

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY CARE & HOUSING – C. MARCHANT

27TH NOVEMBER 2014

SECTION – MATTER FOR INFORMATION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. **Update on alternative arrangements for Social Centre provision**

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the work undertaken to put in place alternative arrangements for Social Centres which were due to close by 31st March 2015. However, following successful discussion with various 3rd Sector/Not for Profit Organisations and service users, appropriate alternative arrangements have been agreed and have already commenced.

2. **Background**

On 24th April 2014, SCHHCB approved the future model of day opportunities for older people and proposed changes for Day Centre and Social Centre provision. These changes were put forward in order to modernise the service, promote community integration and independence for older people, make it effective and efficient in meeting needs and also take into account the implications of the Forward Financial Plan.

In relation to the social centres, it was approved that these services would continue to operate during the financial year 2014-15 whilst options were explored with the 3rd Sector /Not for Profit Organisations to develop an alternative range of social events and activities, which in many cases already exist in communities and are sustainable. These services can promote wellbeing and reduce social isolation for older people within local

communities (as stipulated in the Older People's Commissioner for Wales Report on 21st February 2014, 'The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales').

The SCHHCB report above, concluded that a further report would be made to update Members on the work undertaken with the 3rd Sector/ Not for Profit Organisations to develop alternative provision to ensure that the Council provided social centres could cease with no impact in March 2015.

3. **Current Position**

Up until 30th September 2014, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Adult Social Care provided four social centres for older people within the county borough. They were held one day a week at community venues in Ystalyfera, Seven Sisters, Resolven and Neath.

The Council introduced a Charging Policy on 1st April 2014 for all Community Care Day Services for adults provided or commissioned by the Council. This includes the provision of day care and social centres.

It was agreed that the Council would not impose any charge on any social centre attendee until 30th September onwards. During this time, council officers worked intensively with service users to accelerate the exploration of options to source alternative suitable social recreation to avoid charges, if applicable, being applied.

The rapid development of this work has had an impact on the transport provision which service users receive through the Council's Transport Unit and commissioned services have been withdrawn earlier than scheduled.

4. **Future position**

Community Care and Housing Services recognise the importance and impact of community services for older people in enabling

people to maintain their health and wellbeing and have strived to ensure that the impact of the planned changes are mitigated.

An extensive piece of work has been undertaken by council officers with the support and assistance of NPTCVS to identify suitable alternative arrangements for the service users who attended the four social centres.

Numerous meetings were held with services users to explore options to continue the social centre groups, either by signposting service users to other groups run in their community, or for the groups to become self-governing with appropriate support. A number of local 3rd sector/not for profits organisations, located in the communities affected by the closures, were approached and various possible alternative methods for service delivery were put forward to the groups. Views and opinions were sought from service users to ensure that these alternative options met their needs, mattered to them, and involved them in the decisions being made.

Through consultation, pilot trials and negotiation with service users and 3rd Sector organisations, a number of suitable alternatives emerged and have been put in place from 1st October 2014 onwards:-

4.1 Seven Sisters & Ystalyfera Social Centres

Both groups have successfully relocated to the Y Cwtch Café in Crynant which is operated by DANSA Integrated Community Transport. In addition, DANSA are able to provide a community transport service to all service users who attend and will accept concessionary bus passes, just like any other bus service. The venue offers various amenities including lunch, social trips and a separate room for the group to meet and participate in social activities. Feedback from service users has been very positive.

4.2 Neath Social Centre

Extensive work was undertaken with Neath Social Centre service users to integrate their group with 'Age Connects Neath Port

Talbot' which has recently established an Outreach Service in Neath Town Centre and meets weekly. Amenities include tea & chat, arm chair exercises, lunch, social activities, information and advice and social trips. However, out of the five service users attending, only one service user expressed a wish to continue attending. The main concern for the remaining service users being around transport arrangements to get to and from Neath town centre. Although all Community based travel options were explored this group of service users decided that they did not want to pay for a shared taxi service due to the cost. Council Officers attended the final day of the Neath Social centre group held on Thursday 25th September and following group discussions around transport arrangements there was a unanimous decision made by attendees that they would make their own way to the Age Connect group when they felt like attending. It was also agreed that we would request Care Management reviews for some of these service users to establish if they would meet the eligibility criteria to attend a Day Care service.

4.3 Resolven Social Centre

Resolven Social Centre service users have successfully integrated with 'Age Connects Neath Port Talbot' Outreach Service. The group currently meets weekly at Resolven Building Blocks, Resolven Integrated Childrens Centre but will be based at St. Davids Church Hall, Resolven from November when refurbishment works to the hall are completed. Amenities will include tea & chat, lunch, social activities, information and advice and social trips. Future travel arrangements have been put in place for service users to share a taxi at a very minimal charge to themselves.

5. Conclusion

Members to note the positive work which has taken place with the NPTCVS and Not for Profit organisations within the local communities where the social centres operate. This has not only ensured that alternative suitable arrangements are in place and there is no adverse impact on services users, but that the project

has been delivered six months earlier than originally scheduled with the agreement of all parties involved.

6. **List of Background Papers**

- SCHHCB, 24th April 2014, Modernising Day Opportunities for Older People living in Neath Port Talbot Consultation Outcome.

7. **Wards Affected**

All

8. **Officer Contact**

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