

Committee: Healthier Communities & Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 11/02/2015

Wards: All Wards

Subject: ASC Savings Proposals for 2015-2016 Consultation Results

Lead officer: Simon Williams Director for Community and Housing

Lead member: Councillor Caroline Cooper- Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

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Recommendations:

- A. To consider the outcome of the consultation exercise as detailed in the report with regard to the 3 additional savings proposals.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide feedback on the responses to the consultation exercise that has taken place, on the Adult Social Care budget savings proposals and associated changes to services. This feedback will inform decisions about these proposals.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The Adult Social Care budget savings proposals presentation and an easy read version were made available on the council's website: at merton.gov.uk/adult-social-care-consultation. Paper copies of these documents were also available at the Civic Centre in Morden, Merton libraries, Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) at Vestry Hall and at the council's daycentres.
- 2.2. The total savings proposed for 2015-16 are £2.234m most of which have been approved previously by Members. However, the underachievement of some savings in previous years has meant that the 2015-16 total now includes £400k of replacement savings not previously approved by Members. This consultation was based around three specific replacement savings proposals which are to:
 - Redesign the ' Initial Access Service for adult social care, to achieve savings of £125,000
 - Altering the staff mix at day services for people with learning disabilities including using more volunteers to realise savings of £200,000
 - Review of support packages for everyone who uses adult social care in Merton more often, to ensure the support given remains appropriate as needs change to realise savings of £75,000

- 2.3. The consultation documents also outlined the savings between 2016 and 2019 which had been approved by Cabinet for discussion with scrutiny, and put these savings in the context of other savings already agreed. This makes the cumulative effect of year on year savings clear for consultees.
- 2.4. Views on the proposals were sought from residents within Merton and from people who work within Merton and who have had experience of the adult social care service. They were asked to provide comments on the impact the proposals may have, and to propose alternative ways in which the council could make savings. In order to facilitate an accessible and comprehensive consultation there were 5 options available for providing feedback. These were:
- Online questionnaire was available at merton.gov.uk/consultation
 - Paper questionnaires were widely available at Merton's libraries, at Vestry Hall, the civic centre main reception and the daycentres within the borough. An accessible version of these questionnaires was provided
 - Two public consultation events were held on 15th December 2014 at Vestry Hall and at the Acacia Centre 13th January 2015.
 - Email comments could be sent to ASCconsultation@merton.gov.uk
 - Views could also be sent to Adele Williams atadele@healthwatchmerton.co.uk
- In addition to the above:
- 2.5. A separate consultation event was held with the voluntary sector, and
- Views were also received in the form of a 550 signature petition organised by the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) and an open letter to the Council from the CIL giving its views on the proposals, and
 - Open responses (letters or e-mails) from 12 interested people/ organisations giving their views on the whole savings package for 2015-16 and in some cases beyond.

3 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND KEY FEEDBACK FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

- 3.1. There were 62 questionnaire responses received overall. The characteristics of the people who responded is detailed below, where the information was given.
- 3.2. Responses were received from 20 Carers and 24 Service Users
- 3.3. Responses to Gender were received from 24 Males and 22 Females
- 3.4. 46 respondents provided details of their age with the largest coming from the 45-54 age range – 13 responses and 11 responses from the 55 -64 age group.

15 and under	0
16 -24	2
25 -34	5
35 -44	6
45 -54	13
55 -64	11
65 -74	6
75 or over	2

4 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND KEY FEEDBACK ABOUT PROPOSAL 1 INITIAL ACCESS SERVICE (IAS)

4.1. Comments were sought on how straightforward responders found the current IAS process this is detailed in the grid below.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Straightforward	5	4	1		1
Helpful	5	3	1		1
Quick	4	2	3		1
Easy to understand	4	4	1		1
Difficult	1		1	6	1
Confusing	1		1	6	1
Not helpful	1		1	6	1

Question 12 in the questionnaire asked responders to what extent they agreed with the proposal for the IAS. 11 responses were received about the IAS proposal with 1 strongly agreed, 5 agreed and 5 strongly disagreed with the proposed changes. The balance of the views were marginally in agreement with the proposal.

Strongly Agree	1
Agree	5
Strongly Disagree	5

4.2. There were a further 24 additional comments made in the questionnaire detailed in Appendix 1.1. They can be grouped into 4 main themes:

- Theme 1 was how important it is to have people to speak to in person both on the phone and in person, in addition to on-line access
- Theme 2 was how important it is to have properly trained staff that have a holistic view of people's needs so they can signpost to the correct services.
- Theme 3 was how important it was to have information on how to contact the new service. This needs to be widely communicated both on the Merton website and within the community.

- Theme 4 raised concerns about the capacity within the voluntary sector to take on this additional work, including funding, signposting, training, consistency of approach, and ability to deal with complex needs that span more than one part of the voluntary sector.

5 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND KEY FEEDBACK ABOUT PROPOSAL 2

DAY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- 5.1. Responses were sought on how important the activities at the day centre were to service users and carer's. This is detailed in the grid below. Overall all of the main areas were scored as being very important.

	Very important	Important	Not so important	Not at all important
Respite care	20	4	3	2
Place to learn	23	5	3	2
Place to have fun	25	7	1	1
Place to meet friends	28	2	2	1
Place for community activities	25	6	1	1

Question 22 in the questionnaire asked responders to what extent they agreed with the proposal for learning disability day services. 35 responses were received for the day services proposal 2 which are detailed below. The balance of views, were against the proposals to reduce the service.

Strongly agree	7
Agree	1
Neither agree nor disagree	12
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	13

- 5.2. There were an additional 26 comments made with regard to why respondents agreed or disagreed with the above proposal and these are detailed in Appendix 1.1 attached.

6 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND KEY FEEDBACK PROPOSAL 3 REVIEW OF SUPPORT PACKAGES

- 6.1. Respondents were asked the last time that their needs had been reviewed and their responses are detailed in the grid below. 37 responses were received.

Less than 6 months ago	10
About 6 months ago	5
Within the last 12 months	10
More than a year ago	12

6.2. Question 32 in the questionnaire asked responders to what extent they agreed with the proposal for more frequent reviews. 36 responses were received for the reviews proposal 3 and the responses are detailed in the grid below. The balance of views is against the proposals

Strongly agree	4
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	10
Disagree	6
Strongly disagree	12

6.3. There were a further 28 comments about the review proposals and how the review process could be improved. These are detailed in Appendix 1.1.

7 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENTS

7.1. The two events asked participants to provide feedback and comments on the proposals and on the consultation process. The feedback from the events was collated and is detailed in full in Appendix 2 and 3.

7.2. The summary of the general issues/concerns and queries was as follows:

- The event was welcomed by the group and they all felt it was a positive first step
- The group felt that ASC needed to sell itself more and raise the profile of what it does. The group felt that most people didn't know what it covered and therefore were unaware of the importance of the work. They felt that a communication plan and better uses of My Merton with real cases studies and more awareness raising on Merton-i will help future users understand the importance of ASC and the impact it has on people's lives. The group felt that ASC should be a higher profile than for example "cleaning dog faeces from streets" and felt it's because people don't realise that ASC is not just about older people in care homes
- The group felt that the Council needed to be more robust in its approach and say how important ASC is so it ranks highly. Areas where there are potential alternative savings are two weekly bin collections, recycling more and the council should enforce these changes as it is good for the environment and means that ASC will have to save less. It shouldn't be a political decision when peoples lives are at risk
- Recognition that Merton is one of the lowest spenders in ASC which means that they are doing a good job so cuts should be from other areas that are not so cost effective
- People in the group felt that political decisions for votes outweigh the importance of care for people. The group felt that the community would be willing for council tax to be increased by 1% if they realised how ASC impacts on those it helps
- They explicitly asked "Why is council tax not being raised to cover the deficit?"

- People in the group felt that there should be more shared services between councils. Some members of the group wanted more information on savings where other boroughs had done this such as the tri-borough partnership
- The group said “Cuts are a Curb to independence”

7.3. The groups expressed concern about:

- Future generations – what services will they get?
- Having less activities and staff at day centres
- The increasing age of carers and the toll on them; this is cumulative
- Acknowledging that people have other responsibilities as well as caring
- Ensuring empathy, sympathy, patience, active listening by staff when speaking to callers with mental health issues

7.4. The group suggested:

- Getting/enabling customers and carers to do mystery shopping to review and improve new systems e.g. new access arrangements
- Recognising that the council has been ‘pared down’,
- There are still some opportunities to reduce process and procedures and some of these need to be simplified

8 SUMMARY OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR CONSULTATION

8.1. A consultation event was held on the 23rd January at Wandle Valley Resource Centre and was attended by representatives of the following voluntary sector organisations.

8.2. Carers Support Merton, YMCA, Merton CIL, MVSC, Merton & Morden Guild, Merton Vision, Dean City Farm, Grenfell, Merton Community Transport.

8.3. Nine key points were raised which were :

- A good initial assessment will set the foundation for a proper support plan. It is the key assessment. Use it to build in preventative approaches at this stage and monitor customers regularly
- They welcome the advance notice about the budgets and savings
- The voluntary sector could offer a more VFM service in relation to equipment advice and support compared to the current offer
- Voluntary sector can support Adult Social Care and support delivery of savings by absorbing the work, but not if funding for the voluntary sector is cut by 50%
- The Council needs to work more collaboratively with the voluntary sector on finding solutions to deliver savings and better outcomes for individuals.
- It is Important to understand the impact of savings on the quality of services

- Agreed that ASC and the Voluntary sector need to support people to plan for the future. The need to set up and run forums to do this was agreed. All agreed that this should be actioned as a good idea and would engage people in a creative way.
- Transport costs should be included in people's personal budgets.
- They agreed it would be helpful to have further discussions on future savings and work on solutions/options together

9 SUMMARY OF OPEN LETTERS/EMAILS

9.1. Feedback was received from 12 respondents on the savings proposals in a free form format. They covered 5 main areas which were the overall savings programme, the 3 specific savings proposals and the consultation process itself.

9.2. The summary of responses is attached in Appendix 4

9.3. The main comments which were raised by more than two responders were:

- Responses to the overall savings programme
- ASC savings are risky and will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable people in Merton and should be reconsidered.
- There is not enough detail about the impact of savings proposals on all disabled people and the evaluation of the impact is flawed.
- Proposal 1- The Voluntary sector may not have the range of skills to advise all client groups
- Proposal 2 – Day services are already efficient and effective so why should more savings be made?
- It is not practical to expect volunteers to do what paid care workers do.
- Proposal 3 – If reviews presume that care/support will reduce there is a risk that the Council will fail to meet its duty around eligible needs

10 RESPONSES ABOUT THE CONSULTATION

10.1. The consultation would have been more effective if it had been more accessible and had allowed more time for people affected to give their views

10.2. The consultation was of limited use as alternative proposals to make savings other than in ASC were not presented

11 MERTON CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CIL) OPEN LETTER AND PETITION

11.1. Merton CIL fed back its views on the ASC savings package 2016-19 in an "Open Letter" dated 22nd January 2015 and through a petition it organised and was signed by 550 people.

11.2. The open letter was addressed to Stephen Alambritis (Leader), Ged Curran, (CEO), Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, (Cabinet Member for ASC and Health) and

Simon Williams (Director of Communities and Housing). The full letter is provided at Annex 5, but in summary the open letter explained the CIL's three main concerns. They were that the:

- Process for setting the £14 million savings target is flawed, and the amount planned too high,
- Full, negative, impact of the cuts on disabled people and older people in Merton has not been properly assessed and decisions are being made without reference to the full facts, and
- Consultation process is insufficient given the scale of the cuts and has not been accessible enough.

11.3. The letter went on to request that the 2015-16 savings are carefully monitored in partnership with the CIL and its Members and that the 2016-19 savings be put back on the table for further discussion.

11.4. The open letter was followed by a petition delivered to Merton Council on 2nd February 2015. It was signed by 550 people calling for the Council to "*Stop, Think, Consult before slashing £14m from Adult Social Care*". A hard copy of the petition will be available for Members at the Healthier Communities & Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the 11th February 2015.

11.5. The covering note emphasised the people signing the petition were asking that:

- No further savings to ASC be agreed,
- The impact of the savings on disabled and older people be fully assessed including changes to ILF, and
- Local people should be given the opportunity to work with the Council to identify solutions.

12 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

12.1. The consultation documents issued by ASC presented three replacement savings proposals as outlined above and sought views on these. Some respondents responded to the invitation to offer alternatives to these. For example, it was suggested that the Council could:

- (i) Raise the Council tax rather than cut ASC budgets
- (ii) Establish more shared services with other councils
- (iii) Switch to fortnightly refuse collections
- (iv) Undertake more recycling
- (v) Cut street cleaning rather than ASC budgets
- (vi) Employ an Access Officer within the Corporate Team to work with local organisations to improve access for disabled people to external

opportunities, including improved access to leisure, businesses, and the built environment generally.

13 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

13.1. The consultation period was open from 10th December 2014 to 2nd February 2015 (a period of 7 weeks). The details of the consultation undertaken have been detailed above. There are proposals for further consultation to take place with regard to the proposed savings for 2016 – 2019.

14 TIMETABLE

14.1. The three replacement savings options being consulted on all relate to the financial year 2015-16.

15 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

15.1. The savings being consulted on are put forward in order to meet adult social care's contribution to the required savings for the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

16 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

16.1. Adult Social Care is a statutory service. From 1st April 2015 the current wide range of legislation that applies to Adult Social Care is being drawn together and consolidated under the Care Act 2014. It is intended and expected that the council will still meet its core statutory duties if these savings are implemented.

17 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

17.1. The full Equality Analysis is to follow

17.2. The key findings of this initial assessment are:

- Merton's vulnerable residents are affected, in particular those with mental health issues, older people and people with disabilities (learning and physical) and potentially those identified as part of the 'Socio-economic' category.
- Despite any reduction or cessation of services the council will still continue to meet its statutory duties minimizing any adverse impact on service users and carers
- The council will promote the ethos of greater independence for service users (where possible), maintaining the 'person-centred' approach working together with partners from the health and voluntary sectors, as well as tapping into existing social capital.
- The potential negative impact of these proposals have been clearly identified and communicated with a clear mitigation plan developed as detailed in section 9 of the report.

18 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

18.1. None specific to this report

19 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

19.1. None specific to this report

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

- Appendix 1 Summary of questionnaire responses and
- Appendix 1.1 Additional comments
- Appendix 2 Summary of public consultation event at Vestry Hall
- Appendix 3 Summary of consultation event at The Acacia Centre
- Appendix 4 Summary of Open comments/ emails responses
- Appendix 5 Open letter from the CIL
- Appendix 6 Equality Analysis Assessment Background papers (to follow)