

MINUTES of the meeting of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday, 23rd March, 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes (Chairman)
Councillor PA Andrews (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: KG Grumbley, JW Hope MBE, R Mills, GA Powell,
R. Preece and Mrs E.A. Taylor

Co-Opted Member Mr R. Kelly (Voluntary Sector)

In attendance: Councillors W.J.S. Thomas and R.M. Wilson

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J.G. Jarvis and P.G. Turpin and from Councillor Mrs L.O. Barnett (Cabinet Member Social Care Adults and Health).

44. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st December, 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions from members of the Public.

48. BUDGET REPORT 2006/2007

The Committee considered the position on the revenue budget for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing as at the end of January 2007 and projections to the end of the financial year.

The Interim Finance Manager presented the report. She informed the Committee that the latest projected outturn for the adult social care budget was an overspend of £1.2 million. This was before use was made of the Social Care contingency sum of £1.3 million for both adult social care and children's services, of which £1 million was likely to be allocated to adult social care. She noted that all local authorities across the West Midlands had overspends on learning disability services.

In relation to Strategic Housing she highlighted the significant decrease in the number of clients in bed and breakfast accommodation, which had been the Service's major budget pressure, compared with the previous financial year. The projected underspending for Strategic Housing was £100,000.

It was asked what would happen to the underspending on Strategic Housing. The Head of Strategic Housing Services replied that he was requesting that the sum be rolled forward for work on needs analysis for the Supporting People Scheme and for homelessness prevention activities.

The Director of Adult and Community Services commented that whilst the level of the projected overspend in adult social care had been substantially reduced during the year the overspend was still significant. To achieve financial balance in the future it would be necessary to change the service delivery model in line with the findings of the review of future social care needs for older people and people with learning disabilities which had been reported to the Committee in December 2006.

RESOLVED: That the projected 2006/07 financial outturn for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing be noted.

49. ADULT SOCIAL CARE 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.

The Improvement Manager presented the report. In relation to the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan he reported that four of the five workstreams had been signed off although some work remained to be done on the fifth. Work was underway to embed the outcomes into the Service Plan.

He said that whilst the data shown in the report suggested that the Service would meet only one of the 13 targets for adult social care this was because the data had not yet been reconciled. He considered that 9 of the targets would in fact be met. Those which it was unlikely would be met were: C28 (households receiving intensive home care per 1000 population aged 65 or over), C32 (Older people helped to live at home per 1000 population aged 65 or over), C51 (adults and older people receiving direct payments per 100,00 population aged 18 or over), and D56 (waiting time for services.)

He highlighted success in relation to target C62 (the number of clients receiving a specific carer's service as a percentage of clients receiving community based services), whilst noting that this did not match the upper quartile performance of authorities and D54 (percentage of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven days) where a service which had been performing poorly some 2-3 years ago was now one of the best in the Country.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- In response to a question it was said that performance against target C51 (adults and older people receiving direct payments per 100,000 population aged 18 or over) had improved but had not met the stretched target the Council had set itself.

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- A question was asked about the allocation of houses to which adaptations had been made to meet service users' care related needs. The Head of Strategic Housing Services replied that the allocation system did now take account when re-letting properties with significant adaptations of the benefit of allocating adapted properties to those in need of such adaptations. There was still a need to improve the process for properties with more minor adaptations. A Housing Occupational Therapist employed by the Primary Care Trust was working with the Private Sector Housing Team to create a database of adaptations made to properties and to improve letting procedures.
- In relation to target C28 (households receiving intensive home care per 1000 population aged 65 or over) the Director of Adult and Community Services commented that this was an expensive service and to improve performance would have financial implications. An exercise was underway to see how other authorities assessed performance against this target.
- The Director said that none of the performance indicators had been qualified in the past year, representing an improvement on previous years.
- It was asked whether target 183a (the average length of stay for families with children in bed and breakfast accommodation) which was set at zero weeks was realistic. In reply it was stated that the target was aspirational but reflected the Government's thinking. Whilst there was always the risk of an emergency the target was achievable. There had already been considerable success in reducing the length of stay. It was now a rarity for anyone to wait longer than 6 weeks whereas there had been 40 such cases in the previous year.
- Regarding target 183b (the average length of stay for families with children in hostel accommodation) the spike in length of stay in quarter 2 was questioned. The Head of Strategic Housing Services said that the figure in quarter 2 was attributable to one family. As the numbers of people accommodated in hostels reduced this volatility would be likely to continue.
- The difficulty some families had had in transferring to larger accommodation prompted a discussion of the housing allocation policy. The Head of Strategic Housing Services explained that the focus on reducing homelessness had meant that homeless families had been given priority under the allocation system. Now that the homelessness and housing advice service was being delivered in-house again and the number of homeless people was reducing there was increasing opportunity to meet requests for transfers. However, whilst some 800 properties were advertised during a year there were some five to six thousand families on the waiting list.

He added that the Government was consulting on a code of guidance on choice based lettings which was likely to be helpful in resolving some complications created by the existing legislation and guidance. It was likely that the Council would need to review its allocation policy in the light of the code and Members would be involved in that process.

- In reply to a question about Best Value Performance Indicator 22 (the number of people sleeping rough) the Head of Strategic Housing Services explained that the count was conducted on a particular day in accordance with Government guidance. The Service Plan for 2007/08 recognised the need to do further work on this matter and to conduct a count using the new guidance which had been issued. It was acknowledged that there were also numbers of people who were

not sleeping rough but were still in effect homeless. It was, however, very difficult to assess the numbers with any degree of accuracy.

- A Member expressed concern that a number of private sector properties appeared to be remaining empty for some length of time. The Head of Strategic Housing Services replied that out of the 12,000 properties in question some would be likely to be empty at any one time for example to allow repairs to be carried out or statutory checks to be conducted. The performance of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in relation to properties remaining empty was measured by the Housing Corporation and the Audit Commission against a national performance indicator so it was not in their interests for properties to remain unoccupied. However, it was important that the RSLs and the Council as the Strategic Housing Authority worked proactively to deal with such matters and he proposed to raise the issue at the RSL Forum.

Members proposed that a report should be presented to the Committee's next meeting setting out the position and the comments of the RSL Forum and a decision then taken as to whether there were any issues the RSLs needed to be invited to attend the Committee to discuss.

RESOLVED: That a report should be presented to the Committee's next meeting setting out the position on empty private sector properties and the comments of the RSL Forum and a decision then taken as to whether there were any issues the RSLs needed to be invited to attend the Committee to discuss.

50. HOMELESSNESS CONSULTATION EVENT - 1ST DECEMBER 2006

The Committee considered a report on the outcomes from the Committee's homelessness consultation event held in December 2006 and recommendations arising from it.

This followed on from an initial homelessness event held in October 2005. The event included representatives from relevant agencies across the County. It focussed on lessons learned in the last year in terms of tackling the main causes of homelessness in Herefordshire and explored opportunities for closer working arrangements in the future.

The Change Manager- Homelessness observed that the event had been successful, building on the first event and generating a number of ideas.

One of the issues highlighted at the event had been the importance of educating children about the realities of homelessness. This was reflected in recommendation (e) in the report: that agencies should continue to work closely with schools to successfully prevent youth homelessness.

The Committee was informed of a project developed by the Council and the Supporting Herefordshire Young People Project involving a presentation on homelessness aimed at year 10 pupils. To date three sessions had been delivered to pupils at Wyebridge College, Hereford. It was reported that it was intended to roll the project out to all schools over the next four years. The estimated cost of delivering the presentation to all schools was £35-38k per year.

Members commented on the importance of debt management being included in the programme and the possible role of Ward Members. They also discussed the scope for involving Registered Social Landlords, Charities and Banks in supporting the

Scheme.

The Head of Strategic Housing Services agreed to circulate details of the presentation to Members of the Committee and feedback from the pupils and to confirm the extent of focus on debt management.

It was proposed that the youth homelessness prevention programme was so important that it should be rolled out to all secondary schools in 2007/08 rather than over a four year period as proposed and that recommendation (e) should be strengthened accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) be recommended:

- (a) to note the level of ongoing debt-related homelessness in Herefordshire, and that the Council should consider ways of proactively tackling this issue;**
 - (b) that knowledge of options in the housing market should be increased, amongst the public, and amongst the agencies working with customers threatened with homelessness;**
 - (c) that agencies should continue to work together to share information and further develop an 'early warning' approach to homelessness, building on good practice established during the last year;**
 - (d) that mediation and sanctuary options have made an impact in reducing homelessness in Herefordshire and should continue to be considered with young people and victims of domestic violence whenever appropriate;**
 - (e) that agencies should continue to work closely with schools to successfully prevent youth homelessness with the youth homelessness prevention programme being rolled out to all secondary schools in 2007/08 and further work is undertaken to develop further potential in the private sector housing market;**
 - (f) that the Council continues to develop preventative and reconciliatory protocols in relation to homelessness in partnership with other agencies;**
- and**
- (g) that the Council explores new ways of preventing homelessness for families who have experienced this in the past, and considers the support required to ensure these families do not become homeless in the future.**

51. GROWING OLDER IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee received a presentation on the findings and aims of the Herefordshire Partnership's Strategy 'Growing Older in Herefordshire'.

The Directorate Services Manager outlined the reasons for developing the Strategy and the process that had been followed. The vision and five key aims were also

explained.

The draft Strategy had been enclosed separately for Members of the Committee.

It was noted that there would be an eight week consultation period closing on 16th May, 2007. It was intended to publish the initial Strategy later in the year with action plans then being agreed by partners.

RESOLVED: That the draft Growing Older in Herefordshire Strategy be noted.

52. JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW: TRANSITION FROM LEAVING CARE TO ADULT LIFE

The Committee was informed of progress on the Joint Scrutiny Review on the Transition from Leaving Care to Adult Life and the proposed way forward.

The report noted that the Review Group had concluded that it was not possible to complete the Review in time to report in March 2007 as originally intended. It outlined a number of key themes which had been identified at the first meeting of the Review Group for further exploration and the proposed way forward.

It was noted that those care leavers with more profound and multiple disabilities were not to be included in the Review because there were more specialist transition processes already in place.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the Joint Scrutiny Review on the Transition from Leaving Care to Adult Life be taken forward in the 2007/08 work programme for the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing and Children's Services Scrutiny Committees;**
 - (b) the Review remain a Joint Review between the two Scrutiny Committees under the wider leadership of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee;**
- and**
- (c) following the establishment of the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing and Children's Services Scrutiny Committees for 2007/08, a new Review Group be established comprising membership from both Scrutiny Committees.**

53. SUMMARY OF ACTION IN RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered a report on progress against recommendations made by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

54. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

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The following items were added to the programme: the Directorate Service Plan, operation of Registered Social Landlords (in relation to empty properties) and the response to the recommendations made following the second consultation event on homelessness.

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

The meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.

CHAIRMAN