

AT A MEETING  
- of the -  
**SPECIAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
CARE SCRUTINY AND  
PERFORMANCE PANEL** held at the  
Council House, Walsall on **Thursday  
29 September 2005** at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Councillor Oliver  
Councillor Walker  
Councillor Ault  
Councillor D. Pitt  
Councillor Barton  
Councillor Robertson  
Councillor Woodruff

**ALSO PRESENT**

Chris Kibble	(GMB)
Sue Cope	(T&GW)
Kathy McAteer	(Assistant Director Adult Services)
Andy Cross	(Head of Older People's Services)
Pat Warner	(Scrutiny Officer)

**1. APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 An apology for non attendance was submitted on behalf of Councillor Munir.

**2. SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 2.1 There were no substitutions identified at this meeting.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest identified at this meeting.

**4. COMMUNITY MEALS**

- 4.1 The report of the Executive Director was submitted: -  
(see annexed)
- 4.2 Kathy McAteer outlined the background of the report and summarised the contents as set out.

- 4.3 She advised the panel that the report summarised the work undertaken at stage two of the Community Meals Project following the initial report which had been the subject of discussion by this panel at its meeting in March 2005 and of which the panel had recommended further work being undertaken in respect of the proposals to remodel the service.
- 4.4 Cabinet had endorsed at the end of stage one the Community Meals Service being remodelled to provide flexibility regarding the type of meals; the service provided to people and that the new service would provide a daily hot meals service and a frozen meals delivery service.
- 4.5 The programme for stage two of the community meals project included the preparation of hot and frozen foods specification which set out the requirements for the service detailed in appendix one to the report now submitted.
- 4.6 The specification had been prepared following the review of community meals provision in comparator authorities and benchmarking to find an authority with a highly regarded well developed service.
- 4.7 Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council was selected because it was of similar characteristics and geographical size; population profile and ethnic mix to Walsall. It is also a three star Authority and has been commended by the Department of Health for its Community Meals Service.
- 4.8 Consultation had also been undertaken through a random sample of forty community meals recipients and with black and minority ethnic organisations regarding the best way to provide a culturally appropriate service. The recommendations arising from the consultation with the BME organisations has resulted in a decision that there should be an additional specialist service tendered for separately, in addition to the main community meals service that can be accessed by people from BME communities. The findings indicating a need to undertake further work prior to tendering for this additional service. This will be completed by March 2006.
- 4.9 In respect of the remainder of the service the procurement route involves the service being tendered with a priced schedule which identifies separately the costs involved of three components: -
- a) The provision of a daily hot meals service;
  - b) The provision of weekly or fortnightly home meals freezer scheme;
  - c) The delivery components of hot meal service including safe and well checks.
- 4.10 The evaluation of the submissions will be based on quality and price and this evaluation process will include interviews and food tasting. This will provide an opportunity for the continued consultation with stakeholders, particularly recipients of the meal service.
- 4.11 Members thanked Kathy McAteer for presenting the document and invited the union representatives present to comment.

- 4.12 Chris Kibble of the GMB said she was pleased that the proposals had been expanded to include not just frozen meals but freshly cooked meals on a daily basis. She continued that she was also pleased that a specialist tender was being considered for the black and ethnic minority community particularly since no ethnic minority staff were currently employed within that service. She emphasised that this was an area which needed to be looked at and that situation rectified.
- 4.13 Sue Cope of the T&GW concurred with the previous comment in respect of hot meals being provided. She queried who would be scrutinising the tenders and the timescales for the completion of the tendering process.
- 4.14 The meeting was informed that this had not yet been finalised but it was anticipated that tenders would be returned by Christmas.
- 4.15 Councillor Robertson said he too was very pleased to see the new proposals but would like to be assured that there will be some flexibility built into the process to ensure that those people on the borderline for receipt of community meals were considered through careful assessment.
- 4.16 Members were assured that careful assessment would be undertaken of all likely candidates for this service and if necessary short term provision of this service would be considered for those people who may be on the borderline and whose circumstances are likely to change very quickly.
- 4.17 Councillor Pitt suggested that consideration should be given to the use of fair trade products as part of the specification for the provision of this service. The panel agreed that this should be taken on board.
- 4.18 In answer to a further question raised members were advised that the provider would be expected to supply freezers and microwaves as necessary as part of the service provision.
- 4.19 CRB and POVA checks on the individual staff delivering the meals to resident's homes would be built in as part of the specification of the service, and is in line with all contracts for social care services.
- 4.20 Service users would also be reassessed as part of the specification.
- 4.21 Councillor Oliver said it was interesting to see the wide variety of services being provided across the country and would hope that the service to be provided in Walsall would engender the figures being provided in Bolton and therefore more in line with Walsall's aims. Kathy McAteer advised the panel that incremental growth was part of the development of the service. The aim was to increase the demand and plan for the increase in demand and eventually it was expected that the budgets would be shifting from residential provision to fund more community based services. It was essential therefore that the provider chosen must have the capacity to grow in line with expectations.
- 4.22 Having discussed the issue in great detail the panel RESOLVED that cabinet be advised of the following :

- That the Health and Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel: -
  1. Welcomes the flexibility now introduced into the proposals.
  2. Is assured by many aspects of the proposed tender specification.
  3. Repeats its recommendation for inclusion of this panel's preference to retain a freshly cooked meal option.
  4. Welcomes support being given for the in-house bid.
  5. Would call for further involvement of this panel as the tendering process progresses.

## **5. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

- 5.1 There being no further business the meeting terminated at 6.55 p.m.