

## Appendix 3 – Trade union feedback

### MEETINGS WITH TRADE UNIONS

Below are the minutes from three meetings held with trade union representatives:

**9<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

Present: Ty Denton (Unite), Jan Dudgeon (Head of Service Passenger and Transport Services), Jane Faulks (Head of Service City Catering), Jagruti Barai (HR advisor), Tracie Rees (Director Care Services and Commissioning), Mercy Lett-Charnock Lead Commissioner Early Intervention and Prevention

Tracie Rees welcomed the group and explained members of the other unions had been invited. Ty suggested there may have been a clash with another meeting. Tracie confirmed no apologies had been received.

The purpose of the meeting was to outline the issues in relation to the provision of mobile meals. She outlined the issues for the service as follows:

The service was for Adult Social Care users who were unable to prepare or obtain a meal. This is not about food but about preparation and delivery. There has been a rapid decline in numbers using the service. Personalisation means that people can choose from a range of providers not just Council services and people are increasingly choosing other options such as home deliveries from supermarkets or personal assistants to support with meal preparation. In addition there is some variation in quality and satisfaction with meals – some being reheated from frozen and some prepared freshly. The Council subsidises the service – each meal costing the Council £4.76 at present and will increase.

Ty asked how much this was due to increase by. Tracie said that we do not have exact figures at this time but forecasts indicate this cost will continue to rise and are becoming unviable.

The Council is starting a public consultation today which runs until 7th October. The proposal is “Stopping the Council’s current mobile meals service and helping people to prepare or obtain meals in alternative and more flexible ways”. Letters are going out today to service users.

There will be staffing implications and potential redundancies for both City Catering and Transport. This is not the start of collective consultation, just a “heads up” about the consultation. It is likely collective consultation will start in September so that views of staff and Unions can be fed into the report to executive, so that they can make an informed final decision which is likely to be in November. Labour Group letters were given out to members last night.

Staff support will come from managers and Amica counselling service is also available. The Heads of Service will brief staff at 1.30pm today and letters will be given to each staff member.

Tracie stressed no decision has been made but the consultation is about closure of the current service.

Ty said this was not good. Tracie said that it was recognised how difficult this will be for staff but evidence is suggesting this is a service people are no longer wanting and other options are meeting their needs.

Ty asked if reducing costs had been looked at. Tracie said that as numbers are going down so fast it's hard to reduce costs as last year the Council subsidised the service by £396k.

Ty asked if the usual provisions were being made for staff. Tracie confirmed the redeployment policy would be applied. There would be possible options for Catering staff within schools and maybe options for Transport staff but compulsory redundancy couldn't be ruled out.

A briefing note was handed out to attendees.

Tracie confirmed the minutes from this meeting and the briefing note would be emailed to union representatives that had been unable to attend.

### **19 August 2013**

Present: Ty Denton (Unite), Gaynor Garner (Unison), Steve Barney (GMB), Jagruti Barai (HR advisor), Tracie Rees (Director Care Services and Commissioning), Mercy Lett-Charnock (Lead Commissioner Early Intervention and Prevention)

Tracie Rees welcomed the group and explained it was being held at the request of the unions. Tracie had held a briefing for unions on 9th July, outlining the rationale for change. We are now in the middle of formal consultation. The issues are around declining numbers and the fact that the Council subsidy of approx. £400k is financially unviable. The proposal is to support people to access alternative services.

Steve asked how the consultation with staff had occurred. Staff were informed via a briefing after the trade union meeting on 9th July. Ty Denton and local reps were in attendance.

Jagruti explained that collective consultation regarding redundancies would not commence until after a decision had been made in November as service closure may not be the outcome. However, we do want staff and unions to feedback on the service proposal – including offering alternative proposals for consideration. This will feed into the executive decision making process.

Jan Dudgeon met with staff on 10th after they had had time to consider the information. Staff have been told how to bring issues forward to feed into the consultation.

There will be a meeting in September for unions again to feed in comments, queries and alternative proposals. Unions are requested to give their availability for week commencing 9th September so this can be arranged.

Gaynor asked about the business case stating that there were alternative posts for redeployment – were there enough? Jagruti said there were. However, some staff have two jobs and therefore the hours may not suit them. This will need considering individually.

Ty asked why the numbers had dropped so dramatically – he did not think this was all due to personalisation alone.

Tracie responded that eligibility criteria are for substantial and critical needs and these are being applied strictly. In addition, people are now being offered direct payments and people are using these to choose options such as personal assistants and this has contributed to the drop.

Steve said that the Council isn't promoting its' own services and this is being used as a way of cutting staff.

Tracie responded that we cannot make service users use Council services, we have to give choice. Steve re-iterated that this should be a balanced choice, not just promoting non-Council services. There should be a balance on promoting Council and non-council services. Tracie confirmed that staff are offering both to service users. The current service is somewhat restrictive in what it can deliver and when. Some people don't like the food and some people don't want a lunchtime meal. Chilled supermarket meals that can be warmed up are a good option for some people. Other people are getting someone in to support them to cook for them.

Steve asked about people with no family who may become malnourished. Tracie explained that the Council has a duty of care and this would not change.

Gaynor asked about other options. Mercy explained this could be a direct payment which would mean people can chose whatever they want. Other options could include an alternative hot meal provider, supermarket meals, a personal assistant or homecare. It would depend on individual need and social isolation would be considered as part of the assessment.

Steve said we would know if people were eating the meal when empty plates were collected but Tracie said the current service does not provide this, empty plates are not collected. Home care is a good option if people need this level of support.

If the proposal is agreed, people will need to be assessed and supported to find an alternative. If people need support they will still get it, it could just be from another provider.

Steve asked if we were using the Council service as a second class option and again asked whether services were being offered equally. Tracie said she had no evidence to the contrary and would like Steve to share this with her if he had any.

Ty requested a full breakdown of the decline in numbers and details of the assessment criteria.

Gaynor asked if unions were present when managers met with staff. They were on the day of the briefing.

Gaynor has requested that when Jan and Jane meet with staff again to invite unions to attend.

Jagruti requested availability for the union meeting in September.

Tracie thanked everyone for their attendance.

### ***16 September 2013***

Present: Ty Denton (Unite), Janet McKenna (Unison), Steve Barney (GMB), Jagruti Barai (HR advisor), Jane Faulks (City Catering), Anisha Mistry (City Transport), Mercy Lett-Charnock (Lead Commissioner ASC)

Mercy welcomed the group and explained it was a further opportunity to put forward views or raise questions in relation to the consultation proposal. Tracie Rees had held a briefing for unions on 9th July, outlining the rationale for change and a further meeting had been held on 19th August. Consultation runs until 7th October and there will be a meeting with Catering and Transport staff tomorrow which union representatives are also attending.

Ty said that his concerns were the same as those raised at the last meeting, namely that it wasn't fair as it is felt to not be an even playing field as there is a view that the current service is not being promoted by staff. There is a belief that personalisation is not the only reason for numbers dropping.

Janet asked if we knew why people stopped using the service – did we canvas people's views. Mercy responded that whilst people weren't asked why they stopped using a service, some information was available from their assessment and reassessment information. This was not qualitative as it was as a result of some tick box options but some information could be gathered. Mercy will provide this information as it was gathered for a FOIA request but recalls there was a variety of reasons. Ty asked if any stood out - from memory, Mercy said none did but would provide the information.

As per the last meeting a tighter application of eligibility criteria was also discussed.

Janet asked if Scrutiny had called this in. Mercy said Cllr Moore was informed on 9th July but it hasn't yet been called in but could be at any time.

It was said that there was a rumour the service would be finishing at Christmas. Confirmed an outcome would be known after the report goes to the executive – planned for November. However, implementation would take time so even if the decision was to close the service December would be too early.

Jane said that some of the catering staff expressed an interest in going on to escorting duties, there was also likely to be posts available in catering – short hours particularly. Jagruti confirmed that if a decision was taken to close, consultation on alternatives would start after the executive decision.

Anisha said that some of the transport staff were concerned about the people who get meals as they have a connection with customers due to the delivery. The consultation is about this service ceasing not meals support. The Council will still have a duty to support people who have an assessed need.

Janet asked about the costings as staffing is usually the most expensive element of the service. Mercy confirmed this. The £3.05 contribution from clients was for food, the remainder was other costs.

Janet also queried whether the Direct Payment amount would be sufficient to meet people's need as she couldn't see how the alternative would be cheaper than the current service. Mercy said that there may be several possible alternatives but one of those could be that customers have to pay more.

It was commented that day centres and EPH's as well as mobile meals are political issues and vulnerable people are getting hit.

Steve also raised that there are ways of promoting the service. The council could have carried out a trial of how promoting the service could impact on numbers using the service. Raising the charges could also be considered – if numbers increased the service would be more viable. Had the Council considered increasing the charge?

Jane asked how this would be done as drivers etc. couldn't do this. Steve said it would be assessors (care management staff) that would need to do that.

Steve commented that some service users have good relationships with the people that deliver and without a meal they may deteriorate and could end up costing more. Need to understand the unintended consequences of making the change. Mercy responded as before the Council would still have to provide a service to those that need it. However, Steve was concerned about those who don't meet the criteria now the bar (or eligibility) is perceived to have been set higher. Steve asked if we could

guarantee everyone would get a suitable alternative and no one would fall through the gap. Mercy said the Council has a duty to do this and it would be individually assessed and if they were eligible would get an alternative to meet their need. Steve raised a concern about lack of confidence in the assessment process.

Janet asked how service users were consulted and what the response was. Mercy said she thought it was about 30% last time she had been informed and there had been service user focus groups offered as well as 1-1 meetings if people requested it. In addition representative groups such as the 50+ forum, older people's network, disabled customers group and carers reference group were attended. Concern was raised that those attending wouldn't be the vulnerable people who can't get out of the house. However, Mercy said that these groups are there to represent others and we have had a good response to the survey (numbers wise) and the phone line and questionnaire has given people an opportunity to contact us without having to attend meetings.

Jagruti asked whether the unions would be submitting a written response or whether the minutes of the meetings would suffice. This may vary from union to union so the minutes will be used to feed into the process, along with anything else received.

Mercy thanked everyone for their attendance and confirmed the information requested and notes would be circulated.



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### **UNISON'S RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL TO STOP RUNNING THE COUNCIL'S MEALS-ON-WHEELS SERVICE**

There are some concerns from UNISON that there has been a significant decline from 2010 where there was 1,252 people using the service to May 2013 where there are now 269 people using the service. We are convinced that this reduction in service-users is not just down to numbers using the service dropping and personal budgets.

We believe there has been a deliberate attempt not to refer service-users from 2010; this was echoed in the meeting held with the staff on 17 September 2013 affected by the proposals where a number of them expressed concern that social services were telling service-users the meals-on-wheels service had stopped running and that social workers have not been referring service-users to the meals-on-wheels service. There was also an example of a service-user of 18 years told to stop using the meals-on-wheels service.

UNISON have asked why over the last 2/3 years we have not canvassed people's views on why they have stopped using the service. An opportunity has been missed where a marketing campaign could have been launched to promote the in-house service.

UNISON also questions whether the direct payment amount would be sufficient to meet people's needs.

There are concerns over the quality of meals provided in the private sector and the health and safety implications attached to that.

Our in-house meals-on-wheels service goes that "extra mile" with service-users. They observe service-users and in some cases have even stayed with a service-user who needed medical attention. They have often passed concerns on to social services. Can we see the private sector doing that! Nutrition is a big part of the service-users well-being.

It is common for older people to be particularly vulnerable to malnutrition resulting in the prevention or recovery from illness and an increased likelihood of developing more health problems.

**Gaynor Garner**  
(UNISON Social Care and Health Convenor).