

AT A MEETING

- of the -

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE  
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE**

**PANEL** held at the Council House,  
Walsall on **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March  
2005** at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Councillor Oliver (Chair)  
Councillor Woodruff (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Ault  
Councillor Barton  
Councillor McCracken  
Councillor Pitt  
Councillor Robertson  
Councillor Walker

In attendance: Ray Walters TGWU  
Dave Harrison TGWU  
Sue Cope TGWU  
Chris Kibble GMB

166 **APOLOGIES**

None

167 **SUBSTITUTIONS**

None

168 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Councillor Pitt declared a personal non prejudicial interest as an employee of the West Midlands Ambulance NHS Trust.

169 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 January 2005**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel held on 24 January 2005 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record by the Chair.

170 Working Groups

170a Health Scrutiny 31 January

Resolved

That the notes of the meeting be received.

170b Modernising Services Work Group 2 and 8 February

Resolved

That the notes of the meetings be received.

170c CPA Housing Improvement Work Group 24 February

Resolved

That the draft notes of the meeting be received.

171 Community Meals Service

Caroline Byrt presented to the panel the current position on the remodelling of Walsall's Community Meals Service. She explained the profile of the current service and the drivers for change. The consultation process was explained along with outcomes of that consultation. The preferred option was:-

- The provision of a meals service that can be delivered daily as hot food or weekly / fortnightly as frozen food.
- Is in keeping with national trends and best practice.
- Enables flexibility and choice.
- Acceptable to service users.
- Will ensure the development of a quality meals service.

The next stage was to specify the service, including decisions on the option for prime cook. From there the service would be procured and the changes managed.

David Martin explained to the panel that the preferred model maintains daily delivery of hot meals 365 days per year for those that need that service. The one option for this is prime cook and there would be an opportunity for the current service to continue to provide hot food daily.

Representatives from the Trade Unions had been invited to the meeting by the panel to give their views. Concerns were raised by the Trade Unions that this was a cost cutting exercise and that vulnerable people would be left alone with frozen food. The important daily contact with dedicated staff would be lost. They also expressed concern that the consultation and tasting sessions had been inadequate and that the new service would provide less nutritional food than at present. The Trade Unions felt that meals on wheels was part of a package of care and that some vulnerable people would lose out as not

everyone who currently received the service had a care plan. These safe and well checks were vital and concern was expressed about who would pick this up and the cost of this might outweigh any saving in meals on wheels. The Trade Unions were not convinced that there would be a big pick up of the frozen food option because of evidence from other local authorities. They felt strongly that the current staff provided a quality service and they did not want redundancies among cooks and drivers that would result from these proposals.

David Martin explained that for some people, frozen food was an option that they wanted and it was vital to be able to offer this choice. At present those that needed a hot meal each day would continue to receive one. The key issue was a proper risk assessment and care plan for everyone. Vulnerable people would get the service they needed, and those that wanted the flexibility of having frozen meals should have the option.

The issues of choice and risk assessment was discussed by the panel as for many people the issue was not provision of meals itself, as this was only part of a much wider package of care. There were concerns that a proper preventative system should be in place to, that risk assessments needed to be in place and that service users should have a genuine choice about the service they received in the future.

David Martin explained that the in house provider had not been ruled out and there was a business opportunity for them if they would become more flexible. However, the primary objective was delivering to local people the service they required. The quality of the food would be specified in the contract following nutritional standards. He emphasised that this was not a cost cutting exercise, though there was an expectation that value for money would be delivered when the service was procured. The Trade Unions were concerned how they would do this as the current service was under funded and it was difficult to adapt the current kitchens.

After debate the panel came to conclusion:

Resolved

That the following comments be incorporated into the report on the Community Meals Service that would be considered by Cabinet on 23 March 2005.

That the panel endorses the following recommendations contained in that report: -

- (a) The adoption of Option 3 (provision of a meals service that can be delivered daily as hot food or weekly / fortnightly as frozen foods) as the preferred way forward for the development of the Councils' Community Meals Service and to recommend that Cabinet also endorses that further work is undertaken in the next stage of the project to evaluate the potential for supplying prime cooked (fresh) food as an alternative to regenerated (frozen) food to meet the hot food element of the scheme.

- (b) That service specifications and draft contracts are developed in consultation with service users and carers, and to be reported to Cabinet for final approval in September 2005.

In addition the panel resolved

1. Welcomes the retention of prime cook as an option for remodelling the service.
2. Has concerns over issues relating to risk assessments, care plans and preventative measures.
3. Wants to ensure that service users have a real choice and not be pressured.
4. Wants to see more extensive and thorough consultation.
5. Wants to support to be given to the in house provision to ensure that it is in a fair position to provide options.

## 172 Reprovision of Older People Homes

Carol Byrt gave a presentation about the current position. The purpose to enable older people to stay at home as long as possible supported by a range of community support services, where this was not possible, the service would want to be able to offer a wider range of options to include extra care schemes.

### Reprovision model – 5 year plan

The council is seeking to provide: -

- Extra care housing flats.
- Intermediate care beds.
- Dementia care beds.

Currently sensitive locality based services

### Extra care scheme: -

- Living at home, not in a home.
- Having one's own front door.
- Care based on individual assessed need.
- An opportunity to maintain or improve independent living skills.
- Accessible buildings and technology to make independent living possible and manage risk for people with complex needs.

The next steps were to: -

- Design service specification.
- Prepare tender documentation.
- Draw up detailed proposals for consultation.
- Report back to cabinet during 2005.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

173 Forward Plan

Resolved

That the Forward Plan be noted.

174 Review of Scrutiny Activity 2004/2005

The panel discussed their activities since the start of the municipal year.

It was felt that performance monitoring had been successful and that officers had provided high quality information. It would be useful in future to drill down further into particular performance issues to really understand what the issues were. One way to do this was to develop relationships with service users and the public. Performance data reflects the experience of local people and this required more work.

The relationship with cabinet was discussed and it was agreed that reports and debriefs from cabinet discussions, particularly when scrutiny had part forward views, would add value to the process.

It was agreed that the working groups were looking at long term issues and that scrutiny members were being involved in influencing decisions before they were made.

The panel felt that the budget consultation was useful, though the proforma suggested was not. The panel wanted the freedom to make its own recommendations. The budget consultation process would be improved and more thought was required to get the balance right. It was felt that the budget process did not provide enough challenge to the officers in terms of tough questions. However, it was agreed that the budget for the service overall was very positive and was supporting activities and improvements that members approved of.

Monitoring of financial performance would be improved. For example, under spends would indicate efficiency or would lead to problems in achieving a particular target, such as adaptations. Therefore, budget monitoring had to become more focussed to address this over the next year.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.40 p.m.

Chairman .....

Date .....