

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 4 September 2006 at 10.00 a.m.**

COUNCILLOR M NICHOLLS in the Chair

Members of the Sub Committee:

Councillors Armstrong, Bowman, Hunter, Nicholls, Southwell, Stradling, Trippett and Wright

Other Members:

Councillor Chaplow, Chapman, Gray, Iveson and Meir

Co-opted:

Mr M Iveson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cordon and Porter, and Mr K Ibbotson and Mrs M English.

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2006 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 Presentation by Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services

Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services gave a presentation to the Sub-Committee (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

Her presentation included:-

- Her background
- Values and expectations
 - value for money and efficiency

- equitable access to services
- commissioning engagement and involvement
- respect and deference
- minimal bureaucracy
- link between operational and strategic

- Key challenges
 - over 45,000 people live in wards ranked amongst worst 10% in England for health
 - over 100,000 people live in wards ranked the worst 10% for income
 - teenage pregnancy
 - binge drinking/obesity
 - life expectancy
 - death rates from heart disease/stroke
 - caring responsibilities
 - increase of 'very elderly cohort'
 - decline in birth rate

- Statutory and non statutory duties
- Range of projects and developments
- Objectives 06/07
- Budget 07/08
 - Medium term plan document
 - Financial pressures
 - Saving targets
 - Areas for growth

Rachael explained that tackling poverty in the area was a real challenge for the authority. She anticipated that the merger of the PCTs would make it easier for officers of the authority to be able to plan more effectively the provision of services, as they would be working in partnership with only one PCT.

In response to a question from Councillor Southwell, Rachael clarified how consideration of the budget was to be undertaken and that at the present time the figures set out in her presentation were estimates. Issues of risk analysis and priority would be looked into during the budget considerations.

Members raised a number of issues in connection with gypsies and travellers people and asked for clarification about how this was to be dealt with by the Authority. Rachael advised that she was aware this was an emotive issue and that the authority would need to consider further how to deal with the issues. Councillor Stradling advised that scrutiny had undertaken a previous project about travellers and suggested that this might be helpful.

Councillor Wright referred to the situation where funds have been given to provide a home help service for the elderly in Easington at the detriment of other areas and despite this the situation in Easington still existed. She suggested therefore that this been taken on board when future proposals were looked at and that a risk assessment be undertaken.

A5 Aids and Adaptations- Presentation by John Thornberry, Head of Adult Services

John Thornberry, Head of Adult Services, gave a presentation on the current position in relation to aids and adaptations (for copy see file of Minutes). He explained that situation in Easington and Sedgfield continued to be a problem, however statistics in October were expected to show that the situation is improving.

Councillor Stradling suggested that the best route for progress reports and opportunities to monitor pressures in the system would be at a locality level through the Member Area Panel process. The Committee felt that each MAP ought to invite the relevant District Councils to their respective meetings when they had an agenda item on this subject encouraging a partnership approach in responding to need.

Resolved:-

That the Head of Overview and Scrutiny write to the Chair's of MAPs to ask if they would be willing to put on their respective MAP agenda an item on Aids and Adaptations that would give an update on the issues and progress in their respective MAPs.

A6 Performance Management

(a) Report of Head of Corporate Policy

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing information on the first quarter performance 2006/07 and to seek views of the Sub-Committee to inform the review of the Council's medium term improvement priorities (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:-

1. That the update on performance be noted.
2. That consideration of the medium term improvements priorities be deferred to a future meeting.

(b) Report of Performance Monitoring Officer

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Performance Monitoring Officer providing an update on performance for the first quarter of 2006/07 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Peter Appleton, the Head of Quality & Performance highlighted that a consultation document was published by the Department of Health entitled 'A new outcomes framework for Adult Assessment of Social Care 2006/07' and that the performance indicators could change.

Members were concerned that the indicators kept changing and the lack of consistency meant that it was difficult to measure performance over time. Members felt that there could be fewer indicators and emphasised the need for consistency.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.