

ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14th January, 2014

PRESENT – Councillor Thistlethwaite (in the Chair); Councillors Harman, B Jones, D. Jones, and Knowles (5)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Hutchinson, Kelley, Lister, J. Lyonette, S. Richmond and York (6)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Copeland

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Murray Rose, Director of People, Pauline Mitchell, Assistant Director Adults and Building Services and Elaine Taylor, Senior Business Officer

AH20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

AH30 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2014/15 TO 2019/20 - Submitted – A report (previously circulated) of the Chief Officers Executive which had been considered by Cabinet, at its meeting held on 13th November, 2013, proposing a Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2014/15 to 2019/20 for public consultation.

It was reported that each Scrutiny Committee had been requested to consider specific areas within their individual remits and report the findings back to a special meeting of the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 30th January, 2014, to enable it to co-ordinate an overall response to Cabinet on behalf of all of the Council's Scrutiny Committees and that the areas specific to this Scrutiny Committee related to Adult Social Care, the Homelessness and the Lifeline Services.

The Director of People gave an overview of the proposal within the Plan to reduce spending in relation to Adult Social Care by £3 million over the next two to three-year period and outlined the work currently being undertaken to achieve that target which included working with partners to reduce demand for costly services by increasing low level support, encouraging wider community involvement and greater partnership working with the Third Sector and external partners; reviewing contracts for services such as Domiciliary Care; and increasing the use of direct payments to reduce the costs of some maintained services.

It was reported that the target would be challenging and its delivery relied on other partners and organisations to assist in the future provision of services and that further reports on how it would be achieved, including full impact assessments, would be reported to Members when further work had been undertaken. However, it was emphasised that cultural and service design changes needed to be achieved across services to ensure that the cost reductions were achieved on time and to ensure that the level of reserves did not become inadequate in future years.

Discussion ensued on the need to look at different ways of delivering services to support people to live independently for longer in their own homes and to some of

the work which had already been developed as part of the revised approach such as the Good Friends scheme, which aimed to encourage people to commit just a few minutes of their day or week to improve the life of a disadvantaged neighbour or friend.

The Director of People updated Members on some specific pieces of work which were being developed, such as the introduction of co-production meetings which were held on a regular basis with Council Officers and democratically elected representatives via the Third Sector Organisations from Age UK, Darlington Association on Disability, First Stop and MIND to discuss how services could be delivered differently and how partner organisations could work together to identify the strengths of those requiring some level of support and in signposting to that additional support which might, in the future, be provided from within the community; work being undertaken with large local businesses to encourage their staff to support vulnerable residents by making contact with them on a regular basis as part of a 'buddying' system; the development of RIACT (Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team) which ensured that people got the right extra care and support they needed by working with them, as well as their friends and family to develop the most appropriate care to ensure, as far as possible, independent living; to work being undertaken to ensure value for money from third sector organisations and to need to look at more multi-agency working to ensure less duplication of service delivery.

In relation to the co-production meetings, it was reported that the four represented organisations at those meetings were attending a session in February 2014 to be updated on the People Group's performance clinic information to ascertain their views on the information presented at that performance clinic and the work being undertaken and that the outcome of that meeting could be reported to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to the proposal to reduce the budget in relation to the Homelessness Service by £350,000 through recommissioning and design, the Director of People advised Members of the work being undertaken to achieve those savings which included the possible lowering of support rates for organisations providing support and by reducing the number of units of accommodation. He did however, highlight that the proposals did pose significant risks which were currently being considered and that more time was required to enable those risks to be assessed.

In relation to the proposal to reduce the budget in relation to the Lifeline Service by £337,000 by removing the level of subsidy, the Senior Business Officer outlined the work being undertaken to achieve those savings. It was reported that £140,000 of savings had been achieved during the financial year 2013/2014 by undertaking a staffing review and internal service re-design and that those changes would not impact on clients. However, it was reported that the proposals to achieve the remaining savings of £193,000, would impact on clients once the level of subsidy ceased in April 2015 and Equality Impact Assessments were being undertaken to

assess the impact of that on individual clients and that work was also being undertaken to mitigate any additional costs to residents.

RESOLVED – That, having considered the information provided at the meeting, the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised that this Scrutiny Committee is satisfied with the overall direction of travel, as contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2014/15 to 2019/20, and will continue to monitor the progress of delivery in relation to those areas within its remit.