

SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Monday 18 January 2010 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present Councillor Oliver (Chair)
 Councillor Ault
 Councillor Martin
 Councillor Paul

Health Panel Member present Councillor Carpenter

Officers present

Margaret Willcox	Assistant Director – Adult Services
Clive Wright	Director, Walsall Partnership
Andy Rust	Head of Joint Commissioning Unit
Steph Simcox	Service Accounting & Financial Planning Manager
Lloyd Haynes	SC& I Finance Manager
Matthew Underhill	Scrutiny Officer

56/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received for the meeting from Councillor Barton, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Woodruff and Councillor Mushtaq (Health Panel).

57/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting.

58/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

Councillor Carpenter declared an interest in Item 6. **Links to Work.**

59/09 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were noted.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held 18 and 30 November 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

60/09 LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (LINK)

The Director of Walsall Partnership introduced the update (annexed) explaining that significant work is required to deliver an effective LINK in Walsall. A meeting between the LINK Board and the new host Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) in November highlighted confusion regarding roles as well as that of the Council. He explained that advice was currently being sought from the Department of Health (DOH) to assist in determining the role of the host and the Board as well as the parameters within which the Board is able to operate. To assist in this process a meeting between the Board and the

DOH is scheduled for later in January, with a further meeting of the host and the Board also to be arranged following a postponement earlier in the month due to the adverse weather conditions. Clarification is also being sought as to whether the Board was properly established by the previous host. In terms of other activity, the Director of Walsall Partnership explained that the LINK Board had expressed concern regarding the new host's premises which do not appear to be Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. In addition, the Project Manager appointed by BCHG has subsequently resigned from their position and a recruitment process is underway.

In response to a Panel query the Director of Walsall Partnership explained that the difficulties being experienced were likely to be a consequence of dysfunctional design and governance. He also acknowledged that these issues had been exacerbated in the short term by the resignation of the Project Manager. It was important to recognise that the purpose of the LINK, to consult as widely as possible with local residents on key issues, could not be achieved under existing arrangements. A regional meeting of Council's who have LINK arrangements suggested that underrepresentation was a common experience. However, support from a Government officer from the DOH should assist in tackling the current difficulties being experienced before they worsen. The Chair also highlighted concerns that have been expressed regarding an absence of election for members of the LINK Board which further added to the impression that it was not outward looking. Other key points from the discussion were as follows:

- The Director of Walsall Partnership explained that the relationship and mandates of the host and the LINK Board remained unclear, particularly in terms of decision making powers;
- The Assistant Director observed that a number of established members of the LINK Board exerted strong influence over its activities, some of which were perhaps not always within its remit;
- The Panel also considered receiving a presentation from the new host at a future meeting;
- The Panel discussed whether it might be possible for the LINK to operate in conjunction with the local consultation body MyNHS Walsall, which has achieved considerable success in being representative of local residents, as well as the Citizen's Panel. This might also mitigate against the risk of duplication of activity.

Resolved:

That:

officers will provide an update to the next Panel meeting regarding progress with the current issues associated with the Walsall LINK.

61/09 LINKS TO WORK

Following the declaration of a personal interest Councillor Carpenter left the meeting for the duration of this item.

The Assistant Director introduced the report (annexed) explaining that negotiations continue through the Joint Negotiating Committee. This process had been assisted by the involvement of a former Director who has helped make the process more constructive. The main points of the update were as follows:

- Agreement has now been reached with nine of the at-risk staff who have taken the decision to accept redundancy or early retirement. Under the “go now” arrangements these staff will not be required to work their formal notice period;
- The original position previously given to the Panel regarding a job trial for an at-risk member of staff was not correct. In fact, the individual had elected not to pursue the job trial for a number of reasons and was now being supported in determining their preferred course of action;
- At-risk staff were receiving support from a dedicated Human Resources (HR) officer who is also providing weekly updates to senior officers on progress;
- Discussions are also underway via the JNC to determine the future of Links to Work. An officer recently attended a regional event to ensure that work undertaken in Walsall was consistent with neighbouring authorities. A survey of the three existing Links to Work sites was also underway with a report to be delivered to the Panel and Cabinet;
- Three supervisor posts have been identified for Links to Work and a skills matching process is currently underway. However, an appeal will be heard in early February regarding a person or persons seeking assimilation into this role.

Following a Panel query the Assistant Director explained that current process was on schedule. However, as a consequence of some of the difficulties and delays experienced in the process the extended redeployment period of 29 weeks for at-risk staff had not yet begun. The main points of the Panel’s discussion were as follows:

- The Assistant Director explained that following July Cabinet’s decision on the future of the service there had proved to be 17 staff in at-risk posts. 9 staff have opted for the “go now” process; while of the remaining 8, 3 will be skills matched into the 3 vacant supervisor posts. As a result there are currently 5 members of staff who remain at-risk;
- The survey of the three Links to Work sites includes consideration of all machinery. An assessment will be made regarding the most appropriate course of action, including potential re-sale.
- The Chair agreed to provide further details to the Assistant Director in relation to a query regarding the potential impact of the current changes to those undertaking voluntary work placements with the Council

Resolved:

That:

- 1. officers will continue to provide regular updates on Links to Work;**
- and**
- 2. the Chair will provide further details to the Assistant Director in relation to a query regarding the potential impact of the current changes to those undertaking voluntary work placements.**

62/09 REVISED DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET AND DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2010/11 FOR THE SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH PORTFOLIO

The Service Accounting and Financial Planning Manager introduced the report (annexed) explaining that it was the second of two reports that the Panel had received in relation to the 2010/11 budget. She explained that, following the panel's recommendation to Cabinet on 16 December there had been no changes to the Social Care and Inclusion (SCI) revenue budget proposals. The main points of the report were as follows:

- A further item included at this stage was guidance regarding the Draft Capital Programme which included a number of positive developments for proposed funding. SC&I portfolio no longer have the responsibility for the capital budgets for Aids and Adaptations as this now sat within the Regeneration Portfolio.
- In relation to the Hollybank rehabilitation centre funding which had been requested for a significant period of time to support a restructuring of services now forms part of the proposal for the Capital Programme;
- Funding had also been proposed for the refurbishment of Goscote Adult Training Centre. This will support the delivery of multi-disciplinary services from the site for people with learning and physical disabilities as well as mental health;
- Further capital funding is also planned to be received from the Department of Health (DOH) which can be committed as deemed appropriate within SCI. This currently includes supporting the information technology improvements at the Access and Response Centre;
- The final budget proposals will be presented to Cabinet in February.

The main points of the Panel's discussion were as follows:

- The Service Accounting and Financial Planning Manager explained that there were items on the reserve list where funding has not yet been identified for the next financial year. Should sufficient funding become available then bids may be approved during the year. In respect of the refresh of the PARIS IT system, while funding had not been specifically identified for the next financial year, it was possible that sufficient funding would prove to be available from the Information for Social Care Grant from the DOH;
- In respect of the impact of the proposed reduction in Council funding of the learning disability pooled budget arrangements with NHS Walsall, the Head of the Joint Commissioning Unit explained that it was likely that there would be a proportionate reduction in funding received from the NHS. He explained that a substantial amount of work would need to be undertaken to assess the needs of service users to determine the impact of any reduction in budget funding. He acknowledged that difficult and painful decisions might have to be taken regarding many services, including mental health, learning disability and older people's services;
- The Assistant Director explained that a number of case studies have been undertaken to determine the impact of the proposed changes in SCI. It was anticipated that these would be reported to the Panel at its next meeting. However, in terms of the overall impact of the proposals it was the responsibility of officers to advise the Council as to the point at which funding reductions had gone too far in adversely affecting services. She explained a further challenge existed around the

levels of service that were received as a consequence of the costs of provision. For example, there were services that were provided more widely and therefore greater economies of scale were available. As a result the level of provision was greater than would be possible for more costly services. The outcome of this was that the level of service received was often determined by an individual's needs;

- The Panel agreed that it was difficult to comment on the draft budget without fully understanding the potential impact on service users.

Resolved:

That:

the Panel would wish to express concerns regarding the proposed budget and would like to understand what the impact will be for social care service users.

63/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The work programme and forward plan were noted

64/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair confirmed the date of the next meeting as the 11 February 2010.

The meeting terminated at 7:10 pm

DRAFT