

Cabinet - 6 November 2014

Report of the County Treasurer

Electoral Division affected: All

Report of the Cabinet Working Group on the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme

(Appendix 'A' Refers)

Contact for further information:

George Graham, (01772) 538102, County Treasurer's Directorate,
george.graham@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

On 6 March 2014 the Leader of the County Council approved the establishment of a Cabinet Working Group on the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme, with the following terms of reference.

1. To identify whether the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme is meeting the objectives originally set for it.
2. In the light of experience during the first year of operation to consider whether the original objectives and policy framework remain appropriate.
3. To consider whether there may be alternative options available in the deployment of resources.
4. To consider the scheme's place within an overall offer from the County Council.
5. To make recommendations in regard to these matters to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet Working Group has met on three occasions and members of the Working Group have also had the opportunity to shadow the staff involved in the operation of the scheme. The Cabinet Working Group's report and recommendations are now presented for consideration by the Cabinet.

Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Note the report of the Cabinet Working Group on the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme set out at Appendix 'A';
- (ii) Consider a response to the recommendations of the Cabinet Working Group.

Background and Advice

The Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme is the County Council's response to the transfer of responsibility, on 1 April 2013, from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for functions previously performed by the Discretionary Social Fund. The scheme has been funded by a specific grant provided by the DWP of c. £3.5m per annum including the costs of running the scheme. The Local Government Finance settlement for 2015/16 does not include the continuation of this funding.

The Leader of the County Council agreed, on 6 March 2014, to establish a Cabinet Working Group to review the scheme's first year of operation and identify whether specific improvements could be made to its operation. The Working Group's report is set out at Appendix 'A'.

The Working Group concluded that the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme fulfils a valuable role in the spectrum of provision for people in crisis situation or with specific care needs. In addition the Working Group recognised the added value being achieved through work with both furniture recycling organisations and food banks.

Consequently the Working Group specifically recommends to Cabinet:

1. That the County Council maintains budgetary provision for the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme following the end of the specific government grant at a level commensurate with current demand.
2. That Cabinet writes to the Department for Work and Pensions again, highlighting the importance of the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme with a recommendation that the DWP funds the scheme permanently.
3. That a more active approach to contract management should be taken with Food Banks in order to ensure consistent quality and that local County Councillors should be involved in this process.
4. That officers be encouraged to continue extending the use of Food Banks so that the whole of the County is covered by this type of provision.
5. That current work to pilot the use of "trusted intermediary" organisations within the decision making process be made permanent and opportunities to expand it across the County be sought.

Consultations

The Working Group conducted a survey of advice agencies that refer people to the scheme, the results of which are reflected in its conclusions.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The recommendations of the Cabinet Working Group would not necessitate the County Council increasing spending on the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme

above the current level. However, given that specific grant funding for the scheme is being withdrawn by the Government, any spending on the scheme in future years represents part of the further savings target that the Council needs to address through its medium term financial strategy.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Report to the Leader of the County Council - 'Establishment of a Cabinet Working Group on the Care and Urgent Needs Support Scheme'	6 March 2014	Stuart Benson, Office of the Chief Executive, (01772) 534022

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A