

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Adult & Community Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Date of Committee **12 July 2006**

Report Title **Enhanced Engagement with Users and Staff**

Summary Discussions between the Chair of Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Members of the Committee at recent meetings have highlighted the desire of the Committee to be more engaged with users and staff to improve their knowledge and understanding of services and to equip them to undertake their role more effectively.

The Strategic Director for Adult, Health and Community Services agreed to draft a paper outlining ways in which this engagement could be enhanced for further discussion and agreement. It is important to recognise that this process will evolve and that what is required now is unlikely to be what is required in the future.

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Would the recommendation decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision] No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

Other Committees

Local Member(s)

Other Elected Members Cllr McCarney, Cllr Compton, Cllr Dodd

Cabinet Member Cllr Colin Hayfield, Adult and Community Services

- Chief Executive
- Legal Alison Hallworth, Adult & Community Team
Leader, Corporate Legal Services
- Finance Philip Lumley Holmes, Financial Services
Manager
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION Yes

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by
this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

**Adult & Community Services Overview & Scrutiny
Committee - 12 July 2006**

Enhanced Engagement with Users and Staff

**Report of the Strategic Director, Adult, Health &
Community Services**

Recommendation

Members of Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to discuss the suggestions in this paper and to agree a way forward. Officers can then implement the approach favoured by the Committee.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Discussions between the Chair of Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Members of the Committee at recent meetings have highlighted the desire of the Committee to be more engaged with users and staff to improve their knowledge and understanding of services and to equip them to undertake their role more effectively.
- 1.2. The Strategic Director for Adult, Health and Community Services agreed to draft a paper outlining ways in which this engagement could be enhanced for further discussion and agreement. It is important to recognise that this process will evolve and that what is required now is unlikely to be what is required in the future.

2. Visits to Services

- 2.1. Visits by Councillors are unquestionably popular amongst service users and staff. Both groups relish the opportunity to engage with Councillors and to show them what the service is like – both good and bad. The issue is then to establish what the best format is for any specific visit and this will vary from service to service. The principles that need to be borne in mind are that if there are too many Councillors it can reduce the effectiveness of the visit and reduce the opportunities for proper engagement. If the visit is too short then the benefit may be lost. If only some users or staff get the opportunity to speak to Councillors then a partial view may come across.

- 2.2. In short, the visit needs to be properly planned, the purpose needs to be clear, everyone needs to prepare properly and a programme should be established and followed. Also, there should be a report back to the Committee.
- 2.3. Another point that needs to be borne in mind is that a considerable amount of adult social care services are delivered by private and voluntary organisations and in partnership, eg with the PCT.
- 2.4. Also, the focus in discussions so far has largely been on adult social care services but there are a range of other services which require a different approach.
- 2.5. On a practical basis, and this also links to discussion on engagement with users below, it would make sense for Members to visit services within the District or Borough they represent or if this is not possible then perhaps to cover north and south. There are some disadvantages to this approach but the advantages probably outweigh them.
- 2.6. Taking these points together, it is proposed that Members agree a programme of visits for in-house services, commissioned services and partnership services covering the full range of services within the Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate. Members would cover specific geographical areas and report back to the Committee on a monthly basis. If this approach is broadly acceptable then a draft programme covering the next year could be pulled together for agreement by the Committee. Visits could start in September.
- 2.7. In September, this Committee will look at Residential Care and it is proposed that Members review their S26 responsibilities for our own residential homes. This will entail visits to residential homes and if this is agreed then these visits will be built into the programme.

3. Engaging with users

- 3.1 While it is desirable to engage with users while undertaking visits, systems are being developed to ensure users can influence policy, planning and delivery of services. It is important that Councillors engage with the groups that are being established to promote the voice of users. This demonstrates recognition of the importance of the user voice and the structures that are being established to formalise this approach.
- 3.2 While there are county-wide groups, there are also local groups and the Committee should establish means for engaging with users at both the county and local levels. At the county-wide level, it might be agreed that the Committee will meet formally with the County-wide users' forum on an annual or six monthly basis. This formal meeting could be used, for example, to check progress on the implementation of issues that have come up at the annual conference. Also, it might be agreed that the Committee will invite representatives from the County-wide users' forum to attend Committee meetings.

3.3 At a local level, a different approach could be adopted. Local user groups could invite members from the Committee and other Councillors from the Local Area committees to attend meetings with them to hear about specific issues relating to services and to broader issues within the local area. These issues could be picked up at the appropriate level whether this be local or county-wide.

4. Conclusion

4.1. It is acknowledged that currently, Councillors have considerable contact with users and staff. The proposals for discussion in this paper are seeking to establish a formal process to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to engaging with users and to seeing at first hand what services are being delivered and the views of users and staff about them.

4.2. Members of Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to discuss the suggestions in this paper and to agree a way forward. Officers can then implement the approach favoured by the Committee.

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June 2006