

## **SOCIAL CARE AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

THURSDAY 6 OCTOBER 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

**Panel Members Present:** Councillor Oliver (Chair)  
Councillor Paul (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Ali  
Councillor Burley  
Councillor I Shires  
Councillor Douglas-Maul  
Councillor Rattigan  
Councillor D Coughlan

**Other Members Present** Councillor E Russell

**Officers Present:** Paul Davies, Executive Director, Social Care & Inclusion  
Lloyd Haynes, Social Care and Inclusion, Finance Account  
Manager  
David Lockwood, Housing Standards and Improvement  
Manager  
Suzanne Joyner, Head of Community Care  
Anne Doyle, Commissioning Manager, Strategic  
Development  
Matthew Underhill, Scrutiny Officer

### **117/11 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Turner, Councillor Ditta and Councillor Barker for the duration of the meeting.

### **118/11 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor I Shires substituted for Councillor Barker for the duration of the meeting.

### **119/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **120/11 MINUTES**

It was agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting be amended to reflect the attendance of Councillor Burley.

## Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2011, as amended, copies having previously been circulated be approved as a true and accurate record.

### 121/11 BROADWAY NORTH RESOURCE CENTRE

The Chair introduced the item and invited service users and representatives to provide their views on the services provided at Broadway North:

- A representative explained that the centre was a respite resource for users and carers and provided support for the whole family. In this respect it was far more suitable for many than the Dorothy Pattison Hospital. Many had also noted the tranquil setting of the centre and its contribution to health and well being. It was also suggested that it would be important to promote such a successful service and seek to work more effectively with mental health partners, while providing services on weekday evenings was also suggested. It was also suggested that other local councils might learn from the success of Broadway North;
- Service users explained that they were able to access a range of services and alternative therapies which assisted them in treating and managing a range of mental health issues. A service user had followed a course of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy which had helped address his depression and anxiety. He explained that this type of treatment taught people coping strategies to tackle everyday tasks, for example, shopping. An art therapy course had given him a goal and a sense of achievement. The course had an 86% pass rate amongst service users and was fully funded by Walsall College. Another service user explained that she had completed a course in Level 1 English and the centre had also helped her significantly improve her confidence;
- Representatives acknowledged that the review needed to take place. However, they also highlighted the importance of the respite that was available, particularly for young carers. The provision of on site offices for service user groups was also identified as of potential importance. Other concerns included the risk to the mental and physical health of service users if the centre were to be closed;
- A Member thanked the service users and representatives for eloquently explaining the benefit of the centre. It would be important to acknowledge the value of a resource in Walsall which was not available elsewhere. She highlighted that it was apparent that service users were suffering a degree of distress and inevitably felt insecure while the review was ongoing;
- The Executive Director explained that Broadway North was a good but underused facility. It was also apparent that it was a lottery whether or not an individual was able to access the centre. However, the provision of crisis and respite care would continue to form a key element of mental health services. He pointed out that previously respite beds had been under utilised which had been a consequence of either individuals not being aware that the service was available or the service not being made available. It was noted that recent activity

had increased use of respite beds. However, it would be important to ensure that there were services that reflected local demand and a building should not be confused with services;

- The Executive Director pointed out that it was necessary to acknowledge the failure of the service both to meet known local demand and ensure equitable access to services. A joint review of services available was being undertaken with mental health service partners to ensure effective local provision. He also explained that there would be investment in services to support this objective;
- The Chair explained that it would be important for service users to have a menu of services to choose from and that the Panel should continue to participate in the review of mental health services. He also thanked the invited guests for their invaluable contribution in helping the Panel understand some of the key issues.

## **Resolved**

That the Panel would continue to participate in the review of mental health services.

## **122/11 DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS & AIDS & ADAPTATIONS**

The Housing Standards and Improvement Manager introduced the presentation (annexed). The main points of the presentation and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The process of streamlining schemes below £12,000 had been in place for over twelve months. This had reduced waiting lists, reduced referral to approval time and freed-up staff to work on other related activities. Significant increases in approvals had also been achieved, with an overall 142% improvement in 2010/11 compared to the previous year, with waiting times also substantially reduced between March 2011 and September 2011. A number of challenges to tackling waiting times remain, including the complexity of some schemes and where an individual opts to not use the council's agency service;
- A further significant improvement is the reduction in the average cost of DFGs, this has been achieved through a tendering process which has produced lower cost but high quality schemes. The council is now acting as the lead for a regional tender for lifts, for local authorities including Birmingham, which it is anticipated will deliver significant economies of scale. The council is receiving funding from the other authorities to lead this process and this will be reinvested in services. In addition, land charges were now applied to schemes over £5,000;
- A Member observed that it was a positive report. However, it would be important to maintain the continual improvement. Other Members commended officers for their efforts in successfully helping a number of local families with DFGs and aids and adaptations, as well as the competitively priced and high quality work being carried out.

## **Resolved**

That the presentation be noted.

### **123/11 FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE SCORECARD**

The Commissioning Manager introduced the report. The main points of the presentation and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The scorecard had been revised to reflect changes to statutory performance outcomes and also included key outcomes identified by officers. It was explained that there was no like-for-like comparative data and therefore it would be necessary to wait for future quarters to determine performance trends.

## **Resolved**

That the report be noted.

### **124/11 BENEFITS BASED CHARGING WORKING GROUP REPORT**

The Chair introduced the report. The main points of the presentation and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The Chair thanked all those who had contributed to the report, particularly service users and representatives. He highlighted the view of the working group of the importance of helping people live as independently as possible. The working group had also appreciated the further difficulty created by the Walsall's funding settlement from central government with the result of a saving required to be delivered from Benefits-Based Charging of £3m;
- The working group had recognised the difficulties that would be faced in implementing any new system. However, the group was deeply concerned that some people did not fully understand the implications of the new arrangements. Further concerns existed around the timing of the sending out of bills within a week of the conclusion of local elections, with criticism also expressed regarding the use of the council tax system format for bills which had caused distress for some service users;
- The working group also noted anomalies with the previous fairer-charging scheme. However, the group were not certain as to whether this had been a consequence of failure of the system or a failure to implement the system. The working group observed that the new arrangements were far less likely to produce major anomalies;

- The Chair highlighted the resistance of some service users to the flat rate charging arrangements under benefits-based charging. A particular issue existed where individuals found they were paying the same amount regardless of how much care they received. However, it was also apparent that while users could opt out of these arrangements many were more comfortable purchasing services through the council. It had therefore been proposed in conjunction with officers that when requested individuals would have the right to purchase only the services that they used. This would be facilitated via a brokerage scheme for which individuals would have to pay a small weekly administration charge. Officers explained that service users purchasing services collectively would often be able to do this more cheaply than the council;
- Further working group recommendations included the importance of the council taking a very sympathetic view of individual cases and a single council point of contact for service users. The need for effective communication and the council was highlighted, as was the importance of a further review in six months;
- The Panel approved all the recommendations of the working group for submission to the Cabinet.

## **Resolved**

That the following recommendations of the working group be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration:

That

- (1) that there should be amendments to the current system, and in particular consideration of the introduction of a “brokerage system” when the cost of care received is below the level charged under benefits-based charging;
- (2) that the council should adapt its system to enable access for care users to purchase a range of social care services, including day centres;
- (3) that there be a flexible and sympathetic approach to deal with any residual anomalies and exceptional circumstances which may emerge during the transition to the new arrangements. This should include an identified council point of contact to advise on service user queries;
- (4) that there should be an emphasis on retaining user choice and personalisation, and that there should be a named person / point of contact in particular to provide support and signposting for those facing hardship and problems as a result of the change in system;

and

- (5) that a further review of the benefits-based charging should be undertaken when the system has been fully “rolled out” to all service users.

## 125/11 **WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12 AND FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel considered the work programme and Cabinet's Forward Plan.

### **Resolved**

That the work programme and Forward Plan be noted.

## 126/11 **FINANCIAL PLAN 2012/13 TO 2014/15: DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION**

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

- Personal budgets and benefits-based charging were key areas which assist the Directorate in delivering savings of £7m over the following three financial years. However, he confirmed that there would be no closure of day and residential services. It would therefore be necessary to balance local need with available resources, while at the same time removing inefficiency and over specification from the system;
- Significant savings are also been achieved with previously out-of-borough care packages being replaced with the provision of local support. Following a Panel question officers explained that returning individuals to Walsall had in some cases caused complaints, worry and anger to the service user and their families. Members highlighted the importance of using a case-by-case approach. Officers explained that should individuals choose to remain in the borough in which they have received support the legal responsibility for the provision of care rests with that council. Officers explained that in the cases of those returning to the borough investment had been undertaken into the Hollybank Rehabilitation Centre to effectively assess individuals to ensure the appropriate care package was identified;
- A further key element of savings was care packages. The Chair highlighted the importance of monitoring the impact on services users as consequence of reductions in the level of care they received. Officers explained that the division of savings between out-of-Borough placements and care packages was set out in the Joint Commissioning Unit business plan with a saving of around £15m set against out-of-borough placements.

### **Resolved**

That

- (1) the Panel expressed the need for further information regarding the division of savings between care packages and the reduction in out-of-borough care packages and commented that it would not be possible to judge the impact on individual users and cases until further details became available;
  - (2) the Panel was also concerned regarding the right of individuals to choose whether or not they continue to receive out-of-borough care;
- and
- (3) the Panel noted the outline draft budget proposals.

**127/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair informed Members that the date of the next meeting would be 17 November at 6:00pm.

The meeting terminated at 8:05 pm

Chair:

Date: