

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 9 October 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present Councillor T. Oliver (Chair)
Councillor C. Ault (Vice-chair)
Councillor J. Barton
Councillor A. Paul
Councillor I. Robertson
Councillor Woodruff

Also present Andrew Moulton – Disability Forum
Kath Soames & Jo-Ann Dunn – Carers Federation

Officers present Dave Martin – Executive Director Social Care & Inclusion
Sue Byard – Assistant Director Strategic Housing
Clive Wright – Partnership Director
Julie Gethin – Head of Neighbourhood Partnerships & Programmes
Steph Simcox – Head of Finance Social Care & Inclusion
Tracy Simcox – Supporting People Manager
Debbie Parkes - Housing Strategy & Partnerships Manager
Neil Hollyhead – Senior Housing Strategy Officer
John Greensill – Joint Head of Disability
Helen Dudson – Acting Manager of Corporate Performance Management

33/08 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for non attendance submitted on behalf of members of the panel.

34/08 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

35/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

36/08 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2008, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:

Dave Martin corrected information provided last meeting re placements in Sothorn Cross as follows:

Of 450 residential places available 149 placements are taken by Walsall Council and 124 of those placements are in borough. He added there was no greater concern than previously expresses following reports of the current financial down trend affecting Southern Cross and that he had contacted Councillor Bird after the last meeting immediately he was aware that the previous update was incorrect.

(Annexed)

37/08 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The panel noted the training opportunities as detailed in the agenda and previously circulated to members of the panel.

38/08 FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan as at 9 October 2008 was submitted.

(Annexed)

Resolved

That the forward plan be noted.

39/08 LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORKS UPDATE (LINKs)

The Chair invited Kath Soames (LINKS Operations Manager) and Jo-Anne Dunn (team leader) from the Carers Federation to present information regarding the progress being made (annexed). Following the presentation the chair opened floor for questions.

In response to queries regarding use of mystery customers and how concerns raised would be handled it was explained that much information can be gathered during visits and that the key was to engage with people and get them to feel comfortable with sharing their experience. In relation to confidentiality the Carers Federation explained that they would maintain a database when issues raised and that all would be done to maintain confidentiality of individuals but also to provide generic feedback to ensure improvements.

Dave Martin highlighted that Adult Protection Service (APS) would be close allies in this and encouraged Jo-Anne Dunn to contact Steve Jones (APS). All recognised that closer working would add value. He also suggested that the APS could assist in training to increase awareness of what signs to look for when visiting those receiving care.

There followed questions relating to the governance arrangements where it was acknowledged by the Carers Federation that it was important that all representation on the governing board was balanced and that it was open to many organisations. It was explained that following development all individuals involved would receive one vote for nominees to the board and once the board was elected they would then select the chair. They added that they are aware of some nominees coming forward and also of gaps in areas and so will be encouraging representation from those areas. There will be support for members of the general public that are nominated and the roles and responsibilities are currently being developed in a consultative way. Once the group has been established there will be some facilitation / team buildings activity as well and once work

starts and outcomes are achieved it was felt that the public will recognise and understand the purpose and how they can get involved.

During discussion and in response to other queries it was confirmed that:

- The relationship with Overview and Scrutiny was currently being considered and that a representative to link with Overview and Scrutiny was being identified and that preference was for a protocol to be developed in agreement with overview and scrutiny and also a review date.
- There was no confirmed information regarding how commissioning would be considered.
- Expenditure in relation to LINKS would be decided by the board and that the role of the Carers Federation was to advise and administer.
- It was confirmed that the budget is in the contract and comes through the Area Based Grant.
- The mix of representation and engagement at this point had been good but it was recognised that more cross engagement would be of benefit and that the challenge of helping people recognise the benefits of joining LINKS remained.
- There were various roles available to LINKS but the Carers Federation identified a consultative role for LINKS and were looking for information coming in to identify gaps and where LINKS can influence.
- In relation to NHS engagement it was recognised that there is a need to understand the activity being undertaken and how links can be made and collaborative work can be delivered.
- Priorities and targets for next 6 months are to develop a fully functioning elected LINKS, work plan developed that has focus on some short-term goals so that some outcomes have been achieved to encourage further participation.

40/08 AFFORDABLE HOUSING WORKING GROUP INTERIM REPORT

Councillor Oliver introduced the item recognising that the report had been circulated. The report links to the next item on agenda (Housing Strategy). He briefly outlined the interim findings as detailed in the report and also the further work streams identified, recommending that the working group continues and concentrates on the further work identified.

Resolved

That the affordable housing working group continue to meet to consider the further work items as identified within the report.

41/08 HOUSING STRATEGY 2008-2011

Councillor Oliver welcomed Debbie Parkes to present the report previously circulated and the supporting draft strategy.

(Annexed)

During the discussion regarding the report Andrew Moulton queried the lack of reference to the involvement of the 3rd sector in contributing to targets, for example in relation to the work of the adapted housing service and officers explained that the strategy itself does not include the local targets that are set to determine how the detail of the strategy is delivered. Officers also agreed to consider further the inclusion of 'recycling' homes as

part of the strategy, again recognising that the strategy was supported by a more detailed delivery plan.

In response to member queries regarding the rising fuel costs and a strategy in relation to supporting vulnerable residents Sue Byard outlined the way in which the affordable warmth programme worked and that there was recent indication that central government was making funding available and that the department of communities and local government was establishing a team to consider the impact of the economic downturn to which Andrea Potts (Head of Supported Housing) had been seconded. Officers assured members that preventative measures in response to the economic downturn were being developed and that further updates regarding the recent government announcement would be made available as the detail was known. In addition officers informed members that they worked closely with colleagues in the NHS to identify high risk residents so to prioritise activity. The role of the 3rd sector in supporting this work was recognised and officers confirmed that they are happy to progress referrals in relation to affordable warmth from anywhere.

Discussion then considered the content of the draft housing strategy and supporting supplementary documents in relation to the interim findings and the affordable housing working group.

Resolved

That scrutiny officers work with colleagues in strategic housing to compare the relevant documents to consider any discrepancies between the working group findings and the draft strategy so that these can be considered as part of the next phase of the drafting and consultation process and that these discrepancies be raised as part of the scheduled report to Cabinet.

42/08 SUPPORTING PEOPLE IMPROVEMENT TOWARDS EXCELLENCE ACTION PLAN

The chair invited Tracey Simcox to present the report as previously provided to members and it was confirmed that an updated version of the plan had been circulated at the meeting. The discussion was in relation to version 10 of the plan (annexed).

Officers confirmed that action 4.5 in the plan was specifically in a reference to the annual review of contracts being completed and that a programme for delivering this was now in place. In relation to a suggestion that the group that considered fairer charging policy be re-established officers explained that there were 2 issues relating to fairer charging. The first related to the need to rationalise activity in relation to supporting people and the second related to the planned review of fairer charging, which will involve service user consultation. Officers explained that fairer charging had been identified as a possible way forward for supporting people service users and that the consultation on fairer charging was currently being finalised. It was confirmed that Steph Simcox and Margaret Wilcox would be willing to meet with Andrew Moulton to discuss further consultation.

In response to members questions regarding the progress being made in the delivery of the supporting people action plan officers informed Members that whilst there were no specific concerns regarding the progress being made it was important to recognise that the forthcoming inspection was not a re-inspection and that given responsibility for provision has been in place for 7 years it must be recognised that the pace of

improvement may not match other authorities and that although there was a need to recognise good progress has been made it may not be enough. Members were reminded that it wasn't an inspection of the council service but of everyone involved in the programme and that the probable challenge for members would be to respond to inspector questions relating to their understanding of the supporting people service and what it provides.

Resolved

That more detailed information regarding the supporting people programme would be provided to the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel closer to the planned inspection schedule.

43/08 SOCIAL CARE AND INCLUSION BUDGET MONITORING – QUARTER 2

The chair invited Steph Simcox to lead the panel through the presentation as previously circulated on the in year finance performance for the social care and inclusion directorate (annexed).

In response to a query regarding the links to work service and the report detailed within Cabinets Forward Plan it was confirmed that following cabinet agenda planning the report had been removed from cabinet's agenda and officers had been tasked with developing options regarding the future of the service. Officers also confirmed that it would only be a cabinet key decision if closure of the service was being considered or if a constant overspend was to be accepted. Members were informed that the request was for firm proposals for the future of the service in terms of keeping within budget and there was potentially worklessness funding available. It was recognised that third sector engagement was important to the sustainability of the service and that the work needs to be completed relatively quickly to prevent financial pressure next year.

Resolved:

That the panel note the reported in year financial performance for social care and inclusion and that the report on the future of the links to work service will be received at a future meeting of the scrutiny and performance panel prior to being presented to Cabinet.

44/08 RESOURCE PLANNING 209/10 – 2011/12

The chair invited Steph Simcox to lead the panel through the presentation as previously circulated on resource planning for the social care and inclusion directorate (annexed).

During the presentation reference to the phase 1 resource packs previously circulated to members was made and the financial performance graphs for each service area were reviewed. It was recognised that the changing population in the borough meant there was an increasing demand for services at a time when there was a restriction in funding.

In response to queries it was explained that the savings generated from adapted housing were opportunity savings and that whilst the population was living longer and therefore generating an income in terms of paying council tax that there is an in-balance in terms of the income generate and the costs as social services only budget for increases in

population above the aged of 75 and costs can rise with level of need as the health of individuals tends to deteriorate with age, thus demand constantly increasing.

Walsall pilot for change in PSSEX1 and this may help producing more meaningful benchmarks for Walsall against national trends

It was recognised that the presentation provided a picture of performance by service and against the national picture and Dave Martin suggested there were some areas that may interest scrutiny citing the example of respite care provision in Walsall compared to other authorities and this relates back to the procedure taken in designing service delivery. This was further identified following a query regarding the low take up of direct payments for YADS service users which compared to high unit costs. Officers explained that the packages designed in Walsall are higher cost than some other authorities and so our performance doesn't compare well. In terms of service design this relates to whether the cost of units or the number of units should be counted to demonstrate our approach to service delivery.

Members queried the fluidity of budgets between services and the value of pooled budgets and officers explained that there is a certain flexibility given the nature of service provision and our approach in relation to section 31 and 75 pooled budgets and that whilst the pooling of budgets can be effective there is a need to be mindful of the differences between the funding bodies in terms of their individual terms and conditions and financial regulations.

Members were reminded that the meeting on 24 November was the special budget meeting in which members would have an opportunity to review the information already provided, and with their knowledge of services, to review growth bids so that scrutiny can consider which growth bids they perceive are a priority and also areas of potential savings as cabinet want a view from scrutiny regarding where they think savings can be made.

Members were advised that if any further finance information was required to support them in this process to contact Steph Simcox directly and that any additional information requested by a member of the panel would be forwarded to all panel members.

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45/08 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT – REVIEW AND REFRESH

Chair invited Clive Wright to present report previously circulated (annexed). The panel was informed that the report was an update regarding the baseline targets for the LAA measures and explained that activity on measures continues even though the agreement had been signed off with the measures of specific interest to the panel highlighted in the report. Members were informed that a further update would be available in February. In response to queries it was confirmed that in relation to the local measure re domestic violence there was currently no target as work continued on defining exactly what would be measured and that this should be resolved by December.

Dave Martin explained that there are proposed changes to the structure of the Walsall Partnership and it was confirmed that these changes to the areas of interest to the panel can be presented to the panel for information.

Members asked if there were any specific areas of concern within the LAA and its officers responded that performance against smoking cessation and teenage pregnancy measures in previous LAA was adrift. Officers acknowledge that other measures in the LAA were cross cutting but these had not been specifically highlighted.

Resolved

That the panel note the progress being made in relation to the LAA process.

46/08 MERGER OF YOUNG ADULTS AND DISABILITIES SERVICE

The chair invited John Greensill to present to the panel the update regarding the merger of young adults and disabilities services (annexed).

In response to members queries officers confirmed that progress was at a slower pace than initially anticipated and currently estimated progress to be 6-8 weeks behind original plan. When asked if there were any specific concerns officers explained that there were some concerns around expectations of staff who were keen to progress and to concentrate on addressing cultural issues but that it was important to take the appropriate time to build the infrastructure first.

In relation to budgetary issues progress had been generally satisfactory. In relation to the Integrated Equipment Store although outturns up to month five had shown positive early results month six were showing cause for some concern.

Resolved

That the panel note the progress being made in relation to the merger of the services.

47/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 27 November 2008.

The meeting terminated at 8.45pm.

Chair:

Date: