
People Scrutiny Committee Pre-decision Board - 20 February 2025

In attendance: Councillors Howell (Chair), Belsey, Cross, Field, Geary, Lambert, Shing and Swansborough

Also in attendance: Councillor Maynard (attended online)

Mark Stainton, Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Frood Radford, Assistant Director, interim Assistant Director
Planning, Performance and Engagement.

Rachel Sweeney, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser

Summary of Comments to Cabinet

1.1 The People Scrutiny Pre-decision Board met on the 20 February 2025 and agreed comments to be put to Cabinet, on behalf of the Committee, on savings proposals related to Adult Social Care and Health for consideration on 25 February 2025.

1.2 The Director of Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) introduced each Cabinet report which detailed the recommendations to Cabinet on each saving proposal and information to be considered by Cabinet, including alternative proposals considered, consultation responses, and equality impact assessments.

1.3 The comments of the People Scrutiny Pre-decision Board are set out below:

General comments

1.4 In discussing each of the savings proposals, the Board considered the financial context in which savings had been identified; the potential impacts of savings on individuals, carers and family members, including journey times, as well impacts on strategic partners; and the proposed mitigations for these impacts.

1.5 The Board overall was deeply concerned about the impacts that all proposals would have on vulnerable individuals and services but recognised the extremely challenging financial position of East Sussex County Council and the need to identify significant savings in order to set a balanced budget. The Board was concerned about the capacity of the independent and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to meet increases in demand as a result of proposals going ahead, and noted the fragility of the care market, particularly since the recent increases to national living wage and employer national insurance contributions. The Board discussed plans for local government reorganisation and commented that some savings proposals would have significant impacts on district and borough council services, which would become the responsibility of any new unitary authority.

The Board agreed that it was important for the Council to continue to lobby Government for sustainable funding that met the needs of East Sussex residents.

Proposal to close the Milton Grange Day Service for older people

1.6 The Board recognised the value of this service to its clients and carers and welcomed assurance that the revised proposal for Milton Grange Day Service would be able to continue to meet demand.

1.7 The Board agreed that, in light of the challenging financial context, the revised proposal was the best possible outcome for clients and their carers.

Proposal to close the Phoenix Centre Day Service for older people

1.8 The Board considered the impact of this proposal on clients and their carers, including a recent successful temporary move to Milton Grange during building work on the Phoenix Day Service Centre, and agreed that although there would be some impact on individuals, Milton Grange could offer appropriate alternative provision to clients. The Board considered the travel arrangements for clients and carers who used the service and welcomed assurance that alternative provision would be appropriate for the individual and would take travel journeys into consideration. The Board, therefore, in light of the current financial context, recognised that the proposal was the best outcome available. However, the Board's acceptance of this proposal was dependent on Cabinet agreeing to keep providing services at Milton Grange.

1.9 The Board was concerned about the future of the Phoenix Talking Newspaper and welcomed the Department's efforts to seek ongoing ways to provide this.

Proposal to cease the specialist mental health community outreach service

1.10 The Board agreed that the revised proposal was the best outcome possible, in light of the current financial context, and was reassured that clients using the service would be unlikely to notice any change in delivery. The Board therefore accepted the proposal and requested that the Department report to People Scrutiny Committee in 6-9 months' time on the impact of changes to service delivery and the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

Proposal to close the Linden Court Day Service for people with a learning disability and merge it with Beeching Park day service

1.11 In light of the financial context, the Board regrettably accepted this proposal, however the Board was deeply concerned about the potential impacts this would have on vulnerable clients, particularly on mental health, and sought and welcomed assurance that any transition to a new service would be managed sensitively through client and carer reviews. The Board was also concerned about the increased travel time which could impact clients and their carers and welcomed assurance that alternative provision would be appropriate for individuals affected and would take travel journeys into consideration.

1.12 The Board requested that the Department report to the People Scrutiny Committee in 6 – 9 months time on these impacts and noted that the committee would seek assurance that the relocation of clients had not been detrimental to their or their carer's health.

Proposal to close the Steps to Work service for people with a learning disability

1.13 Overall, the Board recognised that the proposal was the best available outcome in light of the financial context and welcomed the ongoing provision of employment support. However, the Board was concerned that support once people were in employment would cease and that this could affect clients' ability to remain in work. The Board did however recognise that some support was provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.

1.14 Councillor Cross did not support this proposal and expressed a view that the service should be reduced rather than ceased. Councillor Cross expressed concern that the proposal for job coaches to deliver employment support through a re-modelled Learning Disability Day Service Offer would be less effective as coaches would not sit within a dedicated employment service.

Proposal to cease the Community Support Service for adults living independently at home and adapt the service for adults living in supported accommodation

1.15 The Board accepted the revised proposal, in light of the financial context, and received assurance that the individuals affected by ceasing of support at weekends would be supported through a review and offered either a change of day that they received support, or an alternative form of support at the weekend. The Board also noted the potential benefits of existing day services providing a wider range of support.

1.16 The Board welcomed that the revised proposal had generated a larger saving, and that Cabinet was being recommended to use this to mitigate the impact of a reduced saving on another ASCH proposal.

1.17 Councillor Cross expressed concern at increasing the delivery of services through the independent sector and expressed the view that this could be more costly long term.

Hookstead Day Service

1.18 In light of the revised proposal for the Community Support Service for adults living independently at home and service for adults living in supported accommodation, the Board accepted the revised proposal to continue to provide a service at Hookstead Day Service, but at a reduced rate. The Board expressed that it was important to ensure there was provision in the north of the county and that, by preserving the service, it could be expanded in the future if there was increased demand. The Board was concerned that the revised timetable would impact on clients and carers, particularly carers who may use the service in order to work and welcomed assurance that clients and carers impacted by the revised timetable would

be supported and that, although the proposal was to reduce activity times, the morning drop off time would remain unaltered.

Proposal to reduce the funding for the Housing-Related Floating Support Service

1.19 The Board was deeply concerned about this proposal and its likely impact on vulnerable clients, including increased risk of homelessness, and on strategic partners and the VCSE sector, including BHT Sussex. The Board felt that the proposal would shift additional pressures onto district and borough councils which had a statutory responsibility to provide support. The Board also expressed concern that this was a short term solution and that housing support could be the responsibility of a new unitary authority in 3 years' time. However, the Board recognised that this service was not a statutory responsibility of the County Council and had therefore not been prioritised as an area to protect. In light of this, the Board reluctantly accepted the proposal.

1.20 The Board received assurance that, although referrals would be reduced, priority would be given to referrals from Children's Services and individuals most at risk of developing Care Act eligible needs, which included those with care experience.

1.21 The Board welcomed that the Department would continue to work with partners, including districts and boroughs to redesign and co-produce a targeted service around homelessness prevention.

Supported Accommodation for adults with mental health, and additional needs

1.22 The Board was deeply concerned about this proposal and its likely impact on vulnerable clients, including increased risk of homelessness, and on strategic partners. The Board felt that the proposal would shift additional pressures onto district and borough councils which had a statutory responsibility to provide support. The Board also expressed concern that this was a short term solution and that housing support could be the responsibility of a new unitary authority in 3 years' time. However, the Board recognised that this was not a statutory responsibility of the County Council and had therefore not been prioritised as an area to protect and reluctantly accepted the proposal.

1.23 The Board welcomed that the Department would continue to work with partners, including districts and boroughs to redesign and co-produce a targeted service around homelessness prevention.

Proposal to cease the funding for Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services when the current contracts end in summer 2025

1.24 The Board recognised the value of this service and, with no statutory responsibility for any organisation to provide this support, was deeply concerned that there would be no alternative provision if the service was to cease, and that there would be a subsequent increase in service needs. The Board was concerned about the impact this could have on strategic partners and the VCSE sector, including the Seaview Project. However, the Board recognised that this was not a statutory

responsibility of the County Council and had therefore not been prioritised as an area to protect. In light of this, the Board reluctantly accepted the proposal.

1.25 The Board recommended that the service should be retained if possible but recognised that this was contingent on the Department receiving Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Grant funding from the Government. The Board expressed deep concern about the significant impacts on vulnerable people, carers, the health and care system, and wider community if this funding was not forthcoming.

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