

minutes



Meeting SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 8th June 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

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

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor M Brandon-Bravo

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The appointment by the County Council at its Annual Meeting of Councillor Chris Baron as Chair and Councillor Joe Lonergan MBE as Vice Chair of the Select Committee were noted.

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the Select Committee held on 20th April 2004 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J T A Napier, Peter D Prebble and Rita Sharpe.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

MEMBERSHIP

It was noted that the existing Membership of the Select Committee had been re-appointed.

IMPLICATIONS OF YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD CONTRACT FOR CLAYFIELDS HOUSE, STAPLEFORD

Marcie Taylor, Assistant Director, Direct Services Children in the Social Services Department introduced the report. She indicated that the Youth Justice Board required Local Authorities to contract with them for the delivery of secure accommodation with effect from 1st April 2004. A contract had been accepted for 12 out of the 18 beds at Clayfields. This was a tier B contract which was initially for a two-year contract. This left the Department with a dilemma as Clayfields was a business unit and had to make money. Clayfields in the past had created a surplus which had been used for developments across services. The contract made this less likely and the Department would have to sell five out of the six remaining beds to break even. She explained that some Local Authorities had opted out and suddenly the market for welfare beds was flooded, which would offset the price. There was a need to look at the options for Members to consider. It had been originally suggested that the study should be completed by June 2004 but it was now proposed that this should be March 2005 with recommendations being considered by Cabinet in April 2005.

Councillor Lonergan commented that it might be that the Youth Justice Board had gone down the wrong route and there may be a change. He did not feel that the number of young people being in custody was likely to reduce and it was therefore right to review the situation in a years time. Marcie Taylor stated that the Department would have monthly information on bed occupancy for the Study Group.

Councillor Needham felt that the two-year contract gave the Department some stability. He supported the proposed study. He felt that there was a lot of pressure on the beds at Clayfields and he suspected that there would be a continuing need for them. Councillor Sue Bennett felt that the work being undertaken at Clayfields should be applauded. She preferred young people to be kept in custody locally rather than transported over great distances.

It was agreed that a small Study Group of five elected Members (Councillors Chris Baron, John Bell, Joe Lonergan, Sue Bennett and Chris Preston) be established to look at the range of issues identified in paragraph 6.7 of the report in relation to Clayfields and to formulate recommendations for the future. The study was to be completed by March 2005 with an interim report to the Select Committee in November 2004.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Jill Pedley, Assistant Director, Children's Commissioning in the Social Services Department, introduced the report. She stated that there was a legal requirement to offer direct payments with effect from September 2003. The Department were approaching this prudently and 22 children were taking this up with a potential of 39. She explained that each Local Authority was doing this slightly differently. When guidance was published by the Department for Education and Skills, the Department would work out the options and bring a report forward. It was agreed to bring a report to the September meeting on this.

Alison Shield, Service Head, Looked After Children from the Social Services Department explained that with the City Sitting and Befriending Service the Department were looking at reviewing those receiving the service and those waiting for it. She added that on July 1st the Children's Home Care Service would start which could cater for the majority of disabled children receiving a home care service. She referred to the problems on occupancy levels at Minster View. She stated that there was a need to review the criteria and the way the services were provided there.

Jill Pedley referred to the team manager appointment. She explained that it had been estimated that half a team manager was needed but after advertising three times unsuccessfully it had now been decided to increase it to a full-time post to attract a wider range of candidates.

Alison Shield commented that there were issues regarding occupancy levels at Minster View and that the Department had been doing proactive work but this had not brought in increased numbers. She added that there was a problem of getting the right young people into Minster View. Councillor Baron commented that there were Care Assistants to get people up in the night but that there were still vacancies. Alison Shield stated that the Department had not wanted Minster View to be occupied to capacity immediately. She added that full occupancy left no room for new people and it was useful to keep spaces at Minster View for children with complex needs. She pointed out that there was always a tension to maintain capacity. Councillor Baron commented that there was a huge cost to the Authority of having empty beds.

Councillor Needham felt that it was good to have established the Specialist Disabled Children's Team. With regard to Minster View he pointed out that the home was staffed for the level of actual occupancy and therefore the real cost of vacancies was zero, apart from an empty room. He felt that the Department was fortunate in having very few out of county placements, whereas other Local Authorities had large budgets allocated for this. He thought that the real cost of the empty beds was virtually nil and that the criteria should not be changed.

Councillor Lonergan pointed out that the Department had spent £2 million in improving the facilities at Minster View, which were not being used, and had not been since they were improved. He thought this was depriving disabled

young people of the facility. He suggested that if it was accepted that there was not sufficient disabled young children to fill the facility it should be moved into a smaller building. He added that the Best Value Review had questioned whether to continue respite and had considered selling beds. He was pleased that the Big House and Caudwell House were good facilities and supplied needs. He thought that the proposals for direct payments were worrying. It seemed that the Department would have less control over its budget and may have to reduce in-house provision to facilitate direct payments. Marcie Taylor explained that when the Department refurbished Minster View Government and Local Government policies were different. She added that times have changed and that the policy was now around family support packages. She explained that there were not enough disabled young people to meet the criteria. She added that there was a need to take action and that it was hoped to report shortly on this.

Jill Pedley stated that the guidance on direct payments had not yet been published. There was a need to look at this incrementally and report to the Select Committee at each stage.

Councillor Sue Bennett stated that Minster View was a needs led service. She felt that Minster View met needs and should not close even though it was only occupied at 60% as there was a lot of strain on families concerned. She thought that the Department should not rely on unit costs.

THE CHILDREN BILL 2004

Jill Pedley, Assistant Director of Social Services, introduced the report. She stated that a Development Manager had been appointed. Draft options were being drawn up for structures in Nottinghamshire. The expected legislation was to be completed around November 2004. No extra resources were being given to develop the green paper.

Councillor Loneragan commented that this would have major implications for the County Council. In response to a question, Jill Pedley stated that the Department were being cautious. Councillor Needham commented that one should be grateful that there was a lot of flexibility in the Bill. Councillor Preston stated that there was a need to build on existing strengths.

It was agreed that a further report be made to the Select Committee in November.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Councillor Preston who chaired the Study Group introduced the report.

Geoff Ward, Head of Personnel in the Social Services Department, said that it was a question of translating the workforce plan into action. He stated that there were resource issues to be addressed but that the Department was looking initially at areas in which quick improvements can be made. He

added that they were hoping to see positive results and that a report back would be made later in the year.

Councillor Baron commented that the Home Care Study Group had suggested a career proposals which would help retention. He suggested closer links with schools as it might be appropriate for Year 10 and 11 children to have placements in our homes as part of their work experience.

Councillor Lonergan felt that it was a comprehensive report. He thought it was worrying to see the potential for wage inflation with competing Councils offering better wages. Linda Bayliss, Assistant Director, Development and Support Services, in the Social Services Department, stated that we need to focus on the whole package of terms and conditions rather than pay alone.

It was recommended that the Cabinet Member for Social Services adopt the workforce plan.

PROGRESS IN ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

Geoff Ward, Head of Personnel in Social Services Department introduced the report. He stated that the target percentage absence for 2003/04 was 7.6% which had been achieved, although the Social Services Departments in most authorities tended to experience higher absence levels than other service departments. The Department were waiting for the final statistics to confirm this. He added that the target for 2004/05 was 6.5%. He indicated that the corporate figure for days lost was 12/13 days.

Councillor Baron expressed concern about the figures in comparison with the private sector. He added that if one turned the days lost into loss of service provision it would be significant. He thought there was a need to look at the different areas within Departments to see where the problems were. Councillor Lonergan shared these concerns. He pointed out that the percentage absence in the National Health Service was 4.8% and that the Department's high levels were significant. He thought it would be useful to have comparisons in another report. He felt it would be useful to have a split between short-term and long-term sickness. Councillor Preston pointed out that the Authority had responsibilities as an employer; for example, shortages of staff in child care meant that sickness rates were double elsewhere as a result of stress. He pointed that a happy workforce reduced stress.

It was agreed that the next meeting would consider a further report giving comparisons with neighbouring Authorities and a breakdown between long-term and short-term sickness.

REIMBURSEMENTS AND DELAYED TRANSFERS OF CARE JANUARY – APRIL 2004

Peter McGavin Development Manager (Health and Social Services) in the Social Services Department introduced the report. He explained that when one looked at the overall figures for delayed discharges including the NHS

delays the number of delayed discharges caused by Social Services was relatively small. He added that they had done well in the north of the county. The Department had hoped for better progress at the Queens Medical Centre and they were in discussions with the City Social Services Department around the way social services will be managed at the Queens Medical Centre including the option of splitting the Social Services Department at the two hospitals. He added that reimbursements had highlighted each Department's responsibility for patients from its own area. He was optimistic that the Bassetlaw situation could be replicated in the Queens Medical Centre and the City Hospitals, with the development of integrated discharge teams.

Councillor Baron commented that at some time the Select Committee would need to see how the recommendations had been implemented and he suggested a report back in February 2005.

It was agreed that a further report be brought in February 2005.

PROGRESS REPORT ON UNIT STRATEGY FOR THE MEAL SERVICE AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HOT VAN MEALS DELIVERIES

Dave Gibbons, Head of Transport, Catering and Services from the Social Services Department introduced the report. He stated that the completion date for the construction of the additional building was now 4th July. He added that all the oven vans were now operational and that clients were commenting on the improved temperature of meals. He felt that staff involved should be congratulated on their hard work in responding to these new challenges. Councillor Lonergan commented that it was now a better service and cheaper. Mr Gibbons stated that the cost of meals had been held until the end of September and had not gone up since April 2002. Councillor Lonergan felt there was a need to keep a watch on quality and there was a need to be mindful of other providers. Mr Gibbons stated that there was a strong market in the private sector but pointed out that the quality of our product was higher.

It was agreed that the Chair write to the staff to thank them for their hard work in responding to the new challenges with the meals service.

WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the work programme and it was noted that it would be up-dated in the light of amendments made during the meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.22 pm.

CHAIR

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