

APPENDIX 1

Minutes from the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel – 11 June 2019 Appointeeship Charging Item

The Director of Adults Services introduced a report on Appointeeship charging. He explained that the item was being considered as pre-decision scrutiny as the report had not yet been received by the Cabinet. The financial challenges in Local Government had meant Officers had been tasked to review non-statutory services, to find ways to generate new income or to stop providing the service all together. Appointeeship was one of the areas identified which the Cabinet had agreed, the Council should explore the prospect of introducing a charge for providing the service. He was acutely aware that the issue would be contentious and that it would affect vulnerable people throughout the City. Members of his team over the last few months had been gathering information on how other Local Authorities managed the Appointeeship service, including the charging rates.

The Head of Community Financial Support stated that the Appointeeship service was offered to people in receipt of social security benefits who were unable to manage their own finances and had not got support from family and friends to appropriately manage their financial affairs. The proposals had the aim of the Appointeeship service working towards becoming a self-financing administrative system. There were a number of reasons that people would be referred under the Care Act Assessment 2014 for the Appointeeship service. An area of growing concern was from people suffering financial abuse from family or friends. Sometimes the family member or friend who had been given Appointeeship status, had been forced to relinquish the Appointeeship status when they had abused their position.

The Head of Community Financial Support commented that the Appointeeship service offered by the Council provided financial sustainability to the users of the service by maximising benefit claims, providing relevant information to the benefit authorities, paying bills, managing outgoings and budgeting for unforeseen expenditure. Some people had quite substantial savings, an important part of the service was to maximise expenditure appropriately to ensure a greater quality of life and independence. If a person died when the Council was providing an Appointeeship service, the Council were required to find the next of kin and relatives to dispense with the person's estate, sometimes these could be the very people who had abused the person financially, which had led to the original Appointeeship.

The Head of Community Financial Support stated that the proposal was to introduce an Appointeeship charge for individuals who had a balance of more than £1,000 in their account following the deduction of their usual monthly expenditure. The charge would be £5.00 per week for a person living in the community and £3.00 per week for a person living in a care home. The rate was less for a person living in a care home because the administrative processes were simpler. There were currently approximately 200 people in the community who had an Appointeeship with the Council and approximately 300 people in care homes. Out of the 500 people there

were currently 27 people who had savings of less than £1,000 and therefore wouldn't be impacted by the proposals. She felt it was an important service to maintain inhouse. Some Councils did contract out the service, which ultimately could cost individuals considerably more than the proposed levels within the report. Some Councils had contracted out the service and had then decided to bring it back inhouse. It was also true that some Councils did not charge for the service currently, but many others did, some of which were at higher rates than those contained in the proposals. She felt the charges proposed were fair and reasonable and would help the Appointeeship service to become financially self-sustaining in the future.

A Member of the Panel asked about the arrangements for neighbouring Local Authorities, Dudley and Sandwell. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that she believed one authority offered the service free of charge currently and the other contracted out the service. She endeavoured to clarify the exact arrangements for each authority for him.

A Member of the Panel asked for more details about how the Appointeeship service managed people's money in practice. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that an income and expenditure statement was undertaken. A pre-paid card was then issued to them, with an appropriate amount of benefit money available to spend on the card for a given length of time. Not all of the benefit money would be on the card as some was used to pay bills such as utility bills. The card acted like a bank card meaning that the individual could use the card to purchase items at shops and to draw out money from cash machines. All individuals in the Appointeeship had the support of a key worker or a social worker. If there was unforeseen additional expenditure, such as a special birthday, the social worker could contact the Appointeeship service and ask for extra money to be placed on the card.

A Member of the Panel asked how the proposed Appointeeship charge would be reviewed in the future. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that there would be a review in twelve months' time if the proposals were supported by Cabinet. There was a yearly review of all fees and charges and so it would fall within the remit for that review in the future. The Council were not able to profit from delivering the Appointeeship service.

A Member of the Panel expressed support for delivering the Appointeeship service inhouse and believed introducing a charge for the service was the correct approach in order for the service to continue. She believed there were benefits delivering the service inhouse because the people would already be known by the Council's Social Services department.

A Member of the Panel commented that whilst the proposed charges would make many people feel uncomfortable, she believed it was the correct approach. She believed the Appointeeship service could be a great relief to the relatives of vulnerable people who were no longer able to effectively manage their finances. An Appointeeship could lift a heavy burden from relatives having to spend considerable time trying to manage a vulnerable person's finances and would reduce the risk of their money being abused. She believed the service was a good news story and that the Council should consider promoting and brokering the Service. Another Member

of the Panel expressed support for this idea. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that it was worth considering and would form part of the Impact review after twelve months, it was however important to remember that the Council could not make an overall profit from the Appointeeship Service.