

ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12th April, 2016

PRESENT - Councillor S Richmond (in the Chair); Councillors Culley, Kane, Knowles, Lyonette, Mills, M Nicholson, T Richmond, and Storr (8)

APOLOGIES –

ABSENT – Councillor D Jones

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE –

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Suzanne Joyner, Director of Children and Adult Services, Kevin Kelly, Assistant Director Adult Social Care, Hilary Hall, Head of Strategy and Commissioning and Heather McQuade, Finance Manager for Housing and Adult Social Care

AH40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillor Knowles declared an interest in Minute ER41 below (C8 – Cease Funding to Aspire Services) as Chair of Salters Community Garden. There were no other declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

AH41. MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/17 TO 2019/20 – The Scrutiny Committee met to further discuss those proposals contained in phase 2 of the next round of spending reductions as contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20, which were specifically under its remit.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the following proposals in relation to the core Offer, the Impact Assessment Forms and the Futures Fund :-

AH3 – Adult Packages – The Director of Children and Adult Services referred to the services the Council was required to provide in relation to adult social care packages, together with proposals to reduce the core offer in relation to those packages to achieve a reduction of approximately four per cent from the current spend. Details of how that reduction would be delivered were also contained within the Core Offer.

Reference as made to the current level of financial contribution received by individuals as a contribution towards the cost of their care and support and it was reported that consultation was currently taking place around the future charging policy of the services which the Council currently provided free of charge or at a subsidised rate.

AH4 – Adult Financial Assessment/Protection Staff – Reference was made to the proposal to retain, in the core offer, the number of Financial Assessment and Financial Protection staff to complete individuals' financial assessments and to safeguard individual's personal finances.

It was reported that the Financial Assessment staff undertook financial assessments to determine the level of financial contribution individuals needed to make towards their personal care and support needs and, although more use could be made of self-assessment questionnaires, it would be likely to mean a reduction in the level of income received from self-funders. The Financial Protection staff supported individuals who did not have the mental capacity to look after their own finances and who did not have anyone else to support them. Both of these areas generated an income to the Council.

AH5 – Adult Direct Payment to Personal Budgets Costs - Reference was made to the proposal to retain, in the core offer, the number of Payments and Income Officers and Direct Payment Officers.

It was reported that the Payments and Income Officers made payments to all Residential, Nursing, Day Care and Domiciliary providers and the Direct Payment Officers made payments to both Adults and Children's direct payment users.

AH6 and C10 – Adult Commissioning and Contracts Staff Costs – The Director of Children and Adult Services outlined the proposal, within the core offer, to reduce the number of staff within the Commissioning and Contracting team, subject to a review of future service levels. The core offer outlined the role of the team and the impact Assessment referred to the effect the reduction might have on the levels of contract monitoring and quality assurance work that could be undertaken in the future however, the statutory duties the Council was required to provide would still be maintained.

Discussion ensued on the timescales to make the proposed staffing reductions, the number of external providers on the framework and the potential impact, as detailed in the Impact Assessment form, of the proposed reduction.

Members expressed particular concern at the potential safeguarding risks, if the proposal was approved and sought reassurance that any risks could be managed and mitigated against. It was reported that further work would be undertaken to re-design the function to ensure that the team was focussed a targeted resource and focussed on the priorities.

C3 – Cease Floating Support for Domestic Violence Victims – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to the proposal to cease floating support for domestic violence victims achieving a net budget reduction in 2016/17 of £33,563 and £67,055 by 2020/21. The service was a preventative service providing outreach support for victims of domestic abuse and specific support for children affected by domestic abuse and aimed to reduce the actual number of those presenting to the Refuge.

It was reported that £22,000 of the contract would be retained as it had been deemed statutory to cover a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub worker and a Children's worker and that there may be some specialist provision for victims of domestic violence within the housing related and outreach support for vulnerable adults' budget, if this budget was approved as part of the Futures Fund (see below).

Reference was made to the current contractual agreement; to the possible effect of cost shunting to other areas within the Council if the proposal was approved, and the impact the proposal might have, if approved, on partner organisations and stakeholders. It was

reported that discussions were taking place with those partners to try to mitigate the impact and the need for joint working and improved signposting to other agencies to also mitigate the impact was discussed.

Reference was made to the potential cumulative impact a number of proposed reductions across preventative services would have on groups of individuals and it was reported that the cumulative impact of reductions in housing related support services would be on the most vulnerable groups in society and disproportionately on those from deprived wards within the Borough.

C4 – Cease Key Point of Access – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to the proposal to cease the key point of access (KPA) and to streamline processes for the assessment and referral into housing related support services achieving a net budget reduction of £28,071 in 2016/17 and £56,083 by 2020/21.

Particular reference was made to the current contractual agreement and it was reported that the current contract had been extended until September 2016 to enable the proposal to be considered alongside all other proposals within the MTFP.

Reference was made to the possible effect of cost shunting to other areas within the Council if the proposal was approved and to the opportunities available to streamline the referral processes in the future which could potentially improve access.

C5 – Cease Vulnerable Adults Floating Support – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to the proposal to cease the contract for the provision of housing related support for vulnerable people aged 25 plus. This would not include the ceasing of the Council's statutory requirement to provide temporary accommodation as part of that contract.

Particular reference was made to the current contractual agreement and to the possible effect of cost shunting to other areas of the Council if the proposal was approved, although it was difficult to quantify the effect of preventative work and what the impact might be of ceasing that support. It was again reported that the cumulative impact of reductions in housing related support services would be on the most vulnerable groups in society and disproportionately on those from deprived wards within the Borough and that work was on-going to prepare detailed impact assessments following contact with individual clients.

C6 – Cease Drug and Alcohol Floating Support – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to the proposal to cease the contract for the provision of housing related/outreach support services for people with substance misuse problems (alcohol and drugs).

Particular reference was made to the current contractual arrangements and to the possible effect of cost shunting to other areas of the Council if the proposal was approved, as this was a preventative service.

Reference was again made to the cumulative impact of ceasing these services and the Scrutiny Committee also heard the views of Mr Elliston who addressed the Committee to speak against the proposal to cease this support.

C7 – Reduce some elements of Young Person’s Pathway – The Director of Children and Adult Services outlined the Impact Assessment in relation to the removal of the non-statutory elements contained within the Positive Support Pathway for Young People up to the age of 25. It was reported that there was a large number of statutory elements which the Council was required to provide within the pathway and these would be retained.

Reference was made to the current contractual arrangements; to the possible cost shunting to other areas within the Council if the proposal was approved and to the cumulative impact of the proposed reductions.

C8 – Cease Funding to Aspire Service – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to the proposal to cease the Aspire service, which was a service which provided support to school leavers with learning difficulties to move from education into paid employment and acted as a preventative service aiming to support people to live independently. Access to support services was available from other organisations such as Darlington College and Careers England.

C9 – Cease funding to Gay Advice Darlington, the DAD Information Post and room hire for the Deaf Club – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment to cease funding to a number of voluntary organisations for specific information and advice services. It was reported that, in relation to the contract with Gay Advice Darlington and Darlington Association on Disability, both of those contracts had been extended in line with the MTFP timescales to enable the consultation process to be undertaken and to plan for future provision.

Discussion ensued on a number of other organisations which provided support and the need for improved signposting to those organisations was highlighted.

Futures Fund – Housing Related and Outreach Support for Vulnerable Adults - - Reference was made to the proposal to include, in the Futures Fund, a budget of £160,000 to enable a new service to be re-designed which would provide some support to many of the former beneficiaries affected by the proposals outlined above as a result of the proposals to cease services. It was reported that the support would not be for as long as previously or for as many but would maintain a service to prevent needs from escalating and possible cost shunting to other areas within the Council.

The Director of Children and Adult Services reported that work would be undertaken to ensure that the resources available within the core budget and the Futures Fund would be used in a focussed and targeted way to achieve the maximum effect possible.

RESOLVED – That the information provided at this stage be noted.