

MINUTES of the meeting of the Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Tuesday, 27th January, 2004 at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs. P.A. Andrews (Vice Chairman)

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

Voluntary Sector Representatives Mrs B. Millman

In attendance: Councillors Mrs. L.O. Barnett, P.E. Harling and W.J.S. Thomas.

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs E.M. Bew.

41. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs A.E. Gray declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 5 as a service provider in relation to people with learning disabilities.

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November, 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION OF SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME IN HEREFORDSHIRE

Further to the report to the Committee in November 2003 the Committee was informed of the outcome of the inspection by the Audit Commission of the Supporting People Programme in Herefordshire and the improvement plan.

The inspection report was appended to the report. The Council had been assessed as a 'good' two star service that had uncertain prospects for improvement.

The Head of Strategic Housing drew attention to the improvement plan attached to the report at Appendix B.

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

- It had been noted that the inspection team had found that the Council had identified too many priorities for the Supporting People Programme and it was suggested that the priorities selected following a review should be clearly set out

and related to available funding and its allocation. The Head of Strategic Housing confirmed that a report on the revised priorities could be prepared.

- In relation to paragraph 39 of the report which stated that there were no specific services for people from minority ethnic groups the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing reported that research was being undertaken to assess the level of support which was required.
- Paragraph 37 of the report stated that there were currently 4,805 units of supported housing or housing support in Herefordshire provided by 44 organisations. It was suggested that this was a large number of organisations to deal with and monitor. The Head of Strategic Housing commented that there were a large range of client groups involved and no one organisation could serve all their needs. He did not consider the number involved excessive in relation to the number of units being provided but recognised the advantages in seeking to rationalise arrangements if possible.
- Attention was drawn to the weaknesses in performance management referred to in the report. The Head of Strategic Housing noted that this was an issue which was being addressed across the Council as a whole with the development of the performance management framework. He noted that the inspection report had stated that the Council had focussed on getting the Supporting People programme in place and this was evidence of its ability to focus on what mattered. However, performance management was taking place and work was underway on devising local performance indicators.
- The need for the action plan to be free of jargon was noted and the benefit of including glossaries in documentation was noted.

In response to further questions the Head of Strategic Housing commented as follows:

- The development of Supporting People would enable the continued revenue funding of the Supported Housing for Young Persons Project (SHYPP) delivered by St John Kemble Housing Association once Single Regeneration Budget funding ended in April 2004. All Supporting People funded housing related support services would be subject to review, however, Supporting People grant represented an important funding stream for such projects. These arrangements would be monitored and reviewed to ensure value for money.
- He noted a suggestion regarding paragraph 54 of the report that from a voluntary sector perspective in terms of securing Supporting People funding guidelines would be helpful on what elements of a service were housing related support and what constituted personal care for staff involved in the direct provision of services. He added that the distinction was a national issue and the Government had issued questionnaires to establish whether authorities had been making inappropriate use of the funds in the Supporting People Programme. He believed that the Council had been cautious and robust in its approach. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's guidance set out what counted as personal care and what could be funded from the Supporting People programme.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the findings of the Audit Commission Inspection of the Supporting People Programme be noted;

- (b) a list of proposed services as originally prioritised, the current priorities and an indication of the cost of the revised priorities and the budget be reported to the Committee;

and

- (c) a report on user feedback be made to the Committee.

45. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE JOINT REVIEW ACTION PLAN - JULY 2003 AND THE DIRECTORATE SERVICE PLAN 2003-04

The Committee received a progress report on performance against the action plan produced following the joint review of the service by the Audit Commission and the Social Services Inspectorate and the Directorate's service plan.

In response to a question about the transfer of the Council's residential homes and the provision of care for the residents in the home at Leadon Bank, Ledbury the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing explained the arrangements which were being made. She said that it had been thought that the concerns of staff and residents had been addressed but if there were any outstanding issues she requested that these be brought to her attention.

RESOLVED: That the progress in relation to the action plan produced following the joint review of the service by the Audit Commission and the Social Services Inspectorate and the Directorate's service plan be noted.

46. OLDER PEOPLE'S BUSINESS CASE

The Committee was asked to consider and comment upon the scope of the challenge to provide services for older people in Herefordshire focusing on the needs, improvement and service development required.

The report stated that the intention was to present a business case setting out the work needed to move the Social Services Inspectorate's Assessment of performance in the delivery of adults services from, "uncertain" capacity for improvement to "promising" capacity for improvement.

The detailed business case was appended to the report together with a national discussion document: "All our Tomorrows".

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing commented that the business case sought to assess what the gap in service provision was, how to manage that gap and the investment required. She invited comments on the proposals in the Plan.

In the ensuing discussion the following principal points were made:

- The Head of Adults' Services advised that, although the payment of a carer's allowance was a welfare benefit and outside the Council's control she had not identified a trend that suggested that the cessation of its payment at retirement age led to people ceasing to act as carers and looking to Social Services to pick up the responsibility. However, the need to carry out more assessments of carers was recognised and that process would identify any trends of that kind.
- It was suggested that the business case should set out more clearly what the current starting point was, where the information it presented was derived from

and how the conclusions contained within it had been reached. It was also asked whether the business case looked far enough ahead.

In reply the Director commented that the need for additional staffing resources was considered self-evident but it was accepted that more information could have been presented on the baseline position. The life of the business plan was consistent with the medium term financial strategy.

Specific comments were made on the pages of the agenda papers as follows:

- Pages 95-96: Whilst accepting that the performance indicators were presented in the form required by the Government and acknowledging their complexities, it was suggested that the presentation of the information did not make clear the scale of the task faced. For example, including actual numbers of people in the County receiving or requiring particular services as well as a percentage figure, would help.
- Page 104: that in proposing additional staff the business case should show the current staffing levels and where possible an indication of workload.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) **officers be congratulated on their hard work;**
- (b) **it be noted that changing the focus of existing resources would contribute 34% in 2004/2005 to the proposed improvement and development of older peoples services;**
- and
- (c) **the provision of additional resources in 2004/2005 to develop services for older people be supported.**

47. BUDGET/PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2003/04 - 8 MONTHLY REPORT

The Committee received a report on the budget and performance indicators for the first eight months of the financial year.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing reported that the aim was to balance the budget but there were a number of risk areas. Considerable efforts had been made to manage the budget more effectively. However, it had to be noted that there had also been some adverse effect on services and some areas where it had been identified that development was necessary had not been pursued.

RESOLVED: That the budget monitoring report and the performance monitoring report for the first eight months of the financial year be noted and the Director of Social Care and Housing and staff complimented on their performance.

48. EXTRA CARE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The Committee received an update on the position with regard to the development of an extra care housing scheme in Hereford and was invited to support a county-wide review of sheltered housing.

The report outlined progress towards the development of an extra care

housing scheme in Hereford. It was noted that the scheme might have an impact on the existing sheltered housing provision elsewhere in the County. It was intended to commission an external independent consultant to review provision.

It was suggested that it would be helpful if the Committee could visit an existing scheme.

RESOLVED: That the latest position with regard to the provision of extra care housing provision in Hereford City be noted and the commissioning of the review of existing sheltered housing provision as outlined be supported.

49. HOME SUPPORT STAFF - RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE ISSUES

The Committee received a report on workforce issues relating to home support staff.

The report set out the main reasons for recruitment difficulties, the reasons employees had given for leaving the service and changes which it was thought would encourage potential employees to join the service.

It was noted that new staff had to be willing to meet training requirements and obtain qualifications and this was proving to be one of the recruitment difficulties. Those who had left the service had done so for a variety of valid reasons and there was no single issue to be addressed.

RESOLVED: That the recruitment and workforce issues in relation to home support be noted.

50. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee was invited to consider three task groups to cover the service areas of Older People, Children and Mental Health.

It was noted that a day had been set aside for the groups to identify areas upon which they would wish to focus and that the outcome would be reported to the Committee's next meeting.

RESOLVED: That Task Groups be established as follows:

- **Services for Older People (Councillors Mrs P.A. Andrews, Mrs A.E. Gray, R. Mills, Ms G.A. Powell,)**
- **Childrens Services (Councillors Mrs E.M. Bew, Mrs J.A. Hyde, P.G. Turpin)**
- **Mental Health (Councillors K.G. Grumbley, Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, Mrs J.E. Pemberton).**

The meeting ended at 12.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

