

minutes



Meeting SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 20th April 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Chris Baron (Chair)
Joe Lonergan MBE (Vice Chair)

John Bell		Peter D Prebble
Mrs Sue Bennett	A	Chris Preston
Steve Carroll		R S Robinson
Rod Kempster		Rita Sharpe
J T A Napier	A	K Walker
R Needham		

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Yvonne Davidson
Councillor M Brandon-Bravo

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meetings of the Select Committee held on 17th March 2004 were confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to it being noted that on page 3 in the last paragraph it should read "Councillor Prebble asked whether the Department had looked at voice recognition to avoid Social Workers typing up reports."

MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Lonergan asked about whether there was any progress about the report which was being taken to the Labour Group concerning difficulties in employing care workers. In addition he asked for a copy of the report about feedback from the Social Services Inspectorate on performance targets for Social Services Departments.

It was agreed that the Chair would write to Councillor Anthony, the Cabinet Member about these two issues.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Chris Preston

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Richard Needham declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No 6 'Specialised Residential Support Study Group – Progress Report'.

HOME CARE STUDY GROUP – FINAL REPORT

Councillor Baron introduced the report of the Study Group. He commented that it was disappointing that it had been identified that there was the perception of a two tier system in the eyes of clients and that they preferred the direct service by Social Services. He added that they had tried in the Study Group to focus on better working between the Department and the independent sector providers.

Councillor Lonergan commended the report of the Study Group. He sought clarification as to how the equity calculation had been arrived at. Mr Dillon, Assistant Director of Social Services, stated that a detailed response explaining this would be provided. He indicated that the formula used was for a cross range of services so that resources met the demands in districts. He added that the Department had been trying over several years to have a rational basis for budgets. Historically home care had not been based on an equity basis and they were trying to change this. He pointed out that last year, because of recruitment and retention difficulties the budget had been allocated where it could. Councillor Needham commented that a service was being turned round which had been under-resourced. Councillor Baron agreed that there was a need to emphasise that additional resources of £1.7 million had been allocated.

In response to a question from Councillor Lonergan, it was explained that the contracted hours included travelling time.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and the report was referred to Cabinet for consideration with a request that a response be brought back to the Social Services Standing Select Committee by July 2004.

DAY SERVICES MODERNISATION – PROGRESS REPORT

Joy Cooper, Assistant Director of Social Services, stated that the Study Group were looking at Oxfordshire as a model. She pointed out that there were no minimum standards for day services so local ones would be developed. Councillor Rita Sharpe stated that it was pleasing that the Group were looking at standards as it was disappointing there were no national standards.

The report was noted.

SPECIALIST RESIDENTIAL PROVISION AT WOODLAND VIEW – PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Brandon-Bravo commented that he had not yet received an answer to the question he had raised about the legal position concerning a family in Bream House. It was agreed to follow this up as it was thought a response had been sent.

Councillor Richard Needham welcomed the progress report. He thought that the record of the Department in avoiding agency placements was exceptional as these were a drain on resources. He added that often agency placements did not meet a young person's need. He pointed out that he had some concerns about the concept behind the proposed specialist residential unit. He expressed concerns around the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. He stated it was necessary to have the staff trained and to have personal guidelines who can accept young people and avoid stigmatisation. He added that there was a need to think about the sort of workers to be employed.

Councillor Lonergan agreed that the proposed unit seemed to be a high risk strategy. He added that this had been tried before with the aim of modifying behaviour. He thought that this would not sit well with Social Services unless there was a high level of professional support to operate the unit. He believed it would be difficult to recruit staff with sufficient experience. He added that it was also a high cost strategy and would only work if there was support from Education and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services who would both put in resources. He thought the project needed to be very carefully controlled.

Councillor Needham stated that the Department needed to think carefully of a therapeutic community. He thought that what mattered was that the people coming on shift cared for the young people. He stated that the question of whether a young person felt cared for was not asked. He stressed that caring was not straightforward but was complicated and that staff needed to know how to care. Councillor Lonergan felt that the concept was to take a young person into the house and modify their behaviour. He added that this may be more appropriate for the Health Service.

It was agreed that the Study Group would consider these issues in more detail.

WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Baron stated that at the last meeting it had been agreed that there would be an up-date at every meeting on Children's Services Review together with an up-date on the effect of the children's services legislation. This was agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.03 am.

CHAIR

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