

## WIDEMARSH WORKSHOP - UPDATE

**Report By: Head of Adult Social Care – Learning Disabilities**

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

1. To update the Committee on progress in respect of Widemarsh Workshop following the Cabinet decision on 22nd March 2007.

### Background

2. On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2007 Cabinet approved the establishment of a Children's Centre on the site of Widemarsh workshops by converting the current building, and relocating the present services to leased properties.
3. Cabinet had previously agreed and endorsed the need to modernise the Council's services to people with learning disabilities based on the principles of inclusion; this includes promoting employment as a viable option.
4. Widemarsh workshop was established in the early 1980s to provide employment training for people with disabilities. At the time it was an innovative service which provided work style opportunities in a segregated environment. Whilst it was set up to provide employment training few people have successfully move on into employment.
5. The service currently supports 77 people, with an average attendance of 43 people. Over recent years, fewer service users have been opting to attend due to other opportunities becoming available to them.
6. Children and Young Peoples Directorate will manage the site and provide an opportunity for people with learning disabilities to be integrated into the community facility. A community café and garden maintenance service will run by people with learning disability and provide opportunities for paid employment.
7. Two further social enterprises will be developed on the Foley Industrial Estate – a franchise for packing and distribution and a pews reclamation scheme, PACK-IT. PACT-IT is well established social firm in Cardiff and is supporting Herefordshire with a detailed business plan. PACT-IT was recommended to Herefordshire following an independent feasibility study.

8. The Diocese of Hereford identified the potential for a pews reclamation scheme and is keen to work in partnership to develop opportunities for disabled people.

### **Progress**

9. Negotiations are now complete for premises at Foley Industrial Estate, and the terms of a rental agreement are being finalised, anticipated date for this is 01.12.07. Refurbishment works need to be carried out, as anticipated, and this work will be complete mid March.
10. Work is anticipated to start on the premises at Wide marsh Workshop mid March, and is due to be completed in August 08.
11. Those service users who will be based at Widemarsh running the café will temporarily move to Hinton Community centre, to run the café there, while the refurbishments are carried out.
12. The other group who will remain on the site are the garden maintenance group. These service users will continue to work on site with staff support and be self-sufficient in the garden area/ garden room, which a separate structure to the main is building.
13. Work is underway with service users at Widemarsh Workshops to support people through the move and the changes. Individual mapping work is being carried out with linkworkers and person centred planners, with a minimum of weekly meetings with service users. A visual timeline is displayed in the centre with a question and answers board.
14. Recent communication with families has taken place with representatives from the Friends of Widemarsh and also via letters, information flyers and articles in local newsletters. A wider meeting took place 26.11.07, open to all parent carers. Representatives from the wider council and property dept and the learning disability team, were present to keep people informed. This meeting was positively received by parents and carers.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the progress report be noted subject to any Comments the Committee wishes to make.**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS.**

- Report to Cabinet 22 March 2007– Widemarsh/Children's Centre Proposal