

SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday, 12 March, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room, Council House, Walsall

Panel Members Present

Councillor M. Longhi (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor C. Clews
Councillor M. Bird
Councillor R. Burley
Councillor E. Hazell
Councillor E. Russell
Councillor D. Shires

Portfolio holders Present

Councillor D. Coughlan – Social Care
Councillor I. Robertson – Health

Officers Present

Keith Skerman – Executive Director (Social Care and Inclusion)
Andy Rust - Head of Joint Commissioning Unit
Tony Cox - Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Terry Hawkins – Assistant Director (Social Care and Inclusion)
Tracey Simcox – Commissioning Lead
Tina Faulkner – Press Officer
Bernard Cysewski – Welfare Rights Senior Officer
Lynn Levesley – Service and Case Manager
Davina Lytton – AGE UK
Nikki Gough – Committee Business and Governance Manager

405/15 Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor H. Sarohi, L. Rattigan, and K. Phillips.

406/15 Substitutions

Councillor K. Phillips was substituting on behalf of Councillor J. Fitzpatrick.

407/15 Declarations of interest and party whip

Councillor T. Jukes declared an interest as an employee of Walsall Healthcare Trust.

408/15 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

409/15 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2015 were approved subject to the following amendments:-

- Councillor Russell's apologies should be recorded for the meeting
- Rob Gilham's job title was Corporate Director of Operations
- Councillor T. Jukes declared an interest as an employee of Walsall Healthcare Trust

410/15 Aids and Adaptations Working Group document

The working group initiation document was agreed by the Panel.

411/15 Better Care Fund update

The report was taken to Panel to update on the progress with the arrangements for the Better Care Fund, in particular the proposed arrangements for hosting the pooled budget. If approved the Cabinet report would allow the Council to work with the NHS through a pooled budget. Member's attention was drawn to appendix 1 which illustrated activity related to pooled funding. Members discussed the initiatives in the paper and their success. The Executive Director for Social Care stated that for a number of reasons it was important that people were helped to remain in their own home.

Councillor Robertson stated that it was suspected that in the future more money would go into the pooled fund and it was important that it was set up and governed properly.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Panel asked about accountability of the better care fund, Officers clarified the accountability arrangements and it was agreed that this would need to be further discussed and that the Scrutiny Panel may have a role to play in this process. Members discussed support for carers, the Executive Director stated that a sum of money already existed and this would be transferred into the fund, it was planned to add more money to the fund to better support carers.

The Chair concluded the item by stating that this was a technical document and the Panel would be requesting information on performance in the future including the impact of the better care fund reducing the level of admissions to hospital and residential based care.

Age UK officers discussed the assistance that they could provide in supporting older people to remain at home. It was acknowledged that Age UK services were critical to this objective. Age UK officers stated that they were able to attract funds from elsewhere which would help the objectives of the

Council. Officers stated that the challenge for everyone was to bring health and social care services together to reduce dependence on the hospital.

412/15 Charging Policy for Community Based Services

Officers informed the Panel of the Cabinet report which detailed the outcome of a 3 month consultation exercise, in relation to the Social Care and Inclusion, community based charging model. The report made recommendations for future charging policy. Panel Members were asked for their views on the outcome of consultation and the proposed charging policy. The importance of this policy was stressed.

The Assistant Director for Social Care gave a presentation to summarise the report (annexed). The objective was to charge individuals for services at levels which were reasonable and for individuals to understand what they were being charged for. Individuals would be asked to pay contributions which they could reasonably afford to pay and this would not exceed the cost of services. Members were informed that those with more complex needs would be better off financially under the new policy. Officers explained that the Care Act placed new obligations on the Council, as it meant that self funders would be coming onto the Council books. Meaning that over time the Council would get a different profile of service users and by law they would have to accept people who requested that of the Council.

In considering this information the following points were raised, and would be fed back to Cabinet;

- Concern was raised that there were a significant number of assessments which needed to be completed prior to the policy coming into force and that failure to complete assessments in time could lead to a possible delay in bills being issued in May 2015.
- Concerns were raised about risk management and contingency planning to deal with a surge in activity

- Members were also concerned about internal capacity to deal with appeals.

In response Officers stated that a large proportion of the assessments had been completed and advised that there should not be a delay in customers receiving their revised bills. Officers clarified that when individuals appealed the decision of the council in relation to charges, the original decision would stand until the appeal was heard. Individuals would receive a clear breakdown of charges and income included within the formula which should assist people to make a decision in deciding whether to appeal.

A discussion was held around time slots of care that individuals received, and assurances were given that people would only pay for the care that they received – this was made possible through electronic devices. These devices dis-incentivised carers from cutting visits short. Members agreed that the scrutiny panel received a report back in the future on the initial findings of the policy.

The report was noted.

413/15 Residential and Nursing Home Transitional Contracts and Financial Arrangements for Preferred Accommodation

Members were informed that the implications of the Care Act have meant that policies in Walsall would be merged into one document to be known as 'Financial Arrangements for Preferred Accommodation'. Officers and Members discussed top up payments and deferred payments which would be able to be combined. Officers stated that the new framework would cover all of care homes and the commonly used 'out of borough' care homes. Members expressed concern that up to 80% of equity in a person's house could be taken to repay care charges and these were not insignificant amounts. Officers emphasised the importance of enabling people to remain in their home.

A Member queried the statement that when a person died the total amount payable was due within 90 days, and suggested that this was not practical. Members also discussed the ability in the future to receive pensions in a lump sum and the impact that this may have on social care charges.

The report was noted.

414/15 Work Programme and Forward Plan

The work programme and forward plan was noted.

415/15 Private Session

Exclusion of public

Resolved

That during consideration of the following items on the agenda, the Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel considers that the discussion is exempt information by virtue of paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, and accordingly resolves to consider the item in private.

418/15 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting would be 28th April, 2015, at 6.00 p.m.

Termination of meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 8.40 p.m.

Signed:

Date: