

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 21 February 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Health & Community
SUBJECT: Carers Services within Halton
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval to transfer the Carers Centre to the Voluntary Sector and outline the future of Carers Services within Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board:

- i) Approve the Council's 3 year financial commitment to the running of the Carers Centre in the sum of £160k in year 1, £164 in year 2 and £168 in year 3. The additional funding will be met from the Carers Grant and the Primary Care Trust.**
- ii) Approve the closure of the Widnes Carers Centre Outlet, co-located in the Age Concern building.**
- iii) Authorise the Strategic Director, Health & Community in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Health to award the contract for the provision of Carer Services to Halton Carers Centre, in the sum of approximately £160k per annum over the period April 2008 – March 2011 and that in light of the exceptional circumstances, namely that the Centre is the only available provider of the range of Carers services required to the people of Halton and in accordance with Procurement SO 1.6, Standing Orders 3.1- 3.7 and 3.10 be waived on this occasion. (See paragraph 5.6).**
- iv) Authorise the Strategic Director, Health & Community in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Health to take such action as may be necessary to give effect to the Carers Centre to provide Carer Services to the people of Halton.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Since the opening of the Carers Centres in 2004, it has been the

intention that the management of the Centres by the Local Authority would only be a temporary arrangement, until a voluntary sector organisation could be identified to undertake it. The reason for this was to ensure that Carers would be able to maximise their access to funding streams e.g. Lottery funding, that otherwise would not have been able to be accessed by the Centres under Local Authority control. As such within Halton Borough Council's current Carers Strategy (2006-2008), the intention to transfer the management of the Centres to the voluntary sector is stated as an objective, and in particular with acceptance into the Princess Royal Trust for Carers (PRTC) network. Acceptance of Halton Carers Centre into the PRTC would mean being part of a long established and respected network offering expertise in responding to Carers needs.

- 3.2 During the last 12 months a number of activities, including meetings and consultation events, have taken place to identify the options and their associated advantages and disadvantages, for the future provision of Carers Services within Halton. During this time it has been highlighted that whichever approach was adopted it would need to safeguard the financial future of Halton Carers Centre, improve and expand the services provided, and be acceptable to Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust, to Halton Borough Council, and to local carers.
- 3.3 Due to the priority given to this area of work and to help minimise the potential for conflict due to the differing views of the stakeholders involved, it was decided that the future provision of Carers Services would be independently assessed. In addition to comprehensive research, consultations with key stakeholders have also taken place to maximise input into the planning and decision making process. Initial discussions have been held with a number of stakeholders to explore issues relating to the future provision of services. These included key staff in the existing Carers Centres, the Health & Community Directorate and the Children & Young People Directorate as well as stakeholders.
- 3.4 Three options have been examined regarding future provision, as outlined below: -
 - 1) no change;
 - 2) establish a Princess Royal Trust for Carers Centre in Halton;
 - 3) merge with Princess Royal Trust for Carers Centre in St Helens.
- 3.5 Discussions with stakeholders has indicated that the decision to transfer Carers Centres to the voluntary sector is generally welcomed so long as the service has adequate resources and high levels of commitment from all partners.
- 3.6 Following wide spread consultation including presenting a report to Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board on 15th January

2008, it was agreed that the most favourable option would be Option 2: Establish a Princess Royal Trust for Carers Centre in Halton. The main reasons for this being :-

- As a charitable organisation the Centre would be able to access different funding streams, which the Local Authority is currently unable to.
- An independent Carers Centre would not just be a provider of services but would be an important means of ensuring the voice of carers is heard. Carers within Halton would have a direct input in to how the Centres were managed and the services provided there.

Location of the Centre

- 3.7 Through the development of the options, it has become apparent that within current resources provision over two sites is costly and would represent a significant burden to a small charity as well as splitting a small staff team across two locations.
- 3.8 Statistics from the Census 2001 demonstrate there are wards on both sides of the river which have very high numbers of carers and where targeted outreach exists from one resource base, this may prove equally or more beneficial than having services split across two sites.
- 3.9 A small outreach “centre” is currently co-located in an Age Concern outlet in Widnes and very limited in the amount of space available and current usage levels appear to be far lower than Runcorn Centre, which has more space and would be more suitable to development as a PRTC Centre, in the immediate future. There is an existing proposal to develop a voluntary sector resource centre in Widnes, which may prove a suitable base for the Centre in the long term. However, this is dependent upon additional funding being made available from the lottery. A proposal has already been submitted.
- 3.10 The Princess Royal Trust therefore agree to the closure of the Carers Centre located in the Age Concern building, explore alternative sites in Widnes and await the outcome of the lottery proposal.
- 3.11 The proposal to deliver services from one site is generally supported by the Carers Strategy Group, which consists of carer representatives, including the Chair of the Halton Carer’s Forum. It is recognised that Carers would prefer to see two centres within Halton, one in Runcorn and one in Widnes and this aspiration will be incorporated into the Carer Centre 3 year business plan to be prepared in conjunction with the Princess Royal Trust operating

from the Runcorn site will continue in the medium term.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The profile of the provision of services for carers continues to rise in significance. A Centre within the voluntary sector will have access to new funding streams and most importantly will be able to offer an independent service to carers, which may enable the Centre to be more effective in reaching carers who are at present 'hidden'. The voluntary sector may also provide the Carers Centre with the opportunity to develop more innovative and tailored provision allowing them to reach out to a wider range of carers. In selecting this option for the future of Carers Services, the Council is recognising the importance of Carers issues and ensuring that the services provided to them are maximised.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The PRTC network have stated that they would require a three-year funding commitment by Halton Borough Council, to initially support the Carers Centre. This three-year commitment is a normal requirement of acceptance into the PRTC network and would, in the main, be funded using the Carers Grant.
- 5.2 The option of transferring the Centre and associated services over to the voluntary sector will require an increase in current levels of funding, which at present is approximately £104k for 2007/8.
- 5.3 Establishing a PRTC centre would mean an increase of funding to approximately £160k per annum (if the service was delivered over one site rather than two). The increase of funding for the Carers Centre would ensure that there was an improved range of services delivered to the Carers of Halton and that the Centre would be able to effectively respond to the increased national agenda around Carers culminating in the publication of the new National Carers Strategy during 2008.
- 5.4 Consideration has already been given to how to fund the additional costs. The Carers Grant would continue to be the main source for funding, with additional contributions from the Children & Young People Directorate and Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust. Any additional funding required to support the transfer would be sourced initially from the increase in the Carers Grant 2008/9.
- 5.5 Halton & St. Helens Primary Care Trust currently funds St Helens Carers Centre and they have confirmed that they will contribute £20k towards the funding of the Centres per year for a 3-year period.

Business Case for Waiver of Procurement Sols

5.6 As part of the 3 year financial commitment, it is proposed that the Committee grant a waiver of the relevant standing orders to enable the Authority to enter into a 3 year Service Level Agreement to continue to provide Carers Services from the point of transfer for a 3 year period. Below are details of the business case for waiving standing orders: -

- **Value for Money and Competition** - There is no other known provider offering the same range of services as the Halton Carers Centre. The Carers Centre will produce an annual report of its activities in Halton, in order that the Council can judge that the Service Level Agreement (along with performance targets) has secured value for money. The Council will continue to assess the market to ensure continued value for money.
- **Transparency** – Representatives from the Carers Centre and its Board of Trustees will become members of the Council's Carers Strategy Group and regular reports on activities/progress against targets will be presented to the Group. The Council will work with the Centre to ensure that the needs of carers in Halton are addressed. Other levels of transparency can be achieved, if necessary, via the Freedom of Information Act.
- **Propriety and Security** – The usual integrity clauses will be built into the Service Level Agreement and only staff with a need to know will have information about the agreement.
- **Accountability** - The Operational Director (Adults of Working Age) would remain accountable for the awarding and monitoring of the Service Level Agreement.
- **Public Contracts Regulations 2006** – This Service Level Agreement would be exempt from the Public Contract Regulations, due to it being deemed as a Social Care Service.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The proposal in relation to the future provision of Carers Services would benefit children and young people under 18 who have caring responsibilities, whose lives are often restricted in some way because they are supporting or taking responsibility for the care of a person who is ill or who has a disability etc.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The proposal would ensure opportunities for work, education and

learning for Carers are maximised to their full potential.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The proposal clearly demonstrates the Council's commitment, as a major stakeholder, in recognising the needs of Carers and in promoting their health and wellbeing within the Community.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The Local Authority would need to ensure continued funding of the Centres until such time as the Centres are sufficiently established to ensure that it can access appropriate funds itself. This would form part of a 3-year financial commitment by the Authority.

7.2 The Legal Services and Human Resources (HR) departments have advised that TUPE is likely to apply to the existing Carer Information Officer posts. All current terms and conditions would apply along with a broadly equivalent pension scheme.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 It is a requirement of the PRTC that each Carers Centre has an equal opportunities policy. Carers Centres are required to be accessible to people of all types and from all communities.

9.0 **REASON (S) FOR DECISION**

9.1 The proposed changes in the provision of Carer Services within Halton demonstrates that the Council recognises the importance of Carers issues and ensures that the services provided to them will be maximised.

An independent Princess Royal Trust for Carers Centre in Halton will be able to access new funding streams and most importantly will be able to offer an independent service to carers and provide an opportunity to develop more innovative and tailored provision allowing them to reach out to a wider range of carers.

The Centre will also be in a strong position to effectively respond to the increased national agenda around Carers culminating in the publication of the new National Carers Strategy during 2008.

10.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

10.1 Alternative options considered regarding the future provision of Carers Services included: -

- No change; i.e. the management of the Centres would continue to be provided by the Local Authority.

The main reasons for this option being rejected included that if the Centres remained in Local Authority control it would prove difficult to access sources of funding that could be accessed by voluntary organisations or registered charities e.g. Lottery funding. Also, with not being managed by the Local Authority, the Centre would be able to offer a more independent service to carers, which may enable the Centre to be more effective in reaching carers who are at present 'hidden'

- Merge with Princess Royal Trust for Carers Centre in St Helens

The main reasons for this option being rejected was that in the view of carers and groups consulted if a merger took place there was then the potential for services to carers in Halton to become diluted in favour of St Helens.

11.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

11.1 The aim would be to establish the independent Princess Royal Trust for Carers Centre in Halton by 1st July 2008. This date would coincide with the planned closure of the Widnes site.

12.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.