

Committee: Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 2012

Agenda item: 7

Wards:

Subject: Review of Transport

Lead officer:

Lead member: Councillor Suzanne Evans, Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People overview and scrutiny panel.

Forward Plan reference number:

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Recommendations:

A. To note this report.

B.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. To update members on progress in the area of adult social care transport arrangements.

2 DETAILS

2.1. Transport spending is a significant part (13.46%) of the adult social care budget, and as part of the three year savings programme agreed in 2011, reductions in expenditure of £400k from 2012 -15 have to be worked through. The total transport budget for 2012/13 is £9,482,870, of which £8,279,750 is spent on concessionary fares and taxicards. This links to the increasing personalisation of support for people receiving services particularly through individual budgets. The intention of changing transport arrangements is to use resources more effectively, enabling people with highest needs to be supported appropriately and to support people to travel independently, if possible using public transport.

2.2. Transport expenditure on services arranged via Merton Transport has been reduced from £1.459,180 in 2009 to £1.203.120 in 2012, a reduction of £256k. These savings have been achieved for the most part by reducing fleet transport to day services. This approach will need to continue, along with reducing costs of travel by taxis and ensuring that over provision of transport support is minimised, for example reviewing people who have Freedom Passes but choose to travel to their day time activities by Merton Transport.

2.3. As this work will impact on a significant number of adult social care customers it has been agreed that a policy be put in place setting out the principles behind our approach and preparing a consistent and transparent

set of guidelines. This policy will be brought to Cabinet in December 2012, along with a similar policy produced by the Childrens Schools and Families department.

- 2.4. The policy will be titled 'Assisted Travel Policy', rather than transport; this reflects the approach taken by other authorities and confirms the intention to support people in a variety of ways. The policy will state clearly that we recognise that many people will always need support in travelling to various services, but that we reserve the right to work with people to find the best solution for their individual needs rather than arranging a Merton bus which has frequently been our response in the past.
- 2.5. Help for people to make use of their Freedom Pass will include individual travel training programmes, ongoing support from a carer, or a 'buddy' scheme providing peer support. There will also be support and advice for people to access other solutions such as Motability if appropriate.
- 2.6. Work to achieve savings in the past year has focused on three key areas. The first is as noted, a reduction on fleet vehicles bringing people to in-house day services. There has been a gradual reduction over the past four years, and we are utilising day centre vehicles and staff at our main service for people with learning disabilities to collect customers, reducing the demand for Merton Transport vehicles. We will roll this out across our other disability day services in the next year. The second is reducing the cost of taxi use. Merton Transport have re-tendered many of the routes being used to take people to college and day activities. To date this has not achieved the hoped for savings and is being reviewed. Third, as agreed by Cabinet in 2011, people in Mental Health services have had Freedom Passes withdrawn as it was seen to be an ineffective and expensive way to provide support. Freedom passes are a discretionary benefit and other types of support have been provided. This will not bring immediate savings due to the formula by which Merton contributes to Transport for London, but will achieve reductions in future years. Proposed working between Merton Transport and Merton Community Transport has not resulted in significant savings or efficiencies. The savings for 2012/13 are being achieved through other efficiencies in Adult Social Care.
- 2.7. It is recognised that people will need time to adjust to using transport in different ways. Also there will be scenarios where a social care customer might be keen to look at alternatives such as public transport while their carer has genuine reservations about this. However we are committed to pursuing the goal of enabling people who are willing and able to move away from block transport arrangements and focus specialised transport support on those who are in most need.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. There is little alternative to personalising our assisted travel offer. As well as going against the national and local agenda in how support is provided, we are unable to continue to spend such large amounts of money on transport.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. During the summer customers and carers of disability day services have taken part in meetings where these ideas have been discussed. This process will continue once the draft policy is published.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The draft policy will go to cabinet in December.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. As noted, the department is committed to a process of reducing expenditure in this area.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific legal or statutory implications arising out of this approach.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken with regard to the policy.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Risks in relation to customers will be assessed as part of any change to travel arrangements.

11. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

BACKGROUND PAPERS