

MINUTES of the meeting of Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday, 10th June, 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors: Mrs. E.M. Bew, R.B.A. Burke, K.G. Grumbley, G. Lucas,
R. Mills, Ms. G.A. Powell, Mrs. S.J. Robertson and P.G. Turpin

Mrs B Millman (Voluntary Sector Representative)

In attendance: Councillors T.M. James and R.M. Wilson

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs A.E. Gray and J.W. Hope M.B.E.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor G. Lucas substituted for Councillor Mrs A.E. Gray and Councillor Mrs S.J. Robertson for Councillor J.W. Hope. M.B.E.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the former Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee held on 5th April, 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. INDEPENDENCE, WELL-BEING AND CHOICE

The Committee received a report on the Department of Health Green Paper: Independence, Well-being and Choice, setting out a vision for the future of social care for adults in England.

A copy of the Green Paper and a document produced jointly by the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Social Services and the NHS Federation had been circulated separately to Members of the Committee.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing presented the report. She welcomed aspects of the Green Paper such as the proposals for individual budgets giving people greater freedom to select the type of care or support they wanted, but noted that there was no additional investment highlighted nor change programme support, as had been the case in respect of the proposals now enshrined in the Children Act 2004. There was also no detail on long overdue legislative reform and policy changes which would be required to achieve the Green Paper's stated objectives. The document also failed to take the opportunity to safeguard vulnerable

adults.

The Head of Social Care Adults observed that whilst individualised budgets were welcome there was a potential impact on the Council's ability to make the efficiency savings it was required to make in response to other government initiatives. The expectation appeared to be that the changes would be cost neutral.

The Committee acknowledged the points highlighted by the Director and Head of Social Care (Adults). The following additional comments were made in the course of discussion:

- It was unrealistic to expect the changes proposed to be cost neutral.
- The need for better training and better pay for staff did not appear to be taken into account.
- Service Users could find Direct Payments beneficial but could also find them complex. The Green Paper acknowledged this but did not appear to offer any solutions.
- That the extension of direct payments had implications for the voluntary sector which the document did not appear to take into account.
- Whilst section 2 of the Green Paper estimated a significant increase in the number of people aged over 85 by 2051 and identified them as the age group most likely to need nursing, residential or home care the document did not estimate what percentage of the group it was expected would actually need care.
- Section 2 of the report acknowledged that a disproportionate number of older people lived in rural areas. However, section 6 of the report on funding and fair access to care did not take account of the cost implications of this for rural local authorities.
- The investment needed to support people with learning disabilities was not present.
- That the principles and vision in the document were welcome but there was a lack of detail.

RESOLVED: That, following consultation with the Chairman, the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing be authorised to forward comments on the Green Paper made by the Committee as reflected above, together with any additional comments submitted separately by Members of the Committee, to the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health).

6. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING - STAGE 3 REPORT

The Committee considered the Stage 3 Report of the Best Value Review of Private Sector Housing Services.

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented the detailed Stage 3 report. The review's main recommendation was that the existing service should be developed by restructuring the existing teams and improving partnership working.

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FRIDAY,
10TH JUNE, 2005**

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

- Councillor K.G. Grumbley requested that as he had been unable to participate in the Review he did not wish to be listed as a Member of the Review Team.
- It would be helpful if Members were provided with clarification of their roles in both Best Value Reviews and Scrutiny reviews at the outset of each review.
- The report noted that the time taken for the approval of Disabled Facilities Grants from the date of referral was longest in Herefordshire compared with the other benchmarking authorities selected. This was principally because of the time clients had to wait for an occupational therapist to assess their eligibility to receive adaptations to properties. It was asked why this was not specifically reflected in the review's recommendation relating to the development of better partnership working between the Private Sector housing team and Health practitioners.

In reply it was noted that in many authorities occupational therapists were employed within social services departments, rather than by the Primary Care Trust as was the case in Herefordshire. Some plans were already being developed to address this issue and were intended to feature in the improvement plan arising from the Review. The recommendation in the report could be made more explicit. A further report would be made to the Committee on provision of occupational therapy services.

- That the Committee's future work programme would need to include work on homelessness, Houses in Multiple Occupation and housing for older people with mental health problems.
- In response to a question it was advised that the recent Cabinet decision to operate home improvement work as an in-house service should not have a negative budgetary impact. The Council would receive fees for the services provided.
- It was noted that there were issues to be addressed in relation to houses in multiple occupation and the position in Herefordshire would be complicated by the provisions of the Housing Act 2004. It had already been recognised that this was something to which the Committee would wish to return.
- It was advised that the Review's recommendations recognised the need to improve information on properties which had been adapted, to ensure that properties to which adaptations had already been made could be allocated to those most in need of such adaptations.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) the recommendations of the Stage 3 Report of Private Sector Housing be approved, as amended, and recommended to the Strategic Monitoring Committee;**
- (b) Members be provided with clarification of their roles in both Best Value reviews and Scrutiny reviews at the outset of each review;**

and

- (c) a report on provision of occupational therapy services be made to the meeting scheduled for October.

**7. SOCIAL SERVICES AND STRATEGIC HOUSING BUDGET MONITORING
2004/05 - FINAL YEAR END REPORT**

The Committee was informed of the budget monitoring position for Social Care and Strategic Housing for the final year end position for the financial year 2004/05.

The Head of Business Services reported that the final year end position for social care showed an overspend of £1,484,000. The outcome of a review undertaken independently of the Directorate had now been reported to Cabinet and a further report was to be made setting out proposals to manage the budget and the service implications. It was proposed that the Committee would be informed of the outcome of this process at its next meeting, together with a recovery plan for the position on the learning disability services budget.

The homelessness budget was also overspent and it was proposed that an improvement plan on this aspect would also be reported to the Committee. It was noted that a virement from the Environment budget had been approved by the Cabinet as an immediate measure.

The report concluded that the position on both the Social Care and Strategic Housing budgets was very concerning. Although the expenditure on exceptional items was not expected to be repeated in 2005/06, there would be considerable challenges in managing the commitments that had been entered into. Developing/redesigning existing provision and re-commissioning accordingly was the main strategy particularly in learning disability services. This would involve making difficult decisions on the needs of individual service users.

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

- The Head of Social Care (Adults) confirmed that efforts were being made to target resources on those in need. Provision was reviewed to ensure that it was still necessary and appropriate, and this had permitted the redirection of some resources. However, there were complications associated with changing services to which people had become accustomed. In addition the Council was constantly facing the budgetary consequences of the fact that savings of people who had funded their own care were continuously becoming reduced to the point where the Council was required to finance the care itself.
- The Head of Business Services advised that the budgetary pressures had been identified at quite an early stage, but the measures put in place to reduce expenditure had proved harder to achieve within the necessary timescale than expected, because commitments had already been made. This problem would need to be taken into account in making future savings plans.

RESOLVED:

- THAT**
- (a) the final year end budget monitoring report for the financial year 2004/05 be noted;
 - (b) the recovery plan for learning disability services be reported to the Committee in October;
 - (c) a report on the plan to improve the position in relation to the

**homelessness service and budget be reported to the
Committee in October;**

and

- (d) the Committee be advised of the revised detailed spending
plans for 2005/2006 as a whole.**

8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2004/2005

The Committee was informed of the available Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators position and current performance management work within the Directorate.

The Performance Improvement Manager presented the report detailing progress.

In the course of discussion concern was reiterated about the considerable increase in homelessness.

RESOLVED:

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

and

- (b) areas of concern continue to be monitored, noting in particular
the increasing level of homelessness.**

9. BEST VALUE REVIEWS - UPDATE

The Committee was invited to note progress to date on the implementation of the Best Value reviews of Social Care Services for people who have a physical disability, and Carers' Information & Support Services.

RESOLVED: That progress to date be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.20 a.m.

CHAIRMAN

