

## **HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Thursday 28 August 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

### **Panel Members present**

Councillor T. Oliver (Chair)  
Councillor C. Ault (Vice-chair)  
Councillor J. Barton  
Councillor M. Bird  
Councillor Mustaq  
Councillor A. Paul  
Councillor I. Robertson

### **Officers present**

Dave Martin – Executive Director – Social Care & Inclusion  
Margaret Willcox – Assistant Director – Adult Services  
Steph Simcox – Head of Finance – Social Care & Inclusion  
Lawrence Brazier – Head of Procurement  
Debbie Parkes - Interim Housing Strategy & Partnerships Manager  
Brandon Scott-Omenka - Performance & Outcomes Manager – Social Care & Inclusion  
Bill Henwood – Major Projects Manager  
Craig Goodall – Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

### **20/08 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor V. Woodruff.

### **21/08 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

### **22/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Councillor A. Paul declared a personal interest in item 7 'Walsall Housing Group – Proposed Changes to Group Structure' as a Council appointed local housing trust member.

### **23/08 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS.**

#### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2008, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

(annexed)

### **24/08 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

The panel noted the training opportunities as detailed in the agenda.

## **25/08 FORWARD PLAN**

The forward plan as at 8 August 2008 was submitted.

(annexed)

### **Resolved**

**That the forward plan be noted.**

## **26/08 WALSALL HOUSING GROUP – PROPOSED CHANGES TO GROUP STRUCTURE**

The Panel considered the outcome of a series of meetings of the Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG) with key stakeholders on the proposed group structure changes at Walsall Housing Group (WHG).

The Chair explained that following a resolution from Council on 8 September 2008 the AHWG had considered the proposed group structure change at WHG in some detail. They had held two meetings and met with the following witnesses:

- A representative of the National Association of Tenants;
- Representatives from Walsall Federation of Tenant and Resident Associations;
- Whg Trust Board tenant representatives;
- Representatives from whg including from Anthony Collins Solicitors acting on behalf of whg;
- Elected member representatives on whg trust boards and the parent board; and
- Walsall Council officers.

The Chair thanked the invited witnesses for their views and officers for arranging the meetings.

He informed the meeting that the report from the AHWG (tabled) should have included reference to an independent evaluation report. WHG had requested a paper be circulated containing further details and minor corrections to the AHWG report (tabled). The Panel agreed to take these issues into account when presenting their report to Council.

(annexed)

The Chair asked for clarification on an outstanding issue concerning the issue of tenant majorities on housing trust boards.

Debbie Parkes advised the Panel that there was Housing Corporation Guidance on the issue of tenant majorities on housing trust boards but no formal legal position. All Housing Associations should have at least one tenant board member but it is common for Housing Associations to have one third tenant Members, one third local authority nominations and one third independent members. The agreement at the time of housing transfer did not specify a minimum number of tenant board members.

The Chair explained that the AHWG had deliberately not made a recommendation for or against the proposed group structure changes. It was their intention that the report should present a balanced view to inform the debate at Council on 8 September 2008.

A Member suggested that having reviewed the proposals and considered evidence from a wide range of interested parties that the Panel should make a recommendation to Council to assist the debate and any decisions that may need to be taken.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel, having received the report of the Affordable Housing Working Group which is considered to be a balanced view based on the evidence received, commends the proposals for the group structure changes at Walsall Housing Group for the future of the business.**

#### **27/08 FINANCIAL MONITORING**

Members were informed of the financial position of the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate at Walsall Council.

Steph Simcox reported that due to mitigation measures being undertaken the directorates overspend had reduced. Proposals to further resolve the situation would be drawn up in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. The area with the largest overspend was Younger Adults Services. Older Peoples Services was currently carrying an underspend.

Members discussed the benefits of scrutiny considering any mitigation proposals to reduce the Social Care and Inclusion overspend before any decisions were taken by Cabinet.

A Member asked whether Walsall would be affected by current financial problems being experienced by national residential care home provider, Severn Cross. Dave Martin clarified there were five care homes operated by Severn Cross in the borough. None of which cared for Walsall residents. The Council did however use one Severn Cross home that was located outside the borough. He explained that the Council did have the capacity to take over the management of a care home in an emergency situation. He reported that in the case of Severn Cross this was unlikely to happen as they were likely to sell their care homes to other providers. He commented generally that many residential homes were experiencing financial difficulties in the current climate. These financial difficulties had affected the procurement of revised contracts with care providers as anticipated savings were no longer possible.

#### **28/08 BUDGET PROCESS 2009-10 – 2011/12**

Members were informed of the proposed process for scrutiny for the budget for 2009/10.

Steph Simcox outlined the proposals to the Panel as set out in her presentation that was contained in the agenda papers.

(annexed)

Dave Martin explained that options for savings and investments would be put forward for the Panels consideration later in the year and that these proposals would contain details of the relevant risks, if any, of undertaking each particular course of action.

## **29/08 PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

Members considered the Social Care and Inclusion scorecard measures for the first quarter of 2008/09.

Brandon Scott-Omenka explained the new scorecard to Members and reported that those indicators that read 'not applicable' in the previous quarter column were new indicators for which there was no available data at the current time.

Dave Martin assured the Panel that any new red indicators or those amber indicators likely to turn red during the course of the year would be added to the scorecard.

It was requested that indicators concerning direct payments, equipment/adaptations and families in temporary accommodation be added to the scorecard.

### **Resolved:**

**That indicators relating to direct payments, equipment/adaptations and families in temporary accommodation be added to the Social Care and Inclusion scorecard.**

## **30/08 LINKS UPDATE**

The Panel was informed on progress with the Local Involvement Network (LINK) development in Walsall.

Lawrence Brazier reported that the Carers Federation (CF) had been appointed as the host organisation for the LINK. The CF has appointed staff local staff and gained premises in Willenhall and was currently organising its internal governance structures.

He reported that there was a regional event, 'Making LINKS work', taking place on 29 September and asked the Panel if they wanted to consider sending a representative along to the event.

In response to a question he commented that LINKS Members would have the right to inspect any health or social care provider in addition to existing Freedom of Information powers. If LINKS Members were not happy with what they saw or the responses that they received then their concerns could be referred to scrutiny.

Members discussed the benefits of inviting representatives of the CF to a meeting of the Panel and felt that the best opportunity for this would be after the CF had agreed its governance arrangements.

### **Resolved:**

#### **That:**

- a) Councillor V. Woodruff attend the regional LINKS event on behalf of the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel;**

and;

- b) the progress with the development of the LINK and its governance arrangements be considered at future meetings.

### **31/08 COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTORATE ACTION PLAN**

Members were informed of progress in delivering the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) action plan and significant developments that impact on the action plan.

Bill Henwood explained that the enhanced action plan had been presented to CSCI and the Department of Health Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) to consider the refined outcome measures that had been requested. These changes had been approved.

The action plan contained 34 work streams, 15 of which were complete and the remaining work streams were either anticipated to be complete by March 2009 or awaiting further information from CSED. A copy of the CSCI Action Plan was contained at appendix 1 to the report.

In addition to this the 2008 CSCI annual review had taken place. An official star rating would be announced on 27 November 2008. It was likely that this announcement would also contain recommendations for future action.

Dave Martin commented that the Council would be gaining ownership of roles that were currently the ownership of CSED. It was important that the Panel understood what these responsibilities were as this was an important and significant change.

In response to a question from the Chair, Margaret Willcox explained that the Black and Minority Ethnic Conference was a user group that was consulted upon to ensure that services were appropriate to ethnic minority groups.

### **32/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 9 October 2008.

The meeting terminated at 7.30 pm.

Chair:

Date: