

MINUTES of the meeting of the Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road Hereford on 17 June 2003 at 10.30 am

Present: Councillor Mrs. L.O. Barnett (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs. J.P. French (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs E.M. Bew, Mrs A.E. Gray, K.G. Grumbley, Mrs J.A. Hyde, R. Mills, Mrs J.E. Pemberton, Ms G.A. Powell, P.G. Turpin.

In attendance: Councillors Mrs L.O. Barnett (Cabinet Member – Social Care and Housing) and D.B. Wilcox (Cabinet Member – Audit and Performance Management)

1. CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was noted that the Council had appointed Councillor Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes as Chairman of the Committee and Councillor Mrs. P.A. Andrews as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs P.A. Andrews and Brigadier P. Jones CBE.

3. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Mrs J.E. Pemberton substituted for Councillor Brigadier P. Jones CBE

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th March, 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. SCRUTINY – ROLE AND TECHNIQUES

The Committee received a presentation on the role of scrutiny and the techniques that Scrutiny Committees can use in their work.

The presentation briefly described the background to the development of scrutiny and outlined some of the key principles underpinning the role, and risks to effective scrutiny. It also referred to scrutiny processes and how these could be varied according to the task being carried out, questioning skills; the development of work programmes, in-depth reviews, the role in best value reviews, chairing skills and sources of further information.

7. UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND CHALLENGES FACING SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing gave a presentation on the Directorate's priorities for 2003/2004. These included developing home support for older people, improving assessment practice and quality for adults and children, improving resources for children with disabilities, improving records management and data quality, ensuring integrated services have the right pooled budget, creating a robust strategic housing function, getting the best value from available resources, managing risk well and having an organisation which focused on supporting best practice in the core business and "doing what the Directorate said it was going to do".

Challenges included the capacity to develop new services for older people, keeping vulnerable people and services safe, keeping partnerships real and healthy, helping to reduce hospital delays and having capital for supported and affordable housing.

(a) EXTRA CARE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE

The Committee were updated on the position with regard to the development of an Extra Care Housing Scheme within Herefordshire.

The Head of Strategic Housing reminded the Committee that following a study of care services for older people in Herefordshire, the Cabinet had given "in principle" approval for the provision of extra care housing for older people in Herefordshire, namely the development of an extra care housing scheme in Hereford City together with the modernisation of existing sheltered housing schemes in order to provide a county-wide service.

The report set out the current position noting that capital and revenue costs were being established and that a further progress report would be made.

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

- It was noted that whilst there was no extra care housing scheme within the County there were a number of sheltered housing schemes. It was suggested that it would be helpful if information could be provided to the Committee on housing provision within the County to put the Scheme in context.
- It was proposed that Members should be given the opportunity to visit an existing extra care housing scheme in Stoke-on-Trent.
- It was noted that Cabinet had supported the scheme in principle and it was proposed that the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Strategic Housing) be asked to reaffirm this support.
- It was noted that extra care housing schemes were part of a range of approaches to providing an enhanced choice of services for older people.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) **the latest position with regard to the development of the Extra Care Housing Scheme in Hereford City be noted and a visit arranged to see an existing scheme in Stoke on Trent;**
- (b) **a further report be made to the next meeting on the scheme and current housing provision;**

and

- (c) **the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Strategic Housing) be asked to reaffirm Cabinet's support in principle for the provision of Extra Care Housing Schemes in Herefordshire;**

(b) SOCIAL SERVICES BUDGET MONITORING 2002/03 QUARTERLY REPORT

The Committee were informed of the budget monitoring position for Social Services for the final quarter of 2002/03.

The Head of Business Services reported that the projected year end position showed an overspend of £760,000. It had been reported to the Committee's previous meeting that the overspend would continue to reduce as savings targets were partially met. However, this was at a cost to service delivery.

In summary, whilst the budget settlement for 2002/03 was positive, it must be viewed in the context of continuing service pressures. The Directorate had been successful in reducing the overspend as far as possible before the end of the financial year. The pressures would, however, inevitably impact on the budget for 2003/04. The budget plan for 2003/04 has been agreed with the County Treasurer and would be formally reviewed in September 2003

The County Treasurer alerted the Committee to the implications of a recent court case affecting all local authorities which would increase the projected overspend.

It was suggested that the presentation of budget information might be improved by the use of tables mirroring the text of the report.

RESOLVED: That the Budget Monitoring report be noted.

(b) A SERIOUS CASE REVIEW

Further to the report in January 2003 the Committee received an update on the Social Services aspects of a Serious Case Review (Part 8) action plan.

The full progress report was appended to the report. It was noted that progress had been made. It was also reported that the Social Services Inspectorate had decided that the Council had performed satisfactorily on the basis of a national audit of procedures, undertaken in response to the Laming report arising from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing reported that it could not be guaranteed that tragedies would not occur. However, a full revision of child protection procedures had been completed, incorporating key recommendations from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the contents of the progress of the Social Services part of the Serious Case Review Action Plan be noted;

and

- (b) the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing report to a future meeting the assessment of the Council's self-audit of the Laming Report.

(b) PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF HEALTH

The Committee were provided with information regarding the local authority power of overview and scrutiny of health and the new system for patient and public involvement within the health service.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8. PAYMENT OF INVOICES WITHIN 30 DAYS

The Committee were asked to consider the performance indicator during the financial year 2002/03.

The Committee considered performance against the national Best Value Performance Indicator for the payment of undisputed invoices within 30 days, during the financial year 2002/2003.

The report set out the latest performance information noting that whilst the annual percentage was 82.8% compared with 77% in 2001/2002 the performance figures for the last six months were much improved.

It was suggested that when it received the overall report the Strategic Monitoring Committee should consider whether it was necessary for individual Committees to receive further reports on this subject.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Strategic Monitoring Committee advised that the submission of reports to individual Scrutiny Committees should be concluded and revisited at the end of the financial year if there was cause for concern.

9. BEST VALUE REVIEWS

The Committee considered progress with Best Value Reviews and reviewed the composition of Review Teams.

It was noted that in the case of reviews where a Stage 3 report was imminent there was likely to be advantage in those Councillors who had participated in the Review to date continuing to the Review's conclusion, if they were willing to do so.

RESOLVED: that the position be noted and representation on the Best Value Review Teams be reviewed by the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, noting the appointment of Councillor Mrs A.E. Gray to the Review Team for Adoption and Fostering.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were asked to consider the work programme.

The Chairman noted that this was an opportunity for Members to identify issues they considered important and invited members to notify her of their opinions.

It was also recognised that it would be important for the Strategic Monitoring Committee to ensure that the respective roles of the Health Scrutiny Committee and the Social Care and Housing Committee were effectively managed.

RESOLVED: That the draft work programme be confirmed, subject to reports on the Laming Report and the outcome of the Joint Review of Social Services being moved from June to September, 2003.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm

CHAIRMAN