

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 February 2015

Wards: All

Subject: Reference from Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Adult Social Care Consultation Results

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services, 0208 545 3864

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Reason for urgency – the Chair has approved the urgent submission of this item in order that Cabinet may have regard to the outcome of scrutiny when considering the substantive item found elsewhere on this agenda.

Recommendation:

- A. That Cabinet takes account of comments made by the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel (set out in section 2 below) when taking decisions on the adult social care savings proposals for 2015/16;
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to inform Cabinet of the points made by speakers and panel members in relation to the results of the adult social care savings consultation at a meeting of the Panel on 11 February 2015. Cabinet is asked to take these into account when taking decisions on the adult social care savings proposals for 2015/16, contained in the business plan.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The Healthier Communities and Older People Panel received a report at its meeting on 11 February 2015 that set out the responses to the recent consultation on the adult social care budget savings proposals and associated changes to services.
- 2.2. **Speakers**
- 2.3. Representations were made by two speakers:
Roy Benjamin, a local resident
- 2.4. Roy Benjamin expressed concern that undue weight had been attached to financial considerations and not enough to the impact that the proposals would have on peoples' lives. He cited other services on which the council was proposing to spend money and said that some of these, such as a new swimming pool, would be inaccessible to disabled people if their care budgets were cut.
- 2.5. He asked that the adult social care savings be considered in relation to alternative savings that the council could make. He stressed that the impact

of cuts to care budgets would leave people isolated at home, becoming depressed and possibly suicidal.

Lyla Adwan-Kamara, Manager, Merton Centre for Independent Living

- 2.6. Lyla Adwan-Kamara said that nearly 700 people had participated in the consultation (including those who signed the petition). She urged the Panel to listen to the views expressed and engage in open dialogue regarding these.
- 2.7. She said that respondents saw the proposals as a moral issue, were accusing the council of prioritising other services and failing to understand the likely impact or the difficulties already faced by service users. She said that the proposals were likely to reduce independence, reduce wellbeing and increase isolation and were therefore contrary to the July principles. She cited the annual residents survey results as further evidence that the council is failing disabled people.
- 2.8. She finished by saying that Merton CIL had worked hard to engage with officers and councillors and would like to continue with a more open dialogue.
- 2.9. **Panel discussion**
- 2.10. All members thanked the speakers and expressed concern about the impact that the proposed savings may have on disabled people, including social isolation, increased burden on carers and entry to residential care at an earlier stage.
- 2.11. Councillors Brian Lewis-Lavender, Suzanne Grocott and Abdul Latif urged Cabinet to reconsider and to postpone or identify alternative savings from elsewhere in the council's budget, such as reserves or corporate provisions. A motion was proposed and seconded to request Cabinet to withdraw savings proposal C13 in the light of the results of the recent consultation. A vote was taken – 3 members voted in favour and 5 against – and the motion fell.
- 2.12. Councillors Sally Kenny, Pauline Cowper and Brenda Fraser said that they were troubled by the savings proposal, that they had been listening and talking to residents and would prefer not to make cuts but were constrained by the legal requirement to balance the council's budget.
- 2.13. Co-opted member, Myrtle Agutter said that older people had not been sufficiently consulted and there had been no effort to reach older peoples' groups, therefore the results do not reflect their strength of feeling. She said that these are severe and savage cuts and she urged Cabinet to reconsider.
- 2.14. Co-opted member Saleem Sheikh added that he could see that Cabinet was in a difficult position and asked whether there was any leeway.
- 2.15. In response to questions about how the Better Care Fund would impact locally, the Director of Community and Housing said that the overall fund for Merton was £12m, much of which had to be mainly used for schemes that would benefit the NHS. Around £6m would be used to protect adult social care services, which is a wide definition and includes the need to spend new money on functions such as the Care Act and 7 day working. Much of this is from consolidating existing budgets so that the real impact in 2015/16 would

be an additional £1.6m, which has already been taken into account in drawing up the savings proposals.

- 2.16. The Chair said that he had been involved in discussions to protect the most vulnerable people and to prioritise the needs of older and disabled people and children. He expressed regret at having to make these savings and reminded the Panel that not increasing council tax had been an election pledge.
- 2.17. The Panel RESOLVED to make the notes of its meeting available to Cabinet through a reference to its meeting on 16 February 2015.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Cabinet is required under the terms of the constitution to receive, consider and respond to recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED.

- 4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. None for the purposes of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purposes of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

11 APPENDICES

- 11.1. None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None

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