

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES**CABINET****DATE:** 12th May 2008**REPORT OF:** CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SERVICES, HEALTH AND HOUSING**LEAD OFFICER:** DIRECTOR OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**SUBJECT:** COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT – EXECUTIVE RESPONSE**WARDS:****KEY DECISION?: YES****IF YES, IN FORWARD PLAN?: YES**

For general release

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To set out the views of the Cabinet Member (Adult Services, Health and Housing) and officers in response to the recommendations from the Scrutiny Task Group in order to assist Cabinet Members in their consideration of the recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.2 The Council's Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a task group in summer 2007 to examine the position of the provision of Council funded community meals to residents within the Borough. This task group has now concluded and has produced a report of its findings with a set of recommendations. The report was considered by Adult Social Services and Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee on the 28th April and is now presented to Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS**That Cabinet**

- 2.1 consider the Scrutiny Task Group recommendations and this Executive response,**
- 2.2 decide whether to support the Task Group recommendations,**
- 2.3 Proposed changes to the current meals service should be contained within the current meals budget**

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 The final report of the Task Group is attached as **Appendix A**. This sets out the background to the Group's work and includes a summary of the current provision of Council funded community meals within the Borough.
- 3.2 Page 39 and 40 of the Task Group report sets out a "table of recommendations" listing 17 individual recommendations (including 2 each for recommendations 6 and 10). These are set out below, along with the Cabinet Member/Officer response to each.

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Rec. No.	Recommendation	
1.	It is recommended that the eligibility criteria for the meals service should continue to cover critical, substantial and moderate service users.	There are in no specific eligibility criteria for the meals service. Eligibility is based on individual need rather than linked to any service. There are no plans to change overall eligibility criteria in relation to individual needs, and eligibility will therefore continue to cover critical, substantial and moderate service users needs.
2.	It is recommended that separate contracts be used for the Intensive Day Centres and the home delivered service and that a full tendering process take place for both.	Supported.
3.	For meals provided at the Intensive Day Centres it is recommended that the Council provides a meal cooked on site using fresh vegetables and frozen multi portion meat dishes.	Supported, but this has cost implications regarding additional staffing requirements and therefore may require consideration of an increase in charges for the meals (i.e. no increase in Council subsidy).
4.	It is recommended that the menus at the Intensive Day Centres be developed in consultation with carers and users. Ideally there would be two meat options (or one meat, one fish) and a vegetarian option each day. Special diet options should also be made available.	Supported
5.	To improve the presentation of the meals served at the Intensive Day Centres it's recommended that all meals be served on plates.	Supported
6a.	To increase social interaction it is recommended that further work be	The development of an older people's strategy for the

Rec. No.	Recommendation	
	undertaken on the option of transporting people to lunch possibly in conjunction with the review of the Day Centres that is currently being undertaken.	Borough over the next few months will incorporate consideration of reducing isolation and the greater involvement of older people in community activities such as leisure, cultural services, lunch and other social arrangements. This is a better approach than an 'isolated' exploration of transport options in relation to lunch clubs.
6b.	It is also recommended that Cabinet look at the possibility of supporting the establishment of Luncheon clubs in the borough.	As above
7.	For the home delivered service it is recommended that the Council moves towards a frozen only service with assistance for service users where necessary.	Supported
8.	To improve the quality and presentation of the home delivered service it's recommended that food is not contained in just one compartment. For example, consideration should be given to using 'PET' or a three compartment tray (even if this option costs approximately 20p more per meal).	Supported but (as with the fresh vegetable introduction at day centres) additional costs may need to be met by increased charges (i.e. no increase in Council subsidy).
9.	It is recommended that further work be undertaken to ensure residents who have a meals only service have an opportunity to have their incomes maximised. This would keep the Council's contribution consistent through the agreed subsidy whilst giving service users the means to make a choice over the type of meal they wish to have supplied.	Supported. This will be dealt with through referring such people into the Council's funded joint team between Age concern and the Local Pension Service.
10a.	In relation to the home delivered service, it's recommended that further work be undertaken, with the Voluntary Sector, to identify potential volunteers who would be able to provide support for service users where necessary. Thought should also be given to the Domiciliary Care arrangements. For example, requiring volunteers to serve the meals prepared on plates and doing the washing up.	This will be explored, but initial views from voluntary sector do not give grounds for optimism that a viable outcome will be forthcoming given the organisational aspects of such an arrangement.
10b.	To increase choice, it's recommended that the Domiciliary Care arrangements be as flexible as possible in relation to	Supported. This is in line with the Council's move toward self-directed support arrangements

Rec. No.	Recommendation	
	time. These timings should be negotiated with service users so that people can determine when they eat their community meal.	for adult social care which require a much more flexible response from provider services than has traditionally been the case.
11.	The recommendations put forward (if accepted) will result in a frozen only service being delivered to individuals' homes. As a result, it's recommended that people's needs be reviewed and transitional arrangements put in place as quickly as possible.	Supported, but the timescale will be in step with normal reviewing processes i.e. within 12 months. However, no one will be moved from a hot to a frozen meals service without arrangements being in place to ensure food preparation can be managed.
12.	It is recommended that further work be undertaken to ensure appropriate sign posting exists for all options in relation to the meals service.	Supported.
13.	It is recommended that further work be undertaken to ensure service users are advised not to rely solely on their community meal for their Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA).	Supported. The Council's Health Development Team will investigate this matter and liaise with public health staff in the Primary Care Trust.
14.	It is recommended that the packaging used for both the home delivered service and the Intensive Day Centres be as sustainable as possible.	Supported. This will be part of contractual requirements within the tender.
15.	Given the limited time available, consideration of the draft specifications, for both contracts, should be delegated to the following Overview and Scrutiny Members – Cllr Jones, Cllr Davies and Cllr Bouchier – before going out to tender.	Not supported in terms of delegation. This is an officer responsibility. However, all three councillors should be involved in agreeing the final specification.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Task Group report has involved consultation with meals recipients as set out. It has also been considered extensively by Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Voluntary sector representatives were also involved in the task group considerations.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The net cost of the meals service to the Council is approximately £250,000. Cabinet should note that Richmond currently provides the highest number of meals per thousand older people of any of its comparator outer London Boroughs. It also provided nearly double the national average per thousand populations.
- 5.2 The potential additional costs of providing freshly cooked vegetables as part of the day centre meals (recommendation 3) are not yet known, however

these will be partly be offset by savings from the introduction of multi-portion meals at the centres. Final costs will be identified in the tendering process.

- 5.3 Savings are expected from the change to supplying only frozen meals at home (recommendation 7), however some of these savings will be offset by the additional cost of providing assistance to some service users to heat up their meal (through home care providers), with the remainder available for re-investment in the meals service.
- 5.4 The potential change to using three-compartment containers for meals at home will result in additional costs of £23,000 based on expected meal numbers. This will need to be considered in the tendering process when there is further information on the savings released from the new frozen meals service contract. There would be further additional costs of setting up and maintain a volunteering scheme (recommendation 10a) and these would need to be considered when this proposal is explored further.
- 5.5 It is strongly recommended that the proposals contained within this report should not significantly increase or decrease the net expenditure on the overall meals service. This means that overall expenditure increases should be offset by either reducing the subsidy on each meal (increasing charges) or by limiting volume should that provide necessary. Officers will bring proposals to a future Cabinet should such changes be subsequently required.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There is no statutory obligation under Community Care or National Assistance Act requiring local authorities to provide a meals service, either hot or cold. However, the Council's Community Wellbeing responsibilities necessitate consideration of the best ways to ensure the avoidance of isolation or older people and that their general health and wellbeing is promoted, including encouraging good nutritional intake. Such objectives can be met in a variety of ways however, and do not necessarily require provision of a Council funded meals service.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The major risk arising from proposed changes to meals delivery that follow from the task group recommendations report relate to the concerns about residents who have previously had a hot meals service and will now receive a frozen service. A small number of these people may require assistance with the preparation of frozen meals to ensure that they are able to eat them. To mitigate against this risk all service users changing from a hot meal to a frozen meals service will receive an assessment of their individual circumstances, and will be provided with specific assistance to prepare meals if this is required.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT/CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The continuance with a meals service to the some of the most vulnerable people in the community is in line with the Council's equalities considerations. Additionally the meals service specification will continue to include requirements for a diverse menu to meet a wide range of cultural and dietary needs.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10. There is a recommendation in the report that the packaging involved in the provision of meals be as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible, and this will be incorporated into the service specification for the contract.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Community Meals Task Group report

Community Meals item 28, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and Housing, Cabinet Meeting 23 March 2003

Equality Impact Needs Assessment (1) – The Meals Service – Adult Social Care Division, November 2006

Community Meals Service Report Item 8, Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Wednesday 27th June 2007

Community Meals Item 5, Director of Social Services and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Task Group, 14 August 2007

Task Group Agenda Papers

- Meeting 1 – 14 August 2007
- Meeting 2 – 4 September 2007
- Meeting 3 – 3 December 2007
- Meeting 4 – 30 January 2008
- Meeting 5 – 20 February 2008
- Meeting 6 – 19 March 2008
- Meeting 7 – 15 April 2008

Community Meals Service Report agenda item 16, Cabinet Member for Adult social Services, Health and Housing, Cabinet meeting 8 October 2007

12. CONTACTS

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