

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee to Promote Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 6 March 2006** at **10.00 a.m.**

COUNCILLOR M NICHOLLS in the Chair

Members of the Sub Committee:

Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Bowman, Cordon, Douthwaite, Ebbatson, Hunter, Lethbridge, Marshall, Southwell, Trippett, and Vasey

Co-opted:

H Gibbon and Mr K Ibbotson, and Mr M Williams.

Other Members

Councillors Chaplow, Gray, Henderson, Iveson, Meir, and Smith

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2005 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A3 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

A4 Community Equipment

The Sub Committee considered a report and presentation of the Acting Director of Social Care and Health about the key issues relating to community equipment and adaptations (for copy see file of Minutes).

In relation to the backlog it was suggested that users of the service needed to be kept informed of how long they will have to wait for their request to be dealt with.

John Thornberry explained that Social Care Direct was a single point of contact and that an Occupational Therapist had been identified to help tackle the issue of poor communication with the public.

John explained his concern about the changes to the Disabled Facilities Grant and the possibility that the County Council could become responsible for the provision of stair lifts.

In response to members concerns about the lack of progress, John advised that a summit meeting had been held with partners to try and develop a joint action plan. He further explained that the Equipment Loan Service is very efficient with 83.5% of requests being dealt with in seven days.

Tom Bolton informed the Sub Committee that discussions were ongoing with Chester le Street District Council about a joint scrutiny project to examine some of the issues identified in the report.

John Thornberry agreed to provide information on the numbers waiting for service and the length of time involved.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A5 Presentation on Domestic Violence

The Sub Committee received a presentation about Domestic Violence from Angela Sheen, Senior Community Safety Officer, Durham County Council and Rachel Green County Strategic Co-ordinator, Durham Constabulary.

Rachel explained that 1 in 4 four women experience domestic violence and that Durham Constabulary receives 8,000 reports of domestic violence annually. There are more repeat victims than for any other crime. It was pointed out that victims are usually assaulted 35 times before they report it to the police for the first time. The Government is determined to prevent domestic violence happening or recurring, to protect and support its victims, and to bring offenders to justice.

To deal with the problem specialist Domestic Violence Courts have been established which put the victim at the centre of the process. Advocates are appointed to help the victim. The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 has made the offence arrestable.

Durham Constabulary has adopted a new policy on domestic violence. This will ensure that all police officers have received a briefing on how to deal with domestic violence.

A perpetrator programme has been developed that is designed to challenge and support partners/ex partners in ceasing their violent and/or abusive behaviour. Positive feedback has been received from those who have attended the programme. Education packs have also been developed for use in schools.

Angela confirmed that reported incidents for County Durham were broadly comparable to other similar areas.

Councillor Trippett explained that Sedgefield has no refuge and that women often have to leave the area which can have a profound effect on children. Rachel advised that refuges are available in Durham and Bishop Auckland. In

addition an outreach service is available in Sedgefield. Members expressed concern about the location of the outreach centre.

In response to questions about prosecution, Rachel explained that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) make the decision on whether to go ahead with a case. If a victim retracts their statement, the CPS could still decide to prosecute if there is a past history of abuse and violence.

It was suggested that it might be useful to carry out a scrutiny project around domestic violence in order to help raise the profile of this issue. The issue would be referred to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Panel for future consideration.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

A6 Performance Management

(a) Report of Acting Director of Social Care and Health

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Social Care and Health providing an update on performance for the third quarter of 2005/06 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Keith Newby, Performance Monitoring Manager informed the Sub Committee that in relation to Adult Services nine out of sixteen indicators were in the highest banding. Indicator C72 Older People aged 65 or over admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care, was in the red. This is a new indicator and reflects the rising demand for care.

In relation to Childrens Services, Keith advised that seven out of nine indicators that can be banded at this point are in the top banding that can be achieved.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

(b) Report of Head of Corporate Policy

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing information on the third quarter performance 2006/06 and final quartile positions for Best value Performance Indicators relevant to the Corporate Aim, Strong Healthy Safe Communities (for copy see file of Minutes).

Bev Stobbart highlighted the BVPI's whose performance has improved. She also drew attention to BVPI 127 (Violent Crimes) where the number of violent crimes per 1000 population has increased by 43% compared to 2004/05.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

(c) Social Care and Health Annual Review of Performance 2004/05

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Social Care and Health providing information on the star rating of the Councils Social Care Services for 2004/05 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A7 Meeting with the Cabinet Members for Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Issues

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny explaining the areas covered in a discussion between members of the Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Scrutiny Sub Committee and relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A8 'Minding the Gap': Review Report

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the latest review of 'Minding the Gap' which looked at mental health provision and support for 16-25 year olds and their carers in County Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the completion of the project be agreed and the progress made towards the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations be noted.

A9 Forward Plan

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny on the Forward Plan (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved

That the report be noted.

A10 Work Programme

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

Resolved

That the current work programme be noted.