

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Monday 1 December 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present Councillor C. Ault (Chair)
Councillor M Bird
Councillor A. Paul

Officers present Sue Byard – Assistant Director Strategic Housing
Margaret Willcox – Assistant Director – Adult Services
Steph Simcox – Head of Finance Social Care & Inclusion
Mandy Winwood- Strategic Partnerships Manager
Bill Henwood- Major Projects Manager
Tracy Simcox- Supporting People Manager
John Pryce-Jones- Corporate Performance Manager (CFI)
Paul Cooper- Customer Care Manager
Brandon Scott-Omenka- Performance and Outcomes Manager
Colin Teasdale- Performance and Scrutiny Officer

Other Invitees Barbara Watt-
Patsy Richards-
Maureen Bradley- Director of Care and Support, Accord Housing
Charles Watson- Chair of Residents Group, Old Vicarage Close

In opening the meeting the Chair announced the sad death of Panel Member and Deputy Mayor, Councillor Cath Micklewright. She had been an excellent councillor for Walsall and would be greatly missed. The Chair led the Panel in a minute's silence.

The Chair informed members that item 8a in the published agenda (CSCI Judgement) would now be considered immediately after item 5 (CSCI Action Plan)

56/08 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence submitted on behalf of Councillors Oliver, Robertson, Ahmed, Woodruff and Barton.

57/08 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting.

58/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

59/08 ACCORD HOUSING- OLD VICARAGE CLOSE

The Chair informed the Panel that he had brought this item to scrutiny once he had been made aware of problems with the Lift at the Extra Care Scheme in his ward. The lift had been out of order for some time, causing considerable disruption and difficulties for

residents and, whilst it had now been fixed, he wanted to know what contingency plans were being put in place for in case this happened again at any of the schemes. He introduced Maureen Bradley from Accord Housing to the Panel and asked her to outline the actions taken.

Maureen Bradley introduced the report (annexed) and explained to the panel the particular difficulties they had faced with this lift due the original manufacturer no longer being in business and the parts having to be made specifically. She also explained to the panel the various steps they had put in place to minimise inconvenience to residents and to assist in any future occurrences, as detailed in the report.

The Chair then introduced Charles Watson, Chair of the Residents Group at Old Vicarage Close, to the Panel and invited him to speak on how the lift breakdown had affected residents of the scheme. Mr Watson informed the panel that the lift had broken down on a number of occasions and these has become a more frequent occurrence in recent months meaning residents were apprehensive about using the lift .

On questions from members regarding whether this unreliability meant that a new lift was needed, Maureen Bradley replied that the independent review of all lifts that had been commissioned would establish this and confirmed that the particular lift at Old Vicarage Close was near the top of the list for this review.

Members commented that the steps Accord Housing had put in place since the breakdown were commendable but that lifts were such an integral part of living in a block, particularly for older people, that is was essential that steps were taken as early as possible to establish if the lift was still fit for purpose in order to reassure residents. Members requested that the findings of the review were reported back to the Panel.

Resolved

That the findings of the independent review into the state of lifts within Accord Housing are reported back to the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

60/08 CSCI ACTION PLAN

Bill Henwood presented to the Panel the report in the CSCI Action Plan, he informed Members that, subject to any recommendations they may wish to make, this was the last update on this plan that they planned to bring to the Panel.

Members queried if there was any particular reason that the take up of Direct Payments was not happening in BME communities. Bill Henwood responded that he was not aware of any particular reason but that the 2007/08 CSCI requirement had been to increase Direct Payments take up overall, which they had done successfully and that now the bar had been raised by CSCI to increase take up for specific groups.

Members also reaffirmed concerns that had come out of the Personalisation Working Group regarding the risk of money going directly to people who were not able to effectively manage their own finances and also reiterated their desire to see that any savings being realised from the personalisation agenda were redirected into the social care budget. It was confirmed that the Panel's previous resolution regarding savings

being reinvested in social care would be going forward to Cabinet and that the risk management of individualised budgets would be looked at more closely through the Personalisation Working Group.

Resolved

That the CSCI Action Plan be noted.

61/08 CSCI JUDGEMENT

Brandon Scott-Omenka, Performance and Outcomes Manager introduced the report outlining the key findings from CSCI and informed the Panel that this represented a significant improvement on the previous year, acknowledging they had come very close to a 2 star score.

Margaret Willcox highlighted to Members improvements to Adult Protection, in the light of previous comments from members regarding concerns about the financial risk to vulnerable people with the introduction of individualised budgets. It was pointed out that following previously critical judgements from CSCI on this service, it has been an area the inspectorate had focussed on this time around. Walsall was one of the few authorities to have successfully prosecuted somebody for misusing funds (two prosecutions in Walsall) this was attributable mainly to the strong partnership working between the Council and the Police to convince the CPS to proceed with prosecution.

In response to member queries about the use of technology, Margaret Willcox informed the panel that assistive technology had been used to good effect in Walsall and invited any interested Members to visit the Assistive Technology House to what they had on offer.

Members asked how CSCI viewed the budget cuts within social care to which Brandon Scott-Omenka informed them that the Commissioning and Use of Resources judgement had improved from 'uncertain' last year to 'promising' this year. Steph Simcox added that insufficient funding within social care was a well known national issue but that within Walsall, CSCI were acknowledging that investments were being made in the right areas for get better value for money. She pointed out, however, that previously CSCI had been critical of Walsall for beginning improvements and not seeing them through which was why in this years report one of the areas for improvement was 'monitor the budget position to ensure priority work and improvements are sustained.'

Members commented that the report showed that there was still a long way to go but that the Service should be congratulated for the significant improvements it had already made.

Resolved:

That the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel

- 1. Note the CSCI Judgement report; and**
- 2. Congratulate Officers on the improvements made in the last year.**

62/08 SUPPORTING PEOPLE INSPECTION SELF ASSESSMENT

Tracy Simcox, Supporting People Manager, presented the draft self assessment for the supporting people inspection for Members comments ahead of submission to the Audit Commission.

In response to Members questions regarding progress with homelessness since the Panel meeting from earlier in the year, Tracy Simcox informed them that a lot of work had been carried out in partnership with the various agencies, including a 2 week rough sleepers survey aimed at building up a detailed picture of the volume and needs of rough sleepers. This information was currently being collated and there would be a repeat the survey in February.

Members were informed that a formal update would be brought to the Panel on Homelessness at its meeting in February. Members requested that when this report came that it contained detailed budget information.

Resolved

- 1. That the Supporting People Self Assessment be noted**
- 2. That officers are requested to ensure that the homelessness report presented to Scrutiny in February contains detailed budget information.**

63/08 HEALTH INEQUALITIES STRATEGY

Mandy Winwood, Strategic Partnerships Manager, presented the draft Health Inequalities Strategy that had been identified as a gap in the findings of a recent Grant Thornton audit. She informed Members that the priorities of the strategy were in line with the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA.

Members queried whether there was any correlation between the fall in teenage pregnancies and the raise in the termination of pregnancies that were both highlighted in the report. Officers confirmed that this was not the case as teenage pregnancies were counted at conception rather than at birth.

Members noted the comments in the report, under the section 'what works well in the West Midlands' on the Welfare Rights Service (WRS), which stated that since its step up there has been a gain in benefits of £110m across the borough, with New Benefit maximisation of £6.8m 2007/08 and £8m 2008/09. Members felt it was important that this was highlighted to cabinet when this strategy went forward to them for their approval due to recent proposals to make cuts in this area.

Barbara Watt distributed to the Panel an update on the Grant Thornton Audit and progress against the findings of this. Members commented that they were pleased to see the introduction of free swimming for under 16s and over 60s.

RESOLVED

That the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend Cabinet to:

- 1. Endorse the Walsall Health Inequalities Strategy;**
- 2. Approve the proposal that future strategies are subject to a health inequalities impact assessment before presentation to the boards of key partner agencies in Walsall;**

3. **Approve the proposal that (in addition to LAA and other existing targets) key 'health inequalities gap targets' are introduced in each of the major service area;**
4. **Note the inclusion in this independent report, the findings regarding the benefits of the Welfare Rights service**

64/08 QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE SCORECARD

Brandon Scott-Omenka presented the quarter two scorecard (annexed) to Members.

In response to a query regarding Occupational Therapy Waiting times, Margaret Willcox confirmed that this was in two parts, there was no waiting list for assessments but they were struggling to meet the 28 days for the delivery of a care package. Brandon Scott-Omenka added that this needed to be seen in context as the OT service had far higher case loads than any other service and recovery of this indicator was being shown.

Members commented that they had previously talked about a two-tiered system for adaptations whereby lower end, simple adaptations were made quickly and cheaply through the use of a framework contract.

Sue Byard informed members that work was underway to put such an agreement in place and that this could make significant improvements and efficiencies.

65/08 COMPLAINTS MONITORING

Paul Cooper, Customer Care Manager, presented to the Panel the statutory annual complaints report for Adults Social Care 2007/08. He informed them that there had been some issues in this period to do with training due to capacity within the team and changes to the Organisational Development. However they had seen very positive results in mediation and improvements to ensuring the learning from complaints.

Members commented that whilst there was a reduction of 9% in the number of complaints upheld or partially upheld, this was still high at 55%. They requested more information on what constituted a complaint as many of these complaints could be quite trivial but would still count on the statistics as could vexatious complaints; they felt it was important that there was a proper understanding on the nature of these complaints so that they could concentrate on the more serious ones.

Officers agreed to report back to the Panel on the nature of complaints including examples and outcomes of learning.

Resolved

1. **That the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel note the Complaints monitoring report; and**
2. **That officers bring back to the Panel details on the nature of complaints along with examples.**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 19 January 2009.

The meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.

Chair:

Date: