



## **CABINET**

**23 OCTOBER 2018**

### **RVS OLDER PERSONS CENTRE ADDENDUM REPORT**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Brake, Adults' Services

Report from: Ian Sutherland, Director of People – Children and Adults Services

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#### **Summary**

To provide Cabinet with the views of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee which considered the report on 16 October 2018.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The report set out progress made on ensuring the future sustainability of the RVS Older Persons' Centre in Chatham. The provision locally is centred around a community café with there being a variety of drop in facilities provided for vulnerable older people. The aim of the offer was to reduce social isolation and loneliness.
- 1.2 Following a review of grant funded arrangements, the Council gave notice to RVS that grant funding would no longer be provided for the Centre post March 2018. This was on the basis that grants paid to RVS and to other voluntary organisations were not compliant with procurement and contract regulations and it was not possible to evidence whether good value for money was being achieved. The Council had since embarked on recommissioning VCS services in Medway.
- 1.3 Notice was given to RVS that grant funding, amounting to £35,000 per year, of which £18,000 was attributed to rental fees for the premises,

could cease in March 2018. Following a campaign by RVS, service users and volunteers, Cabinet agreed on 10 April 2018 to invest a further £17.5k to match fund the centre until March 2019. Funding was agreed on the basis that officers and RVS would work together to develop a sustainable plan to enable RVS to continue services.

- 1.4 RVS and the Council's Partnership Commissioning team were working collaboratively to achieve a sustainable plan for the Centre to continue operating once grant funding ends. The preferred option being to relocate the Centre to more cost effective premises that was easily accessible and had good transport links.
- 1.5 Council Officers identified a number of property options which included renting and sharing office space with other partner organisations. RVS investigated these options but they were ruled out due to cost, inaccessibility and not being suitable for running a café.
- 1.6 RVS had engaged with 14 property agencies and reviewed 47 buildings, 45 of which were not suitable. Of the two suitable properties, one had already been leased before negotiations could be completed. RVS had now identified a property with a business case due to be developed. If agreed, RVS would seek to fundraise to take forward the proposals.
- 1.7 A Committee Member said that they had been pleased to hear about a possible partnership development with a local housing association. It was hoped that the new building would be better than the existing premises and the Member felt that the housing association should provide the funding to refurbish the building. She commended the work of RVS staff, both locally and nationally in order to achieve sustainability. A Community Coordinator had been appointed to promote the role of volunteers. It was clear that few volunteers would be existing service users as they tended not to want that level of commitment. The Member considered the Older Person Café to be very important and it was therefore important that the new facilities offered this and that if the identified venue proved to be unsuitable there should be more work undertaken to help RVS find an alternate premises. Having paid staff was seen as being crucial to the success of the Centre. It was noted that a befriending pilot had started for people unable to access the Centre. The Committee was also advised that Arriva had started running a 'Talk on bus' from Maidstone to Tenterden which featured activities for passengers and it was suggested that a similar service was needed in Medway.
- 1.8 The Head of Adults 25+ Partnership Commissioning and Better Care Fund said that there was a need for capital investment to bring the proposed premises up to the required standard for use and that joint working was ongoing to ensure future sustainability. It was noted that a report would be presented to Cabinet in October 2018 and that further updates would be provided to the Committee and to Cabinet as required.

- 1.9 Another Committee Member said there were a significant number of potential service users in the Brompton area but that there was a need to address lighting and security concerns as well as the large steps that currently provided access to the facility. A Member was in favour of the Council supporting the facility but said that RVS also needed to take responsibility for ensuring future sustainability.
- 1.10 The Committee supported the continued identification and consideration of buildings within the Council's Estate that could provide a low cost property for RVS, provided comments for Cabinet and requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee to update Members on progress.

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