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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Adults Select Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 8th February, 2018 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor S. Howarth (Chairman)

County Councillors: L.Brown, L.Dymock, M.Groucutt, and
S. Woodhouse

Also in attendance County Councillor(s): V. Smith

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ian Bakewell	Housing & Regeneration Manager
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant
Gary Thomas	Needs Assess & Data Development Officer
Julie Boothroyd	Head of Adult Services
Shelley Welton	Lead Commissioner Transformation
Ceri York	Group Manager Service Development and Commissioning
Paula Harris	Scrutiny Officer

1. Apologies for absence

County Councillor Paul Pavia, J. Pratt and R. Edwards.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Turning the World Upside down

Context:

To approve the implementation of a transformational approach to the delivery of care at home. Following a creative, co-produced approach carried out under the banner of Turning the World Upside Down we have developed a model which represents a paradigm shift in the provision of care at home and are seeking the Adult Select Committee's support to now work towards its implementation.

Key Issues:

Domiciliary care or care at home is the single largest area of care and support which Monmouthshire County Council offers. In 2016/17 the total gross spend across older adults social services was £20million; a significant proportion (33%) of this was spent on care at home for older people.

There is a growing acknowledgement across the sector that the traditional model of time allocated slots to provide personal care tasks is broken. We have evidence that the current system can lead to less person centred outcomes, difficulties in the recruitment

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of carers and providers struggling to continue to operate. In embarking upon our programme of Turning the World Upside Down, we acknowledged that we needed to fundamentally transform the current model of care at home.

Member Scrutiny:

Members gave the opinion that in its current state, the report lacked clarity and that they would not be able to recommend it to Cabinet in its current form.

It was asked if the language in the report was a code for delivering cheaper services.

The partner sessions at Humble Farms were questioned and it was asked if due diligence was done so that MCC will lead the agenda, not the suppliers.

In regard to the area patches it was asked how data was used to identify the need in the county.

Concerns were raised regarding the use of outside contractors.

A Member asked for reassurance on the quality and continuity of care visits.

A Member felt that an amendment to the recommendation be as follows 'the Adults Select Committee endorses the principle of the Turning the World Upside Down model and supports the pilot implementation with a further report back to the select committee.

It was asked that Members see more of the detail of how the scheme will work in practice as it was felt that due to the number of people involved in the equation; MCC, partners, end users, there needed to be greater certainty and clarity of the scheme in action.

It was asked why not all of the partners wished to take part in the pilot scheme.

The flexibility of visits was applauded although Members were curious to know if an accurate model was achievable due to the fluid nature of the care.

The Committee commented on the large amount of work Officers have put into the report and felt the officer's presentation aided them greatly.

It was asked if Members could meet with Officers outside the select committee to share ideas.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Adult Select Committee endorse the first draft of the Turning the World Upside Down and look forward to the final draft of the report to come before them. The Committee would recommend that all member seminars are arranged before a

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conclusion report is brought to Committee.

4. Re-Designation of Shared Housing Accommodation Report

Context:

This report is to consider re-designating the Council's Shared Housing accommodation to hostel designation. This will facilitate shared housing accommodation to fall under an alternative definition of the housing benefit regulations. This would eliminate the need for the Council to rely on subsidy funding, subsequent to the loss of the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee from April 2017. This is a follow up to the report received by the Adult Select Committee on 23rd January 2018.

Key Issues:

Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the Council has a duty to both respond to homelessness and to prevent homelessness. The Act also provides the power to discharge the associated duties into the private rented sector. Strengthening prevention activity is an on-going priority, including engaging with private landlords to enable access to private accommodation as a key option for the Council to discharge its duties and minimise over reliance on social housing and utilising bed & breakfast.

In this context the Council has developed a portfolio of 60 rooms, largely leased from private landlords, providing shared accommodation for single people. The scheme has created an additional housing option for single people, particularly males who wouldn't be considered to be vulnerable under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The scheme will have provided an alternative option for some applicants, to rough sleeping.

Prior to April 2017, the Council was able to base the weekly rental charge on the local housing allowance less 10%, plus £60 temporary accommodation management fee, paid via Housing Benefit. Welfare reform changes by UK Government removed this management fee. Welsh Government has attempted to support the Council with this loss of revenue through additional rate support grant. This, however, is insufficient to cover the shared housing scheme as well as the Melin private leasing scheme and has resulted in a significant financial pressure for the Council, which the Council has supported through the Medium Term Financial Plan.

It has been identified that the management of the shared housing is consistent with the Council's homeless hostel accommodation. The hostel is classed as Specified Accommodation under the housing benefit regulations. A change in designation to hostel and designated accommodation will mean that will mean the properties meet the definition of specified accommodation. This allow the Council to charge a rent that

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aligns with the local housing allowance and, subject to the financial circumstances of individual applicants, therefore, will payments will be made via housing benefit. This will avoid the need for the Council to seek a subsidy payment.

This arrangement will also support applicants in receipt of Universal Credit as housing costs for such applicants won't be included in their Universal Credit payment. To meet the housing benefit regulations the Council will need to enter into ten year leases with property owners. The risk associated with this is considered to be low as current six month leases contain two month break clauses. A suitable break clause would be applied to any new leases.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked if the accommodation will remain the same after the re-designation and looked for confirmation that this would not change the usage.

In term of the sixty rooms, it was asked if there were a large number of landlords and asked if landlords were expected to be part of an accreditation scheme or vetted.

Reassurance was sought that families would not be housed in hostel type accommodation.

Clarification was sought over the implication of a ten year lease and asked about the length of the break clauses.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Committee considered the benefits of the Shared Housing for homeless applicants and those threatened with homelessness in the context of the financial sustainability of the service.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet that current units (and any possible future units) of shared housing should be re-designated to hostel accommodation from 1st April 2018 and to seek to negotiate ten year leases with appropriate break clauses with applicable landlords in order to facilitate the re-designation.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am