

Minutes of the Meeting of the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 July 2005

Present:

Members of the Committee	Councillor Les Caborn
	“ Jose Compton
	“ Jill Dill-Russell
	“ Richard Dodd
	“ Anne Forwood (replacing Mick Stanley for this meeting)
	“ Nina Knapman
	“ Anita Macaulay
	“ Helen McCarthy (replacing Marion Haywood for this meeting)
	“ Mota Singh (Vice Chair)
	“ Ian Smith
	“ Ray Sweet
	“ Sid Tooth (Chair)

Cabinet Portfolio Holders	Councillor Colin Hayfield (Adult and Community Services)
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Officers	Bill Basra, Principal Review Officer
	Elaine Bettger, Assistant to Liberal Democrat Group
	John Bull, Head of Adult Services
	Kushal Birla, Head of Library & Information Service
	Marion Davis, Director of Social Care and Health
	Desmond Heaps, Principal Librarian Community
	Noel Hunter, Director of Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards
	Martin Lake, Principal Review Officer
	John Lyons, Area Planning Co-ordinator
	Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator
	Jane Pollard, Assistant County Solicitor

1. General

The Chair welcomed Councillors Anne Forwood and Helen McCarthy to the meeting.

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marion Haywood and Mick Stanley.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Jose Compton declared a personal interest in Item 7 as a member of the Warwick District Council for Voluntary Service.

Councillor Jill Dill-Russell declared a personal interest in Item 7 as a member of the management committee of the Voluntary Organisation.

Councillor Anne Forwood declared a personal interest in Item 5 as a member of the management board of an organisation that dealt with direct payments on behalf of individuals, in Item 7 as a member of the North Warwickshire Council for Voluntary Service and the North Warwickshire Volunteer Bureau and in Item 9 as a member of the Rowan Organisation, Atherstone.

Councillor Anita Macaulay declared a personal interest as her father received care from Social Services.

Councillor Sid Tooth declared a personal interest as his daughter received care from the Health Services and in Item 7 as a member of the Nuneaton Homestart Management Committee.

(3) Minutes of the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on the 21 June 2005

The minutes of the meeting of the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 June 2005 were agreed as a correct record with the following correction:

Page 4 – 5. Developing Short Breaks (Respite) Care Services for Disabled Children and Young People – paragraph 3

16 July 2005 to be changed to 16 June 2005.

Matters Arising

Page 4 – 5. Strategic Review of Older People's Services

John Bull reported that Dame Yve Buckland had been invited to give a presentation to the Committee at the 6 September meeting on the outcome of the Review of Older People's Services and the ongoing work resulting from that Review. Her availability was still to be confirmed. He did note that work was ongoing and that an Action Plan was being developed.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

3. Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards Performance Report Full Year 2004-2005

Members considered the report of the Director of Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards detailing the Directorate's achievements of actions and targets within the 2004/05 Service Plan.

During the ensuing the discussion the following points were noted:

1. Community Support Officers attended some mobile libraries to give safety advice and highlight safety issues. Their purpose was to be visible and to act as the eyes and ears of the community, feeding information to their senior officers. The police were expected to review their work with mobile libraries and the outcomes of their review would be brought back to the Committee.
2. Equity of opening hours in different areas would be considered as part of the Best Value Review.
3. Engaging a variety of users with different needs in communities through a large range of activities had been challenging with increased populations and limited resources.
4. There had been a decrease in visitor numbers to museums as well as to towns over the past couple of years, which contributed to the decrease in donations.
5. Members commended the Department for their good work.

Having considered the Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards (LHTS) excellent performance for 2004/05, Members endorsed the proposed remedial actions.

4. Supporting Learning in Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards (LHTS): Accredited Workforce Development Programme

Members considered the report of the Director of Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards informing Members of the recently established workforce development programme "Supporting Learning in Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards".

Kushal Birla noted that as a front line service, the programme had been developed to support learners and learning to ensure that key staff were trained to deliver this service. The programme was separate to Investors in People (IIP) but did contribute to IIP, particularly in terms of competencies.

Members noted and supported the Workforce Development Programme “Supporting Learning in Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards” which is accredited by the Open College Network.

5. Departmental Performance Report – Social Services/Adults

Members considered the report of the Director of Social Care and Health outlining performance during 2004/05 for Adult Services within Social Services and produced as part of the County Council’s performance management system.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. The Department were still responsible for reviewing the care of users who had opted for direct payments and support was provided for individuals experiencing difficulty with direct payments.
2. There would be an annual performance assessment of Adult Social Services on 15 August. This would look at performance and prospects of the service and would be scored with a rating of 1 – 4 (4 being the best). A score of 1 or 2 would affect the County Council CPA rating.
3. Within the Adult Social Services spending block, there was an amount identified for older people and an amount identified for adults. The greatest pressure on the budget was the cost of residential care for adults with learning difficulties and the Council spent more than Government suggested on disabilities, in line with other Social Services Departments.
4. A tendering exercise was being undertaken to reduce the number of major providers of domiciliary care to 10-15 to provide more efficient, effective care for users.
5. Members agreed to hold a review of Domiciliary Care.
6. No fines had been imposed this year for delayed discharges within Warwickshire hospitals. It was agreed that the only way to continue to tackle this was through partnership working.
7. The Committee were reminded that Members had agreed to only give care services to those with critical or substantial needs and that Recommendation d) was for Members to agree to receive a report providing fuller analysis of the implications and cost of lowering FACS threshold criteria. John Bull agreed to circulate to Members the definitions of different levels of needs.

8. A working group with officers and independent service providers had been set up to look at concerns highlighted in the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) Report and a report would be brought to the Committee on what the formal response to the OFT would be.
9. It was agreed that as Members were accountable to users, that they should be invited to attend the Customer First Conference.
10. Members thanked the Department for the report, which reflected credit on the Department working with limited resources.

Having considered the Social Services (Adult) Department's performance for the full year 2004/05, Members endorsed the proposed remedial actions and noted the intention to produce a more detailed report for Members providing fuller analysis of the implications and cost of lowering FACS criteria.

6. Improving ICT to Mobile Libraries – Proposed Scrutiny Review

Members considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive proposing a review in the area of mobile libraries and ICT.

Martin Lake outlined three key areas within the report:

1. The mobile library fleet was due for renewal and therefore any input would have to be made within a tight timeline.
2. The improvement in ICT would carry forward the county vision for ICT.
3. The quality of the new fleet would impact on the Customer Access Strategy.

During the ensuing discussion, the following issues were highlighted:

- i. Mobile libraries with improved facilities and links with a range of service providers could make a major impact, especially to isolated areas.
- ii. Plans were for smaller vehicles to service smaller communities, with targeted facilities.
- iii. There were no plans to cut services to the 230 village communities currently served.
- iv. Extra resources had gone into the housebound service to assist users with mobility problems.
- v. The Best Value Review would look at the needs of communities and service provision, which included the mobile service, static libraries and community outreach.
- vi. The fleet had to be replaced and the specifications for the replacement were being worked on now. Any enhancements to these would have to be costed and decisions made on that basis.
- vii. The Committee noted the imaginative way the Department was seeking to provide essential services to all communities.

The Committee agreed to set up task and finish group to investigate the issue of improving Information Communication Technology (ICT) to Mobile Libraries within the objectives, methodology and timescales set out in the report and that the following councillors would form the Task and Finish Group who will submit a final report to the October meeting of the Committee:

Councillor Ray Sweet (Labour)
Councillor Les Caborn (Conservative)
Councillor Jill Dill-Russell (Liberal Democrat).

7. Review of Relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector

Members considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive providing a further update on progress in implementing the review of the County Council's relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).

John Lyons raised the following points:

1. Government had produced guidance some years ago for Local Government to engage more and sub-contract more services to the VCS.
2. The CPA assessment had highlighted the Council's inconsistent relationship with the VCS.
3. Social Services had undertaken a review of all contracts with the VCS which ran parallel to and would be included in the development of a strategy and action plan to guide working relationship between the Council and VCS.
4. The National Association of Voluntary Sector Organisations had stated that they did not want to be viewed as a gap-filler in services provided by Local Government.

During the ensuing discussion, the following issues were highlighted:

- i. Members were informed that a leaflet on "Appointments to Outside Bodies" was available for Members and any queries could be taken up with Jane Pollard.
- ii. Members noted the great amount of good work carried out by the VCS and the need for organisations to be sustainable and for the new strategy to ensure best value and quality provision being provided to the community.
- iii. It was important that the health and spirit of the sector was upheld as a traditional and vital part of the way of life in this country.

The Committee noted progress towards developing a Strategy to guide working relationships between the County Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector and recommends Cabinet to support this work.

8. Social Inclusion Strategy 2005-08

Members considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive updating progress in developing the Social Inclusion Strategy.

The Committee noted Cabinet's decision to defer approval of the Social Inclusion Strategy to enable further work to be done on developing performance indicators and that a further report would be brought to the next meeting of this Committee.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

9. Update on the Direct Payments Scheme

Members noted the progress made in implementing Direct Payments and agreed to receive a further report on one year's time.

10. Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to the Work of this Committee

Members agreed the provisional items for future meetings and agreed to hold a review on domiciliary care.

11. Any other Items

There were no other items.

Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 4.10 p.m.