

## **HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**31 MARCH 2015**

### **MEMBER'S ITEM: COMMUNITY MEALS PROJECT**

Report from: Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adult Services

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#### **Summary**

This report sets out the response to an issue, raised by Councillor Murray on the community meals project.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 Under Medway Constitution Overview and Scrutiny rules (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.1) Councillor Murray has requested that an item on this matter is included on the agenda for this meeting.

#### **2. The Issue**

- 2.1. Councillor Murray has requested that this item be placed on the agenda. The basis of Councillor Murray's request is set out below:

I intend to put a Members' item on the next Health O&S about the Council's project to move community meal recipients to direct payments in order to purchase their own meals. I am very concerned that the project proposals will increase the likelihood of recipients becoming more dependent.

The project was listed at the last full council meeting as one requiring a budget extension. I would like to have the following details for the Member's item please.

- What recurring savings are proposed from the project and how much did the project cost?
- Are all recipients being asked to move and if so what support is in place to ensure that vulnerable people make choices which accord with nutrition guidelines etc.?
- I would like to have data on the numbers, ages and status of community meal recipients ie how many are registered disabled, how many live alone, how many also need their meals to be heated and served to them, how many receive the meals as part of a wider care package?
- What safeguards are in place to ensure recipients have facilities and ability to store and heat their own meals safely?
- A copy of the guidelines for criteria for receiving community meals now
- Does the community meals service carry out health and well being checks on recipients and if not why is this opportunity being missed to help prevent hospital admissions etc?
- Has there been any consultation with home care services or carers?

### **3. Director's comments**

3.1. In response to Cllr Murray's questions about the community meals project I supply the following clarification:

3.2. *What recurring savings are proposed from the project and how much did the project cost?*

The recurring costs of the changes in contractual arrangements are £22k. These were achieved by changing the contractual relationship from a block contract to a spot purchase arrangement. Savings are accrued due to the removal of penalty clauses within the original block contract, which required the Council to continue to pay for a set number of meals to be delivered when the numbers of people choosing to use community meals was decreasing. The new arrangement removes this requirement.

3.3 *Are all recipients being asked to move and if so what support is in place to ensure that vulnerable people make choices which accord with nutrition guidelines etc.?*

No service users were required to move provider other than a small number who live on the Hoo Peninsular where the provider gave notice that due to the small number of people receiving meals from them the service was no longer financially viable. For these 12 individuals alternative arrangements were made with local public houses, restaurants and cafes for the delivery of meals. Individuals are offered the choice to take the contribution as a Direct Payment

- 3.4 *I would like to have data on the numbers, ages and status of community meal recipients ie how many are registered disabled, how many live alone, how many also need their meals to be heated and served to them, how many receive the meals as part of a wider care package?*

At the mid year point for this financial year 220 people had been directly provided with Community Meals, the total number being directly provided with meals on 30.9.14 being 118.

In addition to this number 499 people were in receipt of a direct payment, a number of whom could have been using this payment to purchase meals directly.

Due to the number of people receiving support it has not been possible to break down the information to the level requested within the timescale as this would require a trawl through individual records.

- 3.5 *What safeguards are in place to ensure recipients have facilities and ability to store and heat their own meals safely?*

Meals continue to be delivered as they were before apart from for those individuals who chose to make alternative arrangements. The council does not support the delivery of frozen or chilled meals to individuals except where this is an explicit choice. However, if this was the chosen meals methods for individuals an individual assessment of need and risk would be carried out on a case-by-case basis and appropriate support arranged or directly provided.

- 3.6 *A copy of the guidelines for criteria for receiving community meals now*

There is no separate eligibility criteria in relation to community meals. Individuals needs will be assessed and if the need is assessed as being critical or substantial the service will be funded. The current arrangements allow for people to purchase their own meals if they are not eligible for council funded support.

- 3.7 *Does the community meals service carry out health and well being checks on recipients and if not why is this opportunity being missed to help prevent hospital admissions etc?*

All clients receiving meals funded by the Council have a health and wellbeing check and any concerns about individuals picked up by those delivering meals are passed through to the Council to respond to.

- 3.8 *Has there been any consultation with home care services or carers?*

When discussions were carried out to change the contractual arrangements with the provider there was consultation with those using the service at the time.

#### **4. Risk Management**

- 4.1 There were limited risks related to the change in contractual relationship with the provider.

#### **5. Financial and Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The arrangements with the provider were amended by agreement to ensure that the Council is only required to pay for the meals it contracts for, ensuring that better value for money is achieved from the arrangement whilst service provision is protected.

- 5.2 Section 9FC Local Government Act 2000 provides that executive arrangements by a local authority must enable any member of an overview and scrutiny committee of the authority to refer to that committee any matter which is relevant to the functions of the committee.

#### **6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 That Members are asked to consider the matter.

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#### **Background Papers**

None