

Sub-Committee to Promote Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities

2 September 2002

Investing in Modern Services for Older People

Report of Head of Overview and Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Sub-Committee about a meeting of a Working Group to consider the way in which the Authority is managing the implementation of the strategy for Investing in Modern Services for Older People.

Background

2. In September 2001, a Task Group of the former Scrutiny Committee under the Council's experimental Constitution was set up to consider the proposals for the future of residential services for older people in the County. A report was produced by that Group which included a number of recommendations considered by the Executive.
3. One of the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Group was that the transitional arrangements when closures of residential homes took place should be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny to assess whether best practice was being achieved.
4. A Scrutiny Working Group to consider this issue was reconvened under the Council's new Constitution and met on 19th July 2002. To ensure continuity, the Members of the previous Task Group were invited to this meeting.
5. The detailed recommendation from the Scrutiny Group was that, in addition to the proposals from the Director of Social Services about managing the transition, the following issues should be added:-
 - Friendship Groups for residents should be retained as an important issue
 - Residents, subject to their wishes, should be kept as near as possible to their home area

- Consultation with Member Area Panels/Area Forums should be considered in terms of Member involvement in advance of any changes taking place
 - Respite care should be maintained throughout the transition.
 - Day care should be maintained throughout the transition
6. Peter Kemp, Director of Social Services, together with Malcolm Haddick, Operations Manager, and Duncan Callum, Head of Service, attended the Scrutiny Group meeting to give an up-date about progress made, and, in particular, to explain how the closures were being managed by the Social Services Department.
 7. Four homes had been decommissioned:
 - Moor Grange, Spennymoor
 - Essyn House, Easington
 - Syke House, Burnhopefield
 - Sunningdale, Ouston.
 8. The residents at Essyn House and Syke House had been moved prior to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Group. Almost all the residents from Moor Grange, Spennymoor, had been transferred to Appletree Home as part of the transitional arrangements. The only home, therefore, where residents had been dispersed was Sunningdale.
 9. The Director of Social Services explained the care which had been taken to try to ensure that the impact on residents at Sunningdale was minimised as far as possible. The general view from officers from the Social Services Department, following a number of independent checks, was that the transition had been managed appropriately. The views of the Scrutiny Group had been taken into account in the transitional arrangements. As an additional safeguard, Age Concern were to be engaged to provide an independent assessment of the way in which the transition had been managed.
 10. The Director of Social Services also explained the position about Stoneleigh at Barnard Castle where a local action group had been formed by relatives of residents. Considerable opposition had been lodged to the proposal to bring forward the closure arrangements to enable an extra care scheme to be built on the current site. The difficulties at Stoneleigh demonstrated the sensitivity of this type of operation.

11. The Working Group was also told that a Project Board had been established to oversee the Investing in Modern Services for Older People strategy. A Cabinet Member was a member of the Project Board, but there was no non-Executive Member. This Project Board met on a regular basis to monitor progress and ensure effective control and delivery of this project.
12. The Director of Social Services was asked whether a non-Executive Member could serve on the Project Board. Whilst it was recognised that such a Member could not be involved in scrutinising the work of the Project Board, there was a general view from the Working Group that it would be of assistance if a non-Executive Member was included in the composition of the Project Board.
13. The Working Group was also asked to consider whether it wished to seek a dialogue with representatives of relatives and residents who had been involved in the move at Sunningdale. The purpose would be to seek assurances that this difficult issue was being handled in the most appropriate way. The Working Group considered that it would provide additional assurance if Members of the Working Group sought independent views from those who had been affected and those who represented those who had been affected. This would also include staff.

Summary

14. Accordingly, it was agreed that a further meeting would take place to consider evidence from and on behalf of residents and staff affected by the closure at Sunningdale. A request is also to be made for a non-Executive Member to serve on the Project Board.

Recommendation

15. That this information be noted, the request for a non-Executive Member to serve on the Project Board be confirmed and the nomination of the non-Executive Member be delegated to the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen.

Contact: Ian Mackenzie Tel: 0191 383 3506
