

MINUTES of the meeting of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 2nd October, 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors: K.G. Grumbley, J.W. Hope MBE, J.G. Jarvis, R. Preece and Mrs E.A. Taylor

Co-opted Member: Mr R Kelly (Voluntary Sector)

In attendance: Councillors Mrs. L.O. Barnett, W.J.S. Thomas and R.M. Wilson

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors R.Mills, Ms G.A. Powell and P.G. Turpin.

The Chairman welcomed Councillors J.G. Jarvis, R. Preece and Mrs E.A. Taylor as new Members of the Committee and Mr R. Kelly to his first meeting as a co-opted Member representing the Voluntary Sector.

22. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24. MINUTES

A Member said that he could recall an exchange at the Committee's meeting on 26th July, 2006 about the availability of exempt Cabinet reports to Members of the Committee and questioned why this was not reflected in the Minutes of that meeting.

The Chairman acknowledged that an exchange had taken place and that it related to the availability of an exempt report to Cabinet on the Adult Social Care budget on 29th June, which she had considered would inform the Committee's debate on the budget and which she considered had not been properly highlighted to Members. However, the exchange itself was not directly relevant to the Committee's consideration of the issue. The draft Minutes sent to her had not included reference to the exchange and she had seen no reason to propose that a reference should be included.

The Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) also agreed that the exchange had taken place and emphasised the importance of the Scrutiny Committees having access to all relevant papers and her view that everything should be done to facilitate this.

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The Committee was advised that the question of Members' access to information including the availability of exempt reports had been discussed by the Constitutional Review Working Group and then by Cabinet in January 2006 with a report then being considered by Council in February. Democratic Services had subsequently distributed papers in accordance with Council's decision.

The Committee was then asked to decide whether it wished to amend the Minutes of 26th July or confirm them as a correct record. It was noted that reference to the exchange about the availability of exempt reports at the July meeting would be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting on 2nd October.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th July, 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions from Members of the Public.

26. BUDGET 2006/07

The Committee considered a report on the revenue budget's financial position for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing as at the end of July 2006 and projections to the end of the financial year.

The Interim Finance Manager presented the report. This noted that the projected overspend on adult social care at the end of July was £3.3 million. This was before any use was made of the social care contingency.

She reported that the risk sharing agreement with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) on spending on Learning Disabilities Services had been suspended and the PCT had agreed that it would fund its share of any overspend. However, variations to government funding for Health Services due to budgetary pressures had resulted in reduction of £205,000 in the Local Delivery Plan. The overspend on Learning Disabilities would therefore increase.

Ongoing pressures on the budgets for older people, physical disabilities and for mental health were also outlined.

In relation to strategic housing she noted that the projected overspend for Strategic Housing was £31,000 against a £2.10 million budget, rather than £2.01m as indicated in the report. Also, the average number of families in temporary accommodation in 2005/06 had been 45 rather than 405 as indicated in the report. Homelessness remained the main reason for the projected overspend. This had, however, reduced by £52,000 since the last report. The use of the homelessness prevention fund had been an important factor in reducing the demand for temporary accommodation.

The report concluded by noting that in adult services there were projected overspends across all service user groups, with the position on Learning Disabilities requiring particularly close monitoring.

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

- A question was asked about progress on the needs analysis assessing future social care needs and the services to meet them for older people and adults with learning disabilities. The Director of Adult and Community Services replied that consideration had been given to a range of service delivery models and a report would shortly go to Cabinet setting out options. An update would be provided to the Committee at its next meeting. The indications to date were that comparator authorities focused more on preventative measures and that this brought them cost benefits. However, given the demographics within Herefordshire additional investment would be needed to change to the pattern of service delivery.
- Clarification was sought on the funding arrangements with the PCT and the respective responsibilities for funding various service areas given the pressure on the PCT to make budget reductions. The Director commented that in the case of the pooled budget for learning disabilities the PCT could no longer provide the resources it had originally allocated. Some £178,000 of development monies was being withdrawn due to the funding of continuing healthcare being outside the pooled budget, placing pressure on that budget. Negotiations were ongoing with the PCT over funding for these cases. The Council recognised the pressure under which the PCT had been placed by the Government's decision to top-slice the budgets of all PCTs to help fund the NHS deficit. However, the Council had to meet its own pressures and negotiations with the PCT over funding were appropriately robust. He added that the last report to Cabinet had shown some reduction in the projected overspend on the adult social care budget. However, the position was now being reversed because of the PCT's predicament.
- A report on residential placements including an explanation of the budget available to support day activities was requested.
- The Committee's attention was drawn to the upheaval in health bodies in Herefordshire noting the departure of the Chief Executives of the PCT and the Hospitals NHS Trust to new posts outside the County and the replacement of the Chairman of the PCT. It was also noted that the difficulties faced by the PCT in responding to the requirement to top-slice its budget were severe in comparison with those PCTs who could readily identify savings as a result of amalgamation following the recent reconfiguration of NHS bodies.
- A question was asked about how the social care contingency fund set aside to fund both adult social care and children's services might be allocated. In reply it was confirmed that no decision had been taken as to how the sum might be divided between the two services and business cases would have to be presented to justify the release of money from the fund.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the projected 2006/07 financial outturn for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing be noted but with continuing concern;**
- and**
- (b) a report be made to the Committee on residential placements including an explanation of the budget available to support day activities.**

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27. ADULT SERVICES AND STRATEGIC HOUSING PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee considered the performance indicators position and performance management initiatives for the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Divisions within the Adult and Community Services Directorate.

In presenting the report particular attention was drawn to the Annual Review Meeting with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). It was noted that a Record of Achievement setting out a balanced and clear view of the Directorate's performance in 2005-06 had been prepared and submitted to the Commission's Business Relationship Manager. This included benchmarking comparisons with the Council's Institute of Public Finance family showing that in many aspects the Council's performance compared favourably and setting out the context within which services in Herefordshire were delivered and the particular issues this raised. It was noted that the Commission would publish its judgement of performance for all Councils in December 2006.

In giving consideration to the detailed performance indicators the following principal points were made:

- Questions were asked about indicator C51 for the number of people helped to live at home per 1000 population aged 18 or over. It was suggested that progress in the second quarter would need to be examined.
- It was suggested that whilst Direct Payments were perceived as a good idea providing service users with choice there were complications and the overriding issue was that people required a good service. Setting a target for the number of people receiving direct payments was not in itself an indicator of a good service. In reply the Director of Adult and Community Services said that there was a national debate over how meaningful some of the existing performance indicators were. CSCI was consulting on a revised inspection framework and how best to capture performance outcomes.
- In relation to target 183a, the average length of stay for families with Children in Bed and Breakfast accommodation it was suggested that the requirement to provide for affordable housing as part of the granting of planning permission for new housing developments was something to which the Council needed to give further consideration.

RESOLVED:

THAT (a) the report on Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing performance be noted;

and

(b) areas of concern continue to be monitored.

28. SCRUTINY OF HOMELESSNESS

The Committee considered an update on homelessness and possible future issues for scrutiny.

The report set out the background to the rise of homelessness as an issue in Herefordshire, reminded Members of the homelessness consultation event, with

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representatives from the Council and a range of relevant agencies across the County, held under the Committee's auspices in October 2005, the Committee's recommendations in response to the event in December 2005 and progress in relation to those recommendations. It also set out at paragraph 27 a number of issues which might need to be kept under review.

The Change Manager - Homelessness presented the report. He remarked on the progress which had been made in tackling homelessness, informing the Committee that the Council's performance in housing prevention was now in the top quartile. The key now was to sustain that performance and continue to manage the issues effectively.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- The work of the homelessness team was praised, recognising in particular the benefits arising from the use of the Homelessness Prevention fund. The Homelessness Manager reported that a key aspect of the fund's success had been that by preventing people being declared homeless it had removed the stigma and changed the focus of the debate. The emphasis now was on rehousing people and this had helped the Council to work more closely with private sector landlords and had improved access to the private rented sector.
- Concern was expressed about the growing level of debt across the County and the potential implications of this for homelessness.
- The work being undertaken in schools to prevent youth homelessness was welcomed. However, it was asked why children in year 10 were being targeted rather than year 11. The Homelessness Manager replied that national research showed that the earlier the engagement with children and families the greater the chances of preventing parental eviction when children reached the school leaving age.
- The Change Manager - Homelessness alerted the Committee to the impact that the work to prevent homelessness was having on the Home Point system and on some other organisations. He advised that this was something which was likely to generate further discussion in future months.
- It was asked whether the Voluntary Sector had been helpful in addressing the issues of homelessness. The Change Manager - Homelessness replied that the Sector had in the main been very helpful. Some concern had been expressed to him about the changes which had been made to the Council's approach to homelessness and the robust stance now being taken. Further feedback from the Voluntary Sector would be welcome.
- It was proposed that a further homelessness event with representatives from the Council and a range of relevant agencies across the County be held on the afternoon of 20th November.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) the updated position be noted;**
- (b) the Committee be kept informed of progress and developments in homelessness prevention and the work of the Homelessness & Housing Advice Steering Group;**

and

- (c) a further homelessness event be arranged on the afternoon of 20th November to review issues identified at paragraph 27 of the report.**

29. EVERY CHILD MATTERS TRANSITION TO ADULT LIFE - SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Committee considered an approach to a short Scrutiny exercise to look at the Council's approach to transition issues for looked after children with support needs from childhood into adult life.

The report noted the consideration given to the Council's scrutiny programme by the Strategic Monitoring Committee, as reported to the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee on 26th July. The area of transition from leaving care to adult life had been identified as an issue on which the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee would lead, working jointly with Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee. A proposed approach to the scrutiny exercise was set out in the report. Nominations were invited to serve on the Review Group.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) the approach to the scrutiny review of the approach to transition issues for looked after children with support needs from childhood into adult life as set out in the report be endorsed;**

and

- (b) Councillors: Mrs P.A. Andrews, J.W.Hope M.B.E and J.G. Jarvis be appointed to serve on the Review Group.**

30. ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

The Committee noted that in its discussions earlier in the meeting it had requested a report on adult placements and identified a date for a further piece of work for homelessness. Both of these items could accordingly be added to the programme for its December meeting.

RESOLVED: that the work programme as amended be approved and reported to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.