

MINUTES of the meeting of Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday, 8th April, 2004 at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs. P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. E.M. Bew, Mrs. A.E. Gray, K.G. Grumbley,
Mrs. J.A. Hyde, R. Mills, Mrs. J.E. Pemberton and P.G. Turpin

In attendance: Councillor Mrs. L.O. Barnett

51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms G.A. Powell.

52. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

54. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27th January, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME

The Committee was informed of amended development priorities for the Supporting People Programme and associated issues.

In January 2004 the Committee had been informed of the Audit Commission's inspection of the Supporting People Programme in Herefordshire. One of the Commission's findings had been that the Council had identified too many priorities for the Programme. The Committee had requested a report on this aspect and user feedback.

The report set out amended development priorities for the Programme, the Programme's financial situation and processes in place to give feedback to service users and service providers.

In presenting the report the Housing Strategy Manager drew attention to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's adoption of the findings of an independent review of the national Programme. One of these findings was that the programme was over-funded due mainly to Local Authorities using the grant to fund non-eligible care services. The review had found that this had happened in only a few authorities, Herefordshire Council not being one of them. However, the ODPM had indicated that all local authorities could expect an adjustment in funding in 2005/2006. This was in addition to the reduction in funding for 2004/2005 of 2.5 % and no uplift for

inflation (a £562,000 reduction for the Council in 2004/2005).

Representations had been made on behalf of the Council but it was estimated that the Council could expect to receive £6.9 million in 2005/2006 against an allocation which might otherwise have been expected to be £7.5 million.

The report explained the basis on which revised aims for the programme had been set, placing them into three categories: High (statutory obligations), Medium (highly desirable ambitions determined locally), and Low (actions which the Council would want to take but might not achieve because of the focus on the higher priorities). Referring again to the uncertainties over the financial position of the programme the Housing Strategy Manager advised that the High and Medium aims could be met, as could the savings targets outlined in the report, and that the Programme was robust.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- The clarity of the report was welcomed.
- In response to a question the Housing Strategy Manager commented that whilst, given the funding constraints, it would not be possible to realise all the objectives the Programme would make a significant contribution, freeing up resources for other services.
- The proposal to deliver a pilot housing related support scheme for people having early signs of dementia or Alzheimer's disease was explained.
- The negotiations taking place with the numerous providers involved regarding the possible capping of hourly rates for housing related support and limiting the amount of care to a maximum of ten hours per person per week and the reasoning behind those discussions were noted. It was acknowledged that some people were currently receiving more than ten hours support. Current levels of support would be maintained until reviews had been completed. At that stage consideration would need to be given by the Supporting People Commissioning Body to how any withdrawal of support should be managed.
- It was confirmed that although there were quite a number of projects in the High Priority category these were capable of being delivered.
- It was noted that some poorly performing or less strategically relevant services would need to be decommissioned more quickly than had been planned and acknowledged that Members needed to be informed when this was to occur.
- It was confirmed that there were robust Service Level Agreements with Aspire and Mencap regarding their provision of services for people with learning disabilities.
- That the Supporting People Commissioning Body was responsible for allocating significant sums of money and there should therefore be some Member involvement in the process. It was suggested that the Chairman of the Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Strategic Housing) should be involved. In response to concerns that it would be inappropriate for the Chairman to participate in decision making in this context the Director advised that the involvement would not include any voting rights. The role in relation to the Commissioning Body would be the same as that carried out by non-executive Primary Care Trust Board Members and non-executive board members of the National Offender Management Service. This

would fulfil the requirements of a Shadow Supporting People Commissioning body.

RESOLVED:

- THAT**
- (a) the amended priorities for the development of Supporting People Grant funded housing related support services, as set out in the report be noted;
 - (b) regular reports noting progress towards the Commissioning Body's delivery of the prioritised schemes be made to the Committee;
- and
- (c) it be requested that the Chairman of the Committee and, subject to her agreement, the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Strategic Housing) be invited to be involved in the considerations of the Supporting People Commissioning Body in a non-executive capacity in the same way as non-executive Primary Care Trust Board Members and non-executive board members of the National Offender Management Service.

56. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HEREFORDSHIRE ADOPTION AND FOSTERING SERVICES - UPDATE

The Committee noted progress on the consultation process and development of the action plan for the Best Value Review of Herefordshire Adoption and Fostering Services.

It was reported that the timetable for the Best Value Review had been modified to take account of the requirement to produce an action plan in response to the inspection of the Fostering Service by the National Care Standards Commission. The inspection report was expected in April and the action plan would then be prepared and discussed with the Best Value Review team.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

57. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PHYSICAL DISABILITY SERVICES - STAGE 1 REPORT

The Committee received a report outlining progress to date on the Best Value Review of Social Care Services for people with a physical disability.

The detailed stage one report had been enclosed separately for Members of the Committee.

In the course of discussion it was requested that a briefing note on transport provision for service users should be circulated.

RESOLVED: That progress to date be noted and a briefing note circulated on transport provision for service users.

58. BUDGET/PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2003/04 - 10 MONTHLY REPORT

The Committee was informed of the position on budget monitoring and performance indicators for Social Care and Strategic Housing for the first ten months of the financial year 2003/2004.

The Head of Business Services reported that, as she had previously advised the Committee, the childrens' agency placement budget was particularly under pressure and since the last report 6 new placements had been necessary. However, if it did not prove possible to balance the Social Care budget she expected that no more than 1% would be carried forward as an overspend.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing commented that the Directorate as a whole had worked hard to balance the budget but reiterated that there had been some adverse effects on services. The approach had, however, helped in presenting the Older Peoples Business case.

The Head of Social Care (Adults) commented that services to older people had perhaps been most affected. There was a need to speed up the modernisation of these services. This would, however, be likely to entail some instability in the short term.

In relation to performance monitoring it was noted that some factors were outside the Council's control. It was also the case that improvement against some indicators was almost wholly dependent on the availability of resources.

RESOLVED: That the budget monitoring and performance monitoring report for the first ten months of the financial year be noted.

59. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered issues for inclusion in its work programme following a scoping day to identify topics for in-depth review in respect of services for older people, childrens services, and Mental Health.

The provision of home care and supported housing for vulnerable people had been identified as preferred areas for review. An aspect of Children's Services had also been identified. However, given the provisions in the Children's Services Bill it was suggested that this work should not proceed at the moment and Members of the Children's Services Task Group invited instead to participate in the work of either of the other Task Groups.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) scoping studies be prepared for the investigations into the provision of home care and supported housing for people with mental health problems and reported back to the Committee for approval;**
 - (b) that the investigation into joint working in delivering Children's services be deferred pending enactment of the Children's Services Bill and receipt of relevant guidance;**

- (c) Members of the Childrens Services Task Group be invited to participate in the work of either of the other Task Groups, and the arrangements for the involvement of the voluntary sector and others be noted;**

and

- (d) the work programme as appended to the report be approved subject to review at the next meeting.**

The meeting ended at 12.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

