

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 27 July 2009 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor PA Andrews (Chairman)
Councillor AE Gray (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: ME Cooper, MJ Fishley, KG Grumbley, GA Powell and RV Stockton

Co-opted Members Mr B Seamons (LINK)

In attendance: Councillors LO Barnett (Cabinet Member, Social Care Adults), WLS Bowen, PJ Edwards, T M James and Councillor JG Jarvis (Cabinet Member, Environment and Strategic Housing),

120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors H Davies, BA Durkin, MD Lloyd-Hayes, and JE Pemberton.

121. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor JD Woodward substituted for Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes and Councillor PM Morgan for Councillor JE Pemberton.

122. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor AE Gray	11 – update on the contract for learning disability services with Midland Heart	Personal - as a provider of care for people with Learning Difficulties.
Councillor ME Cooper	11 – update on the contract for learning disability services with Midland Heart	Personal – as a Trustee of Elgar Housing Ltd

123. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions for future scrutiny.

125. PRESENTATION BY THE CABINET MEMBER (ENVIRONMENT AND STRATEGIC HOUSING)

The Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) presented his report.

The Cabinet Member took the Committee through his report, and highlighted the following areas in particular:

- That the target for bringing 110 empty properties back into use during the year had been met.
- That the Council's local mortgage rescue scheme had been heralded by central government as a great success, and was recognised as the inspiration or the development of a national scheme.
- A new affordable housing guide for parish councils had been launched in September 2008 and, as a result, planners were being more receptive to the needs of local people.
- A local housing market assessment had been undertaken that had included the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers, which had been assessed as part of the Sub Regional Housing Market Area Partnerships at West Housing Market Area Partnership level. Partnership working had been established in order to assess the needs across the west housing market area.
- The completion of Equality Impact Assessments had led to service developments such as video guides on Home Point for the hard of hearing and foreign language nationals.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

126. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOMES AND COMMUNITIES AGENCY

The Committee received a presentation on the Homes and Communities Agency from Rob Kilby, Investments Manager, West Midlands. The key points from his presentation were:

- That the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) was the national housing and regeneration agency for England, with an annual investment budget of more than £5bn.
- That the Agency was formed in conjunction with the Tenants Services Authority (TSA), the new regulator for affordable housing. Also launched on 1 December 2008, the TSA took over the regulatory powers of the Housing Corporation.
- That a Memorandum of Understanding between the HCA and the TSA set out how the two organisations would work together on areas of common interest. The HCA and TSA had identified building sustainable communities as being top of their joint agendas.
- By engaging local authorities in a 'single conversation' on all aspects of housing and regeneration, the HCA aims to connect local ambition with national targets. The Single Conversation was the HCA's most important business process – it was the way in which delivery at the local level was secured in support of national objectives.

The HCA's priorities for the West Midlands were to:

- Align housing and regeneration resources to support growth, place-making and housing renewal, and to deliver the government's targets for affordable homes.
- Form partnerships and joint ventures to help unlock investment in areas including economic development, transport, education and health, and to create sustainable communities that meet the needs of local people.
- The National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) sought to increase the supply of affordable homes in England. From 2008-11, the HCA would invest £8.4bn in affordable housing through the NAHP. Lead Partners would deliver

155,000 new homes and each year, a proportion of the homes built would be made available for low cost home ownership and social rent.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- That the Agency was guided by the Local Authority as to whether bids for funding met the local housing needs in rural locations, as well as urban ones.
- That the County needed to be more ambitious in making bids for funding, and respond to opportunities as they arose. Housing Association partners were needed who were prepared to build houses and utilise funds.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

127. AFFORDABLE HOUSING – DELIVERY PROGRAMME 2009/2011

The Committee noted a report on the delivery programme for affordable housing from 2009/2011. The Housing Needs and Development Manager reported that there was a shortage of affordable housing in Herefordshire. As at the 1st July 2009 there were 4,863 households on the Home Point waiting list for housing and the Council had been experiencing high levels of demand for homelessness and housing advice services due to associated housing stress.

The Housing Needs and Development Team (HNDDT) were responsible for increasing the supply of affordable housing through a wide range of activities. Located within Strategic Housing Services, the team work alongside the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team, Private Sector Housing and Home point to ensure that the housing needs of vulnerable groups were met. Some of the solutions offered by Strategic Housing ranged from grants to improve properties from small repairs through to adaptations which can help someone remain living independently in their own home. In many instances, therefore, Strategic Housing interventions can resolve housing needs without requiring a person to move home. However, there was an overriding need for more affordable housing within the County.

The priority to deliver affordable housing was reflected within the County's Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council's Corporate Plan and there was an agreed Local Area Agreement (LAA) target to deliver more affordable homes focussed on National Indicator 155 (Number of additional affordable homes acquired and built). The Council had agreed LAA targets under National Indicator 155 with the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM): 200 homes for 2008/9, 220 for 2009/10 and 275 for 2010/11. During 2008/9, 208 affordable homes were built or acquired, of which Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) provided 53% with 47% provided by Private Developers and Low Cost Home Ownership options.

In order to deliver against the agreed LAA Target of 220 houses for 2009/10, a number of approaches were being taken. These included contributions from property developers, in the form of completed units through the planning system. Contributions from Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who provided for 100% affordable housing with grant input primarily from the Homes and Communities Agency and the RSL's own capital reserves. Bringing Empty properties back into use also contributed to meeting the needs of local people, although this could include open market housing in order to ensure that the housing stock was increased, and to address a range of housing needs.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- A Member said that his constituents were desperate for more and improved social housing, and it was important that the public should be informed of the work that was being undertaken.

- That whilst the Council had a small Housing Team, it did recognise the scale of the problems that it faced over the next three years, and was working to address these needs.
- That a survey of land banks in the County had been undertaken, and the results were being analysed. Builders holding significant land banks were not building houses at the moment. The Council was in discussion with land bank holders in order to encourage the building of affordable housing on new developments.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The report be noted.**
- and;**
- b) That a report on the various schemes that the Council ran to alleviate homelessness should be presented to the meeting on 14 December 2009.**

128. SAFEGUARDING BOARD, ADULT SOCIAL CARE - IMPROVMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee received a presentation on the work of the Safeguarding Board from the Interim Head of Safeguarding. She reported that there was an unacceptable level of variation in the thresholds for reporting, the use of safeguarding thresholds, and the proportion of referrals not investigated. Greater continuity was required in all these areas. The recent inspection by CSCI (the Commission for Social Care Inspection) had thrown up further issues that would have to be addressed before the next inspection in April 2010.

In reply to a question from a Member, she said that in order to have a robust safeguarding system, a number of systematic and robust measures would need to be in place. An engagement with Commissioners as to how Safeguarding was undertaken, as well as good relationships with all involved in Housing and Safety in the County were examples of these. All of the findings from councils that performed well in this area had been captured as part of the safeguarding programme.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding went on to say that the Project Plan would be finalised by the end of July 2009, and an Extraordinary meeting of the Safeguarding Board would take place in September. A series of seminars on safeguarding would be run for Members and senior management in October.

The Safeguarding Board in the County was a multiagency board, as it was important to share the same principles across all service providers in the County. and it was seeking to ensure that safeguarding informed commissioning priorities, and that there was a commonality of best practice across the Council and the PCT in order to deliver high quality safer services. At the moment processes were not person centred, and adjustments would allow better delivery of service.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The presentation be noted.**
- and;**

- b) **That a progress report should be presented to the meeting to be held on 14 December 2009.**

129. IMPLEMENTATION OF FRAMEWORKI AND COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report on the progress made in the implementation of Frameworki. The Associate Director, Social Care, reported that the system had replaced the Clix system, which was no longer fit for purpose. Frameworki had gone live in November 2008. There were simple issues with the system that would be rectified, and the next performance indicator report would provide a more positive view.

There was a lack of a finance model, and it was difficult to say how much had been spent or committed. The Abacus finance package work was not entirely complete, but would be in place by next April. The savings targets for the implementation of this part of the Herefordshire Connects programme would be achieved once the Frameworki finance package was in place, as it would facilitate initiatives such as electronic monitoring for home care. At present care managers had to manually enter data into the system which had been collected remotely, this was not an efficient use of professional time.

RESOLVED:

That: a) the report be noted.

- b) **That the Cabinet Member takes forward to Cabinet the current problems with financial control with the strong suggestion that the financial package required to interface with Frameworki is obtained as a stop gap whilst the Aggressor package, part of the Connects Programme is awaited.**

and:

- c) **that fieldworkers are provided with remote access data entry devices in order to prevent duplication of effort when entering data to Frameworki.**

130. UPDATE ON THE CONTRACT FOR LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES WITH MIDLAND HEART

The Committee received a report on the partnership agreement with Midland Heart, to provide accommodation and Support for Adults with a Learning Disability in Herefordshire. The Associate Director, (Social Care) Integrated Commissioning said that the report identified key progress against the targets set for the first year of the partnership as well as identifying improvements in quality and outcomes for individuals living within the services. The contract identified key targets for the first year of the partnership were:

- To create five new long stay beds at Ivy Close for young people leaving school and colleges.
- To develop five new flats at Southbank Close for people currently living with older family carers (age 70+)
- To improve the quality of services for people living within the services against the baseline assessments.

Progress against these targets has been good and could be evidenced by:

- Five new beds created at Ivy Close as a result of amalgamating the short-breaks (respite) at Southbank Close which had been offered to young people leaving

residential schools and colleges.

- Plans to develop the existing resource centre at Southbank Close into six flats.

The quality of the services people had received had improved in several ways:

- The refurbishment of bungalows at Southbank Close as well as new windows and refurbishment work at Ivy Close
- Work with Registered Social Landlords to improve the environment at properties in Leominster.
- Person Centred Planning (PCP) and individual support planning had been made available to people in the services. This had focussed on individuals who were in services which were remodelling and currently 21% of individuals have a PCP which had been reviewed within the last 12 months. A further 16 individuals had been supported by the Housing Facilitation team to understand the proposed changes.

It was noted that the amalgamation of short breaks in Southbank Close had not resulted in delivering enough capacity to support new demands on the service from young service users reaching adulthood. Existing service users had not had their allocation of short breaks reduced, but staff were working with service users, their families and carers to consider alternative options.

The Associate Director, (Social Care) Integrated Commissioning went on to say that Midland Heart had already begun to meet the targets set for year two of the contract, specifically:

- Plans were in hand to remodel Ivy Close as supported housing for younger people with a learning disability with links to the local colleges.
- There were plans to remodel two small group homes in Leominster
- Plan to support more individuals to develop a Person Centred Plan

These changes would mean that at the end of the second year of the contract Midland Heart would have reduced the number of registered care beds by twenty five and increased Accommodation options for people by eleven.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

131. PROVIDER SERVICES REVIEW – PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Integrated Commissioning reported that there would be a PCT Board Meeting later that week, at which the Provider Services Review would be discussed. He undertook to provide an updated report to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

132. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be approved and reported to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.45

CHAIRMAN