

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Monday 24 November 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present Councillor C. Ault (Chair)
Councillor J. Barton
Councillor A. Paul
Councillor I. Robertson
Councillor Woodruff

Officers present Sue Byard – Assistant Director Strategic Housing
Margaret Willcox – Assistant Director – Adult Services
Steph Simcox – Head of Finance Social Care & Inclusion
Craig Goodall – Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

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 minutes silence.

48/08 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence submitted on behalf of Councillors Mushtaq Ahmed and T. Oliver.

49/08 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor B. Cassidy and E. Hughes substituted for Councillors T. Oliver and Mushtaq Ahmed respectively.

50/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

51/08 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Members of the Panel requested several minor editorial changes.

Resolved

That the minutes, as amended, of the meeting held on 9 October 2008, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

(Annexed)

52/08 FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan as at 9 October 2008 was submitted.

(Annexed)

72/08 - Links to Work

Members noted that they had previously requested to consider this item before it was sent to Cabinet. However, the item was scheduled to go to the next meeting of Cabinet without first coming to scrutiny. Members also commented that the description of the decision in the forward plan could be improved.

Margaret Willcox commented that the Cabinet date would need to be revisited so that the issue could come to scrutiny first.

75/08 – Learning disabilities short breaks

Margaret Willcox commented that this decision was also likely to be considered at a later meeting of Cabinet. She explained that a series of regional benchmarking exercises had resulted in proposals being put together to reduce the resources on offer in line with other local authorities. She added that respite care for older people was underused, however, ideas such as Housing 21 were designed to encourage greater take up.

63/08 – Implementation of charging policies within Social Care and Inclusion

The Panel were informed that this did not include transport charges

Resolved

That 'Links to Work' be considered by the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel before it is reported to Cabinet.

53/08 2007/08 BUDGET – 6 MONTH MONITORING REPORT

The Panel were given a breakdown of the Social Care and Inclusions revenue outturn forecast for 2008/09 including explanations of overspends and risks to the achievement of the forecast based on the first 6 months of the financial calendar, April to September 2008.

Steph Simcox informed Members that the directorate was £156,000 under spent. High risk areas in adult services were monitored on a fortnightly basis.

It was noted that the Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) and Links to Work disability services were overspent.

54/08 DRAFT BUDGET 2009/10 PROPOSALS

The Panel considered what proposals they wished to make to Cabinet regarding the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate budget for 2009/10.

Steph Simcox explained that this was the Panel's opportunity to put forward headline recommendations on their priority areas for Cabinets consideration when setting the draft Social Care and Inclusion budget for 2009/10.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Members discussed the potential for further retendering of commissioned services and the savings that this could bring. Margaret Willcox explained that the largest retender remaining was that of nursing and residential care it was anticipated that the

introduction of standardised systems would bring savings. This was scheduled to take place during 2009 with a consultation starting in the spring. Another potential area for retendering was learning disabilities day centres and the creation of smaller localised centres.

- The possibilities of greater joint commissioning and pooled budgets with other health care providers was suggested. Margaret Willcox explained that currently all joint commissioners were joint appointments with the teaching Primary Care Trust (tPCT). Steph Simcox added that it would be difficult to identify cashable savings from this type of reconfiguration but efficiencies would be created.
- Members suggested the further development of assistive technology, including information technology, to help reduce the number of people requiring hospital treatment. Margaret Willcox reported that work was ongoing with the discharge team on reducing the time people spend in hospital. Whilst this was proving successful it did consequently put pressures on other services that supported people once they were living in the community as people would often require aids and adaptations to enable them to live independently.

A Member cited an example of an elderly person who had been discharged from hospital during the Christmas holiday period without having a proper assessment completed. This meant the person was sent home without any food.

Margaret Willcox reassured Members that social workers were in place at the hospital to assess all patients being discharged to ascertain what support, if any, they would need in the community.

- In response to a question Margaret Willcox explained that the Council offered care packages to people below the 'critical' threshold. Other authorities did not start to deliver care until a person's needs were considered 'critical' under the Fair Access to Care Services Guidance. If Walsall was to change its policy and only deliver care to those persons with 'critical' needs it would be required to build up the voluntary and community sector first so that those with lesser needs could still be supported. Members supported the idea of strengthening the local voluntary and community sector.
- Margaret Willcox replied to a Member question by explaining that in order to fill any vacancy at the Council at the current time it was necessary for any appointments to be approved by two Executive Directors, the Head of Human Resources and the Head of Corporate Finance.
- The Chair tabled a briefing note from the Personalisation Working Group (annexed) requesting that any savings made through this scheme from central support services were re-invested in the Social Care and Inclusion directorate.

Resolved:

That the following recommendations be reported to the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel and Cabinet for inclusion in the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate budget for 2009/10:

- 1. further retendering of commissioned services is investigated with a view to making efficiencies whilst maintaining value for money;**

- 2. further efficiencies be identified through pooled budgets including the joint appointment to posts with other health care providers;**
- 3. further investment into assistive technology be sought to support discharges from hospital in conjunction with the Manor Hospital and NHS Walsall;**
- 4. continued investment in aids and adaptations to support vulnerable people in their own homes;**
- 5. further investment in the voluntary and community sector to increase its health care capacity with a view to longer term savings;**
- 6. an early commitment be made for any cashable efficiencies realised in the social care and inclusion directorate and central support services through more efficient processes created by the implementation of the personalisation agenda be redirected into adult's social care.**

and;

- 7. information regarding the levels of contributions from Walsall Council to fund social care activities in the voluntary and community sector be provided to the January 2009 meeting of the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel.**

55/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 1 December 2008.

The meeting terminated at 7.16 p.m..

Chair:

Date: