

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee to Promote Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 3 March, 2003 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor M Nicholls in the Chair.

Members of the Sub-Committee:

Councillors Armstrong, Blenkinsopp, Coates, Douthwaite, Fenwick, E Foster, Hogan, Mrs Howarth, Mrs Hunter, Langham, Marshall, Myers and Quigley.

Other Members:

Councillors Firby, T Forster, Mrs Hodgson, Walker and Watson.

Co-opted Members:

Mrs H Gibbon and Mr K Ibbotson.

An apology for absence was received from Michele Armstrong.

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman continued by welcoming Ken Ibbotson and Harriet Gibbon to the meeting of the Sub-Committee. In addition, he welcomed Jan Stephenson from the Cultural Services Department.

A2 “Message in a Bottle” Scheme

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by Harriet Gibbon, Chief Officer, Age Concern Durham, concerning the “Message in a Bottle” scheme (for copy of slides of presentation see file of minutes).

In relation to the presentation, Harriet highlighted the following:-

- Purpose of message in a bottle.
- Aims and objectives.
- Potential benefits.
- How the scheme works.
- Partners.
- Funders.

The scheme would be launched in April 2003 and would involve a wide distribution. It was also planned to have a poster campaign, together with articles in local newspapers. Some 42,000 bottles would be issued and Harriet emphasised that this was the largest scheme nationally.

Careline (County-wide) and the Warden Service (within Easington area) would assist in the circulation of the bottles and they would be keeping a record of recipients, however it would not be possible to monitor those bottles picked up by individuals from chemist shops.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

A4 Performance Management

Tom Bolton (Senior Support Officer Scrutiny) referred members to the recent training session held by Keith Power (District Audit) in relation to Performance Management and circulated a paper entitled 'The Member Role in Performance Management' (for copy see file of minutes). He then continued by explaining that the following presentations would build upon the previous training session in relation to Performance Management.

(a) Performance Management - Presentation by Corporate Policy Unit

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by Judy Lomas (Senior Corporate Policy and Performance Officer) concerning Performance Management (for copy of slides see file of minutes).

Judy gave a presentation to members concerning the Half Year Monitoring, Best Value Performance Indicators for 2002/03 in relation to Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities, together with a progress report against Local Public Service Agreement targets and an update on Best Value Review Action Plans (for copy of slides and papers see file of minutes). She then highlighted the relevant Best Value performance indicators to members.

Councillor Mrs Howarth referred to BVPI 162 (PAF 20) and asked whether performance was still declining.

Keith Newby (Performance Management Monitoring Officer, Social Services Department) explained that the diminished performance was mainly due to social worker vacancies in the field of Child Care in the Durham and Chester-le-Street areas. Shortages of Social Workers were being experienced by authorities throughout the country.

Councillor Nicholls asked whether future performance indicators produced for consideration by the Sub-Committee, could include comparisons of performance in relation to other Local Authorities.

Peter Appleton, Operations Manager, Quality and Performance (Social Services Department) informed the Sub-Committee that this was a national issue and that the Government was trying to increase the number of people undertaking social work degree courses. However, it would take 2 to 3 years for these people to come through the system. In addition, he recognised that there was a need for the authorities terms and conditions of employment to be improved.

Councillor Nicholls suggested that it may be appropriate for a further investigation of the issues in relation to PAF 20.

Councillor Coates asked if, for future meetings, the performance information could be sent via e-mail in advance to allow members time to prepare any questions.

Resolved:

That members note the information contained in the presentation and further information be sought concerning issues identified as a factor in PAF 20 performance (difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers and comparisons with other areas within the country).

(b) Performance Management Social Services Department – Presentation by Keith Newby, Performance Management, Monitoring Officer

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by Keith Newby, Performance Management, Monitoring Officer in relation to Performance Management within the Social Services Department (for copy of slides of presentation see file of minutes).

Keith Newby highlighted the following issues:-

- PAF Indicators – bandings.
- Children's PAF Indicators.
- Adults Performance Indicators.
- Assessment Exit Survey Indicators.
- Member Involvement.
- User views – why bother.
- How we consult with users.

Members referred to the increases in funding within the Social Services budget and to the need for this to drive up performance.

Members were advised that the Department was now focusing on those areas in the orange banding to improve performance. However, it often took time for any initiatives to have an impact on banding.

In response to a question about client surveys, Keith Newby confirmed that the response rate varied from 45% up to 70% depending upon the nature of the survey.

Councillor Armstrong asked that in future, performance data be sent via e-mail to members prior to the meeting.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the presentation be noted and that performance data be sent to members via e-mail in future, prior to the meeting.

A5 Improving Road Safety in relation to Child Deaths and Injuries – Presentation by Dave Wafer, Business Manager, Traffic Section, Environment and Technical Services Department

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by Dave Wafer, Business Manager, Traffic Section, Environment and Technical Services Department concerning Improving Road Safety in relation to Child Deaths and Injuries (for copy of slides see file of minutes).

Dave Wafer highlighted the following issues:

- 2010 Target - Local Public Service Level Agreement
- Child Casualties Statistics
 - Child Casualties the problem
 - Child Casualties - national statistics
 - Child Casualties - the problem
 - Child Casualties putting it all together
- Recent Research
- Update on Current Initiatives

In response to a question about links between deprivation and the incidence of road traffic accidents, Dave Wafer advised that most accidents happened near to the home, and particularly on housing estate roads.

Various initiatives were underway to educate drivers about the use of speed, however speed currently was not perceived by the public as being socially unacceptable.

In response to a question, Dave Wafer confirmed that representations had been made to Government about the availability of data on injuries arising from children not being secured or correctly restrained in vehicles.

Members commented on the need to concentrate on safe playing areas, as children now tend to play in the street due to a lack of green areas.

Councillor J Armstrong emphasised that speed kills and requested that views be sought from the Police Authority regarding the use of speed cameras to reduce speeding vehicles.

Resolved:

That the information continued in the presentation be noted and that a further presentation be arranged for members by the police in relation to the use of speed cameras.

A6 Mental Health Scrutiny Project – Progress Report

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny concerning the Progress Report in relation to the Mental Health Scrutiny Project (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

Councillor Mrs Hunter, Chairman of the Scrutiny Working Group, informed members that three meetings of the Group had taken place to date, involving five speakers. She emphasised that this project was currently still in the very early stages and that it was anticipated the project would continue for some time.

Resolved:

That the progress report be noted.

A7 Social Care Direct Contact Centre – Presentation by Bob Morland – Social Care Direct

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by Bob Morland, Social Care Direct Contact Centre concerning the work undertaken by the Contact Centre (for copy of slides of presentation see file of minutes).

Bob Morland highlighted the following issues in his presentation:

- The hours of operation.
- The staff.
- Methods of contact.
- The 3 R's
 - Resolution
 - Redirection
 - Referral

After 5.00pm the calls are transferred to the Emergency Duty Team.

Members suggested that a visit to the Contact Centre be included in the summer visits schedule.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted and a visit be arranged to the centre as part of the summer visits programme.

A8 Forward Plan

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny (for copy see file of minutes) giving details of the sections of the Council's Forward Plan falling within its jurisdiction.

Resolved:

That the report and section from the Forward Plan be noted.

A9 Work Programme

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny (for copy see file of Minutes) to update Members about the work programme for the Sub-Committee.

Tom Bolton, Senior Scrutiny Support Officer, referred to the recent discussions during scrutiny of the budget when members had highlighted issues about sickness levels within the Social Services Department. This might form the basis of a study by members, with appropriate representation from the Human Resources Committee. It was suggested that membership and chairmanship of the working group be determined in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

In addition, the Chairman suggested that it might also be appropriate to call a further meeting of the Investing in Modern Services for Older People Working Group later in the year.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a Working Group be established to look at sickness absence levels within the Social Services Department with Chairmanship and membership being determined in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub-Committee.
- (iii) That a further meeting of the Investing in Modern Services for Older People's Working Group be arranged for later this year.