

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date of Committee **30th May 2007**

Report Title **Modernising Meals Services**

Summary This report summarises progress to date with a 3 year development plan with the current meals service provider. It makes recommendations for modernising the service through a tendering process with revised service specification(s) which better fit with current and future requirements. It proposes a full cost recovery model which sees the phasing out of the current management fee subsidy.

For further information please contact:

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision] No.

Background papers None.

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Not Applicable
- Other Elected Members Councillor F McCarney, Councillor M Dodd, Councillor Mrs J Compton, Councillor R Randev
- Lead Cabinet Member Councillor A Farnell – for information
- Cabinet Member Councillor C Hayfield
- Chief Executive

- Legal Alison Hallworth, Adult and Community Team Leader
- Finance Philip Lumley-Holmes, Financial Services Manager
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

FINAL DECISION NO

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet 26th June 2007 – Meals on Wheels Commissioning Plan
6th September 2007 – Modernising Wheels Service Update
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 30th May 2007

Modernising Meals Services

Report of the Strategic Director of Adult, Health & Community Services

Recommendations

The Committee's views on the following recommendations are sought:

- A reduced hot meals service is maintained for those with nutritional needs that cannot be met in other ways and that this service is tendered during 2007/08 for implementation April 2008.
- A frozen meals service is procured and assistance with provision of microwave/deep freeze equipment be considered as appropriate.
- Alternative methods for addressing "social" needs e.g. reducing loneliness and isolation are explored including the use of the PHILLIS service and/or procurement of befriending or other services.
- Full cost recovery is pursued – subject to Fairer Charging – and that the current management fee "subsidy" is withdrawn.
- All current meals service users are reviewed to assess their current nutritional and social needs, and determine the most appropriate future means of meeting these.
- Further consultation with a broad range of existing/potential service users including people from BME groups, take place over summer 2007.

In order to inform a future report to the Cabinet in September as to the way forward.

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2003 a three year contract was awarded to WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service) for the development of a hot meals service based on operational intelligence which suggested that there was significant unmet need, that geographical coverage was patchy, and that service availability across the week was variable.
- 1.2 A Development plan was put in place to ensure provision of meals through lunch clubs and direct to service users' homes on a minimum 5 days per week basis throughout the county increasing to 7 days per week in areas of known demand.

- 1.3 The contract with WRVS expired 31st March 2006. However, a 2 year exemption from tendering was obtained to allow the contract to continue whilst a review took place.
- 1.4 The Development plan put in place in of 2003 has been only partially successful. Improvements in coverage have taken place including the provision of a 5 day service extended to the whole county and approximately a fifth of Warwickshire now having 7 day per week cover. A direct referral mechanism was also introduced in 2005. Expressed satisfaction is high with a satisfaction survey undertaken by the Adult Reviewing Team in June 2005 indicating that the vast majority of service users were satisfied with their service. Moreover, a Trading Standards review has indicated that the meals are of an “acceptable” nutritional standard.
- 1.5 However, in spite of these achievements, and a considerable amount of publicity for the service, there are key difficulties in the execution of the plan. Development has been constrained by the predicted demand failing to materialise. As at November 2006, 1292 service users were receiving meals of which 718 were part of a care package and 574 people were receiving meals only. Additionally Home Care teams undertake additional lunchtime visits for approximately 450 people on days when meals services do not operate. Uptake via direct access has been low.
- 1.6 Some of the service users asked were not particularly satisfied. Some of the concerns expressed were that the meals arrived too early, portions were inadequate, quality could be improved, dietary requirements were not observed and temperature of the food was not satisfactory.
- 1.7 Benchmarking with other authorities has revealed a variety of arrangements with some making no provision but signposting people to independent meals providers, some making fortnightly deliveries of frozen meals and others still operating a hot meals service.

2. A Modernised Service

- 2.1 At first sight the lack of take up of meals services, even once a self referral system has been put in place, might seem puzzling. Increases in charges may have acted to deter some service users from continuing to receive meals in this way and some people may have been put off by charges at the point when need was first identified. This is evidence that much of this is associated with the availability of alternative means to satisfy needs and people making alternative arrangements.¹
- 2.2 Central Government policy² continues to place emphasis on promoting independence of citizens and increasing service users’ choice, voice and control.

¹ An extreme example of this occurs each Christmas time when service users who have insisted that a Christmas meal is required in fact make alternative arrangements with the provider making abortive visits

² E.g. Department of Health Green Paper “Independence , Choice and Control” DH March 2005 ; Department of Health White paper “Our Health, Our Care, Our Say” DH January 2006

- 2.3 Importantly, Department of Health guidance on Fair Access to Services requires councils with adult social care responsibilities to assess individuals according to need as opposed to other factors; for example availability of services.
- 2.4 Essentially, what is being considered is two types of distinct but related needs i.e. nutritional needs and social needs. At its best, a hot meals service might be meeting both sets of needs with varying degrees of success i.e. the person receives a nutritious meal and also some company. This is obviously the aim for lunch clubs whereby the whole social experience is important but for service users receiving meals at home this is often more difficult to achieve.
- 2.5 What is needed is a more fundamental change of approach which promotes choice, flexibility and independence, and meets nutritional and social needs in a variety of different ways.
- 2.6 For many people the delivery of nutritious frozen food which can be reheated using a microwave oven can be an option. Advantages for those who are able to use this option are that the service users can have more choice as to what to eat and when the meals can be taken. Tendering for provision of the meals will need to be considered along with providing equipment (freezers and microwaves) for those service users unable to make their own provision. In some authorities providers hire equipment for service users at a small charge.
- 2.7 Some people will remain who are unable to heat and serve their own meals at home. For these service users alternatives need to be sought but it may be that a smaller scale meals preparation service is considered whereby “volunteers” attend people’s homes to assist with food preparation and at the same time spend a few minutes chatting to the service user thereby helping to meet social needs. Links to the PHILLIS team would be critical in this respect.
- 2.8 For some people the need being met by the current service may be primarily social. Tendering for the provision of lunch clubs might help reshape these facilities with a view to improvements in co-ordination of provision and potentially opening up the range of venues to other places where people meet e.g. the local public house, social club or leisure facility. We would be looking for tenders to work up proposals on the best local alternative provision and linking in with the current review of transport and day care provision to enable a co-ordinated approach. Links to befriending services through PHILLIS will also be important in this respect.

3. Full Cost Recovery

- 3.1 The current arrangement for provision from WRVS for lunch clubs and meals on wheels is that the provider pays all costs and clients income but that the Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate pay a management fee of £0.177m. On 6 April 2006 Cabinet approved a process for phasing out this management fee over three years with an initial increase of 35p per meal for 2006/07. It is anticipated that a further 40p uplift in 2007/08 and a final 40p

increase in 2008/09 are needed to make the current service self sufficient although the 2008/09 figure will need to be revisited in the light of re-tendering of a refocused meals service. Benchmarking has indicated that Warwickshire charges less (£2.50 per meal) than many other authorities some of which charge £4 per meal. Many authorities in Warwickshire's family group charge more than the current Warwickshire rate.

3.2 The potential £0.177m saving could be recycled to assist with further promoting independence of service users, taken as a cash releasing saving or a combination of both.

4. Recommendations

4.1 In order to progress with this modernised approach to meals provision it is recommended that:

- A reduced hot meals service is maintained for those with nutritional needs that cannot be met in other ways and that this service is tendered during 2007/08 for implementation April 2008.
- A frozen meals service is procured and assistance with provision of microwave/deep freeze equipment be considered as appropriate.
- Alternative methods for addressing "social" needs e.g. reducing loneliness and isolation are explored including the use of the PHILLIS service and/or procurement of befriending or other services.
- Full cost recovery is pursued – taking account of Fairer Charging- and that the current management fee "subsidy" is withdrawn.
- All current meals service users are reviewed by the Adult Reviewing Team in collaboration with officers from the Adult commissioning Unit to establish the most appropriate future for meeting their nutritional and social needs.
- Further consultation with a broad range of existing/potential service users including people from BME groups, take place over summer 2007.
- A further report on progress is presented to Cabinet in September.

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May 2007