

## Council

24 September 2015

### Report of the Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Housing Related Support

#### Recommendation from the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

That, given the uncertainties around the level of assessments required and the ability to undertake these in the timescale, Council defers the planned saving of £300,000 in 2015/16 to be found from housing related support budgets and instead uses £300,000 from General Reserves in 2015/16 to balance the Council's budget.

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 15 July 2015, the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ASC&H OSC) held a select committee to consider the outcomes of the consultation on Housing Related Support and the proposals for the future. The ASC&H OSC agreed a set of recommendations to the Cabinet (see **Appendix A**).
- 1.2 On 18 August, the, Cabinet held an extraordinary meeting to consider the recommendations of the ASC&H OSC, as well as the recommendations for changes to the Housing Related Support Services. A copy of the report to Cabinet and the draft minutes are set out at **Appendix B**.
- 1.3 Following the Cabinet meeting, this item was called-in by Councillors Richard Chattaway, Maggie O'Rourke, Clive Rickhards and Jerry Roodhouse (he reasons for the call-in were given as: *"The Cabinet report failed to provide enough detail and clarification around the assessment process"*).

#### 2.0 Views of the Committee

- 2.1 On 9 September 2015 the ASC&H OSC held the call-in meeting to consider this item. During the debate the following points were made
  1. The Committee were disappointed that they had made a number of substantial recommendations to the Cabinet, which had been "acknowledged where appropriate" but not implemented.

2. The risks relating to assessments had been highlighted by the Committee at their select committee and it was noted that assessments had been identified as a risk in the report to Cabinet. This remained a concern with members of the Committee, particularly in light of the fact that the cost of any additional assessments would come from the remaining budget provision for Housing Related Support.

Chris Lewington informed members that within the original principles and philosophies of Supporting People, which had been introduced by Government in 2003, the assessment of individuals had never been a requirement. Under the new proposals assessments would be done on a wider footprint, including under the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and the current responsibility on providers to assess users would continue. Anyone eligible for social care would continue to be referred through the current system and where appropriate offered an assessment. The proposals included an approximate calculation within the social care budget, based on the known client group, and as such had been identified as a small risk.

3. Eligibility for housing related support services would be based on those with genuine and absolute eligibility for social care (as defined in the Care Act 2014) and those considered to be 'on the edge of care' i.e. people who are at risk of becoming eligible for social care without support being provided.
4. The eligibility criteria proposed included Looked After Children.
5. Officers would work with providers and commissioners to mitigate the impact of the reduced funding. Chris Lewington noted that this was an opportunity to improve current services by making a different offer.
6. Members agreed that the Committee would need to receive update reports to monitor the impact on vulnerable groups.

2.2 Chris Norton advised the Committee that when considering making a recommendation they should be aware that whilst the use of reserves was possible to enable a temporary delay in implementing the proposals, it was not possible if a permanent delay was anticipated. There are a number of significant overspends across the organisation as reflected in the Quarter 2 monitoring report, that would result in a direct call on the Council's reserves. In addition there is the current forecast and uncertainty around the current Government Spending Review (due to be published in November 2015). On this basis it is not recommended to be using general reserves to delay the implementation of a savings plan. Any decisions on the use of reserves would have to be made by the full Council.

The Chair responded that the role of scrutiny was to consider the impact on people using these services.

- 2.3 Chris Lewington reminded the Committee that further delays would result in delays to the redesign and the ability to work with providers to redesign and improve services.
- 2.4 Councillor Jose Compton noted that she was required to deliver One Organisational Plan savings in line with the budget that had been agreed by the full Council in February 2015. Officers were working to achieve this, but continued to protect the most vulnerable. She added that this was a good opportunity to look at all services and redesign services for the better.
- 2.5 Councillor Bob Hicks proposed, seconded by Councillor Kate Rolfe that the Committee agreed to option 2) to refer the matter to full Council on 24 September with the following resolution “that given the uncertainties around the level of assessments required and the ability to undertake these in the timescale, Council defers the planned saving of £300,000 in 2015/16 to be found from housing related support budgets and instead uses £300,000 from General Reserves in 2015/16 to balance the Council’s budget”.
- 2.6 Councillor Mike Perry proposed, seconded by Councillor Wally Redford, that the Committee take no further action, but request a further report in six months’ time, setting out details on the number of assessments, how these had gone and how much they had cost.
- 2.7 A vote was taken for Councillor Mike Perry’s recommendation, with four votes for and four against, the Chair took a casting vote to defeat the recommendation.

A vote was taken for Councillor Bob Hicks’ recommendation and it was carried with five votes for and four against.

### **3.0 Comments from Statutory Officers**

#### **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Currently the One Organisation Plan has a total savings target of £3.725m for Housing Related Support (HRS) savings to be delivered by 2017/18. Of this, £0.300m is to be delivered this year (that is, in 2015/16) and £1.828m in 2016/17.
- 3.2 The One Organisation Plan does not have any flexibility. If a saving is dropped then something has to be identified to replace it on a permanent basis. Reserves can only be used for one-off things – in this case, a temporary delay in implementing savings, rather than a permanent removal of that saving.

- 3.3 Any delay in implementing 2015/16 savings plans for Housing Related Support Services will also delay implementation of savings in 2016/17 if work on contracts that are to be renegotiated, re-let or decommissioned is stopped, pending decisions on the 2016/17 Budget at Council on 4 February 2016. If this occurs, the £0.300m delayed from 2015/16 will still need to be found in 2016/17, but in a tighter timescale, as lead-in times are squeezed. Similarly, if there are delays in implementing changes originally planned for implementation on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 they will need to be found by either accelerating HRS savings planned for 2017/18 into 2016/17, or by accelerating other savings plans forward.
- 3.4 Any use of General Reserves will feed into 2016/17 budget setting considerations. When the 2015/16 budget was set, this was in the context of a risk assessment influencing the level of reserves that only covered £2.5 million for overspends. The latest One Organisation Plan update report (considered by Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015) identified two Business Units with accumulated overspends of £5.700 million that will need to be funded from reserves. All other things remaining equal, this will take General Reserves below the required adequate minimum and will need to be replenished.
- 3.5 The level of reserves set is based on having a medium term financial plan and agreed annual budgets that are adhered to. This minimises the level of reserves needed, as the provision to be set aside for additional, in-year budget allocations made by Elected Members to Services to offset savings targets has been low. This provision will need to be increased if the risk materialises and Members do make additional in-year allocations to offset savings, as is suggested for Housing Related Support. The additional provision will be a first call on any 2016/17 budget resources.

## **Legal Issues**

- 3.6 Whilst the Council is responsible for setting the budget the Leader and the Cabinet are responsible for the implementation of the budget. Provided the Leader/Cabinet stay within the budget and policy framework which has been set by the Council decisions on how the budget is implemented remain a matter of discretion for the Leader/Cabinet.
- 3.7 Whilst it is possible for the Council to pass the resolution recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (as that is a budget decision) it is still for the Leader/Cabinet to decide how the budget or any revision to it is implemented. Although the Council can make recommendations to the Leader/Cabinet about how the budget for Housing Related Support Services

is implemented, the Council cannot give directions about how that budget is implemented. For the avoidance of doubt there is nothing within the Policy Framework which affects the proposals for Housing Related Support Services.

## **Background papers**

None

**Councillor Maggie O'Rourke**  
**Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Committee**