

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 14 December 2009 at 9.30 am

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

Councillors: ME Cooper, H Davies, MJ Fishley, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie,
MD Lloyd-Hayes and RV Stockton

In attendance: Councillors WLS Bowen and PJ Edwards

150. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor OM Barnett (Cabinet Member, Older People), Councillors BA Durkin and JE Pemberton.

151. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor DW Greenow substituted for Councillor J E Pemberton.

152. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor AE Gray declared an interest as a provider of care for people with learning disabilities.

153. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions from members of the public.

155. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2009/10

The Committee received a report on the financial position of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing revenue budgets for the periods to 31st October 2009. The Management Accountancy Manager reported that the forecast outturn position for Adult Social Care showed an over spend of £2.5 million. The forecast included £1.088m savings which had arisen from the recovery plan that was in place. Further recovery action was being undertaken.

He went on to say that the forecasts were based on client commitments identified within the different social care systems and had been projected forward. Planned implementation of a commitment accounting approach for homecare had encountered considerable software difficulties which were unlikely to be solved in the present financial year. Work was

progressing on the implementation of the finance module of the Frameworki system which would enable full commitment accounting in 2010-11.

The Management Accountancy Manager went on to say that the trend in care packages for 2009/10 indicated an increase in all areas except mental health where a more robust panel process for younger adults and the use of the mental health intermediate care project had helped to reduce the numbers going into residential care. Service Managers were challenging the content of care packages in all client groups put forward, and had access to void information in residential homes in order to aid their decision making.

The Management Accountancy Manager went on to highlight paragraph 23 of the report, which outlined the recovery plans which were designed to generate savings of £1.7m. He said that £75k had already been achieved through the hold on vacancies and the utilisation of void day care places. Further savings which totalled £1.089m had been assessed as being achievable and were included in the October forecast.

Resolved:

That

- a) the current and forecast budget overspend be noted with concern and that the recovery plans to address the situation were supported.**
- b) In the opinion of the Committee, proposed elements of the plan were unlikely to be deliverable in either the short or long terms.**
- c) the suggestion in the Recovery Plan that consideration should be given to options to raise eligibility criteria for services was viewed with concern, as this would be particularly problematic.**

and;

- d) given the demographic profile of the County and high expectations of a quality services from both Central Government and service users, in order to prevent similar overspends in 2010/11, a substantial increase in the base budget was required.**

156. SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME GRANT BUDGET POSITION

The Committee received a paper on the Supporting People Grant budget. The Management Accounting Manager reported that the Grant was a Government funding stream for housing support which allowed approximately a million people to live independently in their homes. There were five thousand people in Herefordshire benefiting from the scheme, which had been in place since 2003. Over the previous six years there had been an accumulated underspend on the Grant, which had been ring fenced. From 2010/11, the Grant would be paid under the Area Based Grant, and would not be ring fenced. This would allow the Council to provide more flexible and innovative ways of supporting vulnerable people.

The Associate Director of Joint Commissioning reported that she was concerned over the expected 6% top-slicing of funds into the Area Based Grant. This would affect carers in Herefordshire, as well as having an impact on the Mental Health service. There were many other areas where grants had been used to develop core services. Many services across the Herefordshire Supporting People Partnership Boards remit were project based, and not core to the work of the Service.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- Concern was raised over the issue of a top slice of 6% on the Area Based Grant.
- A Member said that it was important that an open and direct approach should be taken in order to communicate to service users what the situation was regarding funding, in order that they could fully understand why services were being reduced.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

157. ADULT SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2009/10

The Committee received a report on Adult Social Care Performance Monitoring. The Associate Director of Joint Commissioning reported that the Council had received its rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for the year, and was now rated as performing well, which was an important upward trend. The CQC had recognised real improvements in the robustness of management, performance and programme management. There were a number of areas that had been turned into an Action plan that would mean that the Council would be in a good position to report back to the inspectorate. The Chairman congratulated the Adult Social Care staff and the Associate Director of Joint Commissioning on this outcome.

The Associate Director presented her report, and said that whilst there were a number of areas of strength, there were issues associated with IT systems. She went on to say that of the national indicators reported, NI 136 (People supported to live independently) appeared to be performing poorly, but this was because not all the work undertaken had been previously recorded, such as telecare services and Third Sector support. The targets would be achieved when this situation was rectified. There were recording difficulties associated with NI 135 (Carers receiving a needs assessment or review and specific services), improvement in which would mean that it would be on target for the next report. There had been problems with NI 131 which were associated with the handover period of the patient from hospital discharge to social services care. This situation had been rectified, and the indicator would improve.

The Associate Director went on to say that delays in NI 130 (Social care clients receiving self directed Support) were reflected at a national level. A solution had been worked out in the county, whereby the Council would offer to administrate the budget on behalf of the user. It was therefore expected that this indicator would improve.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

158. STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE

The Committee received a report on Strategic Housing Performance Monitoring. The Head of Strategic Housing reported that there were two Local Area Agreement (LAA) indicators that were red flagged as being below target. These were NI 155 (Number of affordable homes delivered) and NI 156 (Households in temporary accommodation). Every effort was being made to meet NI 155, despite the economic downturn. Whilst the targets would not be renegotiated with the Government Office for the West Midlands, the Council had received confirmation that the targets and out turns were cumulative, and that the additional delivery that was made in 2008/09 would count against the final three year total. Funding was being maximised to ensure that as many units as possible could be delivered in 2009/10. A progress report would be provided to the next meeting.

The Head of Strategic Housing went on to say that performance against LAA NI 156 (Households in Temporary Accommodation) was in a negative position in comparison to the 2008/09 outturn. In recent weeks the trend had been downward from a high of 118

reported at the end of the second quarter. The target for LAA 156 is 82, therefore there was a risk that the target for 2009/10 would be missed. Within the current figure there are 7 households in Bed and Breakfast which represented an improvement on recent levels of occupancy which had on occasions exceeded 12 households. There had also been increased interest in the National Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- A Member said that she was concerned that some Private Landlords were not maintaining their properties up to a safe standard. The Head of Strategic Housing replied that this was a concern, and asked that Members should pass on any information on such Landlords so that the Private Landlord Enforcement Team could prevent this occurring.
- A Member said that she had been told by Landlords that they were unwilling to take tenants on housing benefits, as they felt that it was difficult to reclaim their properties. The Head of Strategic Housing said that the Council was looking at ways of formalising the arrangements between landlord and their tenants. One approach would be to let Registered Social Landlords to act on behalf of private landlords. There were a number of private sector landlords who were new to the market, and confusions did arise when incorrect notices were served on tenants.
- In reply to a Member's suggestion, the Head of Strategic Housing said that restructuring work was underway in order to ensure that the Housing Office was brought closer together with the Homelessness Team.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

159. SAFEGUARDING BOARD, ADULT SOCIAL CARE – IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee noted a progress report on Adult Safeguarding in Herefordshire. The Associate Director of Joint Commissioning reported that a great deal of progress had been made in this area since it had first been reported to the Committee in February 2009.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

160. SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HOME CARE IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee noted the Scoping Report for the Scrutiny Review of Home Care in Herefordshire.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the Scoping Statement for a Review of Home Care in Herefordshire be approved;
 - b) Councillors K Guthrie and P Andrews should be appointed to serve on the Review Group;
- and;
- c) Councillor A E Gray should be appointed as Chairman of the Review Group.

161. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ALLEVIATION APPROACHES

The Committee received a report on Homelessness prevention and alleviation approaches.

In reply to a question from a Member, the Head of Strategic Housing said that the Housing Allocations policy did not provide a priority status for members of the military. Armed forces personnel and their families who left military accommodation after leaving the forces would receive a priority assessment through the Council's homelessness schemes. Others who were already in settled accommodation would not be viewed as a priority. He went on to say that he would ask the Housing Teams to produce a leaflet designed to address the needs of forces personnel.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

162. LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA – A NATIONAL STRATEGY - UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee received an updated report on the implementation in Herefordshire of the National Strategy 'Living well with Dementia'. The Associate Director of Joint Commissioning reported that there was a rapid rise of the condition in the County as a result of the local demographic, with 61% more people in Herefordshire over 65 by 2026, and it was important that there should be a widespread response to the problem.

She went on to say that the strategy was designed to ensure explicit working with the NHS, and there was a process in hand with the PCT to seek bidders for contracts to run mental health services across the County. There were advantages to be had as this approach offered economies of scale, and contracts would be awarded by the end of April 2010.

In reply to a query from a Member, the Associate Director of Joint Commissioning said that the budget of currently commissioned services amounted to £3.8m. She believed that new ways of working would be required in order to find ways of addressing the situation. The Primary Care Trust would work in partnership with the Council as they faced many of the same issues. She pointed out that residential care was not always appropriate in this area, and consideration might be given to specialist housing schemes with nursing support.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the report be noted;**
- b) the Committee noted with concern the funding implications to the Council of the Strategy;**
- and;**
- c) regular updates on the strategy should be provided to the Committee.**

163. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted its Work Programme.

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