

Notes of the Disability Equality Scheme's External Scrutiny Board Special Meeting 22nd December 2011

Item	Notes
Board Members in attendance	Jan Rothwell (Chairman), , Keith Hester, Sue Hinks, John Carr, Cllrs Pam Bale and Joe Mooney, Kate Green, Mick Hutchins
Others	Cllrs Graham Jones, Jeff Brooks; Nigel Owen (Project Manager Community Services), Jan Evans (Head of Adult Social Care), David Baker (WBC Policy Officer), Andy Day (Head of Policy and Communication), Keith Ulyatt (Public Relations Manager), Andy Walker (Head of Finance), Matthew Metcalf (Transport Officer), Catherine Carey (Transport Services Manager), Jason Teal (Consultation Manager) and Gary Poulson
Introduction and apologies	<p>Jan Rothwell welcomed everyone to the meeting,</p> <p>Apologies: There were apologies received from Keith Hester, Norma Weaver, Maggie Allison and Graham Hunt.</p> <p>Purpose of the special meeting was to provide an understanding of the proposals for a £9m savings in the 1012/13 budget as part of the on-going consultation process. The meeting was an opportunity to ask questions and to provide feedback to the council on the impact and issues in caring for and protecting vulnerable people that needed to be considered.</p>
Financial overview	<p>Andy Walker (Head of Finance) gave a short presentation covering a four year view of the £28m savings that the Council was being asked to make.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011/12 - £8.1m savings were made by focusing on back office and support staff reductions of 180 people with minimal impact on front line services • 2012/13 - £9.0m savings were proposed made up of £3m savings of further staff reductions, £4m across general council services and £2m savings that would have an impact on vulnerable groups. <p>Please see appendix 1 for full details of financial overview presentation.</p> <p>Mick Hutchins asked about the 4% rise in the planned Adult Social Care budget for 2012/13 and did this reflect an increase in demand for services. The numbers of vulnerable people requiring services in 2012/13 was not expected to change. The budget rise was being generated by higher costs in terms of complexity of the support services</p>

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	<p>required. Mick Hutchins commented that the significant changes in service provision such as Day Centre Services and the implementation of Personal Budgets was disruptive for many vulnerable users. Mick Hutchins was concerned that the Council was planning to freeze Council tax in 2012/13 at the 2011/12 level. Why had the council not chosen a rise in council tax rather than seeking £2m savings from vulnerable groups. Cllr Graham Jones explained that a Government Grant of £1.98m would be withheld from the Council if it exceeded a council tax rise of 2.5%. As each 1% of council tax rise raised £800k of additional revenue no overall benefit could be gained by raising council tax in 2012/13. John Carr was concerned that disabled people and vulnerable groups were being asked to pay for all the cuts. Alan Fleming thought that there were other budgets such as Cultural Services that should be cut before impacting on vulnerable groups. It was noted that if the entire Cultural Service budget was removed an additional £5m savings would still be required.</p>
<p>Review of Newbury Shopmobility</p>	<p>Andy Day gave a short review of funding available for shopmobility. In 2011/12 the shopmobility budget of £24k had been fully protected. In 2012/13 a revenue saving of £8K was required. This revenue reduction would be mitigated by a £6k of capital sum being made available for the purchase of new mobile vehicles. In 2012/13 it was expected that there would be no reduction in the service level provided to users of the shopmobility service.</p> <p>Gary Poulson reviewed the progress made in developing the shopmobility service between 1995 and 2011. Today, it provided a 6day/week service which created considerable added value to the town of Newbury. People would shop elsewhere if the service was reduced. 2011 showed a 30% increase over 2010 in the number loans made during the year. Mick Hutchins supported the added value provided by volunteers working for the shopmobility. John Carr was pleased to hear that the current service would be maintained in 2012/13 but was concerned that further cuts in grant might be required in years 3 and 4.</p>
<p>Removal of travel token concessions</p>	<p>Kate Green was concerned about the impact that the removal of travel tokens would have on vulnerable groups, individuals would become more isolated particularly those that lived in rural areas where alternative transport was more restricted. Catherine Carey (Transport Services Manager) had written to all token users explaining why the service was being removed and provided information on bus passes, the Handy bus scheme and Volunteer Car Users schemes which may be able to provide an alternative service for vulnerable users.</p> <p>Matthew Metcalf was actioned to provide details on how travel tokens had been used.</p> <p>The following table was provided after the meeting:</p> <p>See appendix 4 for details of the distribution of travel token users by postcode.</p>

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	<p>For the 2010 - 11 period:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="414 183 1317 491"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="414 183 907 220">Mode of Transport</th> <th data-bbox="907 183 1169 220">Value £</th> <th data-bbox="1169 183 1317 220">%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 220 907 256">Taxis</td> <td data-bbox="907 220 1169 256">74,452.75</td> <td data-bbox="1169 220 1317 256">53.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 256 907 293">Not used & not returned</td> <td data-bbox="907 256 1169 293">30,170.25</td> <td data-bbox="1169 256 1317 293">21.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 293 907 330">Community Transport and Charities</td> <td data-bbox="907 293 1169 330">15,843.75</td> <td data-bbox="1169 293 1317 330">11.32</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 330 907 367">Rail Services</td> <td data-bbox="907 330 1169 367">11,564.00</td> <td data-bbox="1169 330 1317 367">8.26</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 367 907 403">Local Bus Services</td> <td data-bbox="907 367 1169 403">5,519.75</td> <td data-bbox="1169 367 1317 403">3.94</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 403 907 440">Returned unused to the Council</td> <td data-bbox="907 403 1169 440">2,467.00</td> <td data-bbox="1169 403 1317 440">1.76</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 440 907 491"><i>Total</i></td> <td data-bbox="907 440 1169 491">£140,017.50</td> <td data-bbox="1169 440 1317 491">100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>John Carr asked that a follow up survey should be conducted in 12 months time to see if the cost of providing bus passes was greater than the travel tokens system. Mick Hutchins asked for more information and publicity covering the provision and availability of bus passes.</p>	Mode of Transport	Value £	%	Taxis	74,452.75	53.17	Not used & not returned	30,170.25	21.55	Community Transport and Charities	15,843.75	11.32	Rail Services	11,564.00	8.26	Local Bus Services	5,519.75	3.94	Returned unused to the Council	2,467.00	1.76	<i>Total</i>	£140,017.50	100%
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<p>Budget proposals for 2012/13 Care and Support for Adults</p>	<p>Jane Evans (Head of Adult Social Care) provided a detailed presentation on the 10 proposals amounting to £1.8m of savings that would affect the care and support provided to adults.</p> <p>Please see appendix 2 for full details of the presentation which covered the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voluntary sector purchasing ○ Contributions towards the cost of care ○ Personal budgets ○ Community meals ○ Purchasing Learning Disability supported living services ○ Cost ceiling for care homes and home care ○ Review of home care contracts ○ Transport for Adult Social Care clients ○ Support in Sheltered Housing ○ Women's refuge <p>Mick Hutchins asked how many people were facing two increases in costs, one from the charging proposal, the other from the withdrawal of the subsidy on meals.</p> <p>Nigel Owen provided the following information after the meeting:</p> <p>There are 1,198 people who receive chargeable services, of whom 756 will have an increase in their contribution.</p>																								

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	<p>There are 265 people who receive community meals, all of whom currently benefit from a subsidy of approximately £2 per meal. The overlap is of 153 people who receive both services, of whom, 122 will have an increase in their contribution, as well as losing the subsidy.</p> <p>Mick Hutchins was keen to record the fact that by attending this special meeting of the DES External Scrutiny Board they as individuals representatives and as a Board were not rubber stamping the saving proposals that had been presented. However, he did appreciate the Council's efforts to consult with disabled representatives and having the opportunity to be involved in discussions at the right stage in the decision process.</p> <p>Graham Jones thanked the DES Board for a useful and very instructive meeting and for allowing a number of councillors the opportunity to attend the meeting as observers.</p>
	Meeting close at 1.00pm

Appendices:

Appendix 1	Financial Overview presentation of 2012/13 Budget and Savings Proposals	Andy Walker (Head of Finance)
Appendix 2	Presentation on Care and Support Services for Adult Social Care	Jan Evans (Head of Adult Social Care)
Appendix 3	West Berkshire Council's Response to Mick Hutchins Questions	Jason Teal (Consultation Manager)
Appendix 4	Travel Token Recipients	