

REPORT TO: Grants Advisory Committee

30 October 2020

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Cllr John Williams

LEAD OFFICER: Jeff Membery

The Impact of Covid-19 on existing Mobile Warden Schemes (MWS) Paper 1

Executive Summary

1. Since the outset of Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, voluntary organisations have been impacted both negatively and positively.
2. This paper explores the impact of the pandemic on the existing Mobile Warden Schemes.
3. Exploring the impacts will enable committee members to more accurately determine budget allocation in the short term.

Key Decision

4. No

This report seeks to provide options to GAC for recommendation on to the Lead Member for Finance.

Recommendations

5. The Grants Advisory Committee is asked to review the report and decide whether budget allocation for 2020/2021 is sufficient to support voluntary groups in the short term.

Reasons for Recommendations

6. Budgets for MWS were agreed for the financial year 2020-2021 based on historical performance/budget allocation to such schemes and long before to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown began. However, since the pandemic, the groups which run these schemes have had to adjust their services to reflect the changing nature of the care environment.

Details

7. Historically the budget for supporting the MWS has remained static except for annual inflationary uplifts.
8. The impact of the pandemic on the MWS has been varied, with some schemes reporting more negative impacts than others.
9. On the whole there has been a greater financial burden.
10. All schemes had to change the way they delivered their service as many of the service users are the most vulnerable and/or shielding.
11. This has been problematic for some wardens/volunteers/trustees who also fall into the high-risk category.
12. To adapt, schemes largely switched to contact by telephone and made occasional distanced house calls when needed. This included newspapers, prescription, and food drop-offs as well as sporadic wellbeing check-ins if there were concerns over particular individuals. However, other schemes reported increased activity, taking up the slack as other community support or care provision tailed off and providing additional shopping and prescription deliveries and moral support.
13. When lockdown eased in June, socially distanced house visits resumed with regularity again across all schemes.
14. Additional financial out-lay has been incurred by most schemes due to procuring PPE and hand sanitiser, wages and mileage reimbursement, as follows:
 - a. Wardens reported working longer hours as daily phone calls took considerably longer than normal, compensating for the lack of in-person visits and time spent reassuring clients.
 - b. Increased mileage was also incurred running additional shopping and prescription trips throughout lockdown. As many clients are still too afraid to go outside, this increased level of support has continued in places.
15. One scheme reported having made savings due to reduced travel expenses but this was the exception, not the rule.
16. The same scheme reported reducing fees to clients during this time, but they also reduced their fees to the warden as she worked fewer hours. Another scheme did not charge clients during lockdown.
17. Other impacts have included a reduction in volunteers for some schemes as they also fell into the high-risk category owing to their age.
18. Some clients had their subscriptions suspended due to financial hardship.
19. Reduced income from fund raising activities has also been reported due to cancelled events over the summer e.g. Shelford Feast
20. The impacts to clients have been damaging too with heightened feelings of isolation, fear and uncertainty for the future. Anecdotally, some wardens report clients' dementia worsening as a result of isolation and lack of social contact.

21. By all accounts the wardens have gone above and beyond providing support well beyond their contracted hours.
22. It is well known that the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over and, while unpredictable, it can only be assumed that there will be an ongoing impact on the schemes in question.

Options

23. The Grants Advisory Committee could recommend to the Lead Member for Finance:
 1. to leave 2020/21 grants to existing MWS as they are, perhaps agreeing to monitor the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic again later in the year;
 2. to provide each existing Mobile Warden Scheme with a one-off 'Covid-19 grant' to offset some of the additional costs incurred in 2020/21 as a result of additional demand and the need to alter their delivery models;
 3. to leave the 2020/21 grants to existing MWS as they are but increase them for the 2021/22 financial year and ongoing (bearing in mind the previously agreed move to three-year funding), based on the impacts felt by almost all schemes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the already acknowledged importance of these schemes to the Council and its vulnerable residents;
 4. to provide a one-off 'Covid-19 grant' in 2020/21 AND increase them for the 2021/22 financial year and ongoing (bearing in mind the previously agreed move to three-year funding), based on the impacts felt by almost all schemes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the already acknowledged importance of these schemes to the Council and its vulnerable residents.

Implications

24. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Financial

25. Additional financial resource may be required depending on the recommendation made to the Lead Member for Finance. This may or may not require a report to Cabinet (a Key decision would be added to the Forward Plan should the sums involved be sufficiently high).

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

A modern and caring Council

Ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents: the MWS promote a good quality of life for vulnerable residents, assisting directly in supporting independent living, addressing social isolation and loneliness and a

wrap around service, connecting residents to other sources of help and advice within the community.

Appendices

None

Report Author:

Lesley McFarlane. Development Officer, Health Specialist
Telephone: (01954) 713443