

**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, 22nd June, 2007 at 2.00 p.m.**

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

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

**In attendance:** None

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Mr R Kelly, Voluntary Sector Representative.

**2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

There were no named substitutes.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor A E Gray declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 9: Commission for Social Care Inspection Report on Services for People with Learning Disabilities and the Council's Action Plan.

**4. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March, 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There were no suggestions from members of the Public.

**6. CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee reviewed its co-opted membership.

**RESOLVED:**

That (a) a formal representative of the Alliance of Voluntary Sector Organisations in Health and Social Care in Herefordshire be co-opted onto the Committee;

and

(b) the term of office of the nominee be at the relevant organisation's discretion, subject to the nomination being reconfirmed after the four-yearly elections to this Council.

**7.        REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2006/07 AND BUDGET 2007/08**

The Committee considered the revenue budget's final financial position for 2006/07 and projections for financial year 2007/08 for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing.

The Interim Finance Manger presented the report. The final outturn for 2006/07 in adult social care had been an overspend of £1.05 million. An underspend on Commissioning and Improvement of £134,000 had resulted in a overall net overspend of £918,000. The Social Care contingency fund had been used to offset the overspend and no overspend was therefore carried forward into 2007/08.

The position on each of the main service areas: learning disabilities, older people, physical disabilities, mental health and commissioning and improvement was set out in the report describing budget pressures in each area.

The projected outturn for 2007/08, as at May, was an overspend of £4.38 million against a budget of £31 million. The report noted that the centrally held Social Care contingency (for both Adults and Children's Services) of £1.3 million and specific funding from invest to save monies of £2.7 million could be offset against the overspend at the end of the financial year. The impact of fairer charging policies would also reduce the projected overspend.

The final outturn for Strategic Housing in 2006/07 had been an underspend of £165,000 against a £5.76 million budget. The projected outturn for 2007/08 was an underspend of £6,000 against a budget of £2 million.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- Members noted the ongoing pressures with concern.
- A question was asked about the use of agency staff at Ivy Close respite care facility and action to secure a stable workforce. In reply it was stated that the service had filled all permanent vacancies and agency staff were used to cover for staff sickness. Agency staff were up to 50% more expensive and the service had undertaken a proactive advertising campaign to recruit permanent staff. In addition to any financial benefits it was important to recognise that service users also preferred to have continuity of staff.
- It was clarified that the Social Care contingency of £1.3 million was intended to be divided equally between adult social care services and children's services.
- The Head of Strategic Housing commented on the success achieved by the creation of the homelessness prevention budget. This had enabled the service to intervene at an early stage.
- The Director of Adult and Community Services reported that the budget position was very challenging. The Government was tightening public expenditure. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy provided for no increase in budgets for non-pay inflation for 2007/08. A large proportion of Social Care expenditure was on contracted services creating a significant pressure. The number of service users was increasing across all areas. Service needs were also becoming more complex. He reminded the Committee that the needs analysis for older people and those with a physical disability had highlighted the potential

level of increased demand. People were living longer and over the age of 85 the chances of people becoming service users increased.

The projected outturn was perhaps a worst case scenario and the service would be working hard to try to reduce expenditure, but the situation was difficult.

Separate from the social care budget the Council had allocated £2.7 million for an invest to save initiative to remodel adult social care services to make them more effective, drawing on comparisons with best practice authorities.

- Members requested a seminar on the budget for Members of the Committee. It further requested that this should also include an outline of the Council's statutory adult social care responsibilities.
- Following a short discussion about eligibility for respite care it was requested that a briefing note be circulated to Members of the Committee.
- A question was asked about the funding agreement with the PCT for mental health services and the control the Council had over the budget, noting that the projected outturn assumed the Council would fund the projected overspend on this service area. In reply it was stated that any social care services commissioned were approved by Service managers at a weekly funding panel meeting.

**RESOLVED: That a seminar on the budget be arranged for Members of the Committee.**

## **8. FAIRER CHARGING POLICY**

The Committee considered Cabinet's proposals for fairer charging for non-residential care services.

The report to Cabinet on 7th June, 2007 was appended to the report.

The Interim Change Manager presented the report. It was noted that the Council had commissioned consultants to review fairer charging as part of the adult social care improvement plan. The report set out the drivers for the review, income comparisons, the principles underpinning fairer charging and the specific recommendations made by the review.

The evidence was that the Council's charges were low compared with other authorities with income up to 50% lower than comparators. The challenge was to maintain services in the face of increasing numbers of older people requiring them. The impact of increased charges on individuals was acknowledged. He outlined the consultation process.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was important that the Council clearly explained its proposals to make clear that they were intended to be practical and viable. An assurance was given that public relations issues had been taken into account.
- It was also confirmed that work would be done to encourage people to take up benefits to which they were entitled noting that this might offset some of the impact on individuals.

- It was requested that the proposed consultation should be widened and in particular consultation events should be held in all the Market Towns.
- A question was asked about when a new charging structure would be introduced and the implications for the budget overspend. The Director of Adult and Community Services said that if the proposal proceeded it would be hoped to generate about 25% of the proposed additional income in 2007/08. He added that the Council raised one of the lowest levels of income per service user in the Country. The ability of individuals to pay charges would be carefully assessed.
- It was requested that a further report be made to the Committee in October.

**RESOLVED**

**That    (a)    the proposed consultation on the fairer charging policy should be widened and, in particular, consultation events should be held in all the Market Towns;**

**and**

**(b)    a report on the outcome of the consultation should be made to the Committee in October 2007.**

**9.    COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION REPORT ON SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND THE COUNCIL'S ACTION PLAN**

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

The Committee considered the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)'s inspection report on services in Herefordshire for people with learning disabilities and the Council's action plan to remedy weaknesses identified in the report.

The report to Cabinet on 21st June, had been circulated separately to Members of the Committee. This incorporated the inspection report, and an action plan in response to the inspection.

The Head of Adult Social Care (Learning Disabilities) presented the report. She reported that the inspectorate had been very critical of the service. The overall judgment was that the Council was not serving people with learning disabilities well and that there were uncertain prospects for future improvement.

The review by the Committee, the Council's own needs analysis and the inspectorate's report meant that the issues the Council faced were well known. The key now was taking action to address them.

The Council had been slow to implement the *Valuing People* policy agenda and could not demonstrate an inclusive approach. The Council itself, for example did not employ anyone with a learning disability. This did not show leadership especially when it was trying to encourage other employers to offer opportunities.

The Council had been found not to be promoting independence sufficiently. The most severe criticism was about the number of people who had not had an annual review of their needs. The Council had therefore not been sufficiently sensitive to how needs might have changed and a person's ability to live independently. The

position was improving and it was intended to have cleared the backlog by October 2007.

She then referred to the Council's action plan reporting that the recommendations had been prioritised. She drew attention to the following points in particular:

- In relation to social inclusion issues all Council departments were being asked to make a contribution.
- A wider range of services were needed for service users and carers. Although on the face of it the service was reasonably well resourced, resources were tied up in high cost residential placements. Services had not been developed as other local authorities had done. There was a clear need to change the model of service.
- Healthcare needs were not sufficiently well addressed.
- The transition of young people to adulthood needed to have a much smoother pathway, planned at a much earlier stage. There had to be provision for advocacy services at the transition stage.
- There was a need for improved quality standards and assurance.

In conclusion she said that the inspection's focus had been on outcomes and how the Council had facilitated independent living. Services needed to be reshaped with investment in extra social work staff to ensure the Council could assess and review needs. The amount of supported accommodation needed to be increased. The number of service users taking up the Direct Payments option also needed to be increased to provide more choice and flexibility.

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

- The importance of assessments of needs was noted.
- The action plan was welcomed.
- The role of the voluntary sector was discussed. It was noted that whilst the voluntary sector had a big role in delivering services the Council remained responsible.
- The Director of Adult and Community Services reported that in response to comments in the inspection about the pressure on senior management and the capacity to implement strategic change he had created a new Head of Service Post and a change manager post.

It was requested that the seminar on the budget that had been requested should be widened to include an overview of the Directorate and the Council's statutory responsibilities for adult social care.

**RESOLVED:**

**That (a) the report be noted and a further report monitoring progress against the action plan made to the Committee in October;**

**and**

- (b) **the budget seminar for Members as requested by the Committee during consideration of the budget should also include an overview of the Directorate and the Council's statutory responsibilities for adult social care.**

**10. ADULT SOCIAL 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.

The report set out performance against the various adult social care and strategic housing performance indicators. It also described the basis upon which the annual judgement and star rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspection was made.

The Director of Adult and Community Services gave an overview of performance. He reported that the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) had given the Council's adult social care service a one star rating for the 2005/06 financial year describing it as a service serving some people well with uncertain prospects for improvement. The rating for 2006/07 would be announced in November 2007. The inspection of services for people with learning disabilities would form part of that assessment and there was concern about the bearing this might have on the CSCI rating. The service was working to demonstrate through its action plans that it would deliver change and so give reassurance to the inspectorate. He did not believe that issues raised in the learning disabilities inspection regarding needs assessment were reflected across the service. It was clear, however, that significant improvement was required and this was an area the Committee may well want to scrutinise.

The performance of the strategic housing service was rated as good with the focus on reducing homelessness a particular success. The performance indicator did not yet fully reflect the success in reducing homelessness because it recorded the average length of stay rather than the numbers of homeless. The indicator was to change. It was not yet clear what would replace it. Continuing vigilance on homelessness was needed noting the shortage of affordable housing. There were also issues over responsibility for vulnerable people in private sector housing.

A briefing note was requested on housing for care leavers without a local connection.

The Improvement Manager commented on the detail of the indicators noting that there was evidence of some strong performance but also areas of difficulty.

**RESOLVED:**

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

**and**

(b) **areas of concern continue to be monitored.**

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

The Committee considered participating in a joint scrutiny review into the Transition from Leaving Care to Adult Life and its appointments to the Review Group.

The report set out the reasons why the review had commenced and progress to date. It proposed the continuation of the review and invited the appointment of new Members to serve on the review.

It was suggested that after completing the work currently agreed, transition arrangements for people with learning disabilities might also be looked at.

**RESOLVED:**

- That     (a)     the work undertaken so far be noted and the Scrutiny Review of Transition from Leaving Care to Adult Life continue and that the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee be the lead Committee;**
- (b)     Councillors H Davies, JE Pemberton R Stockton and Mr R Kelly be appointed to the Review Group;**
- and**
- (c)     Councillor JE Pemberton be nominated to be Chairman of the Review Group subject to agreement with the Chairman of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.**

**12.     WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its work programme.

It was noted that progress reports on fairer charging and the action plan for services to people with learning disabilities would be added to the programme following decisions taken earlier in the meeting.

The work programme identified day care and allocation of housing amongst the other issues to be progressed. It was confirmed that the intention was that these should be examined in more depth and scoping statements produced to guide the review of these areas. Initial expressions of interest in investigating these issues were sought. Councillors ME Cooper and AT Oliver expressed an interest in the work on the allocation of housing and Councillor AE Gray in the work on home care.

In relation to the proposed work on the allocation of housing the Head of Strategic Housing commented on the allocation process and aspects the Committee might wish to consider given the introduction of a new Government policy.

At the Committee's meeting in March concern had been expressed that a number of private sector properties appeared to be remaining empty for some length of time. The Head of Strategic Housing Services reported that he had looked into the matter and did not consider that there were issues to be pursued, providing statistical evidence to the Committee in support of this view.

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Issues about the maintenance of properties were then raised. It was agreed to invite Registered Social Landlords to attend the next meeting to discuss maintenance policies.

The provision of affordable housing was also raised. It was noted that a seminar on this was being arranged for all Members.

**RESOLVED:**

**That    (a)    the Work Programme as amended be approved and reported to the Strategic Monitoring Committee;**

**and**

**(b)    authority be given to the Director of Adult and Community Services following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee to progress the development of scoping statements for work on allocation of housing and home care.**

The meeting ended at 4.12 p.m.

**CHAIRMAN**