

APPENDIX 1

Results of Adult Social Care Savings Consultation

1. HOW WE CONSULTED FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE:

1.1 An Adult Social Care budget savings proposals presentation (and an easy read version) was made available on the council's website: at www.merton.gov.uk/adult-social-care-consultation

1.2 Paper copies of these documents were also available at the Civic Centre in Morden, Merton libraries, Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) at Vestry Hall and at the council's daycentres.

1.3 In addition, a general letter was sent to all 3,072 customers on the 23 October 2015 on the ASC Carefirst system. It notified them of the consultation period and how they could participate.

1.4 A further service specific letter was sent on the 23 November 2015 to the customers of the three services that we proposed to decommission, South Thames Crossroads, Sodexo Meals on Wheels and the Imagine Independence Service. This highlighted the specific changes to their service in the form of a question and answer fact sheet and explained how the customers could participate in the consultation process.

1.5 The views of interested people or organisations were also sought. They were asked to provide comments on the impact the proposals may have, and to suggest alternative ways in which the council could make savings. In order to facilitate an accessible and comprehensive consultation process we made 7 options available for stakeholders to give feedback. These were:

- Online questionnaire was available at www.merton.gov.uk/consultation
- Paper questionnaires were widely available at Merton's libraries, at Vestry Hall, the civic centre main reception and the daycentres within the borough. An accessible version of these questionnaires was provided.
- Two public consultation events were held on 30 November 2015 and 2 December 2015 at Vestry Hall.
- Healthwatch Merton also facilitated 6 small customer/carer group meetings.
- Two consultation meetings were held with staff.
- A consultation event was held with voluntary sector organisations on 26 November at the Chaucer Centre, and
- Email comments could be sent to ASCconsultation@merton.gov.uk and letter could be posted to the Civic centre

2. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED AND RESPONDENTS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE CONSULTATION:

2.1 There were 129 questionnaire responses received overall, a response rate of 4.2% of all customers contacted. ASC customers make up 1.5% of the overall population of Merton. The characteristics of the people who responded is detailed below, where this information was given.

Responses were received from 26 respondents who use services, 38 carers and 25 people who were neither a carer nor a service user.

Responses were received from 36 males and 45 females.

87 of 129 respondents provided details of their age with the largest response of 35 coming from the 56 -70 age range.

The full details are contained in the table below:

Age Range	Number of respondents
18 - 25	2
26 - 40	13
41 - 55	22
56 - 70	35
71 - 85	11
86+	4

92 of 129 respondents provided details of their disability which is detailed below:

Responses by Disability	No of respondents
Having a sensory impairment	4
Having a physical health condition	29
Having a long term neurological health condition	8
Having a learning disability	16
Having a mental health condition	11
Having no long- term health conditions	25

2.2 In addition to the 129 people who returned a questionnaire, views and feedback were obtained from up to 280 more people (almost 30% of them staff), some of whom will duplicate those answering the questionnaire or will have attended more than one meeting, as follows:

- There were a total of 72 attendees at the two public consultation events (some may have attended both).
- 72 people attended the Healthwatch Merton small customer events.
- Representatives from 20 organisations attended the voluntary sector consultation event.
- 83 staff attended the staff consultation events.
- 8 organisations submitted email letters/comments.
- 25 open responses & emails were received from the public.

3 SAVINGS CONSULTATION 2016/17 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES:

A narrative of the responses is detailed below. The full summary of the responses is attached in Appendix 3 .The open responses are contained in Appendix 3.1

3.1 Overall reduction in spending

Question 1 sought comments on the overall reduction in spending on adult social care, 87 respondents felt the reductions were too much.

Question 2 in the questionnaire asked people to provide comments if they felt the reductions were too much. A total of 67 comments were received which comprised of 6 categories.

- 35 of the respondents felt that the reductions would effect the most vulnerable of people and would put them at risk.
- 16 respondents felt that the reduction would reduce access to/ quality of services and puts the ability to meet statutory obligations at risk.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 1 Page 1-5

3.2 Staff Savings

Question 3 asked to what extent people agreed or disagreed with the proposed reductions in staffing. 47% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed reductions.

Question 4 asked for comments about the proposed reductions in staffing. A total of 64 comments were received which comprised of 6 categories.

- 26 of the comments were about the effect the reductions in staffing would have on the quality of service provision and the ability to meet statutory obligations.
- 12 comments agreed with the reduction in staff and
- 11 were concerned about there not being enough capacity to meet demands safely.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 2 Page 5-9

3.3 Decommissioning of Services

Question 5 asked about the decommissioning of the South Thames Crossroads Carers Support service, Meals on Wheels and the Mental Health Day Support service. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal. 71 respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal.

Question 6 asked for comments on the proposed decommissioning of services. A total of 90 comments were received which comprised of 9 categories.

- 24 respondents felt that the most vulnerable of people would be affected and they would be put at risk.
- 16 respondents were specifically against the reductions to carers services.
- 15 respondents were specifically against reductions to Meals on Wheels.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 3 Page 9-14

3.4 Support Packages

Question 7 asked whether people agreed to a systematic review of all customers' support packages. 47% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed savings to support packages.

Question 8 asked for comments about the savings proposed to support packages. A total of 51 comments were received which consisted of 6 categories.

- 20 respondents felt that the most vulnerable of people would be affected and would put them and their families under pressure or at risk.
- 14 respondents felt that support packages should be regularly reviewed in a creative and flexible way.
- 10 respondents were concerned that the short term saving of reviewed packages could cost more than the financial saving as changes may affect individual's health and well-being.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 4 Page 15- 18

3.5 Feedback on our Approach to Making Savings

Other Priorities Question 9 asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the recommended priorities to¹:

- Retain investment in prevention and recovery where it reduces longer term costs, 63% of respondents agreed or strongly with this priority, only 8% disagreed or disagreed strongly with this priority and 27% did not know.
- Minimise the costs of long term support, 27% of respondents agreed with this proposal, 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this priority and 23% did not know.
- Reduce waste and duplication in work processes, 79% either agreed or strongly agreed with this priority. No one disagreed with this priority and 18% did not know.
- Work in partnership where possible, 71% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this priority. Only 2% disagreed with this priority and 25% did not know.
- Ensure everyone makes the contribution they are able to, 37% of respondents agreed with this priority, 7% disagreed and 28% didn't know.
- Use a 'promoting Independence approach', 57% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this priority, 11% disagreed while 26% did not know.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 5 Page 18 - 22

Question 10 asked what other priorities we should be using to guide our decisions.

There were 54 comments which covered 10 categories.

- 17 respondents felt that the savings will affect the most vulnerable of people and put them at risk, while
- None of the other categories received more than 7 comments.

¹ Note the analysis of responses does not add up to 100% and nil responses have not been counted.

3.6 Feedback on Alternative Savings Options

Question 11 asked whether which of the alternative savings options, which were considered but not recommended at this time, should be included.

51 respondents answered this question:

- 9% said close some day centres
- 12% said outsource all in-house services
- 32% said share services with other councils or the NHS
- 31% said negotiate fee reductions from providers
- 14% said make bigger staff reductions

Question 12 asked for comments on the suggested alternatives in question 11. The responses covered the following 6 categories:

- Day Services - 13 respondents commented on this proposal. 11 respondents were against daycentre closures for a variety of reasons. Shared Services – 10 respondents commented on this proposal. 8 respondents felt that options for sharing services with other councils or the NHS should be considered.
- Staffing – 6 respondents commented on this proposal. 4 respondents were in agreement with making bigger staff reductions.
- Outsourcing – 10 respondents commented on this proposal. 5 respondents disagreed with outsourcing. 3 agreed with outsourcing and 2 respondents felt that consideration should be given to setting up a trading company.
- Reduce provider fees – 6 people commented on this proposal. 3 respondents felt that there should be scope to reduce fees. 3 respondents felt that fee reductions were unrealistic.
- General comments - There were 11 responses that covered a variety of areas.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 6 Page 22 -25

3.7 Feedback on how the savings have affected customers

Question 13 asked for other ways in which savings could be made.

There were 57 comments which fell into 8 categories.

- 15 respondents felt that there should be a review of staffing costs, senior management and duplication of resources.
- 14 respondents were in favour of an increase in council tax/use 2% ASC Precept.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 7 Page 25- 28

3.8 Feedback on how services have changed since 2011

Question 14 asked about how services had changed since 2011, 75 respondents answered this question. 64% felt that services had become worse or much worse.

Question 15 asked for comments of about people's experience of changes to services since 2011. 43 comments were made which covered 6 categories. 34 people felt that services had gotten worse or significantly worse since 2011.

The full comments are available in Appendix 3.1 Part 8 Page 28- 31

4. SUMMARY OF HEALTHWATCH SMALL CUSTOMER/CARER MEETINGS

4.1 The full Healthwatch report is available in Appendix 4.

Key recommendations from Healthwatch include:

- To urgently review and reduce the scale of cuts proposed for ASC
- To facilitate connections between decision-makers and affected residents
- To commission an independent report into understanding the impact of cuts

5. SUMMARY PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENTS

5.1 The two events were facilitated by Healthwatch and attended by 72 participants who were asked to provide feedback on the proposed savings. The feedback from the events was collated and is detailed in Appendix 5 Part 1 & 2.

5.2 Decommissioning of some services was the area where there was most concern expressed in terms of numbers of speakers and there were also suggestions for alternative savings which were consistent with those raised in the questionnaire responses.

6. SUMMARY OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR CONSULTATION

6.1 A consultation event was held on 26th November 2015 at the Chaucer Centre. The meeting was attended by representatives of 20 organisations and 3 local councillors. The key themes are detailed below and the full minutes are in Appendix 5 Part 3. Overall the feedback was one of concern at the scale of savings proposed and the impact these are likely to have on vulnerable people. Of particular concern was a perceived contradiction between the proposed reduction in funding for the voluntary sector and the intention to prioritise prevention and the recent strategy to ask the voluntary sector to contribute more.

7. SUMMARY OF STAFF CONSULTATION EVENTS

7.1 Two meetings were held with ASC staff to get their views on the savings proposals:

- 26th November 2015 - 2.30 to 4.00 p.m. attended by 43 staff, and
- 24th November 2015 - 11.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. meeting attended by 40 staff.

7.2 Members can see the full notes of each of the two staff meetings at Appendix 5 Part 4 (1st Meeting) and Part 5 (2nd Meeting). Overall staff felt concerned about the potential impact of the scale of the proposed savings on vulnerable people, expressed the view

that plans for volunteers to fill gaps in service left by proposed savings were unrealistic and emphasised that ASC needs to seek to raise new income not just cut expenditure.

8. FEEDBACK FROM OPEN LETTERS/EMAILS BY ORGANISATIONS

8.1 Eight Organisations gave feedback on the savings proposals in the form of open letters or e-mails. In the main the organisations expressed concerns about the negative impacts of the proposed savings on their customers or members.

Full details are in Appendix 6.

9. OPEN RESPONSES AND EMAILS FROM THE PUBLIC

9.1 There were 25 individual open letters and emails received during the consultation process which focused on issues such as concerns about the cumulative effect of savings in recent years and the impact of the proposed savings for 2016-17 on the capacity of ASC to meet eligible needs and on the quality of services.

9.2 For a full account of the individual responses via emails and letters, please refer to Appendix 7.

10. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

10.1 The consultation document included the following alternatives that were considered for 2016-17 but were not recommended for the reasons given below.

- Close some day centres and give people personal budgets less the savings instead,
- Outsource all in-house services,
- Share services with other councils or the NHS,
- Negotiate fee reductions from providers, and
- Make bigger staffing reductions.

10.2 A summary of the consultee's feedback on these alternatives is reproduced below along with our response to their feedback (See also section 3.3 above).

Alternative	Respondent's Feedback	Our Response
Close some day centres and give people personal budgets less the savings instead	9% of 51 questionnaire respondents agreed with closing some day centres Of 13 open comments 11 were against daycentre closures	We believe currently the provision is more cost effective than the alternatives available and user/carers strongly support retaining this provision
Outsource all in-house services	12% of 51 questionnaire respondents agreed with outsourcing all in-house services Of 10 open comments 5 disagreed with outsourcing. 3 agreed with outsourcing and 2 felt that consideration should be given to a trading company	We have not discounted this. We just don't believe it would generate savings for 16/17 due to necessary lead times and will investigate this option for future years.

Share services with other councils or the NHS	32% of 51 questionnaire respondents agreed with sharing services with other councils or the NHS. Of 10 open comments 8 felt that options for sharing services with other should be considered.	We have not discounted this. We just don't believe it would generate savings for 16/17 due to necessary lead times and will investigate this option for future years.
Negotiate fee reductions from providers	31% of 51 questionnaire respondents agreed with negotiating fee reductions. Of 6 open comments 3 felt that there should be scope to reduce fees. 3 felt that it was unrealistic.	Given market conditions and new cost pressures on providers e.g. the national living wage, need to pay for travel time etc. this is not realistic in 2016-17.
Make bigger staffing reductions	14% of 51 questionnaire respondents agreed with making bigger staff reductions. Of 6 open comments 4 agreed with making bigger staff reductions.	Having brought forward staff savings planned for the next 3 years into 2016-17 we consider further reductions too risky and would threaten our capacity to fulfil all our statutory duties.

10.3 Consultees put forward their own ideas on alternative savings areas that ASC should consider. For example in the questionnaire there were 57 comments made about other ways that ASC could make savings. These fell into 8 categories as shown in the next table.

Category	Number of comments
Don't spend on Wheelie Bins	2
Increase council tax/use 2% ASC Precept	14
Cut other Council services instead of ASC	8
Increase parking fees	2
Review staffing costs, senior management & duplication of resources	15
Sharing of resources and the provision of services	7
Work better with carers and voluntary orgs	4
Other Comments	5
Total	57

10.4 Feedback on alternatives at consultation meetings was consistent with the alternatives put forward by responses to the questionnaire. For example:

- The new ability to raise a 2% precept on the Council Tax to pay for Adult Social Care was raised as an option at both the public consultation meetings (see Appendix 4 to the consultation feedback report).

- In addition at the public meeting on the 2nd December 2015 6 people also commented on other ways to make savings, including:
 - Selling assets,
 - Stop publishing My Merton,
 - Stop Wheelie Bin expenditure,
 - Reducing waste, and
 - Being more innovative
- The summary report on the 6 focus groups meetings facilitated by Healthwatch² (see Appendix 4 to the consultation feedback report page 15) said that “People made it clear that they found the cuts proposed unacceptable, and suggested a number of alternatives to facilitators. These ideas included:
 - Reducing spending in other areas such as environment and senior salaries,
 - There was also a lot of enthusiasm for the Council to raise money, e.g. through Council Tax, and
 - Finally, a number of people mentioned the high cost of Merton’s transport contract.”

10.5 Regarding these alternatives, it should be noted that:

- Keeping council tax down is one of the top priorities of Merton residents when surveyed and this is a regressive tax that impacts most on those on the lowest incomes
- Two other departments (CS and E&R have proportionately higher savings targets than adult social care)
- Raising income where appropriate and possible is already part of savings plans
- We already have a number of shared services with other councils, with an ambition to do more where feasible and work is continuing in this area
- When benchmarked, management costs and pay are lower than comparator councils
- There is an existing process of reviewing all Merton’s assets with a view to maximising value from them
- There is an existing process of transport review designed to reduce costs to adult social care and to children’s services

10.6 A further report will be presented to Cabinet on 15 February. This will be Member’s opportunity to consider any alternatives to the proposed savings in the light of consultation, scrutiny feedback and of any further changes in the budget setting exercise as a result of central government announcements.

² These six groups were with a small number of people (72 in total) known to have a strong interest in Adult Social Care.

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