

**MINUTES of the meeting of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee held at The Town Hall, Hereford on Friday, 2nd December, 2005 at 10.00 a.m.**

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

Councillors: Mrs. E.M. Bew, K.G. Grumbley, J.W. Hope MBE,  
Ms. G.A. Powell, D.C. Taylor and P.G. Turpin

Mrs B Millman (Voluntary Sector representative)

**In attendance:** Councillors A.C.R. Chappell, T.M. James and R.M. Wilson

**16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors R.B.A. Burke and R.Mills.

**17. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

There were no named substitutes.

**18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor K.G. Grumbley declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 9: Joint Team with the Pension Service and Voluntary Sector. Councillor P.G.Turpin declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7: Learning Disability Services.

**19. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th October, 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions.

**21. PERFORMANCE/BUDGET MONITORING 2005/2006**

The Committee considered a report on current performance and received an update on the budget monitoring position.

The report noted that the performance indicators showed that a number of planned targets would not be reached.

The Director of Adult and Community Services reported that the Commission for Social Care Inspection had recently published its assessment of Adult Social Care services. The Council's assessment had changed from "serving some people well with promising prospects for improvement" to "serving some people well with uncertain prospects for improvement."

The Commission had not yet issued a revised star rating for the Council pending the outcome of the Joint Area Review of Services the Council provided for Children and Young People and the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

He added that budgetary pressures were worsening and making it challenging to meet performance targets.

Areas where performance was not in line with planned targets were set out in an appendix to the report.

The Performance Improvement Manager commented on the position on targets for adult social care. The Head of Strategic Housing Services commented on the position on targets for strategic housing.

The Finance Manager commented on the budget, reporting that there was a risk that the predicted overspend for Social Care for the year might rise from £780,000 to £905,000 and explaining the pressures contributing to this position, as set out in the report. A risk assessment was being undertaken and Service managers were seeking to manage the situation.

The predicted overspend for Strategic Housing for the year was £815,000 but again, for the reasons set out in the report, there was a risk that this might increase, possibly to £925,000.

Work was continuing to assess demand for services as part of the preparation of the 2006/07 budget.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- A question was asked about indicator E50 (the percentage of assessments of adults and older people leading to a service and target D55 (the acceptable waiting time for assessments). It was suggested that the number of assessments which did not result in a service being provided implied an inefficient use of resources and it was asked whether there were any screening measures in place to minimise the number of such assessments.

The Head of Social Care (Adults) replied that the Social Services Inspectorate had said that the Council was undertaking too many assessments and in doing so raising false expectations. Customer Services Officers were now expected to screen out those who were clearly ineligible to receive services. It was, however, an important area to keep under review. She added that further checks needed to be made with other authorities to ensure that the Council was using the same baselines in assessing performance against target D55.

- It was suggested that it was not credible that the indicator for the number of people sleeping rough showed no people to be doing so. The Head of Strategic Housing replied that the audit had been conducted correctly in accordance with statutory Government guidance which required a count to be taken on one night. He acknowledged that the outcome, whilst on the face of it positive, needed to be treated with caution.
- It was proposed more should be done to draw on local knowledge, in assessing homelessness noting that each of the Market Towns had a Homelessness Group and that Ward Members had access to a number of local networks.

- The Cabinet Member (Social Care, Adults and Health) commented on the budgetary pressures and reaffirmed the efforts being made both to manage the current position and to address the position for the future.

**RESOLVED:**

**That (a) the report on performance and the budget be noted;**

**(b) areas of concern continue to be monitored;**

**and**

**(c) consideration be given to the scope for drawing on local knowledge to inform the assessment of and approach to homelessness.**

**22. LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES**

*(Councillor P.G. Turpin declared a personal interest in this item)*

The Committee considered issues relating to the future delivery of the service and the need for change.

The Head of Social Care (Adults) circulated two papers, one describing the developing approach to the provision of services for those with a learning disability, the other containing key facts about learning disability services in Herefordshire.

She highlighted the themes of the “Valuing People” White Paper of 2001, the report “Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People 2005 and the “Independence, Wellbeing and Choice” Green Paper of 2005 which underpinned the drive for inclusion. She explained the significant changes in approach which had taken place moving from providing hospital care, to providing care in care homes, to the current aim of enabling people to take their rightful place in society and lead more fulfilled and valued lives.

She noted that the “Independence, Wellbeing and Choice” Green paper represented a transformation, aiming to give people more choice, higher quality support and more control over their lives. This had significant implications for way in which local authorities planned services.

Local authorities as a whole faced unprecedented financial pressures, driven by demographic changes, increased demand for services and rising expectations, costs of services rising faster than inflation and threats to existing funding because of changes in investment plans by Government departments and the pattern of NHS expenditure. Whilst local authorities could make efficiencies in planning, commissioning and procurement these would not be sufficient to offset the cost pressures.

She commented on the measures proposed by the Association of Directors of Social Services to address these issues as set out its report to the Government: “Pressures on Learning Disabilities Services October 2005.

In reviewing the planning of services locally in response to this agenda for change she suggested that Members might focus on three project areas:

- Improving assessment and care management, looking at Person-centred

planning and resource allocation

- Planning accommodation and care, reviewing the model of service;
- Increased day opportunities, reviewing current provision.

The Committee discussed the potential benefits of change and the scope for innovation, whilst noting the implications for existing service delivery patterns.

The Committee agreed that reviewing the delivery of learning disability services should form part of its work programme focusing on the three areas of assessment and care management, accommodation and care, and day opportunities. The work would be scoped and progress reported to the next meeting.

### **23.    HOMELESSNESS CONSULTATION EVENT - OUTCOME**

The Committee considered the outcome of a homeless consultation event it had commissioned, involving representatives from relevant agencies across the County, held in October 2005.

The Head of Strategic Housing reported that the three main causes of homelessness in Herefordshire were parental eviction, domestic violence and the loss of assured short hold tenancies. He commented on the points which had arisen during discussion of these issues at the consultation event and the recommendations, as set out in the report, containing proposals for taking matters forward.

It was noted that work was underway to bring the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service, currently carried out by Herefordshire Housing back in-house. The Committee was informed that the ODPM handbook proposed a more robust approach to homelessness. As an in-house service the Council would be better placed to ensure this approach was adopted. However, it had to be recognised that this could lead to more high profile homelessness cases and appeals.

It was proposed that the Councillors K.G. Grumbley, and Ms G. Powell and Reverend Towner should be invited to serve on the Homelessness and Housing Advice Steering Group it was proposed to form.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) be advised that:**

- (a) the establishment of a Homelessness & Housing Advice Steering Group comprising officers and key stakeholders would assist in the monitoring and development of prevention-focussed Homelessness & Housing Advice Services in Herefordshire and it is recommended that Councillors K.G. Grumbley, and Ms G. Powell and Reverend Towner should be invited to serve on it;**
- (b) the Committee should be kept informed of progress on developments in homelessness prevention services and the work of the Homelessness & Housing Advice Steering Group after services are transferred back in-house**
- (c) the Council should continue to develop a preventative and reconciliatory approach to homelessness in partnership with other agencies;**
- (d) agencies should be encouraged to continue to work together to share**

- information and develop an 'early warning' approach to homelessness;
- (e) mediation and sanctuary options should be considered with young people and victims of domestic violence whenever appropriate;
- (f) agencies should be encouraged to work closely with schools to prevent youth homelessness;
- and
- (g) further work should be undertaken to develop further potential in the private sector housing market.

**24.        JOINT TEAM WITH THE PENSION SERVICE AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

*(Councillor K.G. Grumbley declared a personal interest in this item.)*

The Committee considered progress in the development of a Joint Team with the Pension Service and Voluntary Sector to provide an integrated service for older people.

Some concerns had been expressed about this development at the Committee's meeting in October. The report set out the background to the development, the benefits it was considered joint teams could deliver and progress to date. Further information on the background to the development was contained in the report made to Cabinet in July, which was appended to the report.

It was asked whether sufficient consideration had been given to the potential role of the voluntary sector and whether it could carry out the work rather than the Joint Team, what the costs of the proposal were, which age group the Joint Team would provide services to, how the Joint Team would operate and whether it represented value for money.

The Head of Social Care (Adults) replied that the development was consistent with the principles established following the Council's review of Council support to the Community and Voluntary Sector. There was a statutory role which the Council had to fulfil in terms of provision of benefits and a separate role for the voluntary sector in providing advice. Whilst the intention was to move to a single management structure and budget for the Joint Team this was not in place at the moment. Council staff could, however, be accommodated at no cost in the Department of Work and Pension's (DWP) offices. The DWP provided services to those under 65 years old whereas Council officers provided services for all ages. It was possible therefore that there might be an additional role for the Voluntary Sector for those over 65 years old.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**