

BRIEFING NOTE

**TO: HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE
PANEL**
DATE: 20 MARCH 2008

RE: SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To agree the themes for the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel's section of Walsall Councils Scrutiny Annual Report for 2007/08.

Background

Each year each Scrutiny and Performance Panel at Walsall Council produces a summary on the success or otherwise of its work which is presented to Council.

Attached at Appendix 1 to this briefing note is a draft of the content for the annual report from the panel based on the minutes of the work that has been completed during 2007/08.

The Panel are invited to review the areas and content in appendix 1 that they would like in their section of the annual report and approve it for publication.

Once the content has been agreed by all Scrutiny and Performance Panels the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2007/08 will be presented to Council on 21 April 2008.

Recommendations

That the content from the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel to the Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08 be agreed.

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Health Social Care & Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel – Annual Report

The panel have considered a variety of issues from their work programme that was agreed at its meeting on 19 June 2007. Key areas of work were:

Disabled Facilities Grant

The panel considered the disabled facilities grant at a number of meetings throughout the year and had a number of concerns about the proposals suggested by cabinet.

The panel appreciated the need for the council to work smarter with their resources but were concerned about a ceiling being applied to grants and the length of time it took for facilities to be in place for all applicants. This was particularly true for those residents who required minor adaptations who were waiting significant amounts of time for minor aids to be installed. Over the course of the year Members heard that changes were being made to how waiting lists were tackled that would ensure that residents with a variety of needs were assisted.

The panel were keen to see additional resources made available to this service so that residents could receive the aids and adaptations that they were in need of.

As part of their consideration of this issue the panel instigated its own benchmarking work with Walsall's statistical neighbours.

Hollybank House Reprovision

The reprovision of Hollybank House was considered by the panel following a call-in of the cabinet decision. The decision was called in as it was felt that an options report to cabinet on potential future provision of services at Hollybank House was identifying a preferred course of option before the options had been assessed.

Following recommendations by the panel it was confirmed by cabinet that all the options were still open for consideration and that scrutiny would be able to monitor all future issues with Hollybank House.

Further consideration of the issue led the panel to consider the consultation process that was taking place on the possible changes to the services provided by Hollybank House.

Community Meals Gateway

The panel considered the issue of community meals and expressed their desire to cabinet for the supply of daily freshly produced or regenerated meals. The panel felt this issue had not been considered as part of the

tendering process for the new contract and asked that cabinet investigate methods of including these sorts of meals in the new deal.

Local Involvement Networks (LINKS)

LINKS has been an issue that has been monitored by the panel throughout the last year.

LINKS is to be the body that replaces the Patient and Public Involvement Forum's for health and social care issues. In order to establish a LINK a local host organisation needs to be appointed. The panel have monitored the procurement of the host organisation throughout the year and look forward to engaging with the LINK when it is established.

Supporting People Inspection and Supporting People Improvement Towards Excellence Plan

The panel heard that the supporting people inspection had not identified any weaknesses that the council was not already aware of and addressing. Service improvements could be achieved by the embedding of national practices locally. The nature of these improvements led to the development of a 'Towards Excellence Plan' rather than the usual style improvement plan.

The panel have monitored the implementation of this plan on an exception basis.

Registered Social Landlord Void Turn Around Times

Members were informed that the void turn around period for registered social landlords was improving well. The turn around time had been an area of concern in 2005/06.

Performance Monitoring

Throughout the year the panel has continued to monitor the performance of the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate through its own specially developed scorecard. The scorecard is reported quarterly to the panel with all red measures fully explored.

Affordable Housing Working Group

The panel established a joint working group with the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel to consider the issue of affordable housing in Walsall. The working group have considered a range of issues during their work including the legislation that exists around housing, including a draft supplementary planning document, and heard evidence from Officers from Strategic Housing, Regeneration and Development and Control as well as considering the national perspective by receiving information from Housing Justice.

Older Peoples Strategy and Care Criteria Working Group

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In addition to these issues the panel have also considered the Older Peoples Action Plan, the Homelessness One Offer Policy and monitored the budget of the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate at Walsall Council.