

MINUTES of the meeting of Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday, 17th June, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes (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 and P.G. Turpin

In attendance: Councillors Mrs. L.O. Barnett and P.E. Harling

1. CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Committee noted that Councillor Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes had been appointed Chairman of the Committee and Councillor Mrs P.A. Andrews had been appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee at the Annual Meeting of Council on 21st May, 2004.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs P.A. Andrews and Mrs B.Millman, voluntary sector representative.

3. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th April, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. NATIONAL INSPECTION ARRANGEMENTS AND LOCAL PERFORMANCE

The Committee was informed of national changes to inspection arrangements and received an update on local performance as assessed in recent external assessments and inspections.

The report described the inspection structures in place and the inspection activity currently underway.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing provided an update, explaining that the draft inspection report on services for older people had been received and it was expected that the final report would be available for presentation to Cabinet in July. The indications were that the Inspectors would conclude that the service now had promising prospects for improvement, the star rating in 2003 having assessed prospects for improvement as uncertain.

The draft report on fostering services had also been received. The key finding was that the service was fit for purpose. The Directorate was, however, in discussion with the National Care Standards Commission about some aspects of the draft, noting that this was the first regulation inspection report the Commission had produced.

A response to the self-assessment of Strategic Housing performance and capacity for improvement was still awaited.

The Director commented on the recent level of inspection activity and the pressure this placed on the Directorate. It was hoped that the creation of the role of Business Relation Manager within the Commission for Social Care Inspection's structure would assist in co-ordinating inspection work and ensuring that it was proportionate to local performance and improvement. She noted the establishment of a new inspection programme for all Children's Services provided by the Council and partners, and the possibility that the Council might be one of the first to be inspected.

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

- In response to a question the Director said that there was little the Directorate could do to influence the external inspection regime. She confirmed that the Directorate did co-ordinate its approach to the various performance management requirements placed upon it. It also sought to integrate work on achieving the targets in the Council's Local Public Service Agreement and to prioritise where appropriate, for example focusing on some indicators which were known to be key thresholds affecting the assessment of the Service in inspections.
- An update was requested on the transfer of the running of the Council's older peoples homes to SHAW Homes. The Head of Social Care (Adults) reported that SHAW Homes had assumed responsibility for the homes on an agency basis pending completion of the formal Agreement. The management transfer had proceeded smoothly. The contract provided for a close working relationship between the Council and Shaw Homes with both quantitative and qualitative measures in place to monitor performance. Local reference groups were also in place to monitor local issues and participate in developments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2003/04 - 12 MONTHLY REPORT

The Committee received a report on the performance indicators for the Social Care and Strategic Housing Directorate for the year 2003/2004.

The Head of Business Services gave a presentation on performance management. She explained both the onerous external inspection arrangements and how performance was managed within the Directorate.

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

- The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing noted the importance of ensuring that the Directorate was collecting and reporting statistical information in the same way as other authorities. She reported that local performance on delays in relation to those ready to leave hospital had appeared significantly out of line with other health and social care economies. An analysis of the way in which delays were calculated had revealed that other authorities used a different methodology. Applying the same approach had led to a 50% reduction in the

relevant statistic.

- That to achieve higher performance levels against some of the indicators where there were banded performance thresholds, for example provision of intensive home care, would require significant investment.
- That in terms of the cost of children's residential care there were a limited number of providers and this could put pressure on costs. This was a common problem for authorities.
- It was confirmed that there were joint working arrangements with Education and Health services to seek to ensure a co-ordinated approach where necessary.
- It was noted that the Council had reached agreement with the Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust and the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust about the treatment of the grant paid to the Council by the Government to reimburse the Trust in relation to delayed discharges. The grant was being retained by the Council to buy additional services rather than being paid to the Trust.
- In response to a question about respite care for people with a learning disability the Head of Social Care (Adults) acknowledged that regrettably some planned respite care did have to be cancelled. There was a difficult balance to strike between the number of beds which could be kept vacant for planned respite care and the need to accommodate emergency placements. Reviews were currently taking place of all respite care provision to establish whether there were alternatives.

It was requested that a report on respite care provision be made to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the report on Herefordshire Social Care and Strategic Housing performance be noted;**
 - (b) areas of concern continue to be monitored;**
- and**
- (c) a report on respite care be made to the next meeting.**

**8. SOCIAL SERVICES AND STRATEGIC HOUSING BUDGET MONITORING
2003/04 - 12 MONTHLY REPORT**

The Committee was informed of the provisional final outturn budget monitoring position for Social Care and Strategic Housing for the financial year 2003/04.

The Head of Business Services reported that that there was expected to be an overspend of £245,000, representing 0.7% of the budget. This would be carried forward into the next year. She advised that the pressure on older peoples services in particular would have an impact in the 2004/05 financial year and in general she was concerned that it would be a difficult year. It was also important to reiterate that the action to balance the budget had adversely affected service provision and had been difficult for staff.

She repeated concerns about the pressure on the childrens' agency placement budget and said that work was underway to see if there were any other ways of dealing with the problem. Members noted the range of needs which had to be met and the consequent variation in the costs of individual placements.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing observed that if current performance levels in Social Care were to be sustained it would be an achievement to keep the overspend below 1% of the budget. She expected that the budget for Strategic Housing would be balanced, unless there were significant homelessness pressures.

RESOLVED: That the provisional final budget monitoring outturn for the 2003/2004 financial year be noted.

9. SCOPING WORK FOR IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATIONS INTO SERVICE AREAS

The Committee considered an exploratory programme for the in-depth investigations into the provision of home care and supported housing for people with mental health problems.

The report set out an outline programme of visits and fact-finding sessions to inform the reviews. The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing advised that arrangements for the visits would be confirmed and detailed scoping statements prepared in due course.

RESOLVED: That the programme as outlined in the report be supported and the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing authorised, following consultation with the Chairman, to prepare detailed scoping statements.

The meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.

CHAIRMAN