

# **North Somerset Council**

## **REPORT TO THE ADULT SERVICES AND HOUSING POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**DATE OF MEETING: 27<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2017**

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: COMMUNITY MEALS**

**TOWN OR PARISH: ALL**

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: HAYLEY VERRICO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**

**KEY DECISION: NO**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Scrutiny Panel is asked to note the contents of the report.

#### **1. SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Community Meals Working Group presented their report to the Adult Services & Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel's informal meeting on 20th November 2015. Assurances were sought on the effective operation of the Community Meals Business Support function, further updates were requested.

An internal review had been conducted in 2016, by the Support Services Partnership Client Team in liaison with the Executive Members for Adult Social Services and P&C senior management. The review was to gauge whether the business support functions were being effectively performed and the concerns raised are being addressed. A plan was developed to address the various issues identified. A number of reports have since been presented to Scrutiny to provide updates on progress and service position. This report provides an update as at July 2017.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

##### **2.1 Context**

In order to realise required budget reductions, Council agreed in October 2014 to transfer its business support functions to Agilisys in February 2015. The transfer of the functions (Business Support, Front Office, Business Systems Administration and Financial Transactions) generated a total budget reduction of £780k, which represented a 22.9% saving to be delivered through service redesign, consolidation of teams, and automation. The Business Support for the Community Meals Service was one of the functions transferred.

### **3. REVIEW OF CONCERNS**

A number of concerns had been raised in respect of the delivery of the Business Support functions for Community Meals Service since the transfer. The internal review explored these concerns. The summary of the findings and actions are included below.

#### **3.1 Delivery Model**

The initial delivery model adopted by Agilisys at the time of the transfer was to leave the team intact and for it to remain located at Castlewood. This remained the position from the point of transfer in February 2015 through to the creation of the Care Hub in November 2015. This is based in Castlewood. The immediate objective for the Care Hub is to provide a more resilient service for the critical incoming enquiry lines that the hub supports.

Historically within the Community Meals Service individuals had assumed isolated responsibility for certain activities. Holidays or sickness reduced the team's operating capacity. The proposed Hub model allows for wider support of the activities to maintain capacity.

The Care Hub model in support of Community Meals is operational and any operational issues are being addressed as they arise. Regular meetings between the Business Support and NSC Operational Managers continue to ensure effective communication, performance against indicators and continued service development.

#### **3.2 Specification of business support role**

There is clarity over the role of business support for community meals and the service is operating in line with this.

#### **2.3 Knowledge transfer**

Following initial concerns around the loss of experience and knowledge, the knowledge and experience of business support staff has continued to improve with some particular motivated individuals actively leading on the role.

#### **3.4 Inadequate resources**

The resilience of the Care Hub to support the needs of the service is being monitored regularly and steps taken to address any gaps identified i.e. use of answer machines when service requires a swift response over lunchtimes. There are still some occasions when there is a lack of resilience. Management from North Somerset provide support when this occurs.

#### **3.5 Support to Drivers**

Concern had been raised regarding the effectiveness of the support provided by the back office administration to the drivers. To overcome potential difficulties contacting the back office team the telephone access has been reviewed and a direct number provided for emergency driver contact. Support to drivers has now improved.

### **3.6 Access to systems & process efficiency**

No current issues with SMARTT database access are being experienced.

### **3.7 Improvements in operations**

Agreement was reached regarding the delivery of a number of operational aspects and with the introduction of a community meals coordinator role. This post has been in place for 1 year and is working well on promoting the service. The number of clients receiving a service is now stable and referral numbers to the service are now steadily increasing.

### **3.8 Performance information**

Performance indicators are under review as part of the Agilisys OLA approach. Business Support performance is monitored regularly with any issues being addressed through OLA meetings where necessary.

## **4. OPERATIONAL CONCERNS**

4.1 Previous operational concerns have been addressed and confidence has increased in the business support provision. The original issues and current position include:

- There is now adequately trained staff to undertake the tasks included in the specification (especially following up on critical welfare concerns) and contingency.
- Communication has improved since the introduction of the community meals coordinator and with improved relations between the Business Support Manager and the Community Meals Manager.
- Improved level of confidence for drivers - that messages and action will be taken in a timely way.
- Agreement on the scope of the role for the community meals coordinator and the business support has addressed the operational issues and responsibilities effectively.

4.2 The operational challenges are monitored and addressed through the OLA meetings. The use of a issues and risk log helps to ensure business risk is recorded and mitigated effectively.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 The review of the Business Support provision for Community Meals, conducted by the Client Team, identified a number of areas to address and has established a current understanding of the position and proposed actions to resolve them. In general, the operational concerns have been addressed, with any day-to-day issues being resolved more effectively.

5.2 The Community Meals service is a critical service for some of the most vulnerable residents in North Somerset. Ongoing monitoring and review will ensure the service remains effective in its delivery.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

N/A

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The service and related business support have to be delivered within the approved revenue budget.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT**

Some risks had been identified by the Community Meals Working Group and within this report. A risk log is maintained to monitor risks to operational delivery and ensure effective mitigation. The main risk to the service is currently from changes to staff within Business Support as the required knowledge of the service, its clients etc is complex.

## **10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

These are being monitored as part of the ongoing work.

## **11. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

## **12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

N/A

## **AUTHORS**

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil