

AT A MEETING

- of the -

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE**

PANEL held at the Council House,
Walsall on **Thursday 26 January 2006**
at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor Oliver	(Chair)
Councillor Walker	(Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Ault	
Councillor Barton	
Councillor McCracken	
Councillor D. Pitt	
Councillor Robertson	

OFFICERS PRESENT

Dave Martin	(Executive Director, Social Care & Supported Housing))
Kathy McAteer	(Assistant Director, Adult Services)
Andy Burns	
James Walsh	
Brandon Scott-Omenka	
Pat Warner	

OBSERVER

Kevin Davies	(IDeA)
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CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes in membership at this meeting.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Munir and Councillor Woodruff.

RECEIPT OF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

Councillor Pitt declared a personal interest as an employee of the Regional Ambulance Service and also by virtue of his brother Councillor M. Pitt being a portfolio holder for housing.

MINUTESRESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2005, copies having been previously circulated to each member of the panel be approved and signed by the chair as a correct record.

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/7-2010/11 AND DRAFT CORPORATE
REVENUE BUDGET 2006/7-2010/11

Reports which had been submitted to cabinet for consideration were submitted: -

(see annexed)

The panel welcomed Andy Burns who introduced the documents and advised members that the corporate revenue budget would be presented first. He said that the objective of tonight's meeting was to update members on the corporate position and on investment and savings changes since the previous scrutiny meeting for the services within the panel's remit.

He reminded members of the progress to date of the budget process which, following final consultation with scrutiny panel's in January would culminate in Cabinet receiving the recommendations on the 8 February and for Council to make its final decision on the 6 March 2006.

Dave Martin advised the Panel of the national and local context of the Social Care Services. He referred to the strong push on modernisation, integrated working and on prevention. Individualised care, direct payments and choice were also key elements of the modernisation agenda together with performance improvement. The national context perceived a health service in transition with the building of new bridges and the separation of children's services. The white paper being published shortly will put major budget pressures on adult services and the housing legislation means there will be a need to revise relationships with the private sector.

In terms of the local picture, the Social Care budgets is below comparative groups and there is pressure on budgets. He went on to advise members of the present condition of the various services within Social Care i.e. Learning Disability, Mental Health, Young Adults and Disability Services, Older People's Services, Housing and the set of infrastructure within Social Care relating to IT procurement and performance management.

He referred to the improvement in Learning Disabilities within Walsall; the recovery of the Mental Health Services which had regained a second star; the Young Adults with Disability Services which was a brand new service; the Older People's Services which poses the biggest challenge for Walsall.

He referred to the Housing Services which he said is between inspections and is expected to have a performance overview on this occasion as opposed to a complete inspection.

The meeting thanked Dave Martin for his update.

ITEM 4

Andy Burns went on to remind members of the questions put to them at the November budget meeting relating to scrutiny's views on what they felt was missing in terms of priorities; what their priority orders were for the new investments and the disinvestment proposals; suggestions for alternative disinvestments and finally for members to comment on the projected level of council tax increase.

Members were reminded of the Panel's recommendations to cabinet following that November meeting. He proceeded to update the panel on the current position since that recommendation.

The settlement had been received and the Gershon report had requested a three year budget setting period and also for council tax. Formula grant distribution changes had been suggested and provision had been made for dedicated school grants.

Cabinet had recommended a council tax increase of 3.94%. The total new investments were calculated at £2.904 million and the total savings and efficiencies which includes the previously in scope services totalled £8.465 million. The corporate balance for the capital programme was therefore just under £70 million.

He further confirmed that the settlement which Walsall has received is £1 million less than expected.

James Walsh summarised the changes to the draft revenue programme following the recommendations to cabinet from the November scrutiny meeting. In respect of the new investments proposed, a number of changes have been made:

- The total proposed investments for the years 2006/7 has been reduced to £539,000; for the years 2007/8 it has reduced from £1.659 million to £1.327 million. The years 2008/9 it has been reduced from £2.28 million to £1.950 million.

Efficiencies proposed had also been changed as follows: -

- For the years 2006/7 the figure is now £1.435 million, for 2007/8 the figure is now £1.430 million and for the years 2008/9 the figure is now £1.430 million.

The panel thanked James for his update and agreed to go through the appendices setting out the various services and to comment as necessary.

A number of questions were raised in respect of the budget reduction proposals and members were happy with the responses given by officers at the meeting.

Concern was expressed, however, about the proposed reduction in the provision to grants to voluntary bodies.

A question was raised about the thinking behind the reduction of this budget which would result in the cessation of some voluntary services, such as, Home Start which would eventually have to be replaced because of the invaluable service it provides, at an increased cost.

ITEM 4

Members inquired how much of the £84 thousand proposed reduction would be allocated to Social Care.

Dave Martin advised the panel that it was not possible at this stage to indicate how much would be given to individual voluntary bodies until the budget had been set.

A suggestion was made that voluntary bodies could be the type of service recommended for inclusion in a three year budget setting period.

Members considered the Older People's Services and the proposed budget reduction to the level of external day care of a £100 thousand for the year 2006/7.

Councillor Oliver requested that a list of the independent sector contracts and information about the total budget be submitted to him.

James Walsh advised members of the current position of the capital programme as it relates to Social Care. The current draft capital programme for 2006/7 totals £67.985 million and it comprises mainstream and non mainstream schemes.

Members were given the opportunity to comment on all the Social Care schemes.

Councillor Oliver raised a question in relation to the multi sensory scheme. It was unclear where it should be placed within the budget, whether on the reserve list or the list of schemes recommended for funding. He requested that the information be submitted to him.

RESOLVED

That the information set out in the documents presented to the meeting be noted subject to the concerns raised during the discussions and the additional information requested.

PANEL'S REPORT TO CABINET DATED 18 JANUARY 2006

The report setting out the panel's recommendations from its meeting in November to cabinet in respect of the budget was submitted: -

(see annexed)

Members received and noted this report.

FEEDBACK FROM SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS

Health Scrutiny Panel Minutes of 15 December 2005 and 12 January 2006

The minutes were submitted: -

(see annexed)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of both meetings be received and noted.

CPA HOUSING WORKING GROUP 8 DECEMBER 2005

The minutes of that meeting were submitted: -

(see annexed)

RESOLVED

That the minutes be received and noted.

The chairman at this point advised the meeting that a further set of minutes on the CPA Housing Working Group had been circulated to members separate to the agenda and would be considered at this meeting. Those minutes were dated 17 January 2006.

The chairman advised members that at that meeting the CPA Working Group had decided that as the original remit of the group was to monitor progress up to and immediately beyond an inspection, that the remit of the group had been fulfilled and that the group should therefore be disbanded.

Members agreed and it was further RESOLVED: -

That the CPA Housing Improvement Plan Joint Working Group be disbanded.

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS FOR INFORMATION

Members noted the items set out on the agenda for consideration by cabinet at future meetings.

Members further noted the resolution of cabinet following scrutiny's recommendations in relation to the location of a short breaks unit for people with learning disabilities.

David Martin advised the panel that officers would be meeting with the Local Neighbourhood Partnership on Monday to discuss this issue further.

In relation to the reprovision of community meals, the panel was advised that an advert would be going out in respect of the appointment of a contractor.

The panel was also advised that a meeting would take place with Councillor Oliver on the 7 February to discuss the scrutiny process in relation to the redesign and reprovision of Older People's Services.

The panel agreed at this stage to consider the late item which had been circulated following the publication of the agenda.

SOCIAL CARE PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT – 2006/7

The report of the Executive Director was submitted: -

(see annexed)

The panel welcomed Brandon Scott-Omenka who addressed the panel in respect of this issue.

Brandon advised the panel that this report had already been submitted to cabinet on the 18 January 2006 and the document relates to the rating of Social Care Services in Walsall. Walsall is now providing services at a two star level and together with the assessment on Children's and Adult Services this equates to 58% of councils and is therefore industry standard. The actions which have been taken to achieve excellence by 2008 will be embedded within all council plans, from the directorate service plan to the individual team plans and these will be finalised by the end of March 2006.

He said that to ensure the progress to excellence is continued a new strategic performance board for the two new directorates of Social Care and Inclusion and Children and Young People will closely monitor the areas earmarked for improvement against the service plans and score cards.

He went on to advise members of the areas within the children's services for which excellent achievements have been attained within 2004/5 and also those achievements within the adult services within that period.

He went on to list the social care priorities for 2006/7 within the children's services and adult services and went on to say that the improvement in adult services would as previously referred to within the budget discussion take longer to achieve, but that the work was continuing, to ensure that this improvement is achieved.

The panel thanked Brandon for his presentation and RESOLVED: -

That this panel thanks officers for their hard work and commend them for the improvement in the services.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.30 p.m.