

Report of Director of Adult Social Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 10th February 2012

Subject: Deputation to Council 16 November 2011

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. A Deputation to Full Council was made by members of the National Federation of the Blind on 16 November 2011. A transcription of the deputation is attached at Appendix 1.
2. This report specifically addresses the individual points made in the Deputation and sets out the efforts being made by Adult Social Care officers and officers of the Leeds Vision Consortium, the organisation currently providing services to the deaf-blind, blind and visually impaired community in Leeds.

Recommendations

Members of the Executive Board are recommended to note the content of this report and the actions that are currently being undertaken by Adult Social Care (ASC) and Leeds Vision Consortium (LVC).

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed response to the Deputation made to Full Council by members of the National Federation of the Blind on 16 November 2011.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 A contract was in place between ASC and CoHearent-Vision for blind and partially sighted services, provided at Shire View, which ended on the 9 June 2011. ASC conducted a review of the services provided by CoHearent-Vision which, was concluded in January 2009. The review, supported by an extensive consultation process with current and potential users of such services, highlighted significant inadequacies in the service and a level of uptake that did not reflect the significant investment in this service. In Leeds there are 5200 adults registered with a visual impairment of which a only small percentage were accessing the previous service.
- 2.2 Following the review of the services provided by CoHearent-Vision, ASC determined to undertake a procurement exercise as, contrary to accepted Council practice the Visual Impairment services in Leeds had never been subject to a full competitive procurement exercise designed to test quality and value, but had rather developed historically on an ad hoc basis.
- 2.3 The intention, via the procurement exercise, was to establish a new improved service that would be more accessible to a greater number of people, to ensure that services, delivered from premises that were more easily accessed and delivered by more efficient means.
- 2.4 Following the procurement exercise the contract was awarded to Leeds Vision Consortium (LVC) in January 2011. Action for Blind People, SENSE and The Wilberforce Trust have collaborated to form LVC. The new services are being delivered from Fairfax House and a from variety of community based settings. Between January and June 2011 the contract mobilisation period took place which included further consultation with people using the services previously provided by Coherent Vision and with staff affected by TUPE considerations.
- 2.5 In relation to the premises at Shire View, this arrangement was the subject of a leasehold agreement between the Council and CoHearent-Vision. The leasehold agreement entered into by Council officers in the 1990's Shire View was valid for twenty years. Under the terms agreed CoHearent-Vision were the only party that had the right to terminate the leasehold arrangement. It was not until May 2011 that CoHearent-Vision informed ASC officers of their intention to exercise their right under the terms of the lease to return the building to the Council and did so on 30 June 2011. Until that point it was unclear what the intention of the Cohearent-Vision organisation would be in relation to the retention of the premises or indeed to the groups that had used the building during that organisations tenure.

3.0 Main issues

- 3.1 ASC welcomes the Deputation's comments regarding the new service and is aware that a number of members of the Deputation currently avail themselves of the services provided.
- 3.2 A number of key issues were raised by the Deputation at the Council meeting, the response of officers is set out below:
- a) Adults that are newly registered as being blind or partially sighted are offered a full holistic assessment of their needs by Adult Social Care's Rehabilitation Officers which is then followed up by a rehabilitation programme which will take place within the person's own home and in their immediate environment, as this is where it is most needed.

Blind and partially individuals are able to access to LVC services. LVC operates a key working system and service users are allocated a key worker who will assess their ongoing needs and ensure that services are in place to meet those requirements. This support will continue for as long as it is required. There are also opportunities for service users to access other elements of the service such as the locally based satellite groups or the IT suite at Fairfax House which provides classes for groups and individuals.

- b). The second issue relates to social groups that used to meet at Shire View and which were supported by volunteers as part of an individual agreement with CoHearent-Vision wholly separate to earlier contract agreements between ASC and LVC. However, recognising the importance attached to such groups affected by the determination to cease the leasehold agreement, ASC officers and those of LVC have attempted to address the needs of such groups and the issues of new routes and venues raised by the Deputation continue to be actively addressed by LVC. For example, people wishing to continue to access social groups have been offered assistance and support in accessing the groups and will continue to do so.

The following social groups that were referred to in the Deputation, that used to meet at Shire View, are now being supported by LVC and are meeting at Fairfax House. It provides flexibility in its opening hours as it is open during office hours, is available seven evenings per week and on the weekend.

The following social groups meeting at Fairfax House:

- The National Federation of the Blind which meets on a monthly basis and up to twenty five people attend these meetings on a Saturday
- The women's group which meets every Tuesday
- The craft group meets on a weekly basis
- Monthly meetings of the Yorkshire Sports Group.

Two further groups who previously used Shire View by agreement with Cohearent-Vision have decided that they do not wish to avail themselves of the LVC facility they are:

- The SOS group, which has chosen not to meet at Fairfax House but has accepted the support of a volunteer from LVC..
- The provider of the Talking Newspaper has given notice and has now moved out of Shire View.

- c) So far as officers are aware therefore, all of the social groups previously using Shire View as part of their agreements with Coherent Vision have now been supported to find accommodation that meets their requirements with all but two choosing to meet at Fairfax House.
- d) The third issue raised in the past 6 months and reflected in the Deputation has been in relation to the appropriateness of Fairfax House for the Dual Sensory Loss (DSL) day service which is used by approximately 70 people. This service was transferred directly from Shire View. Adults with a DSL are also able to access other parts of the service and these are identified as part of the initial and comprehensive assessment process. The DSL day service continues to be held under review. This recognises that the great majority of people using this service are elderly, all those affected are being offered a review of their support plan and to gather their comments on the future of the service.
- e) ASC officers are aware that there are varying views on the quality of the current location for this particular service. Specifically, in relation to the toilet facilities, food and a spending area for guide dogs. Toilet facilities are located on the ground, first and fifth floor of Fairfax House but originally were only available on the ground and fifth floor.
- f) In order to address these concerns, a stakeholder group has been established, this provides a forum for issues and concerns to be raised and means sought to address them. The group meets at Fairfax House and consists of people using the services provided there, other interested stakeholders and members of LVC. ASC officers undertook a good deal of consultation with people attending the Shire View centre through awareness that the possible change of service and, potentially, venue was likely to cause some anxiety for people who had been used to the traditional services offered by the previous provider at the previous venue.
- g) As intermediate steps, renovation work is being undertaken regarding the toilet on the ground floor. Food for lunch is now being made available on the premises and people have a choice of pre-ordered food being brought to them or going out for lunch, which is popular with some people. Finally, a spending area pen for guide dogs has been designed and installed by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.
- h) As to the longer term, discussions are actively taking place with LVC with the intention of finally resolving these issues. This includes the current and active review of appropriate alternative venues from which this particular service could be provided.

- i) In balance, the overall feedback from many of the people using the DSL services has been positive, the past number of months has seen people build confidence at being in the centre of Leeds. The new city centre venue enables more opportunities to develop people's confidence and promotes their inclusion. Some people have also expressed the view that they prefer to be based in the city centre and would not wish to return the previous venue as it would limit the activities they are now able to enjoy.
- j) Finally, at Shire View there are two organisations that now have leasehold arrangements with the Council (having previously being sub-tenants of Cohearent Vision). They are The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA) and Corner Nurseries. The GDBA invested £600,000 of capital to refurbish the suite of offices they now lease from the Council. Both tenants have exercised their right under the terms of their leases to remain at Shire View and will continue to do so.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

- 4.01 A Deputation was also made to the Health, Well-Being and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board prior to the deputation to full Council. In response the Scrutiny Board established a distinct sub-group to consider that Deputation and to review other evidence in relation to the issues raised. The sub-group met on the 16th January this year and the summary of their findings are appended to this report.

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Prior to ASC undertaking the procurement exercise a series of regular consultation events took place at Shire View. Service users were able to provide feedback on the content of the service specification and amendments were made to the specification following their comments. The consultation events from the outset provided details about the position with the lease and service users and others were made fully aware that the service would need to be relocated to a more central location.
- 4.1.2 Following the award of the contract LVC had a weekly presence at Shire View until the contract transferred formally to them on 13 June 2011. This provided the opportunity for LVC to meet with service users, staff and volunteers. The Senior Managers from LVC and the Adult Commissioning Manager also attended two large meetings with over 100 service users, staff, volunteers and concerned individuals at Shire View. These sessions provided the opportunity for information to be shared in an open and transparent way and for all questions to be responded to.
- 4.1.4 ASC sent out a letter to 5200 adults that are registered as being blind or partially sighted providing them with information about the new service and this generated a significant number of new referrals and enquiries resulting in temporary staff having to be employed by LVC to respond to the level of demand.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Since the new service commenced on 13 June 2011 there has been an increase in the number of adults from BME communities receiving services from LVC. Up to the end of September 2011, 62 adults from BME communities had accessed LVC

and at the same time last year with the previous provider the number was 3. There are specific pieces of work being undertaken to engage with BME communities that are particularly affected by certain eye health problems such as glaucoma related to diabetes. Partnership arrangements have been established with other voluntary sector organisations that work with BME communities in Leeds which are already proving effective in the short time that the service has been open.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 ASC has a duty under the National Assistance Act 1948 to make arrangements for promoting the welfare of adults who are blind or partially sighted.
- 4.3.2 The Leeds Vision Strategy 2009-2014 was developed by the Leeds Vision Strategy group, of which ASC was a key partner. The Strategy sets out Leeds' ultimate goal for eye care and sight loss services, a goal that Leeds should always be striving towards: "Leeds offers a flexible and seamless service of eye care and sight loss support tailored to meet individual needs and targeted to address inequalities in the city and offers barrier-free access to all opportunities within the city."

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 The value of the contract with LVC per year is £500,000. This budget was agreed upon prior to the procurement exercise and was based upon the expenditure on the contract with the previous provider. The budget for this service was not reduced nor has there been any disinvestment in the level of service delivery. A greater range of services are now provided, available to a greater number of people both at Fairfax House and other venues across the city. Statistics collected as part of the monitoring of the new contract demonstrate that LVC has offered services to significantly more people since opening on 13 June 2011, up to the end of September 2011, LVC had received 172 new referrals compared with 56 attracted by the previous provider for the identical period in 2010. Overall this represents a significantly better use of resources than had previously been the case.
- 4.4.2 Corporate property management and Adult Social Care officers are considering a variety of options for the future use of the Shire View facility, which offers 13,000 square feet of office space in the centre of Headingley.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 As a report to the Executive Board this report is subject to call in.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The points raised by the Deputation will be included in the monitoring of the contract and service delivery. The contract performance and service delivery are being rigorously monitored by ASC commissioning officers. A new monitoring framework is in place, which consists of monthly and quarterly contract monitoring meetings. LVC are also to pilot a new outcome measurement tool to be used with service users and this will accurately measure the distance travelled by service users who access the service. It will focus on the delivery of individual outcomes that will have been identified via a comprehensive assessment.

- 4.6.2 The staff team and thirty three volunteers transferred to LVC from Shire View and this has ensured a high level of service continuity and reassurance for the existing service users that also transferred.
- 4.6.3 All the concerns raised in the deputation and separately by people whether accessing or wishing to access the services provided by LVC or associated with them, have been seen positively and strenuous efforts made to mitigate risks arising out of those concerns, that process will continue.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Members of the Deputation are working closely with LVC and ASC officers to seek workable solutions to the issues raised and its hoped that by working together the anxiety and fear expressed can be mitigated and allayed. Active and ongoing consultation with people using and needing to use these and associated services will always form part of the contract with LVC and opportunities for their active participation will be at the centre of shaping service delivery.
- 5.2 As this is a new contract ASC will continue to rigorously monitor the performance of this service and to ensure there is a high level of service user satisfaction. This will include addressing the shortcomings of the present venue for specific groups in the way set out at para 3.2(g) There are many service improvements and developments to be implemented over the next year and for the whole of the contract period. The main aim being to continue to increase the number of service users accessing all aspects of the service and to enable adults with a visual impairment, with the appropriate support, to live as independently as possible and to maximise their potential.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 Executive Board is recommended to:

note the content of this report and the actions that are currently being undertaken by Adult Social Care (ASC) and Leeds Vision Consortium (LVC) to address the points raised by the Deputation.

7.0 Background documents

- 7.1 Leeds Vision Strategy 2009 to 2014

Appendix 1

Deputation – National Federation of the Blind

Appendix 2 – Summary of the Health, Well-Being and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board working group meeting 16/01/12.