

Additional information sought by Cabinet Members following the Cabinet meeting on 16 February 2012

Reviewing Officers

Background

Reviewing Officer posts were created in 2002 in order to provide annual reviews for service users assessed under the NHS & Community Care Act 1990. Reviewing Officers are divided between the Adult Social Care North and South teams. They do not complete safeguarding investigations as they are not qualified social workers. They receive the same level of pay as qualified social workers following a re-grading claim.

Through the development of a more efficient assessment and review system (Liquid Logic), the new IAS system will capture all the case management information in an easy to use system. Social Workers will absorb reviews as part of a wider reconfiguration of care management.

Current situation

The cost of Reviewing Officers was quoted as £191k and the option to cease 5 posts was agreed at the Council meeting of 24th November 2011. Since then, one reviewing officer has opted to take VR/VER, bringing the saving to £152,800. Reviewing Officers have been told that a decision to cease posts has been taken. Consultation meetings were held with the staff concerned on 3rd / 20th October, 17th/ 25th/29th November 2011 and 9th February 2012. The Reviewing Officers submitted a consultation response to PLT and Cllr Porter in January 2012.

The four remaining staff are in a period of consultation (4 weeks from the date of the last meeting, 9th February 2012).

Community Care Practitioners (CCPs)

Background

A comprehensive review of the role and function of Community Care Practitioners (CCPs) was included in Transformation Programme Report of 19th January 2012. Officers put forward a recommendation to cease 4 posts from 2 adult social care teams and look for further efficiencies as part of future care management reconfiguration. Elected Members chose to defer a decision on the recommendation until 1st March, based upon a request for further clarity.

CCPs do not complete safeguarding investigations as they are not qualified social workers. Through the development of a more efficient assessment and review system (Liquid Logic), the new IAS system will capture all the case management information in an easy to use system. The loss of these posts will be mitigated through a reconfiguration of care management teams.

Since the CCP review, one member of staff has elected to take VR/VER, reducing the number of posts to potentially cease, at three. The saving of

£142k, as quoted in the Cabinet report of 2nd February 2012 now stands at £171k, as one CCP has elected to take VR/VER.

Sefton Play Council

Sefton Play Council has formed a consortium with Parenting 2000. From April 2012 they will be moving premises into Alexandra Mount. Four staff will transfer to the consortium. The consortium will deliver most of the functions previously associated with Sefton Play Council e.g. the Art & Craft shop.

Frequently Asked Questions

A number of questions have been raised with officers regarding the proposals put forward as part of the budget setting process. These have been set out below for Members' information

Equality Act Duty

Question

1. Have any risk assessments, especially with regard to the Equality Act 2010, given pause for thought or changed the proposed course of action?

Answer

Yes, for example:

- For the Supporting People proposal (E2.1), extensive consultation was undertaken. Following conclusion of the consultation process, it became clear that the time for consultation needed to be extended so that all the risks, including equality risks, could be identified before a report for final decision is brought to Council. As a result the recommendation before Members on 1 March is to extend the timescale for consultation to the end of May 2012.
- For the Fair Access to Care Services proposal (2.10) the report noted the vulnerable nature of the users, and potential users, of adult social care services. As a consequence, no savings have been attributed to this proposal in the 2012/13 budget. An extensive review be recommended to be undertaken over the next ten months to ensure that all statutory duties, including the Equality Act duty, continue to be met.

Impact of Budget Reductions

Question

2. Can it be demonstrated that where budget reductions have already been made that those protected under the Equality legislation, such as older people and people with disabilities, that the impact of those reductions has not had a disproportionate effect on those and other protected groups?

Answer

Yes. A briefing was given to members on the 9th February at which it was shown that whilst the overall budget had been shrinking the % spend on older people and people with disabilities had increased. In 2010 the Council's expenditure on older people was 18% of the budget and people with disabilities was 25%. In 2012, as a proportion of the budget, the Council's expenditure on older people was 22% and for people with disabilities was 28%.

Consultation & Engagement

Question

3. The Council has conducted a large scale consultation exercise – how necessary is that level of engagement?

Answer

Consultation is a legal requirement. As a service provider, when the Council wishes to significantly change, reduce or cease service provision, it is a duty for the Council

to consult with a range of individuals and organisations, including but not limited to service recipients. That duty can arise because the legislation specifies it for certain services, or because residents, service users, organisations etc expect it.

There are a number of legal cases that set the rules/standards of what a Council should do when conducting consultation exercise.

Failure to consult in accordance with those rules/standards can lead to a decision made by the Council being challenged through a judicial review process. Extensive consultation and demonstrably taking into account the results of the process can help the Council avoid that situation.

Consultation should be proportionate to the proposal being made.

Question

4. Has the consultation feedback led to any changes to the options and have people been listened to?

Answer

Yes, for example:

- The proposal to reduce Lifeguard cover (E3.6) at specified times. The public consultation undertaken identified that 94% of respondents were against the removal of lifeguards during general public swimming times. As a result of what people said the Council will maintain the lifeguard cover during general public swimming times but will have to increase fees and charges to maintain such life guard cover.
- The proposal to cease the operation of the Fairways Park and Ride services on a Saturday. Whilst there was some consultation feedback opposing this, the majority response was to support the option. In addition the Council has provided an extra bus on the Esplanade Service.

Question

5. Are there any suggestions made by the public during the consultation process that have not been implemented?

Answer

Yes, there are a number of suggestions that were made by Members of the Public that have not or have not yet been progressed, for example:

- Some bowling club members have expressed an interest through the consultation process in maintaining their own facilities. Exploratory negotiations will commence with a number of bowling clubs.

Common suggestions that were raised by members of the public during the consultation process have been responded to in the You Choose part of the Council's Transformation pages on the website.