as a major policy change and was a decision that had been reluctantly taken. However, this had to be seen in the wider context of savings requirements. It was not possible for the Council to continue to provide services to those with 'moderate' needs, given the level of resources available. This change would bring the Council in line with the majority of councils in the country. Advice and information would still be available for those with 'moderate' needs and they would be signposted to other services. These support systems were currently available for those with 'low' needs.
- (n) Concern was expressed that the review of the voluntary sector would result in a reduction in the services that people with 'moderate' needs would be signposted to. Members were advised that the review would identify whether voluntary sector bodies were delivering the County Council's priorities and if services were organised effectively or whether they could be done better. The review would be a robust process, including all voluntary sector bodies that currently received funding and involving extensive consultation.

- (o) The refocus of employment services would include the consideration of whether external funding could be generated in order for the County Council's contribution to the Breaking the Barriers team to be reduced and whether employment support might be provided better through mainstream services. For example, day care providers could help service users to identify employment opportunities and encourage them to undertake training or volunteer work. Employment support would, however, remain a priority.

2. Libraries and Heritage Services

- (p) The contract for renewing library stock had been renegotiated and much more favourable terms offered; it was hoped that this would minimise the impact of the proposed reduction in funds.
- (q) The library capital programme would not continue during the foreseeable future because the value of capital receipts had fallen. The Programme was wholly dependent on generating capital receipts. Nonetheless, it would be important to be aware of any opportunities for external funding.
- (r) Officers had access to precise statistics on library users and would be able to identify if policies such as 'self service' were having a negative impact on library use. To date, feedback on self service had been generally positive. Officers would, however, closely monitor the implementation and seek to identify those service user groups having most difficulty with self service and identify ways to support them.
- (s) With regard to the proposed reduction in library staff, it was hoped to minimise the number of redundancies by looking to contract variations (reducing hours) and through turnover (natural wastage).
- (t) The savings in the museums service would result in the Open Museum Service having to be mothballed. It would also require Snibston Discovery Park to reduce costs by £150,000 which might require a reduction in opening hours.
- (u) Centre Stage in the County was currently funded by a grant from the Arts Council. Any changes in grant funding would need to be assessed and might affect the Council's ability to continue to deliver the service to current levels.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the comments of the Committee be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 3 February 2010.