

FINANCE COMMITTEE

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND AGEING POPULATION INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

What is your view of the effects of demographic change and an ageing population on sustainability of funding for health and social care; housing services; and public pensions and labour force?

1. It is anticipated that the projected demographic change and ageing population would have a major impact on each of the issues outlined above – and, if left unaddressed would be unsustainable in the medium to long term. Specific areas of concern include the increasing prevalence of Dementia.

What planning is being done or should be done to address this?

2. The 10-year Joint Commissioning Strategy is being undertaken by all NHS boards in partnership with local authorities across Scotland.

What weight should be given during the annual budget process to demographic trends and projections?

3. This is not something we would be able to answer – although it would seem necessary that a long term view will need to be taken rather than on an annual basis. The planning of budgets would need to be based on changing patterns of need and demand for services.

What data is collected with respect to: health and social care; housing services; and public pensions and labour force?

4. A wide range of health and social care data is collected and submitted to the SG including delayed discharge times, home care, care homes, and housing performance information.

To what extent are preventative policies such as the change fund key to addressing demographic pressures on the provision of health and social care?

5. We understand the Change Fund as a ‘bridging’ fund rather than a preventative fund – allowing local partnerships to try new models of care to ameliorate the impact of the changing demographic population. However, a shift to preventative, proactive treatment will be crucial to mitigating the increase in demand that an ageing population could bring.

To what extent are the pressures on health and social care a consequence of an ageing population as opposed to other health challenges such as obesity?

6. The health issues are absolutely cross-cutting and it would be very difficult to disentangle the effects. Prevention and intervention will be crucial to ensuring a healthy and proactive old age for as many people as possible.

What is likely to be the main pressures on both the public and private housing stock arising from demographic change and what action should government and other public bodies be taking now to address this?

7. There will be a higher demand for adaptations and consideration is being given on how to use these in the most efficient way. It is also important to highlight the use of housing options – as some homes may not be suitable or cost effective to adapt. Homes for the 21st Century and Wider Planning for an Ageing Population outline the main challenges facing housing for an ageing population.

What adaptations will be required to the existing housing stock to provide long-term care and to what extent should the design take into account the possibility that the home may be used for care purposes in the future?

8. Planning already conforms to a 'life-time' homes standard and it is already common practise for new homes to conform to this in the social rented sector. Perhaps more emphasis is required to compel private development to also conform.

What is the likely impact on the public finances within Scotland of demographic change on public sector pension schemes and what action is required by the SG and other public bodies to address this?

9. Not able to answer this question.

What should be the balance within public policy of support for older people who wish to remain in employment versus creating opportunities for youth employment?

10. The operation of the labour market should be kept as flexible and open as possible, as this provides the best operating environment for businesses in terms of remaining competitive, often in industries and markets that are international and mobile in nature. From this perspective, it would be undesirable to see compulsory measures introduced that tipped the labour market in any particular direction, such as encouraging older workers to retire earlier, in an attempt to open up more opportunities for the young.

11. It would also appear that there is a possible public policy mis-match where the current economic circumstances are depressing overall demand for labour (and in South Ayrshire, reducing it), especially younger less experienced labour, yet the level of support being provided to assist the young to gain skills/experience and compete in the labour market is being reduced, probably as part of the public-sector spending cuts.