

PRESENTATION BY CABINET MEMBER TO SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – APRIL 2005

**BY COUNCILLOR MRS LO BARNETT
CABINET MEMBER (SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING)**

1. I made a presentation to the Committee in September 2003 on the policy issues affecting this programme area and the main priorities. Since that time the Council has responded to the Children Act by appointing Councillor Don Rule as the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services. My report this time therefore focuses on developments in Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing.
2. Since that presentation the following achievements have been realised which has involved a massive effort on the part of all relevant officers, and I would like to take this opportunity to record my thanks to every one for their fortitude and loyalty during a very difficult period:
 - The Hillside Intermediate Care Centre opened in November 2003, which has assisted in the reduction of delayed discharges from Hereford Hospitals Trust from a high base to nil. This change in service is helping people to return safely to their own homes.
 - The Transfer of the Council's Homes for Older People to SHAW took place in 2004. This was a very complex contract and demanded a great deal of time and effort in order to obtain the best possible results for service users and the Council.
 - The Business Case for Older People was presented to Cabinet in January 2004, securing additional investment of £700,000 for Older Peoples Services for 2004/05.
 - The Extra Care Housing project for Hereford City is under way, partly funded by a successful bid for Department of Health funding, Herefordshire Council and Extra Care Charitable Housing Trust. This partnership working will result in a very worthwhile scheme for older people, which has been successful in other areas of the country.
 - The Older Peoples Inspection report in July 2004 showed that Older Peoples Services showed "promising prospects for improvement".
 - The Strategic Housing Self Assessment achieved an excellent rating.
 - The in-house home care service has been reshaped into the STARRS reablement service, with little disruption to service users. All members of staff were seen on a one to one basis by the Service Manager responsible for the service. This change is of immense benefit to the people who need it, 800 hours per week across the county being provided by 80 reablement assistants with 10

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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senior members of staff. The new policy is more flexible and ensures staff time is used to the maximum benefit.

3. In my previous presentation I warned that budget plans for 2004/05 and onwards indicated a need for more financial investment, particularly for older people. The increased investment in Older Peoples Services for 2004/05 has resulted in this particular budget breaking even, but I am stressing the need for more investment to meet ever-increasing challenges in future years. The integration of Learning Disabilities and Mental Health has been a success, but the budgets for 2004/05 are showing an overspend which is giving rise to concern and the Learning Disabilities position is being investigated. The integration of the Community Equipment Service with the PCT is yet another change which is to be commended, but the pooled budget arrangements are to be strengthened, much more partnership working is needed and a great deal of research is to be undertaken for the future.
4. My main priorities for the coming year are to:
 - Take forward the recommendations of the new Vision for Adult Social Care, published 21st March 2005. This is a Government Green Paper dealing with "Independence, Well -being and Choice" of individuals, more partnership working with communities and the voluntary sector, plus being involved in prevention work. This document is out for consultation and at the moment does not indicate any additional resources being made available to local government.
 - Review the Budget Plans for 2005/06, recognising the need to achieve efficiency savings.
 - Drive forward the Extra Care Development to bring the project to a successful conclusion.
 - As a matter for priority, take forward the modernisation of the Learning Disabilities Service as endorsed by Cabinet, work closely with the PCT to reach a clear understanding on pooled budgets, to ensure that the budget for this area is brought under control in 2005/06.
 - Develop and enhance the Community Equipment Service as a matter of urgency, working in partnership with Housing and ICT in order to plan a futuristic service as soon as possible, with a report to Cabinet in September of this year.
 - Urgently address the Supporting People programme. There are severe difficulties for the Herefordshire Supporting People Partnership if the ODPM distribution formula is implemented as it stands. Herefordshire will be the 7th most adversely affected authority in England, facing a loss of approximately £1.85million over a 5 year period and means in the long term a loss of at least £4.2 million on 2003/2004 grant levels.
 - I appreciate the support of Cabinet for extra financial assistance and am very much aware that efficiency savings must be found. This will not be easy but there is a determination by senior officers to make sure that the savings are achieved.

Conclusion

5. I am in no doubt that 2005/06 will again be a very challenging year for Social Care and Strategic Housing, and one of even more change and innovation. I am particularly concerned about the Learning Disabilities agenda and Mental Health services but am confident if partnership working is driven forward, particularly on matters financial, a successful outcome will be achieved

6. Delivering the Supporting People Programme is not going to be easy. Homelessness is increasing in our County and this needs urgent attention, but the Supporting People Partnership has produced a strategy document covering a 5 year period, which is on its way to the ODPM with a covering letter from the Leader of Council. I wish to thank the officers and members of the Partnership for all their hard work in producing the document, bearing in mind that a further review will be necessary in 12 months.
7. Continuing to progress the Older Peoples Service achievement is also a matter of priority and concern. I am not unhappy with the Government's Green Paper but feel that words are all very well. However, delivering an ever-changing agenda without any obvious financial help from Government is no easy task, particularly when Herefordshire has an ever-increasing older population.
8. In conclusion I wish to make it very clear that even more investment is required in future years and that we all have to work more closely together with all our partners including our local communities to ensure that we put a great deal of effort into preventative work. At the same time we always need to be aware of the vulnerability of many people in their own homes or in care homes and this will always be a top priority.

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