

MINUTES of the meeting of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Wednesday 25 March 2009 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor PA Andrews (Chairman)
Councillor WLS Bowen (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: ME Cooper, H Davies, MJ Fishley, AE Gray, KG Grumbley,
MD Lloyd-Hayes, JE Pemberton and RV Stockton

In attendance: Councillors P J Edwards

98. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor B Durkin. Councillor JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member, Environment & Strategic Housing) also submitted his apologies.

99. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

101. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That subject to the alteration of Minute No. 90 to read *The Head of Strategic Housing reported that there were in the region of 28 Registered Social Landlords in the County*, the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

102. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

Mr P Bladon raised concerns over the consultation process associated with the closure of the Widemarsh workshops and the usage of Widemarsh Common. It was agreed that he would meet the Chairman and Cabinet Member (Social Care, Adults) at a later date to discuss the matter further.

103. ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES AND STRATEGIC HOUSING PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee received a report on the Adult Social Services and Strategic Housing Performance Monitoring to 31 March 2009.

The Director of Integrated Commissioning reported that the format of the report had been altered in order to help make interpretation easier. The priority indicators that described the core business of the Department were each presented as a 'report card', telling the story of the trend in performance over the year and provided a comparison with other local authorities.

The Performance Manager commented in more detail on the revised format. He reported that the format allowed the Committee to consider the trend of PI C31 through the whole year, for example, and provided a running comparison against the previous year. A range of data from

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different sources was also included, as well as a direction of travel indicator. A Performance Indicator Review meeting was held monthly in order to consider key actions to improve service delivery.

In the course of the ensuing discussion, the following issues were addressed:

- In response to a request it was agreed that the names of the managers responsible for the PI areas would be included in future.
- It was confirmed that there would be real improvement by year-end for PI C32/NI 136 (People helped to live at home), as a number of clients had historically not been recorded on the current client monitoring system, Clix, and were now being manually entered into the new one, Frameworki. No clients would be missed, and 365 were already receiving services.
- In reply to concerns from a Member over complaints received regarding the direct payments system, PI C51, it was noted that there was now a strong permanent team in place, and the Department was now relying on its own resources rather than on managers on interim contracts. Performance would improve as a result.
- Not all data had been migrated from the Clix to the Frameworki system, which had impacted on the February data shown.
- That the indicators B17 (Cost of home care)/B12 (Cost of intensive social care) would not continue to be shown after March 2009 as they were discretionary indicators that were difficult to use in a rural county. The local market would continue to be monitored.

The Chairman stated that in future performance reports would be by exception, allowing greater emphasis on problem areas, for which full details would be provided.

The Director of Integrated Commissioning reported that the Council, in conjunction with Midland Heart, had won a national Health and Social Care award.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

104. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09

The Committee considered the projected outturn as of the end of January 2008-09 for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing.

The Management Accounts Manager reported that the forecast outturn position on Adult Social Care showed a deterioration on the October position of £289k, which had resulted in a revised forecast outturn of an overspend of £566k.

There were a number of factors associated with the overspend position. The most significant one related to the assumption around Continuing Health Care, for which the October position had assumed that the PCT would provide £942k. A review of the cases in question had meant that 7 clients now did not meet the required criteria. There was a high probability that others would be in the same position, so the cost assumption had therefore been reduced to £500k.

The additional significant factor in the increased forecast was an increase in domiciliary care costs of £512k. This had been partly offset by the reductions in residential care, but there was also an emerging under-utilisation in the Rose Gardens block contract. The Council was contractually committed to pay for a fixed level of support, but out of a provision for 20 high care packages there were presently 12 voids. At the same time, the level of spot contracts for domiciliary homecare had increased rather than reduced.

In reply to a question from a Member, the Director of Integrated Commissioning said that that whilst the voids at the Rose Gardens had been reduced, this was an ongoing issue for the

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contract. In relation to Leadon Bank Care Home, Orchard Lane, Ledbury, the Council was working with the provider to ensure that they would improve their Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating the next time they were rated. He added that one of Councils domiciliary care providers had been zero rated by CQC, and clients were not being placed with this company at present. The Council would go back to the company in order to recover costs against the outstanding block contracts. He went on to say that in order to prevent a reoccurrence of this situation, the Council was moving to spot contracts for domiciliary care. There were now only a few long term contracts across the Council and PCT, one of which was with Shaw Healthcare.

The Management Accounts Manager went on to say that the overall forecast outturn for Strategic Housing had improved from the October report, with a decrease in the overspend from £321k to £148k. This was largely due to continued reductions in the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation.

The Head of Strategic Housing reported that the number of families in B&B accommodation had been reduced to zero in January 2009, and had remained at that level. He went on to say that there had been an increasing number of referrals to the Service, especially in the number of teenagers being excluded from home. Mediation interviews were being undertaken in order to help to reduce these occurrences.

In reply to a question from a Member, he said that the Landlord Accreditation Scheme would be launched shortly.

The Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults) said that the Homelessness Team was extremely small and that, considering their workload, they had performed miracles in achieving the results that they had.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recognise the efforts made by the Homelessness Team and recommend that consideration should be given to improving their staffing levels and budgets.

105. HEREFORDSHIRE'S RENT DEPOSIT SCHEME

The Committee noted the report on the Herefordshire Rent Deposit Scheme.

The Head of Strategic Housing reported that the Rent Deposit Scheme was a service designed to prevent homelessness. The Council had a duty under the Housing Act to provide accommodation to households that were deemed to be homeless. The rent deposit scheme allowed people to have access to private rented houses. Whilst the private rental sector had been difficult for the Council to access in the past, landlords had become more flexible in accepting tenants as a result of the economic downturn, allowing greater numbers of people to be housed. The deposit was recycled back into the scheme at the end of the tenancy agreement.

He went on to say that as budgets were extremely tight, and applications were now being looked at on a case by case basis, consideration was being given to a Bond Scheme rather than a deposit scheme. This provided for payment of the deposit and initial one month's rent, as under the rent deposit scheme, but the Council would make a Bond Agreement with the landlord whereby damages could be claimed against the Council should the applicant defaulted on rental payments.

He also commented that the Local Mortgage Rescue Scheme was a preventative measure adopted by the Council that had provided the inspiration for the Government to launch a national scheme. The Scheme had been operating since 2001 and had helped 43 households from losing their homes. The overall budget for the scheme was £3.2m. There were limits on the value of the property that could be helped as the grant element provided

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was, on average, £72k per property. If accepted onto the scheme, households were nominated to Elgar Housing Association to undertake a financial appraisal. Elgar would then buy 100% of the property and lease back a minimum of 25 % to a maximum of 75% of it, depending on what the household could afford.

In the ensuing discussion the following matters were raised:

- That there was at the present time a waiting list for the Mortgage Rescue scheme, and 15 households were expected to receive assistance during 2009/10.
- The Homes and Communities Agency was providing additional mortgage rescue funding through National Government. Funds were being delivered through a select number of agencies and were not providing funds to local authorities to run their own schemes. He believed that the intention was to encourage local authorities to set aside funds locally for such schemes. A bid to the Corporate Programme had been made for 900k to support the scheme.
- Priority was given to those that the Council had a statutory duty to house, but there was a budget of £66k for those who were not priority status. This had been fully spent.

RESOLVED:

THAT;

- (a) **the report be noted;**
and;
- (b) **such a successful scheme should be supported and it therefore be recommended that additional funding should be made available for taking the scheme forward for the purposes of prevention of homelessness.**

106. EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF THE MODERNISATION OF DAY CARE OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

The Committee received the Executive's response to the Scrutiny Review of the Modernisation of Day Care Opportunities.

The Review had been approved by the Committee on 24 July 2008 and had been considered by Cabinet on the 22nd January 2009

The Director of Integrated Commissioning said that the report laid out specific plans to progress the recommendations of the Committee concerning the review of day care, which had been approved by Cabinet. In reply to a question, he said that consultation was ongoing with users of the services.

RESOLVED:

THAT;

- (a) **It was noted that Cabinet was recommending that Norfolk House should be scheduled to close.**
- (b) **The Prevention Services Initiative was supported for a further period to evaluate its impact in terms of helping older people to remain living independently.**
- (c) **It be noted that the mobile day centres for older people at Arkwright Court, Canon Pyon, Dinedor, Longtown and Sellack had been identified for closure and service users would be relocated to another centre to**

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be identified;

and;

- (d) To extend a proportion of current day services for older people provider contracts without variation, for an interim period of 12 months, to take effect from 1 April 2009.

107. PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING OF HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PRIMARY CARE TRUST COMMISSIONING FUNCTIONS

The Committee received an updated report on the proposed restructuring of the Adult Social Care and Primary Care Trust commissioning functions.

The Director of Integrated Commissioning reported that the paper set out the detailed structure of the new Integrated Commissioning Directorate. It was intended that the restructuring would be complete by April 2009.

During the course of the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- As part of the appointments process interim staff were being replaced by permanent members. Staff numbers needed to be at an appropriate level for the commissioning process to be effective.

RESOLVED:

THAT;

- (a) The Committee noted the next steps as set out in Section 4 of the report.
- (b) The Committee notes the appointments process timetable for new Directorate posts.
- and;
- (c) the staff briefing was noted that set out the proposed content and overall structure of the new Integrated Commissioning Directorate, the rationale for the structure, and the formal staff engagement process which be used to appoint staff to the new Directorate.

108. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

It was agreed that the Home Care Services should be added to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the work programme as amended be approved and recommended to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm

CHAIRMAN