

MINUTES of the meeting of Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 13th December, 2004 at 2.00 p.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.E. Pemberton,
Ms. G.A. Powell and P.G. Turpin

Mrs B Millman (Voluntary Sector Representative)

In attendance: Councillors Mrs. L.O. Barnett, T.M. James, D.W. Rule MBE and
W.J.S. Thomas

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs E.M. Bew, Mrs J.A. Hyde and R. Mills.

22. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to recording that Councillor Mrs L.O. Barnett had submitted her apologies for the meeting.

25. ANNUAL SOCIAL SERVICES CONFERENCE 2004

The Committee received a report on the business discussed at the Annual Social Services Conference held in October 2004.

The changes in the delivery of Childrens Services consequent upon the Childrens Act 2004 had been a key theme of the Conference. The Committee congratulated Ms S Fiennes, Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing on her appointment by the Council to the post of interim Director of Children's Services.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

26. SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME UPDATE

Further to the report to the Committee in April 2004 the Committee received an update on the Supporting People programme in Herefordshire.

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The Head of Strategic Housing Services presented the report, which had set out a number of risks to the funding of the Supporting People Programme in Herefordshire. He reported that since publication of the report the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had announced the funding for the Supporting People Programme. In Herefordshire the Programme faced a 6.7% reduction, with funding decreasing from £7.3 million to £6.8 million. In addition the administrative budget faced a 15% reduction, the impact of which was still being assessed.

He noted that a new grant allocation formula was due to be implemented for 2006/2007 and whilst the outcome was as yet unclear the indications were that the formula would be to the disadvantage of shire/rural counties, although it was hoped the change to funding arrangements would be phased in to allow the service time to adjust. It had been confirmed that savings achieved through the review being undertaken by the Supporting People Commissioning Body could be rolled forward. He considered that the funding settlement would allow the Council to implement those measures which had been identified as high priority within the Supporting People Shadow Strategy.

The Head of Strategic Housing Services also drew attention to the monitoring and review process for the Programme and the ODPM's requirement that Supporting People Teams review all Supported People funded Services by 31st March, 2006. This was in addition to the requirement that a five year Supporting People Strategy had to be delivered to the ODPM by 31 March 2005. The report by the Audit Commission following its inspection of the Programme in Herefordshire had commented favourably on the review process being followed. However, it was important to recognise that there had been decisions relating to the de-commissioning or remodelling of services which had not all been well received by stakeholders. As a result the Supporting People Team were considering how the review process could help to ensure that stakeholders and providers were engaged with and committed to each stage of the review process.

He emphasised that the three Services provided in-house through Supporting People Grant: Home Care, Adult Placement/Supported Lodgings and Traveller Liaison were also subject to the review process and reported on the stage reached in reviewing each service. In relation to Home Care, service user consultation had indicated that the Home Care service was undertaking tasks which were ineligible for Supporting People Grant. The Supporting People Commissioning Body had recommended that an audit should be undertaken and it should be considered that any Supporting People Grant, which had been used to fund non-eligible tasks be repaid. The audit was now underway. However, the advice from a leading Supporting People Consultant was that the Home Care service would not have a liability to repay any grant.

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

- It was acknowledged that the Programme used 38 providers to deliver services and this might appear to be a high number. However, the wide range of services provided under the Programme to a wide range of clients meant this was unsurprising. The review process was taking the issue into account.
- It was requested that the information on the decisions of the Supporting People Commissioning Body, as set out in appendix B to the report, be presented more clearly in future reports.
- In response to a question about the engagement of a consultant to examine the Home Care Service's liability to repay supporting people grant the Head of

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Strategic Housing Services explained that the ODPM's guidance was not consistent or definitive on this matter. Because of staffing pressures on the Supporting People Team and the commitments it faced in submitting the Supporting People Strategy by the required deadline the consultant had spent a day with the Supporting People Team providing specialist advice on a range of issues. The Head of Strategic Housing Services reiterated that the advice was that no funding for home care services would be withdrawn from an individual directly because the review had found they were receiving services ineligible for Supporting People Grant. However, the current in-house review being undertaken would help identify how services would need to be provided in the future.

- That a number of issues had been raised which merited further consideration by the Committee and it was proposed that a special meeting should be convened to receive a further update.
- That the role now given to two Councillors in relation to the work of the Supporting People Commissioning Body, as requested by the Committee in April, should be welcomed.
- That the learning from the monitoring and review process should be shared with the Committee as a whole.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) it be noted that the latest position in relation to the Supporting People Programme continued to give rise to considerable concern and a further report be prepared to be considered at a special meeting of the Committee;**
 - (b) the governance arrangements surrounding the Commissioning Body be welcomed noting in particular the role now given to two Councillors in the process;**
- and**
- (c) learning from the monitoring and review process be developed and further considered within the Mental Health Scrutiny Scoping exercise and by the Committee as a whole.**

27. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY - STAGE 3 REPORT

The Committee considered the Stage 3 report of the Best Value Review of Social Care Services for people with a physical disability.

The detailed review report had been circulated separately to Members of the Committee.

The Best Value Review Project Manager and Mrs B Millman, a service user and a voluntary sector representative on the Committee, explained the conduct of the review and presented the report's findings, emphasising the extent to which the recommendations had been informed by the views of service users.

The following areas for development and redesign were identified and recommendations made in respect of each area: assessment and care management, day care opportunities; adaptations and equipment, complaints and

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advocacy, short-term breaks and transport. The recommendations drawn from section 4 of the review report were summarised in paragraph 11 of the covering report. There were also a number of additional recommendations made in section 5 of the review report, extracted to form appendix A to the covering report, which it was considered would improve existing services without radical redesign.

The covering report indicated that the main improvements would be managed within existing resources. A complex proposal for a Disabled Living Centre would, however, require a further feasibility study.

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

- In response to a question the Best Value Review Project Manager confirmed that partner agencies who would need to be involved in the redesign of services had had some involvement with the Review Team and the option appraisal report had been sent out for consultation.
- The review proposed the extension of the direct payments scheme to the purchase of equipment. It was noted that, whilst it was not necessarily the case that providing an individual service user with direct payments would be more costly, the extension of the direct payments scheme on a widespread basis could present a challenge to the Directorate of Social Care and Strategic Housing in commissioning services. The Head of Social Care (Adults) commented that if, for example, a block contract was let for the provision of a service but the uptake was low, with service users opting for direct payments to select their own provision in preference to the contracted service, the financial implications could potentially be significant. This emphasised the need to involve service users in determining service provision and the Directorate recognised the need to carry out further work in this area. The desire of service users to exercise their independence and the extent to which this reflected the national drive for choice was acknowledged.
- There was discussion of the information available to individuals in need of equipment. It was noted that it was a complex issue and suggested that service users really needed independent advice on what equipment was available in order to make an informed choice about what would suit them best. It was also important that once installed and in use the suitability of the equipment was monitored.
- In relation to the complaints system the review report proposed the development of a peer advocacy service to assist service users in making complaints about service delivery. The review report suggested that in the longer term the possibility of the development of an information and advocacy service as part of a Disability Living Centre merited consideration. It was noted that there were currently Disability Living Centres in Shropshire and Worcestershire but not in Herefordshire or mid-Wales. Several service users were reluctant to travel to Shropshire or Worcestershire but there was uncertainty over the ability to support a Centre for a sparsely populated rural area. The review had acknowledged that development of a Centre would require a feasibility study.
- That recommendation 8 as set out at page 37 of the review report should be shortened by the deletion of the last few words: "where appropriate instead of the ad hoc approach which can lead to crisis".
- In relation to transport it was considered that there remained considerable scope for improvement and cost savings, although it was reported that new Regulations

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in January 2005 would increase transport costs. It was requested that the Strategic Monitoring Committee's attention should be drawn to the need for those responsible for implementing the findings of the Transport Review to ensure that account was taken of these concerns.

- Reference was made to a specific instance where there had been a communication failure about transport provision. In reply the Head of Social Care (Adults) advised that an apology had been given to the service users and action taken to resolve matters.
- Concern was expressed about how realistic it would be to implement the review's recommendations within existing resources. It was noted that the review report acknowledged that the proposal for a Disabled Living Centre would require a further feasibility study. The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing advised that she considered that it would be feasible within existing resources to progress recommendations 2, 8 and 9 as set out in section 4 of the review report relating to service development and supervision of specialist staff through the appointment of a Team Manager and resourcing for short term breaks. However, the other recommendations in section 4 of the report would need further feasibility work. It was proposed that the recommendations in section 5 of the report would be progressed as feasible within existing resources. She confirmed that the review and its recommendations would now need to be referred to the Strategic Monitoring Committee for consideration. The Committee expressed the view that in the light of this advice, in forwarding the review to the Strategic Monitoring Committee, a distinction should be drawn between those recommendations which it was thought could or could not be progressed within existing resources.

RESOLVED

- That (a) the Strategic Monitoring Committee be recommended to endorse the findings of the review of services for people with a disability, subject to advising the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Strategic Housing) in considering the recommendations and preparing an Improvement Plan to have regard to the Committee's view:**
- (i) that recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9 as set out in section 4 of the review report could be implemented within existing resources and should be progressed;**
 - (ii) that the remaining recommendations in section 4 of the review report, recommendations 1, 6 & 7 should be the subject of further feasibility work to ensure that sufficient resources were available to implement them; and**
 - (iii) that the additional recommendations in section 5 of the report be progressed as feasible within existing resources.**
- (b) that the Strategic Monitoring Committee's attention be drawn to the need for those implementing the findings of the Transport Review to ensure that account is taken of concerns identified in the review of services for people with a disability regarding the provision of social care transport.**

28. PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2004

The Committee considered a report on the available Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators position (as at the second quarter) and current performance management work within the Social Care and Strategic Housing Directorate,

The report also included a summary of the Commission for Social Care Inspection's (CSCI's) star ratings, which assessed the performance of social services authorities across the Country and their capacity for improvement.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing expressed disappointment that the new CSCI assessment judged that the Council was providing a one star Service, having been judged as providing a two star service in the previous assessment. It was considered that performance against four particular indicators for Children's Services, which were delivered in partnership with other Directorates and agencies had heavily influenced the judgment. The Director advised that the Directorate was looking carefully at those indicators and she agreed to provide an informal briefing note to members of the Committee on the position.

RESOLVED

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

and

(b) areas of concern continue to be monitored and an informal briefing note circulated to members of the Committee on key indicators in Children's Services.

29. BUDGET MONITORING 2004/05 - 6 MONTHLY REPORT

The Committee was informed of the budget monitoring position for the Directorate for the first six months of the financial year 2004/2005.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing reported that the projected overspend on the social care revenue budget was some £700,000, as projected in August, with an underlying trend of £1million. The management action of which the Committee had previously been advised had prevented the projected overspend increasing but had not achieved a reduction. Further consideration was being given to what options were available to reduce expenditure. However, it had to be borne in mind that these discussions concerned services to vulnerable people and the capacity to make reductions was limited.

She noted that It also now appeared highly likely that there would be an overspend on the strategic housing revenue budget because of the large increase in expenditure needed to address homelessness.

Members acknowledged the pressures being faced and the efforts being made by staff to try to address the situation.

RESOLVED: That the budget monitoring report for the first six moths of the financial year 2004/2005 be noted.

30. IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATIONS INTO HOME CARE AND SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

The Committee was asked to note the progress of the exploratory programme for in-depth investigations of home support for older people and supported housing for people with mental health problems.

RESOLVED: That progress on the in-depth investigations be noted.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

