
Report to
Cabinet Member (Community Services)

14 March 2006

Report of
Director of Community Services

Title
Brandon Wood Farm

1 Purpose of the Report

The Director of Community Services is tabling this report at the Cabinet Member Meeting in response to the paper presented by Scrutiny Board 2.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member (Community Services) affirms her policy of creating more opportunities for adults with Learning Disabilities and asks her officers to continue to work with Henley College to create an educational establishment with guaranteed places for adults with Learning Disabilities at Brandon Wood Farm.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member (Community Services), in recognition of the concerns expressed by Carers of those service users who currently access day care services at Brandon Wood, requests that the Director of Community Services should ensure that all the reviews for service users should take place with their carers over the next 3 months and the outcomes reported back to the Cabinet Member (Community Services) in the new Municipal Year.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 Scrutiny Board 2 considered a number of representations at their meeting on March 2nd 2006. The majority of the comments came from carers who thought that the people for whom they cared would lose services at Brandon Wood Farm as a result of changes upon which the Council had agreed last year.
- 3.2 The concerns and suggestions were in four main areas:
- How the future care needs of adults with Learning Disabilities who would not benefit from the educational opportunities that would be available at Brandon Wood Farm would be met?
 - How carers could be re-assured that those for whom they cared would get the same amount of day care support?
 - How was the transition of these changes being managed to limit disappointment and challenging behaviour?
 - Were there any opportunities for any of these people to still be part of the farm – either through a separate day care service or through paid employment in looking after the running of the farm?

3.3 The partnership between the Council and Henley College has flourished over recent years. At present at Brandon Wood Farm a combination of courses are run by Adult Education, Henley College and the City Council. These run alongside a day care programme. These include the following programmes:

- Horticulture, Environment and Woodwork
- Horticulture (alone)
- Drama and Creative Art
- Communication Skills
- Travel training
- Small animal care
- Catering

It is clear that all these programmes will continue to be run by Henley College in the future. Historically the training programme has been developed to match with the needs and interests of the service users, and this will continue. These courses will be provided in the new arrangement and Henley College will be investing in the farm by providing an I.T suite and also refurbishing the catering facilities. All current service users who attend Brandon Wood receive 3 days equivalent from these training programmes and this will continue. We anticipate that the current service users will still be able to access these training courses for up to 3 days a week, although this is subject to them meeting criteria to go on the programme which operates mostly at a pre-NVQ level one standard but does prepare some people to move on to NVQ1. The care staff who support the users in the training activities will still be working to support them. There are a small number of current service users who we consider are ready to move on from Brandon Wood into employment or other similar activity, we are putting a renewed energy and resources into helping those who are "work-ready" to move on.

3.4 There are currently 33 service users who attend the Farm for 4 or 5 days a week. The Education and Training Programme will provide a service for up to 3 days a week. The concerns for users and carers is how are we going to deliver services for the remaining days. Each of these service users and their carers will receive an assessment to look at how those days may be best used. There are a number of options:

- There are currently 86 day vacancies in the other day care services that we provide. This capacity could potentially cope with the maximum of 66 day vacancies that would be required if all 33 service users from Brandon Wood took up those places.
- We have been exploring how to get additional finances for some service users through the Independent Living Fund, which will fund personal activities that promote independence. Staff at Brandon Wood Farm have been working with service users to complete a "listen to me booklet" to explore their preferences for activity and their interests. Each situation could be tailor made to the individual if the money is available.
- A small number of those who have used Brandon Wood have challenging behaviour which has not been actively managed. We will be exploring the possibility engaging some people in short-term behavioural management programmes, for example such as those provided by the PCT's Development Centre.
- We are in discussions with Grapevine about how we can work in partnership on a new project, which is funded by the Department of Health, to provide wider community inclusion opportunities for adults with high support needs.

3.5 The Director of Community Services is concerned about the slow progress that has been made so far in undertaking the reviews of the 33 service users who attend the Farm more than three days a week. In order to establish their future care and support arrangements. He will now instigate a clear programme of reviews over the next three months to ensure arrangements to meet people's care needs are in place. Each service user and their family

carer will be involved in determining their current care needs, how they will be met and will have a written document confirming this. Any service user or carer who does not accept the care plan has recourse to the Complaints Process to seek a review of that plan. This information will be provided with every plan.

- 3.6 The Director of Community Services will continue to have discussions about the way in which the educational programmes are presented and to ensure that there is maximum access to these programmes for the majority of the current users of Brandon Wood Farm. Within these discussions options for the level of care that could be provided at the Farm for any single service user can be considered. The educational programme will also need to be considered for other people who access other day opportunities. This may also increase the spare capacity in other day care schemes.
- 3.7 The Director of Community Services will as part of transition planning for young people leaving school, and the annual review process for all those adults with Learning Disabilities who currently attend day care services who ought to be in employment or employment training opportunities, review the progress being made to achieve this. This will reduce the dependence on day care and enable people to progress through alternative opportunities and ensure a greater flow of people through the different services on offer (care services, day services, educational opportunities and employment).
- 3.8 The Director of Community Services will also ensure that within the next 6 months options for modernising day opportunities for adults with Learning Disabilities are developed and presented to the Cabinet Member (Community Services) with clear proposals for implementation.
- 3.9 It is recognised that all of us can find change difficult. It is also the case that for some people routine is important. But this does not mean that we should stop making changes in order to provide more opportunities for people to live a fuller life. In fact the evidence would point to the fact that changes in environment and in different settings can enable some people to develop in different ways and in ways that particular settings may have not allowed. Adults with Learning Disabilities can adjust their routines to new settings. This will equally apply to the improvements we are making to the housing opportunities for adults with learning disabilities as well as to any changes in Day Opportunities.
- 3.10 The changes that are being proposed at Brandon Wood create a clear opportunity for a significant number of adults with learning disabilities. There are people who are within our current day services that do not have this opportunity now because we have used Brandon Wood in a particular way. In order to give this wider opportunity for some people who may then make more progress we will have to change the arrangements for delivering care to other people whose care needs might mean that they are less able to take up these opportunities. We know that the people who are currently attending Brandon Wood Farm and their family carers really like the environment that the farm offers them. We could carry on providing day care, but if we did this we would be denying others new training opportunities. We would be continuing a view of the world where we put adults with learning disabilities out of sight and not build on opportunities to have integrated provision with the wider community. We are seeking ways to be more inclusive and break down the barriers of the past. We have come along way since people lived their lives in hospital, but we still need to make changes before we create the kind of opportunities to which many people are both entitled and require.
- 3.11 We considered the option of "employment" at the farm and find that there is fairly low level of activity and this is not viable at this stage. One full time member of staff currently manages the care for the animals provided beyond the training activity. We would expect

Henley College as a major employer, themselves, to be considering how they are going to make employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities.

3.12 The Director of Community Services will report back to the cabinet member (Community Services) in the new municipal year on the outcome of these actions.

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper	Location
None	