

SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 15 February 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

Panel Members Present Councillor A Paul (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J Barton
Councillor I Azam
Councillor L Rattigan
Councillor G Wilkes

Portfolio Holder Present Councillor B McCracken

Officers Present Paul Davies – Executive Director, Adult Social Care & Inclusion
Lloyd Haynes – Finance Account Manager
Andy Rust – Head of Vulnerable Adults & Joint Commissioning Unit
David Lockwood – Housing Standard & Improvement Manager, Regeneration
Andrea Potts –Head of Housing, Regeneration
John Fell - Head of Strategic Development
Clive Wright – Director, Walsall Partnership
Matthew Underhill – Scrutiny Officer

67/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received for the duration of the meeting from Councillor T Oliver, Councillor V Woodruff, Councillor B Douglas-Maul and Councillor R Burley.

68/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor G Wilkes substituted for Councillor Oliver for the duration of the meeting.

69/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

70/10 Walsall LINK

The Director, Walsall Partnership introduced the briefing (annexed) which provided an up date on progress in relation to the transition from LINK (Local Involvement Network) to HealthWatch. The main points of the report and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- Walsall LINK was established in 2008 following the statutory duty placed on all council's under the Public Involvement in Health Act 2007;
- The borough is unusual in having two organisations which seek to engage local communities in health and social care issues, Walsall LINK and MyNHSWalsall. The LINK enjoys specific powers to enter and view premises where care is provided and the power to refer matters to scrutiny;
- Recent government proposals, including the Health and Social Care Bill, set out the establishment of a new engagement body, HealthWatch, which will be awarded the powers that are currently designated to the LINK. This forms part of activity aimed at reforming local arrangements, including the establishment of a new Health and Wellbeing Board. The Director, Walsall Partnership observed that by comparison with MYNHSWasall the LINK had not operated with sufficiently effective board arrangements. Officers highlighted the importance of being able to establish democratic legitimacy at the LINK;
- The Executive Director for Social Care and the Director of Walsall Partnership have met with representatives from the LINK and MyNHSWalsall to determine the how these organisations might co-operate to form HealthWatch. The outcomes that were agreed include, further and regular meetings between the two organisations, as well as meetings with the newly established local GP commissioner bodies;
- The Executive Director for Social Care confirmed that the council would continue to meet it's obligations to maintain the LINK during the 2011/12 financial year with Black Counry Housing continuing to act as the host organisation, as the transition was made to the new arrangements. He also explained that work would continue with both the LINK and MyNHSWalsall to assist with a bid for any future HealthWatch contract that might emerge. He also emphasised that HealthWatch represented a new form of arrangement rather than simply a replacement LINK vehicle. The new body will have to be fully representative of local health service customers, it will have to focus on strong monitoring of patient care and it will have to interact effectively with the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Head of the Joint Commissioning Unit pointed out that a specification would have to be developed for HealthWatch and this would ultimately assist in assessing whether the new arrangements were successful in meeting identified objectives.
- The Portfolio Holder observed that often individuals did not welcome change. However, it was necessary to ensure that the best possible representation for users of local health services could be achieved.

Resolved:

That

1. the Panel note the legislation changes described in the report and the actions being taken to establish HealthWatch during the transition year April 2011 – March 2012, with updates to be received during the next Municipal Year;

2. the Panel note the continuation of the LINK during the transition year and LINK support contracted to Black Country Housing.

and

3. the Panel noted the briefing.

71/10 Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) and Aids and Adaptations

The Housing Standard & Improvement Manager, introduced the briefing and presentation (annexed) which provided an update on progress in relation to additional service improvements, performance improvement and future areas of working. The main points of the briefing and presentation and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- Streamlining of “simple schemes” under £12,000 is now fully in place. This has resulted in the total time from referral to approval, for both agency and non-agency schemes, significantly decreasing (49, September 2010, to 30, January 2011) and the waiting list reducing as a consequence. There has also been an increase in approvals with quarter 3 2010/11 (149) representing a 381% improvement against quarter 3 2009/10 (31). In addition, Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) capacity to deal with more complex cases has been increased. The overall impact is that residents are assisted more quickly with lower staff costs;
- This has been achieved through the introduction of clearer and simpler application forms. This includes most schemes now requiring the completion of a four page rather than a forty page document, with schemes under £5,000 requiring the completion of a two-page form. There is now a focus on relevant questions, for example, declarations regarding benefits received or whether an individual has savings in excess of £50,000. Officers reassured a Member that assessments were being undertaken efficiently and without unnecessary delay;
- Other improvement activity includes Housing officers being alerted immediately when Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) defer approval for a scheme. In addition, agreement has been reached that Walsall Housing Group (whg) consent is no longer required for the installation of certain adaptations, including stairlifts;
- Constraints on future improvement action include a significant increase in referrals and the availability of capital funding. In addition, there is a rise in the number of complex cases. For example, health problems associated with obesity requiring adaptations in an individual’s home, where standard stairlifts are not adequate;

- Further actions includes a capital bid of £1m to establish a Preventative adaptation service. The purpose of the service would be to provide assistance to owner occupiers who do not meet DFG or Fair Access Charging (FAC) criteria in installing adaptations which prevent slips, trips and falls. The key objective of the scheme would be to reduce future pressure on local health care services and DFGs;
- Other action includes a capital bid of £226,000 for a Supporting Independence Scheme aimed at reducing future cost pressures by moving residents from care/ nursing homes into independent accommodation. Elsewhere, efforts are underway to maximise the number of properties and types of property on the Adapted Social Housing Register;
- The Chair expressed strong support for success achieved by officers in significantly reducing the time from referral to scheme approval. The Portfolio Holder agreed and praised the knowledge of the Housing Standard & Improvement Management.

Resolved:

That

the Panel noted progress on disabled facility grants and aids and adaptations and that further updates would be received in the 2011/12 financial year;

and

the Panel noted the presentation.

72/10 QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Finance Account Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the anticipated revenue and capital outturn position for 2010/11. The main points of the report and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The forecast revenue outturn for 2010/11 was a breakeven position as a result of action planning which was put in place to support the portfolio and the council's overall financial position;
- The forecast capital outturn for 2010/11 was a predicted slippage against budget of £381,000. This was principally a consequence of the work being undertaken to transfer staff to the Allen Centre, including the upgrade of the PARIS IT system;
- Included within the budget for 2010/11 were new investments of £758,000, together with savings totalling £4.994m. The full year effect of previous years' investments and savings included in the budget are £312,000 for investments and £1.325m for savings. The in-year action plan will deliver £7.9m of efficiency savings;
- In response to a Panel query, regarding the forecast slippage in capital outturn, the Executive Director explained that the upgrade to the PARIS system represented major IT project. There were a number of teams that

were not currently on the system as a consequence of data links not being in place. This action will also enable social workers to operate remotely via laptops and use PARIS in real time. While in addition, part of this activity strong IT arrangements had been re-established with Children's Services. The Executive Director also invited Scrutiny Panel Member to view the Allen Centre when all work had been completed.

Resolved:

That

1. the Panel noted the forecast year end revenue and capital financial position for Social Care and Inclusion for 2010/11;

2. Panel Members be invited to tour the Allen Centre following the completion of the current work;

and

3. the Panel noted the report.

73/10 Service Restructure Update

The Executive Director Social Care and Inclusion introduced the report. The main points of the report and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The Directorate had undergone significant re-structure activity which it was anticipated would be completed by March 2011. The objective was to ensure that services worked smarter and yet were more efficient. For example, £1.1m of savings had been made on agency staff and performance had improved exponentially;
- The new structure operated with a separation of no more than five levels between the Executive Director and front line staff. It was a structure that would deliver effective services and included a remodelling of the Access and Response Centre (ARC). Further reports would be provided to the Panel as the new arrangements became firmly established;
- It was apparent that services had become too inward focussed the objective had been to ensure that service users were at the centre and the following year would witness significant improvement in the delivery of services;
- The Chair and other Panel Members expressed strong support for the re-structuring action and other successful work that had been undertaken.

Resolved:

That

the Panel noted the report.

74/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair informed Members that the next Panel meeting would held on 24 March 2011.

The meeting terminated at 6:45pm

Chair:

Date:

