

Comments on Item 5 of Agenda: Housing related support services

Re. Housing Related Support - Jimmy's Assessment Centre

I write to express my deep concern as the local member about the cuts imposed on Jimmy's Assessment Centre for the last 18 months of the current (proposed extended) contract.

I realise that further decisions have been postponed by County to provide time for the reconfiguration of services, which is helpful, but Jimmy's will continue to have services to provide in the interim. I object to the cuts imposed on a contract for services that are continuing.

I have three grounds for my concern:

1. Lack of transparency

It was acknowledged at the county briefing session on 26th February that the approach and management of the HRS review was unhelpful, in particular the lack of transparency resulting in proposed cuts hitting the local press when members knew nothing about them even in their local areas. Nor had the Adults committee discussed the scope of the review. The longer term aspirations to work with city/district council partners to help with homelessness and secure housing are important (Housing First and Positive Pathways). However, stating that the initial intention to save £1m would be cut down to £683k did not inspire confidence. £683k is a precise figure that suggested that all decisions were already made before anything had been gone to committee let alone been explained to local members or made public.

2. Inadequate local member involvement

I was emailed on 13th May and informed that Jimmy's would get a 10% reduction in its funding for the remainder of its extended contract. Yet this must have been negotiated over several weeks/months with no confidential briefing to me as the local member. I attend meetings with Jimmy's from time to time and so do our three Petersfield city councillors. None of us knew anything about the proposed cuts, suggesting a secretive process .

The response to my email response expressing concern about Jimmy's cuts was that county has been:

"reviewing high value contracts to identify savings. As part of these savings proposals, we spoke to Jimmy's Assessment Centre about reducing the contract value by £50k. They responded with a proposal to reduce by £40k instead. This reduction would be applied for the remainder of any contract period if this proposal is agreed at the next committee".

3. Impact on Jimmy's services

There is no indication in the quote above that the contract will be changed; simply that Jimmy's is required to make a 10% saving in work with some of their most vulnerable clients.

Moreover, if the new county approach of Housing First and Positive Pathways is being developed presumably Jimmy's will be required to work with County to develop this. So as well as continuing with the current contract they will need to dedicate extra resources to assist County in reshaping services.

The comments from officers seem to suggest that an amicable arrangement was reached about the cut. Officers stated that *'this has come from direct discussions with Jimmy's. Following dialogue with Jimmy's around reducing their contract of £441k per annum, Jimmy's produced a proposal to provide a saving of £40k, and it is this is the saving that is being proposed to Adults Committee'*. However, since it was County that approached Jimmy's requiring them to make cuts it hardly seems like a dialogue: more a last ditch attempt by Jimmy's to avoid 12% cuts.

Request

For all these reasons I ask the committee to reject the cuts to Jimmy's services. If County wishes to involve local organisations that receive housing related support in reshaping and refocusing services then County should be providing extra resources to enable their involvement. They are, after all, the organisations and agencies on the ground that deal with the everyday reality of work in this area.

Linda Jones
Member for Petersfield division