

AT A MEETING
of the
**MODERNISING SERVICES
WORKING GROUP** held at
the Council House, Walsall on
Wednesday 2nd February, 2005 at
6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T. Oliver
Councillor R. Walker
Councillor V. Woodruff
Councillor I. Shires

Kathy McAteer
Trish Skitt
John Greenshill
Shirley Williams
Stuart Bentley

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

3. Notes of previous meeting held on 1 November

These were passed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Reprovisioning of Older Peoples homes

Kathy McAteer stated that a report was being drafted for Cabinet that would outline the findings of the soft market testing and next steps, but they were still very much in the early stages of the work, which would require a pre-tendering process that would take a further 6 months. She suggested that, at this stage of the process, this report would be less sensitive than the Meals on Wheels review. She asked the group if they wanted a report to this group or to the full Scrutiny Panel.

Cllr Oliver indicated that he was of the opinion that a report, linked to the Cabinet report, should go to the full Panel, as this group already a fairly full schedule with the review of Carers and the Independent Living Centre, and the schedule for the full Panel is currently fairly free.

This was agreed by the group

Recommendation

- (i) that Kathy McAteer submit a report, linking to the Cabinet report, at the next full Scrutiny Panel.

5. Independent Living Centre Position Statement

Shirley Williams tabled an extract from a report to the Health and Social Care Partnership Board (1/2/05). She outlined the difficulties in identifying town centre accommodation and stated that, although not ideal, the H & SC Partnership Board had given their support to the leasing and development of Tameway Tower as an interim solution. Kathy McAteer further stated that there would be a long term benefit due to the improvement of access to the building.

Cllr Oliver agreed that this was not ideal, but made the point that it was to be a transitional position. He suggested user groups should be asked for their views, and as to the likely commitment of service users to use the new facility. Cllr Oliver enquired about the funding of the project, in particular the NRF funding stream.

Trish Skitt stated that phase 1 was OK, but there was a need to spend the money before the end of the financial year. There is, therefore, a risk that monies will not be spent in time due to the short timescales.

Shirley Williams stated that it was unlikely that they would be able to pull down the full NRF grant, but it was hoped that £250,000 could be used for building work and appointment of a team. When asked about the level of Capital spend, she could not give any firm figures, but it was likely that it would be a good proportion of the available money. She also stated that, as a contingency, other monies may be available, e.g. the LSC has Capital spend, and so, providing that their requirements can be met, this may be another option.

Cllr Oliver mentioned the possible long term provision on the Waterfront site. However, he was not sure what the plans for Regeneration were and he believed that residential plans were now higher on the agenda than Social provision.

Cllr Oliver suggested that a formal approach should be made to the Urban Regeneration Company as to the feasibility of inclusion of this project in Waterfront development plans.

Cllr Shires mentioned the upcoming road scheme at Shannons Mill, which would change the location of bus stops around the Tameway Tower. He suggested that the bus companies may be persuaded to place a showcase stop outside the Tower.

Kathy McAteer stated that Members had expressed an interest in visiting the ILC at Sandwell. She suggested that April may be a good time as this would coincide with the start dates of new staff.

Recommendation

- (ii) that officers from Health and Social Care make a formal approach to the Urban Regeneration Company regarding future plans for inclusion of social elements on the Waterfront site.
- (iii) that a visit to the Sandwell Independent Living Centre be arranged for the end of April.

6. Arrangements for events with carers and service users 8 February 11.00 – 2.30

John Greensill outlined the schedule for the event. He stated that a broad spectrum of carers' views would be presented; those invited included representatives from the Carers' Centre, along with carers who had made presentations at a recent Day Centre open day consultation event.

John Greensill also mentioned that the meeting, involving service users, would include users who do not currently make use of council provisions.

The meeting ended at 6:45 pm.

AT AN EVIDENCE GATHERING
EVENT of the
**MODERNISING SERVICES
WORKING GROUP** held at
the County Hotel, Birmingham Road,
Walsall on **Tuesday 8th February,
2005** at 11:00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T. Oliver
Councillor R. Walker
Councillor C. Ault

John Greensill
Ian Staples
Mark Inglis
Stuart Bentley

Carers and Carers Representatives

1. Apologies

None.

2. Evidence Gathering Round Table Discussion

Mark Inglis opened the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

He stated that the meeting had been arranged by Social Care and Health, under the Scrutiny process, to aid Members gather evidence on the subject of the Modernising of Day Centre Provision.

Mark Inglis then introduce John Greensill and asked him if he could give a brief summary of the current position and thinking in the area.

John Greensill stated that he had already given Members a presentation on the current Government position which states that improvements must benefit both users and carers.

The Modernising Day Services Event held by Social Care and Health in November 2004 had been a good day, but unfortunately, due to the resignation of the project manager since that date, little progress had been made since then and, therefore, the project is still in the consultation phase.

The recent development around the Plech and Allenwall Neighbourhood office, in partnership with local associations, suggested that a more inclusive approach, with integrated facilities, may be possible.

A similar situation may arise with the Rushall office, while retaining core services.

It was believed a 'step by step' approach would be beneficial, seeking and incorporating feedback along the way.

Funding for the Mary Elliot Club and the Mencap Leisure Club would continue in order to keep things going during the modernisation process.

Cllr Oliver thanked John Greensill and opened the meeting up to the Carers.

Each Carer was asked for his/her view but asked to try and avoid over personalising their comments.

The following is a summary of the overall feedback from the Carers.

The Carers stated that:

- they felt the decision makers did not fully understand their needs. They felt that the users were not consulted. Carers Assessments and Person Centred Plans were important in order to understand the needs of the service users and that families should be treated as a unit.
- there was a feeling that the Centres were not as good as they once had been. Users were increasingly left with little to do and were under stimulated. However, there was general agreement that Day Centres should remain and more resources used to improve service delivery. Mary Thornley made reference to a petition from the Carers Centre with over 100 carers' signatures, expressing that they wished to retain the day centres.
- Day Centre activities should be purposeful and meaningful. Activities should reflect the plans and not be overly restricted by Risk Assessment. It was felt that there was no visible sign of external assessment of Day Services.
- the recent trend to segregation of the more profoundly disabled from the more able had led to a feeling of isolation and had adversely affected the lives of the users. It was thought that the interaction of users with varying levels of disability improved the quality of service for all involved. There was a general feeling that users with complex needs were becoming increasingly sidelined.
- however, there was also reference to the needs for new activities and challenges for more able services users, including a variety of venues.
- "Care First" was seen as a success and there was concern that a move to local provision would affect this service.
- "Links to Work" was also seen as a great success, although this had taken certain activities away from the Centres.

- there was lack of staff continuity at the centres, with an increasing usage of agency staff. Also, it was thought that Day Centre officers were increasingly overloaded with the personal care needs of the users, leaving little time to fulfil their other roles. There was general agreement that care assistants would ease the burden and allow Day Centre officers do their jobs.
- local provision was excellent for some service users, although there were questions over the purposefulness of some of the provision. However, concerns were raised over the suitability of such provision for the more profoundly disabled. The less disabled can manage a greater degree of community integration.
- direct payment frequently led to isolation of the carers as there is no formal contact with other users. Voluntary groups were seen as filling the void. Also, the large amount of paperwork and the change of status of the carer, from service user to effective service provider and employee (with the need for public liability insurance, etc...), was a great worry, especially among the aging generation of carers.

Cllr Oliver Closed the discussion by thanking the carers for their input, which the Members had found very informative.

3. Plenary Session

Following the discussion Members and officers held a plenary session to summarise the day's events and to scope the next phase of the process.

John Greensill stated that, at the present rate, Carer Assessments were on an effective 12 year rolling programme and that the target for Person Centre Plans was 100% by 2010. This is obviously a large section of work, but vital input into the modernising agenda. There was a need to increase the rate of information gathered rather than through the full Carer Assessment. Health and Social Care were currently scoping a consultation process that would most likely be commissioned privately and involved questionnaires with one to one interviews if they were felt necessary.

A proposed model for Day Services was beginning to emerge, taking into account; legal requirements, shifts in population density, lack of land, state of buildings and the increasing dependency of the client group.

Direct payment was now more flexible, with a mix and match approach more the norm. However, concerns over paperwork and liability were noted.

Due to the state of the buildings, it is unlikely the majority of the Day Service facilities will be able to remain where they for more that 3 years.

The Plech model is thought to offer an alternative, bringing in up to £80,000 of local funding with the aim of encouraging more able body access to the services so that services can become self sufficient with grant aided access for the more profoundly disabled.

This would release capital receipt for use in staffing. However, the level of capital receipt is, as yet, unknown and there is likely to be a cash squeeze. Any growth in monies is likely to be swallowed by new school leavers.

It is likely that a greater incorporation of the Voluntary sector and other non-council options would be needed to keep carers in the loop.

4. Future Work Programme

John Greensill suggested that, in order to obtain a full view of the issues, the three main strands should be incorporated.

1. Officers – Government approach “Valuing People”
2. Carers
3. Users

The Members had already heard from officers and now Carers, leaving the Users.

Contact had been made with the “Making our Choice” Group, a group of Users that represent other service Users. They are keen to participate and have already produced a video outlining their views. They have also suggested that a representative from Users who do not routinely access council services should be invited.

This was seen as a good next step and it was agreed that an event would be organised before April.

The meeting ended at 3:00 pm.