

7 September 2015**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE INTERIM SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR NORTH
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND DIRECT SERVICES****CONSULTATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTY HORTICULTURE
SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides Committee with details of the consultation exercise that was undertaken between 15 December 2014 and 9 February 2015 about the future of the County Horticulture Service. Following the consultation Members are requested to approve the development of a time-limited Employment and Skills Training Hub at Brooke Farm (Option 1), in conjunction with allowing current service users to continue to attend.
2. The report also seeks approval of the recommended option to develop an Employment and Skills Training Hub within County Horticulture and the investment into staffing additional posts for three years.

Information and Advice

3. The current County Horticulture Work Training Service (the Service) comprises:
 - i. Three horticulture sites at Linby, Skegby and Balderton, known as “Brooke Farm”, where service users with learning disabilities and people with Asperger’s Syndrome are supported by staff to gain horticulture skills and grow seasonal produce and plants, which are sold in a shop at the Linby site and at other locations around the County (e.g. County Hall, special events). There are currently sixty-four service users attending the three sites across the week (ranging from one to five days per person)
 - ii. The Grounds Maintenance and Golden Gardens Service, employing people with disabilities, which delivers garden maintenance and gardening to County facilities, private establishments and local residents
 - iii. A Farm Shop based at Brooke Farm, Linby, which also employs people with disabilities.

4. Although income is generated through the retail and Golden Gardens service, the Service depends on a net budget of £608,000 per annum provided by Nottinghamshire County Council (the Council).
5. Senior Management of Brooke Farm was reorganised in April 2014. Historically the Service has aimed to provide time-limited work training, and service users have agreed to this on admission. However, in practice, few people have moved into work and people have remained in continual training.
6. People are not allocated a personal budget to fund their places in the Service and do not pay any contribution towards the Service.
7. In understanding the Service operations since April 2014, historic practices remain and all service users who attend Brooke Farm have different transport arrangements.
8. The future of the Brooke Farm service was considered as part of the Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Targeted Review carried out through the Redefining Your Council process. As a result of this work, a proposal has been developed to transform the Service into a focused, time-limited Employment and Skills Training Hub (the Hub), operated via an innovative partnership. The Hub would support people with a range of needs (including learning disability, physical disability, autistic spectrum disorders and mental illness) to develop skills in horticulture, retail and administration work, for a defined period of time that would be agreed on an individual basis. After this, staff from the Hub would assist people to find paid work or other vocational opportunities. The suggested defined period of time was a maximum of three years.
9. No savings target was set for the Service, which shows the extent of political support for the Service and recognition that paid work and meaningful occupation bring people many benefits of a financial and non-financial nature, which significantly enhance wellbeing, confidence and quality of life.
10. At the ASCH Committee meeting on 1 December 2014, Members approved the implementation of a consultation process, to canvas views about adapting the current Brooke Farm Horticultural Training Unit to become a focused Employment and Training Skills Hub. Reasons for proposing this change were detailed in the Committee report, Direct Services Delivery Group Update Report on 1 December 2014.
11. Consultation involved a series of meetings with service users and carers, facilitated by an independent advocate where appropriate, across the different venues (Linby, Skegby and Balderton). At these meetings, the proposal was explained and then people were invited to make comments and ask questions. All the comments were recorded. The Consultation feedback will be available on the website as per standard good practice. People were given a written briefing about the proposal in a standard and easy-read version, as well as an easy-read questionnaire that could be handed back to the Council. People who could not attend the meetings could request these papers from the Service.
12. Staff working in the services were briefed prior to service users and carers, so that they could give support to the service users and carers and also understand how to submit their own personal view.

13. The following twenty-two external organisations were invited to participate in the consultation:
 - Job Centre Plus, the Skills Funding Agency, the Shaw Trust, Ingeous, Remploy, A4E, Support In Work, Futures, Central College Nottingham, West Nottinghamshire College, New College Nottingham, Lincoln College, North Notts College, Landmarks Specialist College, Portland College, Brackenhurst College, Sutton Community Academy, Reach Southwell, Sherwood Forest Trust, the Joint Forces Alliance, Reed in Partnership, and Indigo Brave.
14. User Forums that were sent consultation details include the Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Board, the Involvement Group and the North Nottinghamshire and South Nottinghamshire Learning Disability Carer Forums.
15. Within the Council, comments were requested from the Youth Service, Public Health, Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) policy and provision, all Younger Adults Commissioning teams and Strategic Commissioning staff.
16. There were a number of responses to the consultation and these are detailed in **Appendix B**.
17. The Service User Forum from the Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Board is supportive of the proposal. The majority of external organisations and staff working in strategic roles within the Council were positive about the overall vision, aims and ethos of the proposal and its potential to generate new income streams.
18. Many respondents could see positive aspects to the proposal but were also worried about the implications on the current service users and their families. These respondents included some carers, staff from the Younger Adults Commissioning teams, Direct Payments Service Users Limited (DIPSU) and Reach Learning Disability.
19. Most carers rejected the proposal for a wide variety of reasons and some of the comments from Community Learning Disability Teams and a small number of external partners opposed the idea of a time-limited service for current service users.
20. Many comments were given about how the proposal could be developed to ensure its future success and how to support the current service users and their families through any change. Comments on supporting younger people with disabilities with vocational training were made.
21. There is potential for new income generation through an Employment Hub via the Adult Community Learning Service (Skills Funding Agency), colleges, Job Centre Plus, European funding and possibly also NHS sources (e.g. Clinical Commissioning Groups). The Service would require capacity in order to enter into this type of partnership working.
22. It was confirmed that, given capacity, other clients would benefit from access to the new Hub, including people with mental health issues, people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments, people with mild learning disability and clients from Job Centre Plus, the latter possibly on short-term placements.

23. The following organisations and services would like to participate in further discussions to support the Council to develop the proposal further, should it be approved:
- i. Skills for Employment
 - ii. Engage to Employ
 - iii. Futures
 - iv. Portland College
 - v. EHC Commissioning Hub
 - vi. Reach Learning Disability
 - vii. Job Centre Plus
 - viii. Remploy
24. Post consultation and after further discussion, it is now recommended for a three year period that an Employment and Skills Training Hub be developed, which allows present service users to remain at Brooke Farm.
25. In response to concerns raised by people who participated in the consultation, the Council proposes that the following actions are taken:
- a) Meetings will take place following the Committee decision to outline detail and address concerns that have been raised in consultation.
 - b) To address uncertainties about other options and other questions raised during the consultation, written information will be produced using a 'Questions and Answers' format. Further meetings will be arranged with current service users and carers as soon as possible following the Committee decision to explain this information, as well as what has been agreed and what the implications are for people.
 - c) If people choose to move onto employment, options for supporting people to maintain friendships and relationships beyond the service will be explored.
 - d) There will be dialogue with all current service users and their carers, so that a clear picture of the needs and aspirations of each individual person can be established and outcomes for ongoing support and planning identified.
 - e) There will be opportunities for service users and carers to meet other people with learning disabilities who are currently engaged in successful paid employment. The aims will be to:
 - Enable service users and carers to understand how this has been achieved and what benefits those workers experience due to working
 - Raise the aspirations and expectations of current service users and carers
 - Help service users and carers to understand how people are supported to manage risks
 - Support service users to understand how their current experience at Brooke Farm is different to having paid employment.
 - f) There will be opportunities for service users and carers to receive benefits advice so that they understand the implications of engaging in paid work.

- g) An ongoing communications process will be designed so that people have many opportunities and ways to ask questions and receive information updates over time, e.g. using the internet, newsletters, meetings, and discussion groups. Ideas from current service users and carers will be welcomed.

Other Options Considered

26. The Council has also considered the following options:

Option 2: A therapeutic horticultural day service model being delivered alongside an Employment Hub

27. In March 2015, following the detailed consultation on the options for the future of Brooke Farm, Members requested a further option be explored in order to give additional consideration to the current vulnerable service users of the site.
28. This option centres on allowing the Grounds Maintenance, Golden Gardens and Farm Shop to remain unchanged and splits Brooke Farm into two services, A and B.
- **Service A:** A therapeutic horticultural day service, which would allow current eligible service users to remain at the bases in Linby, Skegby and Balderton.
 - **Service B:** The development of a separate, focussed, time-limited Employment and Skills Training Hub based at Linby.
29. There are currently sixty-four service users attending the three sites across the week, (ranging from one to five days per person).
30. In July 2015, the service user split per site is as follows:
- Linby: 36 people
 - Skegby: 18 people
 - Balderton: 10 people
31. Whilst consultation activities from December 2014 to February 2015 have confirmed that the Service is well regarded by all, new referral numbers have not been significant over the last year with only eight people joining the service, as it currently operates, over the three sites.
32. Under Option 2, Service A would not take any new referrals and this service would remain for existing service users only. It is envisaged that this service would reduce over time.
33. Although County Horticulture generates income, the Service is currently reliant on a subsidy of £608,000 per annum provided by the Council.
34. In order to provide a therapeutic horticultural day service and an Employment Hub, the Council would need to recruit an additional staffing team.

35. It is envisaged that investment of £307,031 into staffing would be required to create the Employment Hub. Current employees would be utilised in the support and provision of the therapeutic horticultural day service.
36. Option 2 would therefore increase the current subsidy from £608,000 per annum to approximately £915,000 per annum.
37. The reasons for rejecting this option are:
- i. Success of the Employment Hub (Service B) could create capacity issues for the site at Brooke Farm and without throughput there would be no immediate opportunity for new people to access the service, unless staffing capacity and service offer is increased or significant numbers of current service users leave
 - ii. There would be significant additional costs for staffing to undertake the training role, as current staff would be required to meet the needs of current attendees
 - iii. The nature of this option is potentially very confusing for both existing service users and new service users of the Hub in terms of pathways and outcomes
 - iv. There would be less potential to attract new funding streams and partnership working around the training element, since partners / grant agencies would not invest in a service that was not delivering work-related outcomes in a significant way and did not have a coherent vision or intention to deliver this
 - v. For some people the resources at all sites (Linby, Skegby and Balderton) pose a number of challenges regarding accessibility
 - vi. Current service users who are not eligible for support and service from the Council would not be able to continue to attend
 - vii. Some eligible service users may not be assessed as requiring the number of days' service they currently receive.

Option 3: Maintain the existing service but establish it clearly as a long term day service

38. The reasons for rejecting this option are:
- i. The Council would have no service that offers a work training environment and so would be unable to respond to those people with eligible needs, including young people with disabilities who are within educational provision, who are looking to engage with this type of service. The potential to create a new innovative service that will meet the needs of future generations of people with learning disabilities and a wider group of people will remain unrealised
 - ii. Although the shop at Linby would still be retained for the Community, more produce would need to be brought in. The expectations for day service users will be different to the expectations placed on current attendees and therefore the range of produce would decline.
 - iii. It is likely that service users and carers will believe that setting up the service as a day service will be a way for the current service to continue as it is. The fact that this will not be the case could generate further disappointment and frustration

- iv. Current service users who are not eligible for support and service from the Council would not be able to continue to attend
- v. Some eligible service users may not be assessed as requiring the number of days' service they currently receive
- vi. In order to staff Brooke Farm effectively as a day service, additional staffing will be needed to maintain all three sites in operation as a day service.

Reasons for Recommendations

Option 1

39. The benefits of the recommended option to develop an Employment and Skills Training Hub are that:
- i. The overall purpose of the service is clarified as an Employment and Skills Training Hub
 - ii. The proposal fits with the principle of the Adult Social Care Strategy and Redefining your Council
 - iii. In the new service there will be one progression route which all service users will follow
 - iv. Those aspiring to employment will continue the pathway to paid outcomes
 - v. Those current service users who do not wish / are not able to move on to employment will engage in horticultural activity at Brooke Farm. This means that without agreement these people will not progress to paid outcomes.
 - vi. Horticulture will form part of the employment skills programme but will not be the only focus of activity
 - vii. It is proposed, following appropriate consultation, that the Council seeks to charge for transport and meals in line with other Council charges
 - viii. New service users engaging with the full programme (those who wish to move on to paid employment) would be expected to travel independently to the Hub unless Access to work funding can be obtained. Some new service users may be assessed as being eligible for social care support, which may include direct payments which could be utilised for travel
 - ix. The Hub aims to follow a programme of activity encompassing elements of employment preparation and training. A sample programme is shown at **Appendix A**
 - x. The Employment Hub will operate on a maximum capacity of:
 - Brooke Farm: 30 places (*for people with low level needs)
 - Skegby: 15 places (*for people with low level needs)
 - Balderton: 10 places (*for people with low level needs)

*For people requiring higher levels of support, the numbers will be adjusted to reflect support required

Referrals will be accepted on two cohorts per year determined by availability of places as service users move into paid employment
 - xi. Over time the proposal aims to open access to the service to a wider range of people who need this kind of experience and support (particularly younger people with disabilities in college or in transition from school) and more people will move through the programme. All current service users will have the option to continue at Brooke Farm within the Hub, whether or not they meet the criteria for social care

support under the Care Act 2014. It is intended to undertake individual reviews of all service users who attend Brooke Farm in consultation with the users, carers and their families

- xii. People accessing support in obtaining paid employment benefit from an opportunity to increase their independence and decrease their reliance on support services
- xiii. Participation in the Employment and Skills Training Hub offers people the opportunity to improve their confidence and enhances their wellbeing and quality of life
- xiv. People securing employment raises the visibility of individuals with disabilities in the workplace and demonstrates their positive contribution to the community
- xv. This brings the Brooke Farm service in line with the national agenda (Housing, Health, Employment, Welfare, Further Education)
- xvi. If people are successful in attaining paid work the Council would increase its performance towards the National Indicator NI146 PSA16 (data collected by Nottinghamshire County Council in relation to the percentage of adults with Learning Disabilities who are assessed or review during the year and are in paid employment at the time of their latest assessment or review)
- xvii. The proposal does not impact on the twelve disabled employees who work within the Grounds Maintenance and Farm Shop
- xviii. The operating hours of the Employment Hub will be from 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00am to 4.30pm on Friday. This change will enable the Hub to maximise its facilities and deliver an employment programme from its sites
- xix. A restructure of the staff will be required to implement the new Employment Hub programme. It is proposed that jobs will be restructured under a single service structure to support all elements of the Hub whether people are actively seeking employment or not. This change will be the subject of a separate consultation exercise with staff.

40. The implementation implications of this recommendation are:

- i. An extra investment of £62,500 per annum for three years will be incurred to employ additional staff to support people within the Employment Hub. After three years it is proposed that there will be a review of the service and its achievements over this period.
- ii. A full consultation programme will be undertaken with all staff in relation to proposed staffing changes
- iii. Until any additional income is achieved, the Council will need to continue to support the service with the current budget
- iv. A significant cultural change will need to be implemented for the new service to be successful
- v. The shop at Linby will be retained for the local community.

Statutory and Policy Implications

41. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

42. In relation to the transformation proposal for County Horticulture, initial financial work has suggested that the overall net cost of the Employment and Skills Training Hub will increase from £608,000 per annum to £670,500 per annum. This increased investment of £62,500 per annum on the current subsidy is due to the requirement for additional staff within the Employment Hub.

Human Resources Implications

43. Additional posts for the Employment Hub will be established for three years. These posts will reflect the support element required to assist current staff to develop the employment service.
44. Subject to consultation, the service will be redesigned and staff will be enabled into the new structure. Job Descriptions will be reviewed and rewritten to reflect the new service. A further report will be submitted to Committee proposing a staffing structure for this service.
45. If required, staff will be provided with additional training, so that they can deliver all elements of the Employment Hub required. The staff group will work together, potentially with staff from other organisations, and this will support the cultural change required to establish the new Employment and Skills Training Hub.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

46. The proposal to transform the County Horticulture Service will affect the current service users, who are people with learning disabilities and Asperger's Syndrome. In addition, the proposal will potentially widen access to the new service, which will bring benefits to a wider range of young adults with disabilities and mental health needs. An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced for this proposal and is available as a background paper.

Implications for Service Users

47. The proposal to transform the County Horticulture Service would change the service to an Employment and Skills Training Hub. Existing service users of Brooke Farm would only move out of the service if it is their wish to seek paid employment.
48. There would be an expectation that new people starting the programme wish to secure paid employment. Their programme will cease once this is achieved. It is expected that new service users of the Employment Hub will remain in the service for a period no longer than three years.
49. People will only be able to join when (or if) there is capacity to do so ie when current service users move on.
50. If the proposal is agreed, there will be a commitment to service users' engagement plans which will determine existing service user aspirations for the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1) Notes the results of the consultation exercise.
- 2) Approves the recommended option to establish an Employment and Skills Training Hub within the County Horticulture Service.
- 3) Approves consultation on the proposal that current service users are subject to the agreed Council charges for transport and meals provision.
- 4) Approves the investment of £62,500 into staffing for 3 years.
- 5) Receives a further report in due course proposing a revised staffing structure for the new service following consultation.

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Constitutional Comments (SMG 13/08/2015)

51. The Committee has the responsibility for adult social care matters and approval of departmental staffing structures. The proposals in this report fall within the remit of this Committee.
52. The Employment Procedure Rules provide that the report to Committee include the required advice and HR comments and that the recognised trade unions be consulted on all proposed changes to staffing structures (and any views given should be fully considered prior to a decision being made).

Financial Comments (DLM 13/08/15)

53. The financial implications are contained within paragraphs 40 and 42 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

54. Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Direct Service Delivery Group Update – report to Adult Social Care and Health Committee on 1 December 2014
- No Health without Mental Health – Nottinghamshire’s Mental Health Framework for Action – approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting held on 3 September 2014
- Adult Social Care Strategy – approved at Full Council meeting held on 27 March 2014.
- Redefining your Council strategy – approved at the policy Committee meeting on 7 May 2014.
- Summary of comments received on the consultation on the proposal to change Brooke Farm into an employment and skills training hub.
- Equality Impact Assessment.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All

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