

minutes



Meeting PROMOTION OF INDEPENDENCE AD HOC
 SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 6 July 2004 (commencing at 2.00 pm)

membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

A Chris Baron (Chair)
 Sue Bennett (Vice-Chair)

Alan Davison
Ellie Lodziak
Joe Lonergan MBE

A Brian Smith
 Yvonne Woodhead
 Keith Walker

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 January 2004 having been circulated were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Baron and Yvonne Woodhead.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest by Members or Officers.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE PROMOTION OF INDEPENDENCE FOR YOUNG DISABLED ADULTS – INTERIM REPORT

Joe Pidgeon, Project Manager for the Review, introduced the interim report, pointing out that the review was approximately half completed. He went through the report, and invited members' support for the next steps proposed on pages 12–13.

Councillor Lonergan made a number of comments on the report. He agreed overall with the assumption in paragraph 5.4 that the social impacts experienced by disabled people transcend the experience of specific impairment. In relation to social employment, he saw some contradiction between more than 25% of social firm employees having a disability, and the

Nottinghamshire experience of less than 25%. However, he thought that the idea was worth exploring. He felt that some of the ideas expressed in the Bright Sparks research were also worth exploring.

Councillor Davison wondered about the types of disability experienced by employees in social firms in Germany. Councillor Smith asked, in relation to paragraph 6.2, if there was any alternative to the concept of competition as a mechanism for modernising services for people with a disability. Councillor Bennett believed that the lack of money for physical disability was an issue in the UK, and that the quality of life must be built in as a factor. Councillor Lonergan commented that direct payments were seen positively by respondents, but this had to be weighed against budgetary demands.

Mr Pidgeon observed that different disability groups had different needs, but at a wider level, needs such as transport and employment were similar. He referred to the costs of various forms of sheltered employment. The German model was seen as a commercial operation. The County Council's approach to supported employment was to avoid an over-concentration of disabled people in particular organisations. Councillor Lonergan mentioned the City Council's social operation to support very small firms, and wondered if this was a potential model. Mr Pidgeon said that this would be explored. He commented that in Edinburgh, funding for social firms had come from outside local government.

Councillor Lonergan suggested Portland College as a good source of information. Mr Pidgeon replied that members of the review team had already visited the college, and further contact would be made. The alternative to competition would be partnership. He pointed out that the concept of direct payments was not welcomed by all departments. Malcolm Dillon, Assistant Director, Commissioning (Adults) indicated that Cabinet would be discussing the funding of direct payments. The concept was that the County Council paid £7.66 per hour to the disabled person, who then recruited a carer. The scheme had been successful in Bassetlaw, but not where a disabled person had had to turn to an agency. The average cost of a package was £250 per week, but could be a lot more.

Mr Pidgeon referred to the general wariness about Social Services, as illustrated by the Bright Sparks research. He pointed out that comments were based on a small sample, and might reflect an individual member of staff's inability to sufficiently respond to requests.

The Committee then considered the further work proposed on pages 12 and 13 of the report. Councillor Bennett wondered whether district councils could be doing more in relation to housing and accommodation. Councillor Lonergan agreed, and asked about funding for volunteer drivers, referring to the problems when clubs folded when transport was withdrawn. Mr Pidgeon responded that grants were provided by the Environment Department. The review team had spoken to David Gibbons, Service Head – Transport and Catering Services in the Social Services Department, and identified a difficult question about levels of subsidy to fares.

In relation to income maximisation, Councillor Bennett suggested it would be helpful to meet with the Prime Minister's team. She referred to the difficulty for someone to move from benefits to work. Mr Pidgeon indicated that some pilot work would be done on this in September.

Mr Pidgeon invited comments on the leaflet about the review, a draft of which was circulated. The leaflet was intended for employees and service users. Councillor Lodziak drew members' particular attention to the appendix about current work in Glasgow. Mr Pidgeon indicated that this model would be looked at in more detail. Mr Dillon invited members to become more involved in any work stream which was of special interest to them.

It was agreed to note the interim report, and support the themes proposed for the second phase of the review.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.

CHAIR

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