

MINUTES of the meeting of Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 4th October, 2004 at 2.00 p.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, J.W. Hope, R. Mills, Ms. G.A. Powell and P.G. Turpin

Voluntary Sector Representatives Ms M James and Mrs B. Millman

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs J.A. Hyde and Mrs J.E. Pemberton.

11. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor J.W. Hope substituted for Mrs J.E. Pemberton

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P.G. Turpin declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 6: Respite Services for People with Learning Disabilities in Herefordshire.

13. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th June, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. SCOPING WORK FOR IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATIONS INTO HOME CARE AND SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

The Committee noted the progress of the exploratory programme for in-depth investigations of home care and supported housing for people with mental health problems and considered the scoping statements for the proposed reviews.

RESOLVED: That the scoping statements for in-depth investigations of Home Care and Supported Housing for People with Mental Health Problems Review Group as appended to the report be endorsed.

15. RESPITE SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN HEREFORDSHIRE

(Councillor P.G. Turpin declared a personal interest)

The Committee received an update on the provision of respite care services for people with a learning disability.

The report noted that in June the Committee had requested a report on respite care provision and that a review, a copy of which was appended to the report, had been

undertaken. The Head of Social Care (Adults) highlighted the review's findings including the options for future respite care and the complications caused by emergency admissions.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- In relation to the cancellation of planned respite care by the Service, the Head of Social Care (Adults) explained that this was attributable to a large extent to the need to accommodate emergency placements. People could then continue to occupy a bed for some considerable time. Reasons for this included lack of funding or lack of an appropriate alternative placement. The Service did contract with the independent sector for some respite care but, in addition to the cost of this care, some needs could not currently be met by local independent sector providers. She also explained that some care was cancelled by families themselves, often at short notice. There were a variety of reasons for this including illness or other family circumstances.
- In response to questions the Head of Social Care (Adults) confirmed that alternatives to respite care were considered and account taken of the cost of the different options.
- It was noted that the funding streams for supporting people to live in their own home were complicated. Some support was eligible for funding from the national Supporting People Programme other support was not. Having identified the appropriate service provision, caution then had to be exercised in identifying the appropriate funding stream.
- That whilst older carers favoured improved traditional residential respite care younger carers were more inclined to consider alternatives. However, funding for alternative options such as Direct Payments would have to be released from elsewhere within the Social Care budget. Additionally, Direct Payments could not be spent on Council provision. Whilst they could be used to purchase independent sector provision, where available, this presented the Council with a financial difficulty in that it still had to meet the fixed operating costs of its in-house residential provision whatever the level of occupancy.
- The report used Luton Social Services as an example of how respite services could be developed, noting the work and resources which had been required to achieve change. It was noted that it had proved difficult to obtain comparative information but Luton had been given as an example because of the large amount of work it had done which was recognised as best practice.

RESOLVED:

- THAT (a) options for future respite be explored further;**
- (b) reasons for emergency admissions be explored further;**
- (c) a new strategy for short breaks be considered and referred to the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Strategic Housing), based on this review and subject to considerations in (a) and (b) above;**
- and**
- (d) feedback on the Review recommendations in the report be brought to the Committee in the New Year following discussions between**

the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing and the
Chairman of the Committee.

**16. INTRODUCING BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS - A NEW POLICY FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE IN HEREFORDSHIRE'S CARE**

The Committee was informed of the recent launch of *Building Healthy Relationships*, Herefordshire's new Sex and Relationships Policy for young people in public care and invited to support the policy and work plan.

The Head of Social Care (Children) presented the report, a copy of which had been circulated separately to Members of the Committee, and confirmed it had been prepared by a multi-agency Group and there had been full collaboration with the Education Directorate.

RESOLVED: That the policy *Building Healthy Sexual Relationships*, and the plan of work in hand to ensure its implementation, be noted and supported.

17. BEST VALUE REVIEWS UPDATE

The Committee was informed of progress with the Best Value Reviews currently being undertaken by the Directorate.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

18. INSPECTION OF HEREFORDSHIRE FOSTERING SERVICE

The Committee was informed of the outcome of an inspection of the Herefordshire Council's Fostering Service by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the key features for action in response to the inspection report.

The report set out the background to the inspection, summarised the outcome and the action being taken in response to the findings.

The Head of Social Care (Children) reported that the final report had not yet been formally published. However, the report in the agenda papers did accurately reflect its findings.

The Children's Services Manager highlighted that the Inspection had been positive and concluded that Herefordshire Fostering Service was effectively managed and staffed by well-qualified and experienced social workers.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing noted that this was the first Regulatory Inspection the Commission had undertaken of the Fostering Service in Herefordshire. The focus of inspections of this type was on whether a service was fit for purpose. The inspection had found that the Fostering Service was fit for purpose.

In discussion it was noted that compared with its comparator group of authorities the Council provided a high number of foster care households and was one of the best performing services in the Country.

RESOLVED: That the content of the Inspection Report and associated Action Plan in response to statutory requirements and good practice recommendations be noted and staff congratulated on their

success.

19. THE FUTURE SHAPE OF ADOPTION AND FOSTERING SERVICES IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee received an update on the Action Plan resulting from the Best Value Review of Adoption and Fostering Services in Herefordshire.

The report noted that following the Inspection of the Herefordshire Fostering Service and the Annual Report of the Adoption Service it had been possible to consider the future shape of both Services. Issues relating to future development were set out and the scope for working with other agencies to commission services collaboratively was outlined.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted and the overall approach of enhancing the quality of existing directly provided services, whilst considering opportunities for collaborative commissioning to ensure a flexible and creative approach to meeting the needs of looked after children, be endorsed.

20. PERFORMANCE/BUDGET MONITORING 2004 - FIRST QUARTER REPORT 2004/05

The Committee received a report on budget monitoring and the available Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators position and additional information about current performance management issues and initiatives within the Social Care and Housing Directorate.

Particular attention was focused on the social care revenue budget. It was noted that the projection was an overspend of £700,000 with an underlying trend for an over-commitment of £1 million which was neither acceptable nor sustainable. The situation was considered particularly serious because it was the first time that difficulties had become apparent after the first quarter of the financial year. The pressures were a result of increasing demand for services and the increasing cost of providing services. The high cost of residential placements was one of several areas of concern.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing advised that a further detailed examination of the budget was to be undertaken. In the meantime management action was already being taken. The next monitoring report should show whether this was being effective. She reminded the Committee that the action would necessarily have an adverse impact on service delivery and this too would need to be reported.

In response to a question the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing acknowledged the challenge of providing the option of Direct Payments and reiterated the financial constraints facing the Council in offering that option. Work was being carried out on costs and if there was more demand by users for this option the Council would have to consider how it could provide it. However, at the moment requests were limited.

It was noted that whilst the strategic housing budget was projected to break-even, after incorporating the 2003/2004 underspend, there was a potential risk that additional expenditure may be incurred on homelessness.

RESOLVED:

THAT (a) the report on performance and budget monitoring be noted with concern being registered about the position on the Social Care revenue budget and a more detailed monitoring report submitted to the next meeting;

and

(b) areas of concern continue to be monitored.

The meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.

CHAIRMAN