

From: Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

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Decision No **14/00138**

To: Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee - 4 December 2014

Subject: **LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE FUTURE OPTIONS**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway: Adults Transformation Board – 22 Oct 14  
CMT – 11 Nov 14  
Cabinet – 1 Dec 14

Future Pathway: Recommendation report to Cabinet Member

Electoral Division: All

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Summary: This paper sets out information about the council's local welfare assistance programme Kent Support & Assistance Service (KSAS). This discretionary service provides essential items for vulnerable groups facing exceptional pressure because of an emergency or crisis. The paper seeks discussion about future options for local welfare provision in advance of more detailed work.

FOR DECISION

The Cabinet Committee is asked:

- a) To CONSIDER and DISCUSS the future of local welfare assistance in the context of the options explored
  - b) To ENDORSE option 3 for further work and development of a full business case with a view to future decision by the Cabinet Member.
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## Introduction

1. (1) In response to the report submitted to the Cabinet Committee in July 2014 about the future of the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS), further investigation of future options for the service have been explored.
  - (2) This report provides evidence about the existing. It provides key information to enable decision makers give a view about any future iterations of a local assistance service in Kent and the merits of this kind of provision.
  - (3) Extensive evidence has been gathered to support the exploration of these options and this is available in Appendix 1.
  - (4) Whilst the county council does not have a statutory obligation to continue with this provision, it is clear that for the most vulnerable families there are not

alternative sources of help for some elements of the service that may be required e.g. energy. Any absence of this help would prompt an increase in demand in statutory services such as adults' and children's' social care.

(5) Any future provision must continue to be auditable and deliver a strong preventative benefit

(6) At the time of writing, the provision of a local welfare assistance service has no government funding from 31 March 2015. Following a legal challenge by LB Islington, the government is conducting a review of future funding arrangements. The outcome of this review is expected in time for the settlement announcement in December.

## **The current position**

2. (1) The appendix attached describes the current model of provision and the demand experienced in the first 15 months of operation from residents who cannot access help elsewhere. It describes the assessment criteria that ensures that the service is targeted at those most in need i.e. those with children who are in need of food and emergency travel. It finds that the highest demand has been in the most deprived areas of the county.

(2) The evidence suggests that while the costs of the individual awards made to vulnerable people is low, the preventative savings to the wider authority are significant, with awards forming a fraction of the cost of statutory interventions. The service has been successful in meeting the short and medium term needs of people in crisis who otherwise would have progressed to draw on statutory services.

## **Future Options**

3. (1) In examining options for alternative provision, the evidence finds that outside of the KSAS commissioned provision, supply for some types of award e.g. food and furniture does not match the existing and escalating need. There is no provision for emergency gas and electricity.

(2) Four options for the future were considered:-

**Option 1** End the service on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

It is clear that the service has already prevented the needs of many vulnerable people escalating to each statutory levels. Whilst the ending of the service would save the council money in the very short term, needs would quickly escalate. It is very likely that higher, more long term costs would be borne by statutory services within the authority i.e. within children's and adults' social care.

**Option 2** Provide a further year of the service built on the coordinated model so far established. A diminution of the service would be necessary. Each diminution option presents risks to health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups. The provision of a further year of the service will raise expectations for Year 4 and may further the council's difficulty in considering future options.

**Option 3** Commissioning service delivery. This model enables the council to continue to commission a coordination, advice and guidance service that would link people to their local communities. The service would connect local voluntary groups, organisations and community agents together and build on community capacity, linking and building upon the work already being undertaken within Kent in this regard. The provision of goods and services could be scaled according to funding commitment available. Grants could be made available to local voluntary organisations. Performance indicators would enable the county council to see the effectiveness its investment in the service. This model would enable the council to deliver on its ambitions to be a strategic commissioned authority whilst empowering and supporting the third sector to become suppliers, delivering outcomes detailed in a specification. This tailored approach would become self-sustaining within 4 years.

**Option 4** Grant fund to voluntary organisations. This option is unlikely to deliver the current outcomes as it is uncoordinated and piecemeal. As shown in Appendix 1 coverage and capacity of existing charities is inequitable cannot meet the demand. The level of funding is likely to be restricted to the level of underspend within the current service and this would be insufficient to have any real impact once diluted countywide.

### **Policy Context**

3. (1) The Government devolved responsibility for the Social Fund to local authorities in April 2013. The funding stream for welfare provision was not ring-fenced and current central government funding is at the present time intended to cease at the end of the financial year 2014/15. The outcome of the government's funding review is not due until December.
- (2) The continuation of a support and assistance service is at the discretion of each local authority. Consultation with other local authorities suggests that whilst a small number have taken the step to cease the service, others have secured funding to retain it and most continue to explore options to do so.
- (3) There is a possibility that following its review, government may choose to reinstate the ring-fence to local welfare assistance by top slicing the general grant. Whilst the level of funding within that ring-fence cannot be known it is unlikely that this will exceed the level of spend for 14/15. Should the government decide to fund provision in this way the council will face decisions about how to deal with the subsequent pressure on its budget.

### **Financial Implications**

4. (1) The current (14/15) funding from central government is as follows
  - £2,863,798 for awards
  - £554, 678 for administration
- (2) The most recent forecast shows running costs for the service is as follows
  - £1,897,000 for awards
  - £549,300 for administration
- (3) The budget is currently underspent by £2.69m, which includes an amount of £1.722m rolled forward from 2013/14.

## **Recommendations**

5. The Cabinet Committee is asked:

- a) To CONSIDER and DISCUSS the future of local welfare assistance in the context of the options explored
- b) To ENDORSE option 3 for further work and development of a full business case with a view to future decision by the Cabinet Member.

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*Background Information:*  
CMM Report July 2014  
KSAS Evaluation Report June 2014

Appendix A Evidence Base  
Appendix B Case Histories