

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Executive Summary

The following questions have been received from Members of Public. The individuals who raised the questions have been invited to attend the meeting. The relevant Portfolio Holder will be asked to provide a formal response.

Question 1 – Nikki Roberts on behalf of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

“Many of the proposed service cuts or reductions will have an impact on Disabled People. These proposals will disproportionately affect this population.

Please confirm if Woking Borough Council have asked central government to make up the financial shortfall that disabled people will face by the proposed Woking Borough Council service cuts?

If not, how can we be assured that Disabled People living in Woking won't have to pay the additional costs they potentially face? Surrey Coalition of Disabled People are happy to collaborate with Woking Borough Council to discuss solutions to ensure that Disabled People aren't disproportionately affected.”

Supporting Statement

“Disabled People in Woking will be disproportionately affected by the potential threat of closure or changes to the following services:

- community transport scheme
- community centres and pavilions
- swimming pool
- citizen's advice

Without the community transport scheme which offers a reduced rate of travel, the independence of Disabled People will be significantly reduced as the cost of taxis, in particular wheelchair accessible taxis, are unaffordable for some.

The community centres, pavilions and swimming pool are a lifeline to some, providing social contact and keeping people mobile.

Without citizen's advice, Disabled People will not be able to access support with completing forms such as PIP. Being unable to access benefits, will have a detrimental impact on finances and wellbeing.

It's well known that life costs more for disabled people. Disabled households with at least 1 disabled adult or child, face extra costs of £975 - £1122 a month on average. (Source Extra Costs | Disability charity Scope UK) The disability pay gap is 13.8% and has been fairly consistent for a long time Disability pay gaps in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) with only 7% of disabled workers earning over £30,000 in 2022 compared to 54% of non-disabled workers.

Our Cost-of-Living report published last year showed the disproportionate effect that it is having on Disabled People. 76% of Disabled People surveyed didn't turn on their heating last year as they couldn't afford to and 45% went without food. <https://surreycoalition.org.uk/cost-of-living-crisis/>"

Question 2 – Nikki Roberts on behalf of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People

"Following the publication of the Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), will Woking Borough Council be fulfilling its duty under the Care Act 2014 if the proposals are approved?"

The Care Act 2014 states people are entitled to:

1. receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs
2. can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support
3. have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from."

Supporting Statement

"Community Transport

The mitigation in the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) only cites hospital visits and negates to include GP appointments, mental health support, or community/social activities.

The additional cost and difficulty in sourcing wheelchair accessible transport has not been considered. Of those (over 2,000) people who needed extra support to use the transport, there will not be a service to help them. Additionally, will the current community transport users meet the criteria for hospital transport?

Removing the transport (approx. £42 per person per year) will cost more in the longer term. For example, missed medical appointments, reduced footfall in the town centre.

By removing community transport with no direct replacement the council are in jeopardy of not fulfilling their duties under the Care Act 2014.

Citizen's Advice

The EIA states that 63% of Citizen Advice clients are disabled or have a long-term health condition. Disabled people can not access the information and advice they need to make good decisions about their care as outlined in the Care Act.

The mitigation covers a provision for debt advice but there are other reasons people contact Citizen Advice. For example, housing.

Pool in the Park

Pool in the Park is increasing costs as well as reducing the length of the Disabled Swimming Session will be reduced by 33%.

Many of the mitigations suggest the voluntary sector will provide additional support with less money. This will not be possible particularly as it's proposed the community grants programme is withdrawn in Woking."

Questions from Members of Public

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Date Published: 31 January 2024