

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

26 July 2007 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present

Councillor Ault (Chair)  
Barton  
Bird  
Paul  
D. Pitt  
Oliver  
Woodruff

**Officers present**

Kathy McAteer- Acting Executive Director, Social  
Care and Inclusion  
Sue Byard- Assistant Director Strategic  
Housing  
Karen Reilly- Interim Head of Adult Services  
Lawrence Brazier- Head of Corporate Procurement  
Emma Palmer- User/Carer Involvement Manager  
Colin Teasdale- Performance and Scrutiny Officer

**20/07 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Oliver and Councillor Ault took the chair. Councillor Oliver was able to join the meeting late.

**21/07 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitution(s) for the duration of this meeting.

**22/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

**23/07 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

Members noted that there were no items for consideration in private session at this meeting.

## 24/07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS

### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2007, and 19 July 2007, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

## 25/07 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The panel noted the training opportunities as previously circulated.

(annexed)

Councillors noted the high cost of the PPS3 and Affordable Housing seminar and asked why these could not be run in house using the expertise that exist within the service.

Kathy McAteer responded that it was important to note the difference between a training course and a national seminar which would give the opportunity for networking with other authorities. However officers could forward the request to the training section to explore the opportunity of offering panel members some kind of in-house training on PPS3.

### **Resolved**

That the request for training is forwarded to the member development section of HRD.

## 26/07 FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan as at 9 July 2007 was submitted:

(annexed)

### **Resolved**

That the forward plan be noted.

## 27/07 Disabled Facilities Grant

Sue Byard presented to the panel a report on the Disabled Facilities Grant that had been presented to cabinet on 18 July 2007 and invited questions.

Councillor Woodruff asked why, due to the demographic pressures cited in the report the 2007/08 budget was being reduced.

Kathy McAteer responded that this was an in-year reduction only, due to an overspend last year and in line with corporate capital allocation policies, the virement approved by cabinet would make up for this shortfall.

Councillor Woodruff stated that as ward councillors they had a lot of people coming to see them about the eligibility for a grant and it would be useful to know exactly what the criteria are.

Kathy McAteer offered to distribute copies of the criteria to all panel members.

The panel raised a number of concerns over examples they had come across in their ward duties of where people had been waiting very long times to get aids and adaptations they needed. They commented that this was extremely distressing for the individuals and frustrating for them too as councillors trying to support them with their claims.

Kathy McAteer stated that the backlog on Occupational Therapy waiting list had been completely cleared and that all new service users were now seen within two working days for an assessment.

Councillor Bird questioned this due to his own experience from his ward constituents.

In response to a query from Councillor Woodruff Kathy McAteer explained that the current process was for an Occupational Therapy assessment to be carried out first which allowed cases to be prioritised on a waiting list for the adaptations. It was the waiting list for the OT assessment that had been cleared.

Councillor Bird said that he supported the virement but was not happy with the upper limit of £25k being imposed on each application.

Sue Byard responded that the limit could be topped up by looking at a range of other options, for example looking at alternative accommodation if the cost of adapting is high. It was about trying to be smarter with the limited resources they had and spending more money on one client would inevitably mean there would be less to spend on another.

Councillor Bird stated that he believed the subsequent report to cabinet outlining a proposed policy on setting a ceiling on the maximum grant payable should come to the scrutiny panel first.

Kathy McAteer confirmed that this was on the work programme for this panel on the 27 September and it had always been their intention to involve scrutiny first.

Following another number of examples from councillors from their ward constituents Councillor Ault said it was really frustrating and felt like they were letting constituents down, there was a need to get on top of problems early and keep people informed of delays so at least they would know.

Sue Byard stressed that it was also very frustrating for officers, who were working hard with limited resources, she agreed it was important to keep people informed and told the panel that very clear letters had been sent out to those people they knew wouldn't be able to be seen that financial year.

Officers clarified that any personal issues could be dealt with outside of the meeting if details were passed on to them.

Councillor Bird asked if there was information available on the average time between OT referral and adaptation as it was important to know how and if this was improving over time.

Councillor Oliver agreed with this but added that it was important to know the total numbers as well as the average as the number of applications would have a significant bearing on the times.

Councillor Pitt said that the problem was clearly caused by finite resources, not the work officers were doing who he believed were doing a good job and working hard and he had a number of good news stories where he had contacted officers and had issues resolved. He said the important thing was to know that the best use was being made of what resources were available, for example making use of adapted houses, or reconditioning equipment where people had moved away or passed on.

Sue Byard said that the adapted housing register, launched last September, was designed to do exactly that and it was working well and gathering momentum. She explained that the register logged all adapted housing across all tenures and cross matched these against applicants.

Councillor Micklewright said that some years ago that if adaptations were made to a private house and the residents then sold that house they would have to repay that money to the authority

Sue Byard said it was her understanding that the new legislative framework did not allow them to do that.

Councillor Bird stated that if the grant was used for an extension then that could be given as an interest free loan charged on the property.

Kathy McAteer said they would the legislation and report back on this issue.

## **Resolved**

That

- Copies of the eligibility criteria for disabled facilities grants are distributed to all members
- Information on the total numbers on the waiting list and the average time between OT referral and adaptation is reported to panel
- Officers check the legislative position around reclaiming money spent on private houses where people move on and report back to panel

## **28/07 RSL Void Turn Around Time**

Sue Byard presented information on the RSL Void turn around time, as requested at the panel meeting of 19 July.

Councillors commented that they were pleased to see the improvement in these figures but that there was still a long way to go.

The panel agreed that it was useful to receive this information and they would like it reporting on a regular basis in the future.

## **Resolved**

That performance information on RSL Void turn around times is reported back to panel on a regular basis

### **29/07 Homelessness one offer policy**

Sue Byard presented the paper, as requested at the panel meeting of 19 July and invited questions from the panel.

Councillor Bird questioned the reasons for the 13 'homeless' people who had refused accommodation for reason of it not being suitable.

Councillor Oliver stated that this was something that had been raised before and that is was a case of the accommodation being deemed not suitable for the tenant but meets the legislative criteria of suitable. He said from his own experience in his ward he was aware that there were a number of reasons why this might be, such as the location the accommodation is in being somewhere the tenants had been threatened.

Members agreed that they would like this information reported back more regularly and Councillor Bird asked if information was also available on what current temporary accommodation people were living in who refused accommodation.

### **Resolved**

That information on the homelessness one offer policy is reported back regularly to panel.

### **30/07 Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)**

Lawrence Brazier and Emma Palmer presented to the panel a briefing note on Local Involvement Networks that were being proposed by central government. This was as an 'early warning' of something that could affect the work of the scrutiny panel but that details were still a little unclear.

Lawrence Brazier stated that an initial grant would be available for a 3 year period to help establish the LINK but what would happen after these 3 years was not certain. He said they were looking at the possibility of entering into joint procurement with neighbouring authorities as this will enable the sharing of resources, though a joint LINK would not be possible.

Councillors expressed concerns that this could be another initiative by central government that wasn't properly planned out and that the local authority would end up footing the bill.

Councillor Woodruff suggested that as PPIs currently formed part of the Health Scrutiny Panel it might make sense for this issue to be referred to them.

Emma Palmer stated that they would be engaging with the PPIs as part of the process in any case.

Councillor Oliver said that as this impacted across social care as well as health, he felt it should stay with the full panel for now.

## **Resolved**

That updates on LINKs are brought to the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Panel as and when they become available until such a stage as the full scale of the issue could be determined and the best approach could be decided upon.

### **31/07 Older Peoples Inspection Action Plan**

Karen Reilly presented the latest update on the action plan developed from the CSCI Older Peoples service inspection. She noted that since the plan was distributed to members the only red item on the plan had turned to amber so there were now no red measures and they were confident that all the ambers would become green by the time CSCI sign off the plan in September.

Councillor Bird asked how the amber issues were being tackled as he was concerned with the number of delays on some actions and asked if these delays were due to capacity issues and if it was realistic to expect completion between now and September owing to the high vacation rates over August.

Karen Reilly said that there were a number of sub groups charged with tackling items where there had been slippage and that these were accountable to the OP Action Group. She said that some of these delays had been due to the unexpectedly prolonged absence of a key member of staff but that now they were back in work things were progressing well. She added that all her key officers were in during August so the holiday season would not be an issue and that they remained confident of completing all actions.

Councillor Bird asked about CSCI's involvement in the amber items.

Karen Reilly stated that they were required to report back regularly to CSCI who did not seem unduly concerned about their capacity to deliver on these items.

Councillor asked that, as previously requested, all reports using the RAG system should contain smiley faces or the letters R, A, G as some councillors have difficulty distinguishing between colours. Karen Reilly agreed to this request.

## **Resolved**

That:

- The HSCI Scrutiny and Performance Panel note the action plan update
- Future reports contain smiley faces or letters instead of just colours.

### **32/07 Current Financial Position**

Karen Reilly gave a verbal update on the current financial position in adult services, as had been requested by the panel previously. This was in addition to, not instead of the formal quarterly updates that would still be presented to the panel.

Karen commented that a corrective action plan last year had considerably limited an overspend in the budget, but due to local and national demographic pressures it was recognised that there was a £2.2 million black hole in the Adult Services budget.

In liaison with the chief executive and the relevant portfolio holders the service had successfully negotiated an injection of £964,000 from the reserve. Some of this money was being used to address the shortfall in staffing of the social work teams that had been highlighted as an important issue by CSCI. The remainder of the money was being put into 'invest to save' schemes to drive out high costs rather than just being used to fill the hole.

Karen gave the example of assistive technology such as gas and flood detectors for people suffering from dementia, or sensors that triggered alarms when they went through the front door. This allowed people to live independently at home for much longer periods of time and so had significant associated costs savings by avoiding the need for residential care or intensive home care.

Karen informed the panel that examples of this technology were on display at the Independent Living Centre on Bridge Street at the bottom of Tameway Tower.

Councillors commented that it was good to see this money was being spent wisely and were encouraged to hear of the new technology that was helping people to maintain their independence.

### **33/07 Working Groups Draft Remits and membership**

The panel agreed the remits for the two working groups for access to housing and older people's strategy and care criteria.

The panel were informed that the access to housing had been agreed by the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel as a joint working group and three members of the panel agreed to join the group.

### **Resolved**

The membership and first meeting dates were agreed as follows:

**Access to Housing**  
(20 September 2007, 6pm)  
Councillor Oliver  
Councillor Pitt  
Councillor Shires  
Councillor Coughlan

**Older Peoples Strategy and Care Criteria**  
(6 September 2007, 6pm)  
Councillor Ault  
Councillor Bird  
Councillor Woodruff

The panel agreed membership should not be closed of at this stage and any other members wishing to join either should be given the opportunity to do so.

### **34/07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 27 September 2007.

The meeting terminated at 7.25 pm.

Chair:

Date:

DRAFT