

**Report for:** Cabinet, 17 October 2017

**Item number:** 15

**Title:** Outcome of consultation and decision on withdrawal of subsidy for Meals on Wheels service

**Report authorised by :** Charlotte Pomery, Assistant Director Commissioning

**Lead Officer:** Christine Mosedale, Commissioning Manager

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Key Decision

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1 Enabling all adults to lead healthy, long and fulfilling lives is a key priority of the Corporate Plan, Building a Stronger Haringey Together, 2015 – 2018. Whilst the Council faces a challenging financial climate over the coming years due to reducing funding and increasing demand, the approach continues to be ambitious focusing on improving outcomes for all residents, promoting independence and building choice and control.
- 1.2 Within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved by full Council in February 2017, proposals to withdraw the subsidy for meals on wheels were set out, subject to consultation. This report draws on the outcome of the consultation, which ran from 26 June to 24 September, to make recommendations to Cabinet for the withdrawal of the subsidy for the meals on wheels service.
- 1.3 As part of the wider transformation of adult social care in the borough to ensure provision of services which promote choice, control and independence, this paper also describes the current range of community alternatives, highlights proposals for a pilot independent living service and responds to the key points of the Equalities Impact Assessment, attached.

## **2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

- 2.1 Our Corporate Plan sets out our ambitions to enable adults in the borough to live long, healthy and fulfilling lives. The subsidy for the meals on wheels service costs the council over £140,000 a year at a time when social care is facing unprecedented demand and budgetary pressures and Haringey is the only council in North Central London still offering a subsidised service. The proposals put forward enable the Council to make savings and to build a more sustainable

community offer to more residents, as part of offering choice to residents in need of support to access a daily hot meal. In the proposed new approach, the Council will help users to navigate the options available and choose the one that best suits their needs. We are committed to supporting all current users through the transition to the new model and ensuring that we continue to meet their needs.

### **3. Recommendations**

For Cabinet to:

- 3.1 Consider and take into account the detailed feedback of the consultation undertaken with users of the Meals on Wheels service, as set out in appendices 1 and 2 of this report.
- 3.2 Consider and take into account the equality impact assessment of the proposals on the protected groups, i.e. service users, and the proposed mitigations in appendix 3.
- 3.3 Approve the withdrawal of the subsidy for the Meals on Wheels service.
- 3.4 Approve the future service arrangement with the Council acting as a facilitator and navigator and helping service users to decide which community alternatives meal options available they want to take up.

### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1 In delivering the Corporate Plan, the Council aims to enable all adults to lead healthy, long and fulfilling lives through a strong emphasis on promoting independence, personalisation and choice and control. There is no statutory requirement for local authorities to fund the costs of food or meals directly and a significant proportion of other Councils have withdrawn from delivering or subsidising a meals service over the past five years or so.
- 4.2 The current arrangements for meals on wheels, where a subsidy is paid by the Council towards the cost of each meal delivered through a contract with an external supplier, are taken up by approximately 110 users at any one time. This is a significant reduction from the 300 users accessing the service in 2010 reflecting changing user preferences and habits.
- 4.3 There has been no increase in client contributions to the service since 2012/13 and the contribution has only increased by 20p per meal from £3.20 to £3.40 since 2010. However, as the volume of meals has decreased the cost of the meals has increased each year with a standard meal now costing £7.60. The Council now contributes at least £4.20 as subsidy towards the cost, costing the Council over £140,000 each year.

- 4.4 The responses to the consultation demonstrate that the vast majority of users disagreed with the proposal to withdraw the subsidy and highly value the current subsidised meals on wheels service. However, half of respondents indicated that they would be able to afford to pay more than the current contribution level with 39% indicating that they would be able to afford the full cost of available hot meal delivery options. The service is one of many provisions available to residents with support and care needs and not able to prepare food for themselves in Haringey and only a limited number of people benefit from the existing service, however it is recognised that the recommendations would result in an increase in the cost of a hot meal delivery service.
- 4.5 The proposals would strengthen the Council's statutory role to ensure access to a meal and to act as a facilitator and navigator, helping the individual to decide which meals option of the community alternatives available they want to take up. The proposals set out in this paper enable the Council to make savings and to build a more sustainable community offer to more residents, as part of offering choice to residents in need of support to access a daily hot meal. The Council does not intend to promote one option but to ensure a number of ways of accessing a regular hot meal are in place and to work with users to make the choice which best meets their needs. For existing users of the service the Council will support each individual to choose the most suitable alternative option and ensure that we continue to meet the assessed needs and outcomes.

## **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 Continuing with the current arrangements has been considered but rejected as the payment of the subsidy is not sustainable and only a limited number of users benefit from a hot meal. In addition, neither the Care Act nor preceding legislation require meals to be subsidised or the cost of food to be met by the Council. Haringey Council is the only borough in North Central London which still offers a subsidised Meals on Wheels service. Islington, Camden and Enfield ended their direct provision of Meals on Wheels services in 2011 and Barnet in 2015.
- 5.2 Consideration was given to withdrawing the subsidy whilst not building and signposting community based alternatives. This, however, was rejected as the development of a strong, community offer supports the wider Priority 2 objectives of choice, control and independence and meets the wider Council aspirations to build a stronger community in the borough.

## **6. Background information**

- 6.1 The current meals on wheels service, provided by Sodexo, is subsidised by the Council. The client contribution is set at £3.40 and there has been no increase since 2012/13 and only a 20p increase from £3.20 since 2010. However, the cost of meals overall has increased each year with a standard meal now costing £7.60. The Council pays at least £4.20 as a subsidy towards the cost of every meal, costing over £140,000 each year. The number of users accessing the service has also reduced from over 300 in 2011 to only around 110 users now.

- 6.2 Proposals to withdraw the subsidy for meals on wheels were included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved by full Council in February 2017, subject to consultation.

#### Consultation process and outcomes

- 6.3 The consultation on the proposed changes to the offer and withdrawal of the subsidy for meals on wheels ran from 26<sup>th</sup> June to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

- 6.4 The consultation comprised of:

- A dedicated webpage explaining the consultation and access to an online version of the survey.
- A hard copy of the questionnaire and a free post envelope to return it sent to 135 current and recent service users.
- Drop in sessions held at Wood Green, Marcus Garvey and Hornsey libraries to enable service users to seek assistance with completing the questionnaire and ask questions about the proposal.
- A direct telephone number for service users to call and ask questions or for assistance with completing the questionnaire.
- Sodexo drivers reminded users about the consultation.

- 6.5 The consultation was originally due to finish on 1<sup>st</sup> September. However, on 22<sup>nd</sup> August it was extended to run until 24<sup>th</sup> September to ensure that all those in receipt of the service, including those who may not have been receiving the service when the consultation period began for example due to a stay in hospital, were properly consulted. In addition to receiving a hard copy of the questionnaire and free post envelope, additional drop-in sessions at Wood Green, Marcus Garvey and Hornsey libraries were offered and the online consultation remained open.

- 6.6 During the consultation period, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Culture accompanied one of the Sodexo drivers on a delivery round.

- 6.7 The overall consultation response rate was 24% (33 actual responses). 85% of those who did respond disagreed with the proposal to withdraw the subsidy for the meals on wheels service. It was clear from the feedback received that users highly value the service.

- 6.8 The following aspects of a hot meal delivery service were rated most important by respondents:

Delivery at the weekends – 74%

Hot meals (rather than frozen and need reheating) – 88%

Social interaction – 44%

Lunchtime hot meal (rather than evening meal) – 73%

Variety of meal choice – 79%

Price – 71%

- 6.9 Asked if they would be able to afford to pay extra for the delivery of a daily hot meal 58% of respondents said no. However, when asked what the maximum amount they would be able to afford for the delivery of a daily hot meal 70% of users indicated that they could afford to pay more for the delivery of a daily hot meal than the current cost of the £3.40 client contribution. 39% of users indicated that they could afford to pay £5-7 per meal.
- 6.10 29% of users indicated that they would be interested in attending a regular lunch club, if one was available locally.

#### Equalities impact

- 6.11 The equality impacts identified through the assessment (see appendix 3 for the full equality impact assessment) are:
- A negative impact on the protected groups (age, sex, disability and religious belief)
  - 58% of respondents state that they would not be able to afford the increased costs which will impact on the groups who are more likely to use the service
  - 44% of respondents said it would have an impact on social isolation
  - 27% of respondents said the change will involve family members or carers
  - The need for a range of cultural meals to be provided.

#### The community meals offer and proposed mitigations

- 6.12 If the recommendations are approved, the Council will communicate the decision and next steps to each existing user of the service. Each user will receive a full assessment or review of their support plan to ensure that they will be supported to choose the most suitable alternative option and ensure that their assessed needs and outcomes continue to be met.
- 6.13 Carers impacted by this proposal are entitled to their own assessment and support plan and can receive support from the Council's carer support service.
- 6.14 The current subsidised meals on wheels service is one of many community based provisions available to residents with support and care needs and not able to prepare food for themselves in Haringey although only a limited number of people benefit from the subsidy of the existing service. As part of the wider transformation of adult social care in the borough to ensure provision of services which promote choice, control and independence, the Council is keen to support such community alternatives and going forward the role of the Council would increasingly be to act as a facilitator and navigator, helping the individual to decide which meals option of the community alternatives available they want to take up. The Council does not intend to promote one option but to ensure a number of ways of accessing a regular hot meal are in place and to work with users to make the choice which best meets their needs.
- 6.15 In working on this proposal, information about a range of existing services that residents will be able to access, both for delivery and in the community, has been

collated and is now easily accessible through our community information offer, currently known as HariCare. As well as different methods of delivery there is also a range of different meals available, including culturally specific offers. Many service users and other local residents already access community based provision which offers the opportunity for company and support as well as the provision of a meal, without the need for an intervention by the Council and this is intended to continue.

- 6.16 Those wishing to take up or retain the daily meals on wheels service as now could remain with the current supplier Sodexo at full cost for a hot meal delivery, from £6.75 for a standard meal. Whilst this is less than the standard meal cost of £7.60 per meal within the current contract, it represents an increase from the current level of client contribution which is £3.40 per meal.
- 6.17 We recognise that the removal of the subsidy will have a financial impact on users. However, for both new and existing users, there is the option to transfer to a frozen food delivery service, offered by a range of suppliers in the market including the existing meals on wheels supplier with prices from as low as £2.99 per meal. Where this option is chosen the Council may need to ensure that the user has a freezer with sufficient storage space and ensure home care is in place where a person is not able to heat the food and family are not able to assist to ensure that it can be accessed seven days a week, where needed.
- 6.18 45% of users indicated that they would be able to afford to pay at least £4.50 per meal and there are a number of local community centres that offer a meals on wheels service, delivering a daily hot meal Monday to Friday and costing between £4.50 and £7 per meal. The full costs of the meals are met by users of the service.
- 6.19 44% of respondents have indicated that the removal of the subsidy would have an impact on social isolation. We recognise the value of the daily social interaction and there are a number of community centres that offer Luncheon clubs on various days, costing approximately £5 per meal. The Council is also continuing to work with providers to develop the community offer to ensure a range of options for residents to meet their needs, including working with sheltered housing communities and community organisations, to support the development of local luncheon clubs. We will also ensure that users at risk of social isolation are referred to the befriending service. In addition, where access to a luncheon club is an assessed need, and the user is eligible for adult social care, transport will be arranged.
- 6.20 As part of the wider transformation of the support offered to enable residents to remain independent at home for as long as possible, the Council is working with a neighbouring local authority and with the support of London Councils, to set up an innovative pilot independent living service. One-off seed funding is being sought to establish the pilot which would enable a voluntary sector provider, working in partnership with a registered provider and a private supplier, to establish an independent living service, seven days a week. This could contain a hot meal delivery service which would provide all meal types, including Kosher, Halal and texture modified options, for a standard £5 per meal. The full costs of the meal



would be borne by the individual user. The overall cost of the independent living service may also mean that it is accessed earlier by a wider range of residents with the realisation of possible preventative benefits, including reduced GP visits. The service would offer a welfare check and is also able to offer medication prompting. It is worth noting that with the service able to offer support with both meal preparation and medication prompting a number of users who currently get a lunchtime care hour, which is funded by the Council, could receive this service as an alternative, with the costs of the food itself continuing to be paid for by the user.

- 6.21 There are delivery and frozen options available for a range of cultural meals, available 7 days a week, although we recognise that there are limited affordable options available, in particular for Kosher meals, and this will impact on a small number of users. However, affordable vegetarian options are available.
- 6.22 Going forward the options for how a hot meal will be made available to potential users will routinely be explored as part of the assessment and support planning process. As set out above, where someone is a service user and chooses a frozen meal alternative the Council may need to ensure that the user has a freezer with sufficient storage space and ensure home care is in place where a person is not able to heat the food and family are not able to assist. Brokers will be able to set up arrangements with the preferred provider.

## **7. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

- 7.1 The Corporate Plan, Building a Stronger Haringey Together, sets out the vision and priorities for the Council. Its underpinning principles of empowering communities to enable people to do more for themselves and enabling all adults to lead healthy, long and fulfilling lives align well with the proposals for changes to the current meals on wheels offer as recommended in this paper.

## **8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer, Procurement, Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities).**

### **8.1 Finance**

- 8.1.1 A target of £144k in relation to the ending of the Meals on Wheels subsidy, is included in the MTFS2 savings plan for Priority 2 in 2017/18. This saving will not now be achieved in 2017/18 and alternative savings have been found.

- 8.1.2 Going forward, the proposals on alternative provision of meals offer both opportunities and risks including –

- savings from the withdrawal of the subsidy
- savings from potential reductions in lunchtime hours
- risks of additional costs of alternative provision and unmet needs being identified through change in provision

- 8.1.3 These risks and opportunities will be evaluated for the 2017/18 MTFS refresh.

- 8.1.4 Should the pilot scheme be agreed, additional one-off costs associated with its implementation will be met either from Transformation funding or from within existing departmental resources.

## 8.2 Procurement

- 8.2.1 Clause 6.20 states that funding is being sought to pilot a new independent living service. If this funding is approved, then the procurement process for the pilot must be followed in accordance of the Council's Contract Standing Orders. A separate Decision Report will be required for approving the spend.

## 8.3 Assistant Director of Corporate Governance

- 8.3.1 Cabinet is being asked to make a decision on the proposal to withdrawal subsidy for Meals on Wheels service.

- 8.3.2 There is a common law duty on the Council to consult with service users, carers, providers and other stakeholders that are likely to be affected by the proposals. The consultation must take place at a time when the proposals are still at their formative stages. The Council must provide the consultees with sufficient information to enable them properly to understand the proposals being consulted upon and to express a view in relation to it. The information must be clear, concise, accurate and must not be misleading. The consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposals and to respond. The consultation feedback contained in this report sets out how the Council has discharged this common law duty.

- 8.3.3 The Council must give genuine and conscientious consideration to the responses received from the consultees before making its final decision on the proposals. This report sets out the responses received from service users and other stakeholders.

- 8.3.4 As part of its decision making process, the Council must have "due regard" to its equalities duties. Under Section 149 Equality Act 2010, the Council in exercise of its adult care and support functions, must have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in order to tackle prejudice and promote understanding. The protected characteristics are age, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In line with its equalities duties, the Council must undertake an Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) of the proposals on the protected groups. The Council is required to give serious, substantive and advance consideration of the what (if any) the proposals would have on the protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place. This exercise must be carried out with rigour and an open mind and should not be a mere form of box ticking. These are mandatory considerations. The outcome of the consultation on the proposals together with the analysis of the EqIA must be considered before reaching a final decision on the proposals. In line with its



equalities duties, the Council has undertaken an EqlA of the proposals on the protected groups and are set out in Appendix 3 together with the steps to mitigate the impact of the proposals.

- 8.3.5 The responses to the consultation on the proposals, the EqlA of the proposals and the steps to be taken to mitigate the impact, all must be considered before Cabinet makes its decision on the proposals. Cabinet members must ask themselves: a) whether it is justifiable to seek to make financial savings in the way proposed, having regard to the need to protect and promote the welfare of the service users; b) whether the mitigating steps proposed are sufficient or whether more needs to be done; c) whether the proposals ought to be adopted or discarded; and d) whether there is adequate provision for monitoring the proposed changes, so that changes can be made, if necessary.

#### 8.4 Equality

- 8.4.1 As mentioned above, the Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity for those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them
- Foster good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.
- The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

- 8.4.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqlA) has been carried out for the proposals. The findings and mitigating actions are summarised in 6.11-6.22 of this report, and described in more detail in the EqlA in Appendix 3. The majority of service users affected are over 65 years of age, women and with physical or mental disabilities. The proposed changes will have a negative impact on this group of people. There will be measures in place to mitigate any financial hardship when possible.

#### 8 **Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Consultation results – Residents responses

Appendix 2: Consultation results – Provider response

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

#### 9 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1995**

N/A