

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 3 September 2007 at 10.00 a.m.**

COUNCILLOR J DAVIES in the Chair

Members of the Sub Committee:

Councillors Barker, Bowman, Chapman, Cordon, Davies, Marshall, Priestley, Southwell, Trippett, and Wright

Other Member:

Councillor Nicholls

Co-opted Members:

Mrs M English, and Mrs H Gibbon

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Ebbatson, E Foster, and Stradling, and Mr P Thompson.

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2007 were considered. It was reported that Councillor Southwell's apologies were not recorded and Mrs H Gibbon was not recorded as being present. The Minutes amended accordingly were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Declarations of Interest

Mrs English declared an interest as an employee of the County Durham Drug Action Team, and Mrs H Gibbon as an employee of Age Concern.

A3 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

A4 Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from Lesley Tickell, Head of Adult Care (for copy of presentation see file of Minutes).

The presentation focussed on local authority duties, organisation and structure, process, current activity, referrals by locality, referrals by user groups, current issues, and actions for the future.

She explained that the data does not capture the number of referrals from other areas. It is the responsibility of the host authority to meet the costs of a vulnerable adult and recently there have been many referrals to County Durham. The Referrals are increasing as people's awareness is raised, and there has been an increase in costs due to the extra referrals. She pointed out that there is no specific funding or grant for this, however the Local Authority is expected to safeguard adults. The biggest concern is that adult abuse does not have the same profile as child abuse.

Councillor Nicholls would take on board the comments and would look into with Cabinet to see if there could be a dedicated budget for this. It was pointed out that as there is a corporate parenting body for children there should be something similar for adults. Tom Bolton advised that there had been a recommendation from the Domestic Violence Working Group to look into this. Lesley Tickell explained that the Head of Commissioning was to meet with the independent sector to take this forward.

A5 Quarter 1 2007/08 Performance

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy which provided an update of the quarter 1 performance for the authority's priorities for improvement and the Best Value Performance Indicators relevant to the Corporate Aim of Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities (for copy see file of Minutes).

Concern was expressed at the referrals of young people to the Youth Justice System in relation to were all of the referrals to the Youth Justice system warranted. As once a child is directed there it has serious consequences. Bev Stobbart explained that there is a lot of work being done to ensure that the right referral is made. Gill Eshelby from the Youth Engagement Service would be asked to attend a future meeting to discuss this issue. Mrs Wright suggested that they also need to involve community education in any talks about this. Tom Bolton suggested that they pick this up in the NEET project.

In response to a question from Councillor Southwell about how they would create jobs for those people with learning disabilities Bev Stobbart advised that she did not have that information however would seek to find out. Peter Appleton explained that there is detailed planning to assist individuals in finding employment. Tom Bolton advised that many of these issues had already been picked up under Fear of Crime Scrutiny Working Group and therefore they could revisit this and see if any progress had been made.

Mrs English suggested that with community education outreach work having moved to centre based work they should look at the effect this has had on the children. This would be taken to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Panel to see how they wish to progress.

A6 Medium Term Improvement Priorities

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy on the medium term improvement priorities that have been included in the Council's current Corporate Plan 2007/08 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Sub-Committee was asked to consider whether the improvement priorities were still relevant, and if there were other areas for improvement that should be considered.

Members discussed the issue of children and alcohol, and that children are now able to afford to buy alcohol. It was noted that this links into the health agenda and was part of the concerns following a recent health scrutiny working group. The working group had recommended that there be a detailed healthy lifestyle survey and it was reported that DAAT would establish this.

Councillor Marshall raised the issue of cardiac collapse in young people, and that CRY, a national organisation, are looking into this. The Freeman Hospital is setting up a scheme to test young people in that area and Councillor Marshall suggested that as there were no statistics for this area something similar could be done. Peter Appelton suggested that Anna Lynch, Director of Public Health be invited to a meeting of the sub-committee to share information. This would be discussed at the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Panel as the arena for that may be the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

A7 Any Other Business

Mrs English referred to the comment in the minutes of the last meeting about the Durham DAAT, and she asked that a paper she had prepared about DAAT be circulated to members.