

Minutes of the Meeting of the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 May 2006 at Shire Hall, Warwick

Present:

Members of the Committee	Councillor Les Caborn Jose Compton “ Jill Dill-Russell “ Richard Dodd “ Marion Haywood “ Nina Knapman “ Frank McCarney “ Ian Smith “ Mick Stanley
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Other County Councillors	Councillor Colin Hayfield, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services Councillor Alan Farnell, Leader of the Council
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Officers	Graeme Betts, Strategic Director Adult, Health & Community Services Louise Denton, Assistant to Liberal Democrat Group Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager Caroline Slane, Communications Officer Peter Sutton, Head of the Adult and Community Learning Service
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Also Attending	Jas Dhillon, Programme Manager ACL, Learning & Skills Council John Dwyer, Quality Manager, Learning & Skills Council
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1. Appointment of Chair

Councillor Mick Stanley, seconded by Councillor Jose Compton, proposed that Councillor Frank McCarney be appointed Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Frank McCarney be appointed Chair of the Committee.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor Frank McCarney, seconded by Councillor Jose Compton, proposed that Councillor Mick Stanley be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Mick Stanley be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. General

Councillor Frank McCarney asked that condolences be extended to the parents, siblings and son of Councillor Anita Macaulay following her sudden death. Members added that the Committee would miss her valuable contribution. The Committee stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect to Councillor Macaulay.

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mota Singh and Ray Sweet.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as set out below:

- (1) by virtue of them serving as District/Borough Councillors as follows:-

Councillors Les Caborn and Jose Compton - Warwick District Council.

Councillor Richard Dodd - Rugby Borough Council.

Councillors Mick Stanley, Ray Sweet and Sid Tooth - North Warwickshire Borough Council.

- (2) Councillor Jill Dill-Russell declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 in view of her daughter, who lives with her, works for Stratford Mencap and works with adults who have learning disabilities.

(3) Minutes of the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on the 5 April 2006

The minutes of the meeting of the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5 April 2006 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising

None.

4. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

5. Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2006/07

Members considered the report of the Strategic Director for Adult Health and Community Services outlining the Adult and Community Learning Development Plan which would run from 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007.

Peter Sutton noted that the Plan had been developed in consultation with the LSC and that the Service was grateful for the help received from the LSC in trying to mitigate the changes brought about by the funding cut from the LSC. He noted the following points:

- i. The programme would have to be adjusted to accommodate the 9% loss in income in real terms from the LSC.
- ii. Warwickshire would be required to introduce fees for the first time, by 1 August 2006. This was driven by central Government policy that those learners who were able to, should contribute to the cost of their own learning.
- iii. There was a requirement to broaden the range and mix of the current provision, which concentrated on essential skills, ICT and family learning to disadvantaged communities. The range of provision would need to include adult "leisure and pleasure" courses previously provided by FE colleges.
- iv. The Plan reflected the impetus to develop partnership working focussing on locality work.
- v. There were a range of implications for the shift to mainstream provision, including the impact on the market place, staff and the service as a whole.
- vi. The service had annual targets in terms of learner numbers and their contracts with the LSC would be threatened if these numbers were not sustained.
- vii. Disabled learners and learners in disadvantaged areas and on benefits needed to be protected.
- viii. The service was anxious to support older learners and hoped to have a greater engagement with this group through the "leisure and pleasure" market.
- ix. The Plan provided a good basis as a policy that would be able to react to any future changes in grant.

Jas Dhillon and John Dwyer of the Learning & Skills Council gave a presentation outlining the LSC role in funding and planning of Adult

Learning in Coventry and Warwickshire. The following points were highlighted:

- a. Government's prime obligation was 16-19 and learners achieving their first Level 2 with skills for life being a top priority.
- b. The LSC did not fund all learning provision but was involved with planning together with providers such as Local Authorities, 6th Form Colleges, FE Colleges and work based learning.
- c. 7 Area Partnership Teams were being set up across Coventry and Warwickshire to allow for a closer and more specific focus within local areas for implementation across the whole LSC remit.
- d. Targets for fee income were expected to increase and providers needed to be working towards a strategy to target learners able to pay.
- e. The County Council needed to be represented on the newly formed Regional Group, which would hold quarterly meetings looking at implementation strategies and a common approach in the context of the West Midlands Regional Strategy.
- f. There were some exemptions to fee paying including 16-19, learners receiving benefits, basic skill learners and those studying for their first full Level 2 qualification.
- g. 2006/07 would be considered a transition year with some flexibilities to assist providers move forward with the changes.
- h. The LSC would like to help facilitate discussions around offers of "Learning for Personal Development and Well Being" by the County Council and other organisations.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

1. Members agreed that the new system would be difficult to monitor and requested regular reporting to the Committee.
2. There was a need to ensure that processes were not overly bureaucratic in order to sustain learner numbers through easy access, cost effectiveness and reasonable fees.
3. The service needed to maximise every source of funding available from both outside sources and other areas of the County Council in order to alleviate the position.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet the adoption of the Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2006/07 and recorded their support of the proposed charging system.

6. Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) – A Well-being Threshold

Members considered the report of the Strategic Director Adult, Health & Community Services building on the report and discussion at the last meeting of the Committee and outlining how fair access criteria work.

Graeme Betts made the following points:

1. The report outlined the eligibility criteria in more detail and simpler language and highlighted the focus on well-being through simple and accessible services for all.
2. Partnership work with District/Borough Councils, Supporting People and the Voluntary and Community Sector was integral to improving daily living assistance.
3. A small project team working in this area was expected to be launched by the end of June with targets to provide help to +1,500 users by the end of the year and 2-2,500 by the end of 2007.
4. £300,000 of the £500,000 allocated in the budget would be used to provide low level support and assistance in the first year.
5. A report would be brought to the Committee in October/November on the results of the Performance Assessment Framework, setting out whether numbers of users were improving and early teething problems.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- a. The role of Adult Services was primarily one of assessing which required some flexibility.
- b. It was essential for the County Council to develop their own staff working to a high standard and further information on this would be brought back to the Committee.
- c. Work would be done with Care Managers looking at the changing role of staff in light of the White Paper and modernisation within the Council. Staff would need to put the customer first and take account of wider family and social networks.
- d. Reporting needed to be totally honest and transparent with clear measurement of implementation and progress against agreed targets. These reports needed to be meaningful and easily understandable showing the way forward and including information such as vacancy levels of social workers and delivery of training plans.
- e. Members requested that information be sent to them by e-mail listing roles, responsibilities and contact details of local staff.

Having considered the report, the Committee agreed to:

1. Note the general arrangements for use and interpretation of "Fair Access"; and
2. Note the preparation for project managing the introduction of the new "well being" threshold; and
3. Receive regular reports to monthly meeting monitoring the longer-term development and implementation of new arrangements for low intensity support.

4. Receive a report in October/November 2006 once implementation of the system had begun.

7. 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 Forward Plan items and agreed that meetings would be held on a monthly basis in the future.

The Chair noted that the service was moving into a new area and there was a need for Councillors to get organised and to talk to staff and customers on the ground. He added that the Committee would need to meet more often looking at issues in greater depth to improve the service for all users. The work programme would need to include:

- CSCI requirements
- Changes required within the organisation
- Affects on staff and the best way of supporting them
- Improved Performance management and Information systems measuring a range of indicators such as finance, HR, quality, diversity and culture and risk management
- Enhanced involvement with partners.

Members noted their concern that the work programme was balanced and reflected all areas facing challenges within the remit of the Committee such as Libraries, Heritage and Culture.

Members agreed that the following items be included on the work programme:

- (1) Regular Performance Report with key indicators (financial, HR, service) and highlighting areas of concern.
- (2) A strategy towards building an organisation sustainable for the future including the vision, structures, culture, strategies and systems.
- (3) Financial Position relating to disabilities
- (4) Engagements and involvements and way forward.

8. Any Other Business

There were no items of urgent business.

Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 11.40 a.m.