

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 13 June, 2005 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor M Nicholls in the Chair.

Members:

Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Bowman, Douthwaite, Fenwick, Freeman, Lethbridge, Marshall, Priestley, Robinson, Southwell, Stradling and Trippett.

Other Members:

Councillors Gray and Pye

Co-opted Members

Mrs Gibbon, V Chapman and Mr Williams

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Ebbatson and Hunter and K Ibbitson

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Matters Arising

With reference to Minute A3 (a) (the commissioning of a study by Northumbria University into the impact of delayed discharges on the local community) the

Sub-committee was informed that a meeting had recently taken place which had received input from County Council members in relation to this issue.

In relation to the Aids and Adaptations service Councillor Nicholls commented that referrals in Easington are still taking an excessive period of time. He also asked how priority is determined in relation to the installation of stair lifts.

John Thornberry, Head of Adult Commissioning Social Care & Health explained that the role of the service is to identify what form of assistance is required by individuals. He continued that this is a growth service area with more emphasis now placed on assisting individuals to stay at home.

The service had improved moving from a red indicator 3 years ago to a green indicator currently, however, he acknowledged that there are particular hotspots in provision, i.e. delays in assessments which had been caused by problems with the recruitment and retention of occupational therapists. Steps had been taken to resolve these problems although there are problems from time to time with sickness cover.

In relation to the issue raised by Councillor Nicholls concerning the delays in assessment, the officer confirmed that he would investigate and report back.

With reference to priorities, one of the key messages from the public was that a high percentage of them wanted a facility where advice was available and a range of aids to be purchased privately, there are now two independent shops which provide the advice and offer a large choice of equipment. It was highlighted that these are key features of the authority's strategy.

Concerning stair lifts it was explained that they are not the sole responsibility of the authority as the District Council is responsible for funding. He highlighted the need for a good working relationship with all parties and that a strategy is currently being worked on to improve existing working arrangements.

In relation to previous hotspots, Chester-le-Street District had been identified as an area where there were concerns in the time taken for assessments, however the District Council have increased their funding from £220,000 to £330,000 to assist in tackling the backlog of assessments.

Councillor Marshall commented that in relation to the provision of wheelchairs the average wait is currently 6 months.

The Sub-Committee was informed that there are delays in the supply of wheelchairs however the provision of this equipment is not the sole responsibility of the authority with hospitals and PCT's also involved in supplying this equipment. With reference often the lengthy delays are a result of the nature of the adaptations that have to be made to the property however there is a need to ensure that agencies work together. Although progress had been made there is a need for the service to continue to improve.

Councillor Armstrong emphasised the need to work with partners particularly in relation to funding.

John Thornberry responded that the authority had a responsibility to ensure that all relevant partners discuss the various issues.

Councillor Stradling emphasised that the assessment time is critical to the smooth running of the process. He continued that the service is not receiving funding from the appropriate sources as different criteria is used by the various bodies to determine suitability.

The Sub-committee was informed that the authority is now undertaking joint collaborative work with partners and it was suggested that a joint meeting be arranged with the District Council, Health PCT's and scrutiny members.

Councillor Fenwick responded that he would wish to be involved in any joint meetings as he had recently used the aid and adaptations service.

Councillor Armstrong commented that the Welfare Rights Unit had undertaken a lot of good work over the last 2 years and suggested that leaflets concerning the type of service provided by the unit be given to all new members of the authority for information.

Resolved:

That the issues raised be noted.

A3 Terms of Reference

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Head of Overview and Scrutiny explaining the Terms of Reference of the Committee (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A4 Presentation about the Scope of the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by the Director of Social Care & Health about the scope of the work of the Sub-Committee (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

During the presentation Peter Appleton, Head of Service, Social Care and Health, covered the following issues during the presentation.

- Scope of the Sub-Committee and relevant areas including Cultural Services, Community Support (Community Development and

Community Safety, Welfare Rights and Traveller Liaison), Youth Engagement Service and Social Care and Health Service

- Key Challenges included an ageing population; modernisation of services; the implications of the Children Act; independence, well-being and choice for adults; valuing people and partnership working.
- User expectations and quality were also drivers in terms of speed of response; choice; access to information; round the clock services seven days a week and integrated services.
- There were financial pressures in relation to a number of areas including; Residential and Nursing Care Placements; domicillary care provision; supporting people; school leavers with a learning disabilities; older carers of people with a learning disability; integrated teams; and the requirements of laming report.
- There were a number of human resources pressures linked to turnover; Vacancies; undervalued skills sector; job evaluation; workload; absences/sickness
- In conclusion:
 - All services are modernising
 - People want simple access arrangements
 - Information is the key to choice
 - Silo working is not an option
 - Integrated Teams can work
 - 'Letting go' by modernising services is difficult

Councillor Armstrong thanked the officer for the presentation as it highlighted the complexity of the services.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the presentation be noted.

A5 Performance Management

The Sub-Committee considered reports from the Head of Overview and Scrutiny and the Head of Corporate Policy together with a presentation concerning Performance Management (for copies of reports and slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

During the presentation the Head of Corporate Policy outlined what performance management was and how it contributed to the Council's

pressures; how performance reports are constituted; what the symbols on the performance system mean; and how we performed in 2004/5.

Councillor Southwell asked as to why BVPI 127 (a) (violent crime per 1,000 population and (b) (robberies per 1,000 population) had not been set a target.

The Sub-Committee was informed that there was reluctance on the part of the police to set targets, however, for 2005/06 a target for violent offences had been set.

Councillor Barker asked how performance indicators could drive performance within the authority which resulted in improvements in performance in local communities. Some individual areas in the County have particular problems, and he wondered how the new system Performance Plus would help to 'tackle these problems.'

The Sub-Committee was informed that the mapping process as it is developed can be used to identify local priorities. Peter Appleton also commented that some Member Area Panels do receive information broken down to a local level and that this would be available for all Member Area Panels if required.

Councillor Marshall asked whether the authority had any domestic violence units in the County which would be included in the target for BVPI 176.

Members were informed that through supporting people there are 22/23 places within the County for victims of domestic violence.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

A5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties and Introduction of New Co-opted Member

The Chairman introduced A M Williams, a new Co-opted Member to serve on the Sub-Committee.

There were no items raised by any Co-opted Member or interested parties.

Resolved:-

That the appointment of Mr A M Williams as a Co-opted Member on the Sub-Committee be noted.

A6 Forward Plan

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the section of the Council's Forward Plan, which is within the remit of the Sub-Committee (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A7 Work Programme

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

Members were informed that following the development session with members in January 2005 and subsequent discussions with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman it was proposed that the Sub-Committee should scrutinise, children services (improved life chance) and phase 2 of the investing in Modern Services for older people (in relation to the elderly mentally ill) when appropriate.

Resolved:

- (i) That the current work programme be noted.
- (ii) That the major projects proposed for investigation listed above be approved.
- (iii) That any further additional projects identified be discussed in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

A8 Dates of Future Meetings of the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee considered the future dates of proposed meetings of the Sub-Committee of 5 September 2005, 28 November 2005 and 6 March 2006.

Resolved:-

That the dates be noted.