

REPORT FOR: **Decision by Leader of the Council**

Subject:	The Bridge – Outcome of the Consultation, and decision on future provision
Responsible Officer:	Bernie Flaherty – Director of Adult Social Services
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr David Perry Leader of the Council
Key Decision:	Yes The decision has a significant impact on current and potential users of The Bridge and this impacts on more than one ward.
Power to be exercised:	Paragraph 3 of the Appendix to the Executive Procedure Rules permits a key decision to be taken by the Leader where to wait until the next scheduled Cabinet meeting would be prejudicial to the interests of the Council.
Exempt:	No
Urgent/Non Urgent:	Yes Paragraph 17 of the Access to Information Rules permits key decisions being made without the decision being on the key decision schedule on the grounds of special urgency. The special urgency reason is that following an extensive consultation process, the uncertainty around future use of The Bridge is causing considerable anxiety amongst current users. An immediate decision is required to alleviate this anxiety and it is not in the Council's interests to

delay the decision.

There is no requirement for call-in to be waived and this decision may be called-in in accordance with constitutional rules.

Wards affected:

Building is located in the Marlborough Ward; however consultation respondents, service users and carers are from all Wards.

Enclosures:

Appendix A - Consultation Summary
Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out a summary of the Bridge Consultation responses including alternative proposals put forward during the course of the process. In response to this, a recommendation is put forward regarding the future operation of the service.

Recommendations:

The Leader of the Council is requested to:

1. Approve that the Bridge remain open as a mental health facility, operating as a 'community model'.
2. Approve the tendering of the service to community and voluntary groups.
3. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of People Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adults, to conduct the tendering exercise and to award a contract for a three year period.
4. Authority for a 9 month extension to the existing contract with Rethink Mental Illness to enable the tendering process to be undertaken.

Reason: The decision was originally delegated to the Corporate Director for People Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adults.

However, following the response to the consultation and options put forward during it, the Corporate Director for People requests that this decision be referred to Members.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

This report seeks approval for the Leader to make a decision on the future of the Bridge mental health day facility, following consideration of the consultation responses.

The original proposal for consideration was to transfer all Care Act eligible service users to the Council's Wiseworks run Mental Health Day Service, or other services in Harrow and find alternative venues for other groups and services running from the centre. This would make a saving of £276k, by not renewing or retendering the services currently provided at The Bridge.

Options considered

1. Continue as originally proposed, not to renew or retender services provided at the Bridge – transferring Care Act eligible service users to The Council run day facility, Wiseworks and alternative venues across The Borough.
This was the original proposal agreed to be put forward for consultation by Cabinet in February 2016. The consultation responses have been strongly

against this proposal, with a high level of concern that a valuable local resource will be lost.

2. Community Anchor/ Social Enterprise model put forward by the SaveTheBridge Action/ Campaign group throughout the consultation. *However, due to concerns in the funding structures and over reliance on grants/ crowd funding this option is not recommended.*
3. Community led model, coproduced between service users and carers with a view to being self-sustaining
Following consideration of the consultation responses, this option is recommended on the basis it preserves the facility for the future, whilst utilising the local community and involving service users and carers in the formulating future service provision.
4. In house option, produced in connection with existing council run services to run a self-sustaining mental health preventative service.
This option is not recommended as there is limited capacity within the Adults service to deliver MTFS proposals transforming in-house service provision that have been agreed.

Background

The Bridge was commissioned as a mixed use community space for people with mental ill health located in the Wealdstone area of Harrow. It hosts a number of managed and peer led groups for people with enduring mental health needs, it also aims to support people to build sustainable coping strategies, break social isolation and promote social inclusion through meaningful activities that build networks and training that may lead onto employment.

Until 2010/11 Marlborough Hill Day Centre and the Bridge were partly funded by NHS Harrow, however this funding was terminated as part of earlier savings. In order to meet statutory obligations of the time, and in line with Department of Health Best Practice guidelines for “commissioning guidance on day services with mental health problems” a hub model was designed which would:

- Promote recovery
- Focus on community participation
- Reduce social isolation
- Offer opportunities for people with mental health problems to provide support to each other and to run their own services
- Maximise choice and self- determination
- Meet the needs of diverse groups
- Ensure that services are accessible to people who are more seriously disabled by their mental health problems
- Involve users and carers
- Increase diversity of provision
- Improve cross-sector working

At present, there are approximately 164 people registered and supported at The Bridge and an average monthly attendance (over the last 6 months) of 1391, with in the region of 28 groups running from the centre, including; Art Classes, Breaking Social Isolation, Depression Management, Increasing Self-confidence, Self-harm support group, women’s groups, gardening group, lunch club, art groups, smoking cessation, basic living skills, support for parents, News group, Café group, More than just a choir, BiPolar Support group, Guitar group, widowed friends, music group, Harrow Support Group, Choir Yoga, WhyFi, toastmasters, guitar group, Recovery Support Group, Needlecraft, Quiz Group, Jewelry group, Café outings, Mind PB Art Group, Mind Creative Writing Group (PB), Dawn – Asian Women’s

group, Restorative Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Massage, Carers Support Group (ASAP), ASAP 1:1 Consultations, Hair Dresser, Toastmasters and more groups/ activities on a cyclical basis (eg: Tambala Drums).

These groups are a mixture of contribution funded, Personal Budget funded, free services and peer led.

Current situation

Financial pressures in Harrow Council have contributed to a forecast overall funding gap of £83million and a savings target for this amount being required for the period 2015/16 to 2018/19 across the Council. As part of a Budget setting process all departments put forward proposals for savings to contribute to the savings targets.

The Adults saving target for this period was £18.077m out of a £54.4m (around 33%) controllable budget; this was against a backdrop of more than £28million savings delivered through efficiencies and innovation in Adults since 2007 – 2008.

In order to meet these targets, difficult proposals affecting vulnerable service users and carers from all client groups have had to be put forward, including this proposal not to renew or retender for services provided by Rethink Mental Illness at The Bridge, Harrow.

Consultation

As part of ongoing commitments to involve residents in the decisions made by the Council a 6 week targeted consultation began on Wednesday 3rd February 2016 and closed on Wednesday 16th March 2016.

The purpose of this was to support decision makers to fully understand the impacts of not renewing or retendering for services provided at The Bridge in Harrow and going ahead with the proposal to close the service.

A variety of consultation mechanisms were used to ensure that people impacted by the proposals were given the opportunity to make their views known. The consultation methods used to engage people included:

- **3rd February 2016** – Bridge Event for Service Users, Carers and Rethink Staff
- **4th February 2016** – Public Event hosted at Harrow Civic Centre, for the Public
- **11th February 2016** – Public Event hosted at Harrow Civic Centre, for the Public
- The survey was available online from **3rd February 2016, until 16th March 2016**.
- The survey could be completed by telephone, using the telephone number advertised in the pack from **3rd February 2016, until 16th March 2016**.
- **15th March 2016** - drop in session was held at the Bridge where Council Officers supported users to fill in the survey forms
- Survey made available in hard copy at The Bridge and other mental health specific services across the Borough – including an Easy Read version and alternative languages available on request.

There was a high level of response to the consultation, including two formal petitions; Appendix A sets out the detail of the responses.

The main themes coming out of the consultation feedback are as follows:

- Closure will lead to higher costs on the NHS and other mental health services in the long term;
- Look for commercialisation opportunities eg. Café;
- The service fills a gap between mental health services and services provided via the GP;
- Wiseworks is not sufficient to provide alternative provision;
- The sense of community that The Bridge brings will be lost.

53% of respondents were users, with a further 20% being carers, so that majority of responses came from directly or indirectly using the service. Concerns raised included the following:

- The groups will not continue elsewhere;
- There will be nowhere else to go;
- Current users may not be eligible for alternative support;
- Users' mental health will suffer.

One questions focused on impact and the following themes emerged:

- Risk of social isolation;
- People being less able to cope;
- Higher reliance on GP and other mental health services;
- Higher reliance on; family, others and charities.

The representative groups also gave specific responses and raised concerns about pressure on other mental health services, loss of valuation recovery and support work and impact of other funding decisions on the ability of the voluntary sector to provide alternative support. Responses to some of the themes are contained in the consultation summary.

Why a change is needed

The feedback from the consultation and high level of community activity throughout the process shows the anxiety, distress and concern surrounding this proposal from local residents and in particular the vulnerable service users at The Bridge who value the service and have developed a sense of community at the centre.

The recommendation follows suggestions from a registered charity, the Action Group, and consultation responses to develop a working model that could become self-sustaining over a three year period. The new service would act as a hub by utilising the statutory and third sectors in Harrow to provide a fully co-ordinated system of support for people with mental health needs. The new model will be focused on supporting the community; particularly those from hard to reach groups, provide volunteering and employment opportunities and work in partnership to create a sustainable future for mental health provision in Harrow.

Risk Management Implications

The new proposal has many advantages for individual residents, but is not without its risks. Some of the key risks are outlined within the legal and financial sections of this report. Additional risks of this recommendation include:

The existing MTFS targets for this year surrounding The Bridge will not be met, and funding outside of Adult Social Services has been identified to cover 2016/17 and from 17/18 onwards funding will be allocated from an increase in the Council Tax base.

- In order to implement the proposed model, a procurement/ tendering exercise will need to be undertaken. It is anticipated that this will take around 9 months to complete and will require involvement from Service Users, Carers and Campaigners to ensure the outcomes highlighted during the consultation process are met. There is a risk that the tendering process will not identify a suitable provider who can deliver a self-funding service within the timeframe. This risk will be kept under review throughout the process.
- There are risks that a self-financing model at the site will not be successful, and the option to close will need to be revisited at a later date. Whilst there is no comparable example of a community model for mental health services in Harrow, the risk will be managed by working closely with voluntary organisations, service users and carers.
- There will be a change in service delivery, the centre will not continue in the same way it does currently – with vulnerable service users, change of any sort can be particularly challenging and can cause distress and anxiety. There is a risk that services will be delivered in a different way and that service users are adversely impacted by this. The risk will be managed by ensuring that service users and carers are involved in producing the specification and in the tendering process, as well as ensuring there is an effective transition process.

Legal Implications

The Care Act 2014 introduced new national eligibility criteria to determine eligibility for community care services, including those services that have been provided at the Bridge.

Application of the new eligibility criteria may exclude some service users who have in the past received support from the service, and given the complex nature of the needs and particular vulnerability of those service users, it is important that the Council works within the powers within the Care Act to safeguard these clients during any transitional period.

It is critical to the vision in the Care Act that the care and support system works to actively promote wellbeing and independence, and does not just wait to respond when people reach a crisis point. To meet the challenges of the future, it will be vital that the care and support system intervenes early to support individuals, helps people retain or regain their skills and confidence, and prevents need or delays deterioration wherever possible.

A local authority can change the way it delivers services, as long as it continues to meet its statutory duties. In relation to changing provision of day care services, a fair process involves the need to involve and consult those affected by the proposed decision. The consultation responses must be taken into account by the decision maker. The decision maker must also consider other relevant information, including the equality and financial implications of the decision. When considering proposals

that involve reducing services or closing provision, it is not uncommon for the majority of consultees to be against the proposal.

When considering consultation responses, the decision maker is not obligated to follow the majority response and must consider all views, however there may also be policy reasons for making a decision to change provision, even if the consultation responses are against this proposal. In a situation where local authorities have reduced financial resources, difficult decisions will have to be made about future provision of services and so long as all relevant information has been taken into account and the decision is reasonable and fair based on this information and complied with relevant legislation and guidance, the decision is likely to be a lawful decision.

Financial Implications

The budget for Rethink totals £276k and falls under the Adults Supporting People budget. The saving proposed represented a reduction in expenditure arising from not renewing the contract and contributed towards the Adults Services MTFS savings of £13.287m approved by Cabinet in February 2016.

As a result of the approved saving the Adults budget has been reduced by £276k. The proposed 9 month extension of the contract will therefore require funding, together with the additional unplanned staffing costs of £74k required to develop the new model. The required funding of £350k for 16/17 has been identified from capacity as a result of the 15/16 outturn position and From 17/18 onwards funding will be allocated from an increase in the Council Tax base.

It is not yet possible to quantify the impact of the decision on the MTFS. Whilst the principal of a self-funding model by April 2020 has been proposed, the development of the specification and delivery model and subsequent tender through a procurement process, will identify whether this can be achieved and the level of expenditure required in each of the next three years. Once the financial position is clear, the MTFS will need to be updated as appropriate.

Enabling the new model to be self-funding within three years may result in the Council contributing "in kind" resources such as property. If this were the case, any impact on the wider Council asset strategy and regeneration proposals would need to be considered.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

"The Council completed an equalities impact assessment, which identified that working age adults and those with mental health disabilities were impacted in a negative way to a greater extent than other groups. The consultation responses showed a high level of concern with the proposal to close The Bridge.

The consultation results were used to further inform the eqia. A number of mitigating measures were identified to ensure that the negative impact was reduced; however it is not possible to remove all impact from a closure proposal. The current recommendation seeks to keep the facility open, with a view to identifying a community group to run it on a self-financing basis. Whilst the services may change as a result of this, service users and carers will be closely involved in developing the specification and the tendering process, to ensure that their views are taken into account and that there can be an effective transition during any service change.

Council Priorities

The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

Please identify how the report incorporates the administration's priorities.

- *Making a difference for the vulnerable*
The recommendation focuses on the need to protect this service from closure due to the vulnerable nature of service users and carers impacted by the original proposal.
- *Making a difference for communities*
The new model of service delivery will create a 'hub' for community support. It will give communities an opportunity to work together and run a service in partnership with the Council to improve service provision for people with mental health difficulties in Harrow.
This will also support the Harrow Ambition Plan, to build a better Harrow, the new model will create opportunities for employment, training and volunteering at a sustainable service for the future.
- *Making a difference for local businesses*
The proposal recommends a commercial operational model, with input from local organisations and local businesses to be encouraged to support the new provider in its journey towards self-sustainability. This also works hand in hand with the Harrow Ambition Plan to be more business-like and business friendly to encourage service user employment, external investment and works hand in hand with other programmes working towards self-finance/ self-sustainability.
- *Making a difference for families*
The current service provides support to clients aged 18 and over, provides isolation prevention and networking opportunities for service users, carers and families. The service proposal highlights the impact the existing service has on families in Harrow and will work to improve the support available for families impacted directly and indirectly by mental health needs in Harrow. This supports the Harrow Ambition plan to protect the most vulnerable and support families to look after themselves and be less dependent long term on Council Services, as over time this will become a service run for the community by the community.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Signature:

Name: Donna Edwards



on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 17 May 2016

Signature:

Name: Sarah Wilson



on behalf of the
Monitoring Officer

Date: 16 May 2016

Ward Councillors notified:	YES
EqIA carried out:	YES
EqIA cleared by:	Chris Greenway

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Bernie Flaherty – Director of Adult Social Services
Tel: 020 8424 1611

Background Papers: None

Signature:

Position: Director of Adult Social Services

Name: (print) Bernie Flaherty

Date: 16 May 2016

For Leader

* I do agree to the decision proposed

* I do not agree to the decision proposed

* *Please delete as appropriate*

Notification of disclosable non-pecuniary and pecuniary interests (if any):

[Should you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, you should not take this decision.]

Additional comments made by and/or options considered by the Portfolio Holder

Signature:

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Leader

Date:

**Call-In Waived by the
Chair of Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]