

SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 3 September 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present

Councillor Oliver (Chair)
Councillor Ault
Councillor Douglas-Maul
Councillor Martin
Councillor Paul
Councillor Robertson
Councillor Woodruff
Councillor Barton

Officers present

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| Dave Martin | Executive Director – Social Care and Inclusion |
| Margaret Willcox | Assistant Director – Adult Services |
| Liz Walford | Group Chief Executive – Walsall Housing Group |
| Julie Jones | Acting Head of Supported Housing |
| Samuel Leach | St Paul's Church |
| Steph Simcox | Finance Manager |
| Brandon | |
| Scott-Omenka | Performance and Outcomes Manager |

16/09 APOLOGIES

No apologies for non-attendance were received.

17/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting.

18/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

19/09 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Following a question from the Chair regarding item 13/09 Local Involvement Network (LiNK), Dave Martin provided guidance on the progress of the re-tender of the LiNK contract. Two of the five applicants had withdrawn from the process, Walsall Voluntary Action (WVA) and Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council (WVSC), those remaining being Walsall Endeavours, Shaw Trust and Black Country Housing Group (BCHG). Site visits and interviews took place in August. Shaw Trust were unable to arrange a site visit and as an alternative were permitted to provide a short presentation following interview to ensure they were not disadvantaged. The selection/ interview panel consisted of representatives from NHS Walsall, Walsall PCT, Walsall LiNK Board, the Council's Equality and Diversity team, Social Care and Inclusion, Head of Service, Neighbourhood Partnerships and Programmes (NPP), as well as a Member from the Social Care and

Inclusion Panel. Each element of the tender process was scored, with interviews accounting for twenty percent of the overall mark. In the next stage Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents, totalling fifty percent of the overall evaluation, were assessed in early September by the Head of Service NPP, LINK Contract Manager, and a representative from Social Care and Inclusion supported by a Procurement officer. The financial breakdown provided by the applicants representing the final element to be assessed and amounting to thirty percent of the overall mark will also be completed in early September. The Panel will be advised of the successful candidate at its next meeting.

The Member who participated in the process as part of the interview/ selection panel and Dave Martin both observed that three organisations with very different backgrounds had applied for the role. The Member emphasised that a fair and equal process had been undertaken with each applicant asked the same set of questions in a range of areas. Dave Martin made the point that some difficulties have arisen in the past because the Council commissions a third party organisation to facilitate the LINK which is then operated by a group of individuals representing different interests within the community, rather than the third party organisation actually undertaking the work itself. He further commented that there had been some frustration that thus far the LINK had probably not developed in the way that had been originally anticipated. The Chair highlighted the importance of Members being assured that the LINK was operating successfully and it was agreed that the appointed host organisation attend a future Panel meeting.

In respect of item 15/09 Links to work Dave Martin and Margaret Willcox explained that the ambition throughout the restructuring process had been to agree a fair approach. Agreement had now been reached to place twenty-five posts at risk of which eight posts will be retained, this includes consultation with the Links to work sub-group. Following the restructure it is intended to retain the existing one-hundred and forty-seven service users with resources applied appropriately dependent on user's levels of disability. For example, those undertaking recycling duties typically required less support. Provision will be made for both those service users who carry out constructive jobs as well as those who require a sheltered service. The issue for a number of service users is that they can undertake permitted (or therapeutic) work but cannot earn above a certain amount each week before it negatively impacts on their entitlement to Incapacity Benefit, Income Support (including extra disability premium), Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit and National Insurance contributions.

Officers explained that work was being undertaken to review current vacant posts that are available and to attempt to job match those in at risk posts. Efforts are also being made to remove the requirement for interview where deemed not necessary if an alternative selection method is available. In some instances individuals will be given a four-week in-post trial to determine their suitability. They can remain on the redeployment list for up to seventeen weeks. The 70 percent rule is also being applied meaning that if an individual matches that proportion of the job description further training can be offered in-post to fill the gap in skills. The Panel was also informed that work was continuing to determine the applications of the Future (new) Jobs Fund for job creation for those with a range of disabilities across the Council.

During that period individuals will also receive appropriate training, for example, IT training. A range of other support is also being offered, including assistance with completing application forms and a dedicated member of staff at Jobcentreplus identifying suitable posts. Work is also being undertaken to identify suitable posts at other significant local organisations, including Walsall Housing Group (WHG) and the Primary Care Trust (PCT). There are also some individuals who have also expressed a preference to leave and where possible redundancy arrangements were being made.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. Following appointment the new Local Involvement Network (LiNK) host organisation should be invited to attend a future Panel meeting;**
 - 2. Regular updates will be provided to the Panel regarding redeployment and other activity in relation to Links to Work staff in at-risk posts;**
 - 3. Officers from Regeneration be invited to attend a future Panel meeting and explain progress in relation to the Future (New) Jobs Fund;**
- and;**
- 4. The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

20/09 DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Member development opportunities were noted.

21/09 HOMELESSNESS

Julie Jones and Reverend Samuel Leach gave a presentation (annexed) updating the Panel on progress made by the short life multi-agency homelessness group since their attendance at the 12 February Panel meeting and Council Housing Services activity. Action includes an ongoing restructuring within Supported Housing, which will include filling the gap in service provision of direct access for “non statutory homeless people”, an out-of-hours advice and guidance service, including a pilot service at the Glebe Centre, as well as an action team to go out to those unwilling to approach the service directly. The Glebe Centre has now received funding from a charity to operate for the next three years and this will be supplemented by voluntary contributions. A further Presenters Survey and other counts have been undertaken, including of over night accommodation usage. The homelessness group carried out a further Presenters Survey which was not as successful as its predecessor. The group have therefore decided to seek to join a wider “Homelessness Prevention Group”, which will consider a range of broader issues as well as homelessness. However, the research undertaken indicates that a new client base had evolved over the last twelve months, and this may be as a consequence of the current economic climate.

A Member observed that it was often very difficult to engage with those within the category of non-statutory homelessness. It was necessary to find appropriate ways of reaching out to these individuals with the importance of gaining their trust of particular importance. These were also challenges faced by other organisations including Hi's n Lows. He felt that outreach work was critical and that it was also important for different groups within local communities to work together to tackle rough sleeping. Following a Member query Julie Jones explained that a range of services provided both by the Council and external agencies and organisations were available to help individuals affected by the recession. This included priority given to families in need of re-homing and the Mortgage Relief Scheme.

The Chair concluded the item by observing that the issue of Homelessness was now within the remit of Regeneration. However, he hoped that the Panel's discussion of the item over a number of meetings had assisted in highlighting the improved understanding of rough sleeping and the further coordination of local needs with service provision.

21/09 2008/09 FINAL BUDGETARY POSITION PRIOR TO EXTERNAL AUDIT

Steph Simcox introduced the report (annexed) explaining that it set out the budget position prior to final audit, although this had now been completed. She highlighted that the end of year financial position for Social Care and Inclusion was an underspend of £79,000. This position was a consequence of management action taken particularly in respect of older people's services, as well as an underspend due to savings on staffing costs and receipt of additional funding from external sources. However, due to the anticipated increase in the uptake of a range of services as a consequence of the current economic climate, these savings were unlikely to be repeated in future years. A significant area of overspend was non-pooled learning disability services, including the decline in income received at Links to Work which was a consequence of the challenging macro-economic conditions being experienced.

22/09 2008/09 ESTIMATED CAPITAL POSITION

Steph Simcox introduced the report (annexed) highlighting forecast capital outturn for Social Care and Inclusion, including guidance on slippage and underspend in Housing Services and Adult Services. She explained that the majority of slippage within Housing services related to grant funding which will now be rolled forward to this financial year to support the delivery of a range of projects, including the repair assistance programme and health through warmth. Aids and Adaptations as well as Disability Facility Grants accounted for the remaining slippage; this work is scheduled to be undertaken in early 2009/10. Similarly within Adult Services slippage relates to grant funding which will be utilised within this financial year. The underspend within Housing relates to funding which was not required and so not drawn down from the Kickstart programme which is administered externally.

In response to a Panel query relating to strategic housing projects, officers explained that a Gypsy and Traveller strategy was being developed by Regeneration. This included investigations to identify a range of new sites including permanent and show sites. A key

challenge was determining how many sites were required. Planned activity includes the refurbishment of existing sites and seeking planning permission for other sites.

23/09 FINANCIAL MONITORING – 2009/10 FIRST QUARTER FORECAST

Steph Simcox introduced the report (annexed) explaining that it set out forecast position for the first quarter which ran to the end of June 2009. The report highlighted that a predicted overspend of £1.6m is expected to be reduced to under £0.5m following the introduction of a corrective action plan. Difficulties exist in being able to predict what the demand for services will be over the duration of this financial year. This will impact on the financial position and the achievability or otherwise of the action plan. This will also have an effect on risks identified with just under £2m of amber risks identified under the red amber green (RAG) rating system.

The following is a summary of the Panel's discussion of this item:

- In response to a Member query regarding the risk to service provision in those areas marked as red or amber, Dave Martin explained that it was always difficult to anticipate demand and produce an accurate associated budget forecast. It is anticipated that action including the development of the joint commissioning unit with the PCT will support improved forecasting;
- Following a Member query officers agreed to provide further information in the quarter 2 report on the split of income unachievable for Transport Charging, split across Disability Services and Older People Services;
- Margaret Willcox provided guidance that although homecare contracts had been suspended with a number of providers, a standard contractual requirement remained for the Council to continue to make payments. However, the Council has begun to take action to recover these payments from providers. Officers also agreed to inform Members of the proportion of homecare provision undertaken by the Council;
- There is a shortfall in income received for Community Alarms from WHG, work is underway to try and tackle difficulties being experienced in collecting outstanding income.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. Officers will provide guidance to Members in relation to income received from Transport Charging, split between Disability Services and Older People Services;**
- and**
- 2. Officers will provide guidance to Members regarding the proportion of homecare provision undertaken by the Council.**

24/09 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD 2008/09 OUTTURN AND QUARTER 1 APRIL – JUNE 2009/10

Brandon Scott-Omenka introduced the report (annexed) highlighting those areas of service provision which were coded as red under the RAG rating system. This indicates that action would need to be taken to ensure that targets were met by year end.

In summary these were as follows:

- **C72 Admissions to residential/ nursing care per 10,000 population aged 65+,** with the score for 2008/09 being 88.9 against a target of <85, which equates to seventeen admissions over the target. This is a consequence of underlying demographic changes creating pressure on services. However, the outturn is still within the highest of the former national performance band;
- **NI 133 Timelines of Social Care Packages,** with outturn of 88% against a target of 90.1%, and **D54 Equipment/ Adaptations Delivered Within 7 Days,** with outturn of 70.2% against a target of 90%. These are both the result of delays in the delivery of equipment to residents. Following a review in May a working group has now been set-up to improve performance during 2009/10;
- **CC1 The Number of complaints received in the period (stages 1 and 2),** with 121 complaints received against the target of 160. The purpose of the indicator is demonstrate that an effective complaints procedure is in operation. However, it is likely that complaints have fallen as a consequence of learning from previous complaints leading to improvements which have removed the need for repeat complaints, as well as increased consultation and engagement activity;
- **CC2 The Number of Complaints that were resolved within indicated timescales (stages 1 and 2),** of the 120 complaints received 89 (67.5%) were resolved within the 20 working days timescale, narrowly missing the 70% target;
- **HR2 Percentage of SSD directly employed posts vacant,** with 212 (or 21.3%) of 995 posts vacant during 2008/09, the target of 20% was missed by 13 vacancies. This is in part a consequence of a freeze on non-essential vacancies following restructuring of services and responsible budget management.

Brandon Scott-Omenka concluded the review by highlighting a significant improvement in assessment time scores over the last three years. This has been as a consequence of working with front line staff and has resulted in performance placing Walsall in the top 20 of 163 authorities in the country. Members also agreed to a scorecard for 2009/10 which, in addition to the comprehensive directorate scorecard list, would include an indicator that has turned red together with performance having fallen below the agreed threshold. Also to be included are significant red indicator **D54 Equipment/ adaptations delivered within 7 days** and new indicator **NI 130 Social Care clients receiving Self Directed Support (direct payments and individual budgets).**

Resolved:

That:

Officers will present the agreed performance scorecard to the Panel at quarterly intervals.

25/09 AFFORDABLE HOUSING WORKING GROUP: FINAL REPORT

The Chair introduced the report (annexed) explaining that it focused on the working group's review of Walsall Housing Group's (WHG) pledges to tenants following the transfer of Council properties. The working group's activity included providing Members with the opportunity to highlight key concerns both within respective wards and borough-wide. WHG were then invited to attend a meeting with the working group to respond to these issues, offer their perspective and provide guidance on meeting the pledges made to tenants following the transfer of Council properties to them. The Chair noted that WHG was responsible for twenty-thousand homes, was a major employer within Walsall and had a significant role in relation to regional economic development. He also explained that the working group had accepted a number of textual amendments proposed by WHG to the final report.

The Chair summarised the key conclusions of the report:

- It was agreed that a strong partnership vision was important;
- The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) pledge had been met. However, properties are deemed to have met the standard if the work is offered but refused by the tenant. Often it is elderly tenants who decline the work due to a range of concerns, and it was agreed that it would be important to identify an appropriate solution to address this issue;
- The existence of some long-term vacant flats was an anomaly but still needed to be resolved;
- It was agreed that issues relating to parking, garage sites and anti-social behaviour should be tackled in partnership;
- Recognition of the importance of building on the progress made in relation to community engagement and neighbourhood management ;
- The importance of a joint approach to regeneration and determining how to meet the demand for further housing.

The Chair invited Liz Walford to comment on the report, she felt that it was a fair synopsis. She also observed that the issues highlighted were shared concerns and that joint working would be important in tackling them. The Panel agreed that a partnership approach was crucial.

In response to a number of Member queries Liz Walford provided the following guidance:

- environmentally-friendly condensing boilers are installed in properties when existing boilers fail. This ran alongside an ongoing programme of central heating system replacement;
- In terms of limited off-road parking in some areas there was some complexity in identifying an appropriate solution as there was often a mix of owner-occupied, private rented and other registered social landlord accommodation meaning gaining agreement would present challenges;

- In respect of vacant properties she explained that WHG was willing to work with Council in making use of Empty Home Management Orders to bring them back in to use.

The Chair concluded the item by observing that the overall picture was very positive and the Panel commended the report and its recommendations to Cabinet.

Resolved:

That, the report of the Affordable Housing Working Group and its recommendation that approaches are developed to a number of key issues be reported to Cabinet.

These include:

- 1. Increasing uptake of decent homes heating and warmth packages by elderly residents;**
- 2. Tackling long-term voids in some specific flats over shops ;**
- 3. Problems of limited off-road parking in mixed tenure areas;**
- 4. Entrenched anti-social behaviour, often exacerbated by the above issues;**
- 5. Working with other partners to improve community engagement in the borough;**
- 6. Meeting demand for social housing for rent within the borough.**

26/09 WORKING GROUPS

The initiation documents of the working groups were noted.

27/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The work programme and forward plan were noted.

The meeting terminated at 8:02pm