

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

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To: Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee - 10 July 2015

Subject: **Local Welfare Assistance Future Options Update**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This paper gives an update on the progress made in the provision of local welfare assistance.

Recommendation: The Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member on the proposed decision to:

- a) extend the current arrangements for local welfare assistance in the context of the options explored, as set out in paragraph 3.(8) (b); and
 - b) endorse the co-ordination and integration of the future design, commissioning and provision of any revised model for local welfare provision with that of the larger scale transformation projects.
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Introduction

1. (1) In its December meeting, the committee considered evidence about the impact of the provision of local welfare assistance via the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) and discussed future options for delivery of local welfare assistance. The committee agreed that a commissioned model should be scoped for future consideration.

(2) The model would enable 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 and organisations together.

(3) At the time of the meeting government's plans for the future funding for welfare assistance remained unclear.

(4) In a late announcement, the authority's revenue support grant was increased to provide funding for welfare provision to the value of £1.481m

(5) The budget proposal for 2015/16 was amended to reflect this and approved by the County Council on 12 February 2015.

The current position

2. (1) The call handling, assessment and coordination of awards is currently conducted by a small specialist team of 9 officers within KCC's Contact Point. The commissioning of this service and that of the providers of the goods and services that make up the awards are overseen by Strategic Commissioning.
- (2) The arrangements with the Contact Point end on 31 August 2015 to coincide with the procurement process for the contact centre as a whole.
- (3) Due to efficiencies in the processing of awards and a shift to online applications, the costs in the administration of awards has decreased significantly for 15/16.
- (4) The Access to the Department of Work and Pensions back office data system has proven to be efficient in establishing applicants' identity and eligibility.

Future Options

3. (1) The committee previously highlighted the importance of the sustainability of any future model and redesign for local welfare provision and that it should have having community action at its heart; it should be integrated and dovetail with other transformation work being undertaken within the authority, particularly the Information, Advice and Guidance work (IAG); a significant element of the Care Act work stream.
- (2) Similarly, work is being undertaken to align the Council's approach to economic wellbeing across all directorates from which platform, any future strategic commissioning of local welfare provision may be considered.
- (3) Close links have been made with other, peer authorities to establish their future plans for local welfare provision (LWP) to establish a will to either co-commission or to be commissioned on their behalf to deliver LWP in neighbouring areas. It is clear from this dialogue that there is an appetite to work together. Exploration is underway to establish the possibility of delivering local welfare provision solutions on behalf of other authorities, which could generate income for KCC. Kent is unique among its peers in its streamlined approach to assessment and eligibility and this is attractive to other authorities. Additionally, initial research amongst the voluntary and community sector has not identified an interest in that sector to provide this sort of service.
- (4) Opportunities to attract investment or income from outside the authority to fund welfare provision e.g. from energy companies, are also being sought.
- (5) It has become clear in the work undertaken so far that the market for this provision is rapidly changing and adapting to the revised landscape. A market engagement event is planned for the coming weeks.
- (6) There is a co-dependency and a requirement to coordinate the reshaping of LWP with the reshaping and recommissioning of the council's other large scale transformation projects. The timetable for implementation of the large scale projects

such as IAG is not yet clear or agreed, and as a result an interim solution to local welfare provision is necessary into 16/17. Continued access to DWP's CIS system would be required in a future model including any interim arrangements will require this.

(7) In the first instance an extension to the current arrangements is sought until 31 March 2016

(8) In order that the eligibility, assessment and information function continues as the future procurement of Contact point progresses, the two interim options are :-

(a) Transfer the entire KSAS team (10.8 FTE) into Contact Point and the wider procurement of this service. As access to CIS (the Department of Work & Pension's database) will not be granted to a third party supplier, this would precipitate an immediate necessity for the delivery model to be changed. The council's ability to use CIS to safeguards against fraud and maintain process efficiency will be lost.

(b) Return the Customer Service Advisors into Contact Point (2FTE) and the wider procurement, whilst retaining the assessment team and absorb into Strategic Commissioning in the short term (8.8 FTE). The CIS function and the efficiency derived could be retained. This option is in keeping with the IAG obligations of the Care Act and the KCC approach of specialist service being offered only where necessary. Retaining the element of the service most attractive to other authorities could support a future commercial opportunity for KCC.

(9) The second interim option is recommended. This enables continuity of service, within the budget efficiencies in the current budget allocation. It positions any interim arrangement to be positioned appropriately for alignment with future large scale projects such as IAG.

Financial Implications

4. (1) The current (15/16) funding from RSG is £1,481,500. This will be allocated as follows:-

- £1,148,500 for awards
- £333,000 for administration

(2) This compares with an outturn figure from 2014/15 as follows:-

- £1,436,323 for awards
- £554,000 for administration

Recommendations

5. The Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member on the proposed decision to:

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- b) endorse the co-ordination and integration of the future design, commissioning and provision of any revised model for local welfare provision with that of the larger scale transformation projects.

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Background Information:

ASCH Committee report December 2014

CMM Report July 2014