

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, 1st October, 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors: H Davies, MJ Fishley, AE Gray, KG Grumbley, G Lucas,
AT Oliver, JE Pemberton, RV Stockton and JK Swinburne

In attendance: Councillors LO Barnett Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health), PJ Edwards and JG Jarvis Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing)

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that three Members of the Committee, Councillors H Davies, AE Gray and AT Oliver had been accidentally omitted from the membership of the Committee listed on the agenda.

Apologies were received from Councillor ME Cooper.

14. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor G Lucas substituted for Councillor ME Cooper.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor AE Gray declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 11: Learning Disability Action Plan.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June, 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions from Members of the Public.

18. PRESENTATION BY CABINET MEMBER (SOCIAL CARE ADULTS AND HEALTH)

The Committee received a presentation from the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health).

A report from the Cabinet Member summarising current issues in strategic housing and adult social care, achievements during the previous year, priorities for the next twelve months, topics where scrutiny could help big decisions likely to go to Cabinet

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in the next few months, key dates and performance was circulated at the meeting.

The Cabinet Member referred Members to her report, commenting briefly upon aspects of it, noting the challenges ahead and expressing the hope that the extra capacity built into the service would help to meet them.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was suggested that the threshold for affordable housing as set out in the Unitary Development Plan needed to be revisited and lowered.
- The cost of provision of care for people with learning disabilities and shortage of housing options was raised. The Head of Adult Social Care – Learning Disabilities reported that negotiations were underway on a contract with an independent sector partner to increase housing options. The financial parameters within which the partnership had to operate were within the current budget for the transferring services.
- Asked about IT provision the Director of Adult and Community Services said that the need to replace the current performance management system had been recognised. The target date was Summer 2008 but there was a lot of work to be done. It was added that the key was to ensure that effective systems and processes were in place to derive the benefit from IT. Work was focusing on assessment and care management processes.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member.

19. PRESENTATION BY REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS

The Committee received a presentation by representatives of the Festival Housing Group (FH): Richard Grounds, Commercial Director and Claire Huyton Executive Director of Festival Housing Ltd.

Copies of the Group's annual report 2006/07 and strategic plan 2007/08 had been supplied and previously circulated for the Committee's reference.

The presentation outlined:

- the formation of the Group
- highlights, including: 8,000 homes in Worcestershire and Herefordshire, over 1,350 homes in Herefordshire, 200 new homes being provided a year, 1,000 people helped into home ownership, an Audit Commission inspection in October 2005 which had given the Group a two star rating as a body providing a 'good' service with 'promising prospects' for improvement, and 500 staff achieving Investors in People and Charter Mark Awards.
- The development of the landmark Rose Garden Extra Care Scheme in Hereford, due for completion in June 2008.
- The approach to rural housing – based on small scale, good design, consultation and a local lettings policy.
- The approach to home ownership, with 1,000 households assisted, a Herefordshire do it yourself shared ownership scheme, shared ownership, mortgage rescue and the Festival property purchase scheme for first time buyers

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and others.

- That 95% of homes currently were classified as decent and the target was to make this 100% by 2010. The planned investment was £12 million per annum.
- Green initiatives.
- The future including looking at sheltered housing, resident expectations and a review of future options.
- The approach to repairs and void properties noting that the Group had its own maintenance company to maintain quality and cost. It was in the top quartile for urgent repairs, had 97% customer satisfaction, and was in the 2nd national quartile for void properties.
- The different housing needs to be met noting the need for more extra care housing, the high demand, except for some sheltered housing, and that where there was underoccupancy there was a need to provide an attractive alternative to encourage people to move. The Group worked closely with the Council on the homelessness issue.
- The Audit Commission Assessment had given the Group a two star rating as a body providing a 'good' service with 'promising prospects' for improvement. It had found access to services was easy and staff were customer focussed, improvements to homes were to a good standard and there was high tenant satisfaction with improvement work, anti-social behaviour was being well managed, vacant properties were repaired promptly and to a good standard, a good record of making service improvements and in increasing tenant satisfaction, and income management was strong and customer focused.
- Awards included: Charter Mark, Quality Housing Services, Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies and a UK Housing Award for the mobile office.
- Developing new ways of involving residents
- Work in neighbourhoods with the police and voluntary sector, including resourcing community initiatives, a grant on one estate achieving a 70% reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- An action plan to improve equality and diversity.
- Initiatives in Herefordshire included: the landmark extra care initiative, pathways into home ownership, close co-operation with Homepoint on choice-based lettings, and progressing new schemes for affordable homes.

In summary it was stated that the Group provided good services – confirmed by the Audit Commission, had a track record in delivery of new homes in Herefordshire, had a leading role in low-cost home ownership initiatives, had local management and neighbourhood initiatives, resident involvement at all levels, supported neighbourhood initiatives, had a track record in partnership working, high customer satisfaction, good services and continuous improvement.

In response to questions the following principal points were made:

- Asked about measures to prevent misuse of properties it was stated that the Group had strengthened its tenancy agreements and also had starter tenancies involving visits and contact with tenants and a review at the end of the first year. The aim was to support tenants and especially young tenants.
- The process for managing tenants who were in arrears was explained. Asked if eviction was pursued FH worked with the Council on the issue it was confirmed that if an application for a warrant for eviction had to be made there was usually a

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gap between the application and an eviction. During this time there was an opportunity for preventative work and Herefordshire Council did try to help to avoid eviction.

- It was asked whether there was any screening of tenants, especially where challenging behaviour was involved. The reply was that in Herefordshire tenants applied through Home Point. The aim was to identify any problems early on and offer a support plan. Abuse of properties was relatively rare.
- The sheltered accommodation at Turner Court Ledbury was discussed. The property consisted of 20 flats, 13 of which were bedsits. However, research had clearly shown that older people wanted 2 bedroom accommodation. A number of improvements were under consideration.
- The shortage of affordable housing was also raised. In reply it was said that lack of funding had at one time been the issue. However, whilst there was now more finance available there was a shortage of land for affordable housing.

The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) reported that consideration was being given to whether suitable sites for affordable housing could be found from within the Council's landholdings.

- A question was asked about underoccupancy. FH said that there were no provisions to compel people to move to smaller properties. The FH approach was to manage these situations sensitively and identify attractive alternatives. However, even though there was an incentive scheme this was a difficult exercise. Work was being done on this issue and reference was made to the Council's Sheltered Housing Review which assessed need.
- Asked about the approach to energy efficiency FH said they considered their approach to be good. They expected to attain a level 3 rating under the Code for Sustainable Homes next year moving up to level 6 by 2016. Energy efficiency work was being carried out but a balance had to be struck against the capital costs, noting that some of the housing stock was 40-50 years old.
- It was noted that one of the priorities was to reduce fuel costs. Those using prepayment meters paid most. FH had joined a fuel club to try to obtain good value fuel. Welfare benefits advice also provided help.
- The potential future accommodation needs of migrant workers and the importance of clear factual information on this issue was noted.

The Chairman thanked the representatives of Festival Housing Ltd.

It was noted that arrangements were being made for the representatives of the other major Registered Social Landlords to attend the next meeting.

20. REVENUE BUDGET 2007/08

The Committee received an update on the projected outturn for 2007/08 for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing.

The Interim Finance Manager presented the report. The projected overspend for 2007/08 on adult social care was £4.02 million representing a 9% overspend. Remedial actions were set out in the report and it was noted that the impact of these measures would be reflected in the next report to the Committee.

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The projected overspend on Strategic Housing was noted as £19,000.

The Director of Adult and Community Services referred to the reasons for the overspend and the strategy to address it that was set out in the report. He emphasised that the matter was being taken very seriously in the knowledge that a continuing overspend could not be sustained by the Council. He commented on the fairer charging policy designed to maximise income; the investment to be made to change service delivery, following the recent work on needs analysis for older people, which would in future provide a service which cost more than it did at present but less than it would have done without change; the investment in Herefordshire Connects; the pressures caused by expensive nursing and residential care packages and the significance of preventative action.

He also informed the Committee that a budget seminar had been scheduled for the afternoon of Wednesday 28th November.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was asked whether the Primary Care Trust was meeting its funding commitments. The Director reported that there were some areas for discussion. The Council was working with the PCT to review a number of cases which may qualify for funding under new Continuing Care guidelines. The current policy on placements under section 117 was also being reviewed. Asked how this latter point was being addressed the Director said that the matter had been raised with the PCT, requesting an urgent review.
- The continuing budget pressure caused by the cost of providing temporary accommodation to support the homelessness service was raised. In reply it was reported that whilst significant progress had been made, reducing the number from 55 families in January 2006 to 4 families now, it was proving hard to meet the target of zero. There were further pressures as a result of prisoners being released early on licence and rising interest rates leading private landlords to sell properties or raise rents.
- The number and cost of nursing and residential packages and the reasons for the additional 16 placements between April and August were discussed. The Director reported that work was underway with the PCT to review the placements and ensure that the Council paid only for assessed need.
- In response to questions about projections for need the Director reiterated that detailed needs analysis for older people and those with learning disabilities had already been undertaken and further work was planned on physical disabilities and mental health. However, there would always be an element of uncertainty over how the strategic findings would translate into individual service user requirements.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the projected outturn for 2007/08 for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing be noted;**
- and**
- (b) that the remedial measures to reduce the overspend as set out in**

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the report be noted and a detailed report on the recovery plan be made to the next meeting.

21. ADULT SOCIAL CARE FAIRER CHARGING

The Committee considered the outcome of the consultation on recommendations on fairer charging for non-residential social services.

The recommendations made by Cabinet had been previously considered by the Committee on 22 June.

The Interim Change Manager presented the report. This noted that by far the most significant concerns had been raised about the proposed increase in day centre fees for £2.90 to £7.30. It had been suggested that this would move people away from Community Care Services leading to a decline in health and increased residential nursing care. As a consequence it was proposed to recommend to Cabinet that the charge be set at £4.

The Committee focused on the increase in day centre fees. It was noted that people attending the day centre had to pay for transport and food in addition to the day centre fee. There was a consensus that a review of provision itself was needed. It was proposed that this particular increase should be held in abeyance pending the Committee's review of the modernisation of day opportunities for older people.

RESOLVED:

That (a) Cabinet be recommended that the proposed increase in day care fees, now recommended at an increase from £2.90 to £4 be held in abeyance pending completion of the Committee's scrutiny review of the modernisation of day opportunities for older people;

and

b) that otherwise the fairer charging proposals be noted and an update be provided to the Committee in six months time on the effects of the their introduction.

22. ADULT SERVICES AND STRATEGIC HOUSING PERFORMANCE MONITORING

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

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

- The Commission of Social Care Inspection (CSCI) judgment and star rating of Social Care performance was discussed. It was noted that although performance against the indicators had generally improved this had to be viewed in the context of improved performance by other authorities against the indicators and this aspect of performance was only one of the factors CSCI took into account in forming its judgment.
- In relation to indicator D41: delayed transfer of care it was asked what the current performance was. In reply it was stated that the statistic was provided by the

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PCT and information was not to hand.

- The extent to which the indicators measured quality of Service was raised. The Improvement Manager commented that the set of national indicators was expected to change, to focus more on outcomes. Consideration was being given to how local indicators might be revised in line with this approach.

RESOLVED: That the reported progress be welcomed whilst recognising that there were some caveats.

23. LEARNING DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

(Councillor AE Gray declared a personal interest in this item.)

The Committee considered a progress report on the implementation of the action plan agreed following the Commission of Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspection of Learning Disability Services.

The inspection report itself and the action plan had been presented to the Committee in June and were available for inspection. A progress report against the action plan that had been presented to CSCI in August was appended to the report.

The Head of Adult Social Care – Learning Disabilities presented the report. She reported that progress was on target against all the actions.

In response to a question it was confirmed that the Council had a contract with an advocacy organisation to deliver the required support to people with a learning disability.

A question was also asked about the resourcing of some of the investment in the service such as the increase in the staffing capacity of the Community Team. The Director of Adult and Community Services replied that the recent needs analysis had recognised the need to invest in this area as an invest to save measure and as such this did not impact on the Directorate's budget position.

RESOLVED: that a further progress report be provided in three months time.

24. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOMELESSNESS

The Committee received a report on the response of the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) to the Committee's recommendations on Homelessness.

The report noted that the Committee had agreed a number of recommendations on homelessness in March 2007. The Head of Strategic Housing presented the report commenting on action being taken in response to each of the recommendations.

It was noted that the recommendation that the youth homelessness prevention programme should be rolled out to all schools had been accepted in principle. However, resources were not available in the budget. Work was continuing with Children's services to attract funding.

RESOLVED: That the response to the recommendations as set out in the report be endorsed subject to restating the Committee's wish that funding should be identified to enable the youth homelessness prevention programme to be rolled out to all

schools.

25. SCRUTINY REVIEW: THE MODERNISATION OF DAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Committee considered a scoping statement for a proposed review of the modernisation of day opportunities for older people.

A draft scoping statement was appended to the report.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the scoping statement for a review of day care as appended to the report be agreed;**
 - (b) the Review Group comprise Councillors WLS Bowen, ME Cooper, MJ Fishley and AT Oliver;**
- and**
- (c) that Councillor WLS Bowen be appointed Chairman of the Review Group.**

26. SCRUTINY REVIEW: HEREFORDSHIRE HOME POINT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Committee considered a scoping statement for a proposed review of the allocation of housing in Herefordshire.

A draft scoping statement was appended to the report.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the scoping statement for a review of the allocation of housing in Herefordshire as appended to the report be agreed;**
 - (b) the Review Group comprise Councillors PA Andrews, H Davies, KG Grumbley and JE Pemberton,**
- and**
- (c) that Councillor PA Andrews be appointed Chairman of the Review Group.**

27. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

Further to discussions earlier in the meeting the following additions were proposed:

- December: Learning Disability Services Action Plan Update, Learning Disability Services –Tender for Support, the replacement of Widemarsh Workshops and presentations by other major Registered Landlords.
- April 2008: An update on the effects of the implementation of the fairer charging

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proposals.

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

The meeting ended at 12.55 p.m.
<LAYOUT_SECTION>

CHAIRMAN