

Division(s): All
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## **CABINET – 27 JANUARY 2015**

### **HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT**

#### **Report by Director for Adult Social Services**

#### **Introduction**

1. Housing related support services have largely been protected from cuts for the past four years, but the scale of financial challenge facing the County Council required action to be taken to reduce the budget by 38% in line with the actual funding available. This decision was taken by the Council when setting the budget in February 2014.
2. On 29 May 2014 the members of the Health Improvement Board agreed a proposal for how to implement the reduction of funding for housing related support services to go forward to consultation with other stakeholders.
3. This report outlines the findings from the public consultation that ran from 26 June to 17 September and sets out the proposed way forward following that consultation. This proposed way forward has been subsequently considered and approved by the members of the Health Improvement Board on 20 October 2014 and of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 13 November 2014. All the District Councils and the City Council are represented on the Health Improvement Board. There are two District/City Council representatives on the health and Wellbeing Board.

#### **What are we trying to achieve?**

4. Given the complexity of the funding mechanisms in this area, and the interplay with district council housing responsibilities, substantial discussion took place with both housing officers and the county Chief Executive' and Leaders' groups prior to any formal external consultation.
5. Whilst district colleagues were unhappy at the proposed reductions they understand the scale of financial problems facing the county and after some debate and amendment, agreed on a set of principles which have guided our recent process. We believe that this has allowed us to put forward a realistic way through a very complex issue.
6. The agreed principles allow us to:
  - Keep all hostels open
  - Retain a pathway for single homeless people in Oxford City
  - Retain complex needs service with access from across the county
  - Retain community floating support across the county

- Increase accommodation based services outside Oxford city and particular in Banbury.
7. We said from the outset that these proposals would be challenging and difficult to implement. Results of this consultation confirmed our view. However, they are achievable ***with some additional help from the county council*** and we are proposing to smooth the process by making available an additional £400k from Public Health funding and phasing the overall reduction in funding over two years.
  8. In addition, it is clear that further work is required in relation to Domestic Violence services and these will be reviewed separately over the next year prior to any final decisions being taken about changes to current services.

### **Proposed way forward following consultation**

9. Overall, most consultation responses were not in favour of the proposals. Alongside this overall view, there was good level of support for the proposals on principles and outcomes, and some support for specific elements of the proposed distribution of funding or of how future services could be commissioned and provided. Full consultation report is attached at **Annex 1**.
10. As part of this consultation we have identified a number of suggestions that we believe would make the original proposals more robust and flexible. Therefore we are proposing to make some changes to the original proposals, as set out in more detail in **Annex 2** to this report.
11. The County Council believes that this core set of proposals should go ahead as they allow us to implement the required reduction in funding whilst keeping all hostels open in Oxford, retain a range of services across the county for people with different levels of need, and increase access to local services outside of Oxford, in particular in Banbury. This position was agreed by the Health Improvement Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **Financial and Staff Implications**

12. We believe that robust implementation of these revised proposals would allow us to deliver the required reduction in funding of 38% over two years, in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

### **Equalities Implications**

13. This consultation provided a wealth of information and case studies to evidence potential impact of these proposals on vulnerable people, in particular on women and children, those from Black Minority Ethnic groups, or those with a disability. We welcome this robust contribution to the impact assessment process and have revised the associated Social and Community Impact Assessment in November 2014, which is attached at **Annex 3**.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 14. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposed plan for re-commissioning of housing related support services as revised following the consultation and set out in this report.**

### **JOHN JACKSON**

Director for Adult Social Services

Background papers: N/A

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December 2014