Title:

Review of the Waverley Meals on Wheels Service
[Portfolio Holder:Cllr Stefan Reynolds and Cllr Kevin Deanus]
[Wards Affected:All]

Note pursuant to Section 100B(5) of the Local Government Act 1972

An annexe to this report contains exempt information by virtue of which the public is likely to be excluded during the item to which the report relates, as specified in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, namely:-

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Summary and purpose:
The purpose of this report is to ask the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the review of the current Meals on Wheels service delivered by the Royal Voluntary Service Surrey Hub, which is jointly funded by Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council, and pass comments on the future priorities for a community meals service.

The review has been identified for three main reasons:
1. Monitoring information provided by the Royal Voluntary Service shows that there has been a steady decrease in the take up of the Meals on Wheels service from 40,248 delivered in 2011/12 to 29,775 meals delivered in 2014/15;
2. Consultation from the Ageing Well Strategy highlighted the need to review the service as some residents expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of meals. Some residents said that they preferred to buy ready made meals from local supermarkets and Wiltshire Farm Foods that deliver frozen meals to individuals;
3. The current Meals on Wheels service has operated in the same way for some years: Future priorities and how these might be achieved may need to be considered to ensure a meals service meets the future needs of the community that offers a high quality service, meets people's wellbeing needs and offers a value for money service.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:
The Council funds a number of voluntary organisations that provide high priority services for the benefit of Waverley residents, in partnership with the Council. The Meals on Wheels service is provided through the Royal Voluntary Service and is available to older residents, vulnerable people and people with disabilities through a referral system. The service is funded through an annual Service Level Agreement
in partnership with Surrey County Council who match-fund Waverley’s financial contribution.

**Financial Implications:**
A Waverley Meals on Wheels service is delivered by the Royal Voluntary Service under an annual Service Level Agreement. Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council Adult Social Care directorate both contribute £30,000 towards the overall service delivery, totalling £60,000. Funding for the service has remained the same since 2007. Provision has been made within the 2016/17 budget to continue funding RVS at the same level although the amount released may depend on the outcome of the review during the year.

The service operates from Brightwells Gostrey Centre in Farnham, which is owned and maintained by the Council. RVS operate out of the building entirely free of charge: they occupy office space and have use of the kitchen. RVS does not pay towards utility costs and the Council is responsible for maintaining and replacing all equipment in the kitchen. In recent years, the Council has incurred significant kitchen repair costs including repairing the walk-in freezer which is predominantly used by RVS and repair of extractor fans. Whilst it is difficult to allocate specific kitchen works costs to the RVS service, this expenditure is shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014/15 (£)</th>
<th>description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4,780</td>
<td>Gas checks and upgrade system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,375</td>
<td>Supply &amp; fit new canopy ductwork and extraction system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,711</td>
<td>Manufacture &amp; install new canopy extensions &amp; upgrade external duct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>Supply &amp; fit new commercial appliance &amp; carry out safety check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,897</td>
<td>Party wall fire barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226</td>
<td>Fan &amp; canopy works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>515</td>
<td>Deep clean of grease extracting ducting system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Replace faulty condenser fan motor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,027</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16 to date (£)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
<td>Check out and rectify fault with freezer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Council also pays for trade refuse collection which was £3,000 in 2014/15.

**Legal Implications:**
There is a current Service Level Agreement in place between the Royal Voluntary Service and the Council. The terms of the Agreement state that either party may terminate the Agreement upon giving six months’ notice in writing to the other or a lesser period of the parties agree in writing. There is scope within the current Agreement for it to be extended whilst the review takes place. There should be no legal barriers to this being possible.

**Introduction**
1. Through an annual Service Level Agreement, Waverley Borough Council contracts the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) Surrey Hub to deliver a Waverley-wide Meals on Wheels service 5 days a week; 260 days per year. The service is
based at the Brightwells Gostrey Centre, Farnham and all meals are heated up and delivered from here through paid staff and volunteer service model.

2. The Council needs to plan strategically for demographic change, particularly with the increasing older population in the borough, and the impact this will have on local services. As part of this, it is timely to review what type of supported meals service older residents need to support their independence to remain in their own home, quality of life and overall wellbeing.

**Wider context**

3. In partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Surrey participated in benchmarking Meals on Wheels services in 2014. 20 Councils participated with 70% providing a Meals on Wheels service and 30% not providing a service. The majority of respondents subcontract the service to private companies like Apetito and it is usually a 7-day hot meal delivery. Financial contributions ranged from 20% of the cost of the service to £3.15 per hot meal. One council paid the full cost and 6 made no financial contribution. Nationally there has been a 7% decrease in the number of people using the Meals on Wheels service. Over the past four years, the number of hot meals delivered in Waverley has decreased by 26%.

4. When taking into account the total funding awarded by both Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council to the RVS for the Waverley service, both authorities are currently subsidising the service at £2.17 per person. With Waverley’s funding alone, it is currently subsidising the service at £1.08 per person.

5. In Surrey other than Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Mole Valley District Council, Meals on Wheels are provided as a community service by the relevant Council. Annexe 1 shows the types of community meals services delivered throughout Surrey.

6. Providers carry out annual satisfaction surveys. Overall the response is positive: people and their carers/friends and family appreciate the service and the added value of a safe and well check. Safeguarding alerts have been received from providers and they are helpful in distributing information on services for people living at home.

**Background to the Current Waverley Service**

7. RVS has been delivering Meals on Wheels throughout Waverley for over 50 years, connecting with many older people and volunteers. RVS Meals on Wheels Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Royal Voluntary Service, delivers a Monday to Friday Waverley-wide Meals on Wheels service 260 days per year to older residents and residents with disabilities. The RVS Waverley service buys ready-made frozen meals from Tillery Valley Foods, the market leader in healthcare catering, which arrive frozen in segmented foil trays with a cardboard lid. The meals are all reheated at Brightwells Gostrey Centre and delivered hot and ready to eat from distribution points across the borough. Meals are transported in polypropylene boxes with Thermoboost pads to keep food warm. Meals must be delivered within a three hour window. 159 residents are currently supported by
the service with two people between age 18 and 64, 52 people aged over 65 and 105 people aged over 85. Annexe 2 summarises how the service operates for the client.

8. The Waverley Meals on Wheels service operates a volunteer model employing some paid staff supported by approximately 200 volunteers. The RVS process DBS checks for volunteers and they receive an induction and training. It delivers a client focused service putting the customer at the heart of delivery. The service enables people to remain independent in their own home, as well as giving them the ability to see and converse with another person, thereby reducing possible social isolation and loneliness.

9. Today RVS describes its service more accurately as “Meals with Care”. All volunteers are trained to provide the RVS “Safe and Well check” at every client visit. Volunteers assess the wellbeing of every client and report any concerns to the Farnham office who would then contact a next of kin, Adult Social Care or emergency service if appropriate. Volunteers can stay with clients for up to 10 minutes depending on their needs. The quality of the visit/time spent with the clients is very individual depending on the level of support they may need. Sometimes clients just need a chat and someone to talk to; the Meals on Wheels service may be their only form of social contact in a day. Volunteers can serve meals on a plate, get a drink for the client and cutlery. For the most vulnerable clients, volunteers will check there is food in the fridge, that it is not out of date, or that the client has enough food in the fridge and cupboard to get by between Meals on Wheels visits. Volunteers normally work on the same days, doing the same routes so they get to know the clients and clients get to know them. Wherever possible, clients will receive their meals at the same times, however this is dependent on volunteers being available as if a volunteer is away, rounds may have to be merged which would impact on the times of delivery. The aim is also to proactively inform clients about support available in their community and for them to be signposted correctly.

### Cost of meals to the customer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2 course lunch</th>
<th>Tea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost 2012/13</td>
<td>£3.60</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost 2013/14</td>
<td>£3.60</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost 2014/15</td>
<td>£3.70</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost 2015/16</td>
<td>£3.80</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number of meals delivered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2 course lunch</th>
<th>Tea</th>
<th>Decline compared to previous period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 2011/12</td>
<td>40,248</td>
<td>1,186 (commenced Aug. 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 2012/13</td>
<td>34,685</td>
<td>1,642</td>
<td>-5,563 lunch (-456 tea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 2013/14</td>
<td>32,610</td>
<td>1,578</td>
<td>-2,075 lunch (-64 tea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 2014/15</td>
<td>29,775</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>-2,835 lunch (-699 tea)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. The reduction in the use of meals on wheels service is a national trend, although the trend in Waverley is much higher, and may be linked to the increased availability of people to have choices through their meal options coupled with people remaining more active and healthy as they age. Many people now choose to use local supermarket ready-made meal options, internet shopping, local ‘Cook’ shops of which there are three in Waverley and Wiltshire Farm Foods delivery service and their families.

11. A proportion of the more vulnerable, frail older people living independently in the community require a Meals on Wheels type option to ensure their independence is maintained due to limited ability to shop themselves, be digitally included or limited support available from friends and family.

12. People requiring the service are referred in accordance with an Eligibility Criteria attached at Annexe 3. RVS operates a properly documented system of quality control and these records are open for inspection by the Council at all reasonable times.

13. Further information on how the service operates is detailed in Annexe 4, including the key requirements within the Service Level Agreement, staffing structure and meal options etc.

**Review of the service**

14. Whilst the number of people accessing the Waverley Meals on Wheels service has been declining since 2011/12, for the 159 residents currently supported it remains a lifeline. 66% of clients are over 85 years of age and the service supports them to remain independent at home, safe and well and have social contact. The service provides more than the benefits of a hot, nutritious meal: they are also emotional and psychological. Apart from the person regularly delivering their meals, 34% of clients only get a regular visitor once a week or less. Whilst there is anecdotal evidence within the borough that the service prevents or delays needs escalating to high or complex needs, the measurement is difficult to achieve. It is also difficult to convert to financial savings. Annexe 5 provides case study examples of the wider benefits of the service.

15. A copy of the 2015 RVS Waverley Customer Satisfaction survey is attached at Annexe 6. The survey shows that 78% of respondents said that the Meals on Wheels service contributed to them remaining independent at home. 86% of respondents said that their meals were either always or mostly tasty. In particular, the service provided by the volunteers delivering the meals was rated as being very good in all aspects by over 80% of the respondents.

16. The service is supported by approximately 200 registered volunteers. They are highly valued by the clients and provide a good, consistent service. 91 of the volunteers are 70 year of age and older and 26 of the volunteers are 80 years of age and older. These volunteering opportunities enable a another cohort of older people to remain independent, feel valued, remain busy and healthy, meet new people and be part of their community. It also enables some volunteer drivers to continue to run their own cars.
17. The Meals on Wheels service to an extent hinders the preparation of the Brightwells Gostrey Centre lunch-time meal service that it prepares for its own clients. Brightwells are unable to use the three main ovens until approximately 11.15am-11.30am and need to cook larger joints of meat the afternoon before. It also means the kitchen area can become busy when RVS are loading up prepared meals whilst Brightwells staff are preparing lunches.

18. When consulting with residents as part of the development of the Council’s Ageing Well Strategy people were asked whether they used the Meals on Wheels service and how they rated it. Of those people who used to use the Meals on Wheels service some rated the service as “fair”, “not very nice”, “no taste”, “too monotonous”. Very few used the service, however, this is likely to be because the profile of Meals on Wheels customers tend to be over 85 and less able to go out. Most residents ate meals at one of the five independent day centres funded by the Council. Some said “having a decent meal at the day centre is important”, “if I don’t come to the centre, I wouldn’t eat properly” and “a hot meal at the day centre is important”. Some chose to use Wiltshire Farm Foods saying “they give you more choice to choose on the day”, “they do different sizes” and “they are very good”.

19. RVS Waverley operates a reheat service and some residents may prefer a freshly cooked meal. The vitamin content of some vegetables, particularly green vegetables, may be impaired through a reheat service. A reheat service may not offer the flexibility of a freshly cooked service, which could respond more easily to menu choices. Meals are reheated in one central location for the entire borough which means meals can remain warm for up to 3 hours.

20. The service has suffered from limited promotion in recent years. At SLA monitoring meetings, officers have asked RVS how it is going to market the service more widely due to the decrease in numbers, however, this has not been widely actioned. Officers have also requested a Marketing Plan which has not been provided. It had been agreed that more promotion of the service should be carried out as there is too great a reliance on Adult Social Care for referrals. The service is not being actively promoted by RVS and they have stated they will not grow and develop the service with an annual SLA due to the uncertainty around longer-term funding.

Conclusion

21. Waverley has the largest older population in Surrey and an over 85 year old population that is set to grow almost 30% by 2020. Whilst people are remaining more active and healthy into older age and have more choice to access meals such as Wiltshire Farm foods, microwave meals, supermarket home delivery etc, a community meals service meets the nutritional and social needs of some of our most vulnerable residents.

22. Whilst the number of meals being provided to Waverley residents by RVS has declined by 26% since 2011/12, the service supports some of the boroughs most isolated, frail older residents. The service is more than a hot meal: it provides older people with vital social contact, raises any safeguarding issues and
supports their health and wellbeing to stay at home and remain independent, thereby reducing more costly interventions. It also offers the opportunity for nearly 200 people to volunteer in their local community, which supports their health and wellbeing.

23. RVS continues to receive the same level of funding, despite a 26% decrease in the number of people using the service since 2011/12 and an increasing older population. The review has provided the opportunity to explore other priorities going forward to deliver a future community meals operating model to residents. These may include:

- To increase take-up of the service.
- To maintain the important personal contact element of the service.
- To improve the quality and type of meals for example, some community meals services offer a freshly cooked service rather than a reheat service.
- To secure ongoing funding to support delivery of the service in future years.
- To review the financial model for the service so that it is more self-sustaining.

Recommendation

That the Community O&S Committee considers the review of the current RVS Meals on Wheels service and provides feedback to officers to identify future priorities for the service and how these might be achieved.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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