

# Report



meeting

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

date

6<sup>th</sup> May 2004

agenda item number

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES IN SOCIAL SERVICES**

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 I am pleased to present the key issues and activities as Portfolio Holder for Social Services, since my last report to Council.

#### **2. Key Issues and Activities**

##### **2.1 Beacon Status**

- 2.1.1 In April of this year, the County Council was awarded Beacon status for its services for older people.

- 2.1.2 The Beacon Council Scheme is run by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and is at the heart of what central and local government together are seeking to achieve, which is high quality local services for everyone. The Scheme provides a successful, positive way of recognising best practice which is then disseminated to other authorities by the Improvement Development Agency (IDeA).

- 2.1.3 Only three other authorities in the country were selected for the award in this theme and Nottinghamshire was commended for its “enthusiasm, passion and confidence through political and management support”. The “vibrancy and dynamism of older people and partners working across the county in the interests of older citizens” was another key factor in the award of Beacon status.

- 2.1.4 The County Council has invested budget and resources in services that enable older people to live independent lives. The achievement of this award demonstrates that we are on the right track in terms of our strategic approach to developing cross-cutting services that reflect national priorities and the priorities of older people locally.

- 2.1.5 Along with the award is a sum of money (£63,000) to be used for the active promotion of the good practice we have already begun.

## 2.2 Home Improvement Agency Funding for South Nottinghamshire

- 2.2.1 On 30<sup>th</sup> March we were advised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) that £70,000 is to be awarded to the County Council, as part of its Supporting People Grant, to develop Home Improvement Agency services in Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe. This award follows a successful partnership bid made by the Supporting People Commissioning Body to develop this service, with financial contributions amounting to around £180,000 in total already being guaranteed by the County Council (contributing around £60,000), Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council and Gedling Primary Care Trust.
- 2.2.2 Home Improvement Agencies are small, not for profit organisations funded and supported by local and central government. They provide advice, support and assistance to elderly, disabled and vulnerable people who privately rent or own and live in their own property. They help people to repair, improve, maintain or adapt their home to meet their changing needs. The purpose of the service is to help people to remain independent, in their own homes, warm, safe and secure. Nottinghamshire already has Home Improvement Agencies operating in Mansfield, Ashfield and Newark and Sherwood.
- 2.2.3 The ODPM received bids from 84 Administrative Authorities totalling £5.2 million. This resulted in bids exceeding the £2 million available. In total, 51 authorities were awarded funding, many receiving less than they had requested. The Nottinghamshire bid, for the maximum amount awarded, has been met in full.
- 2.2.4 The development of Home Improvement Services across the county was a key recommendation from the County Council's Best Value Review of the Promotion of Independence of Older People. As part of the development of the Supporting People Strategy, consideration is currently being given to the need to develop a service for Bassetlaw.

## 2.3 Opening of Resource Centres in Bassetlaw

- 2.3.1 One of the recommendations arising from The Best Value Review on the Promotion of Independence for Older People was the development of Resource Centres and Networks.
- 2.3.2 As a result of this, two new resource centres are nearing completion, one in Retford and one serving the South Broxtowe area.
- 2.3.3 The Retford Resource Centre is to be based at the New Life Christian Centre on Thursdays (market day), and is to be called "Retford Resources for Older People". The Centre has received an Acorn grant of £30,000 capital to refurbish the premises (e.g. disabled toilet, improved lighting, installation of cooker and fridge etc), which means the building can also be used by other voluntary and community groups on other days of the week. The manager of the Retford Action Centre is undertaking the co-ordination of the centre and its

services, which currently involves some 12-15 service providers, and a Steering Group of 6 organisations. There is to be an open day on June 10<sup>th</sup>, and services will be delivered from June 17<sup>th</sup>. A further £30,000 Acorn funding will be required during the current financial year to enable services to be delivered.

- 2.3.4 The South Broxtowe Resource Centre is to be based at Maycliffe Hall, Stapleford, and is principally a partnership between Maycliffe Hall trustees and Stapleford Volunteer Bureau, although another ten organisations have agreed to deliver services from the centre. This centre is being co-ordinated by the Volunteer Bureau organiser, and received no funding last financial year. However this year Acorn funding of £30,000 will be made available for some capital costs, and as a contribution towards revenue costs. The open day is on 30<sup>th</sup> June, with services being delivered from 7<sup>th</sup> July, every Wednesday.
- 2.3.5 It is proposed that the first resource network is set up in Gedling, and initial discussions have taken place with Gedling CVS and the Social Services Locality Manager. Further work will be undertaken from June this year.

## 2.4 Feedback on Supporting People Inspection

- 2.4.1 The authority has recently been inspected on its implementation of Supporting People. The Supporting People programme was introduced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in April 2003 and brings together funding and planning for housing related support services. The County Council is the Administering Authority for Supporting People locally and leads a partnership with the 7 Districts, 7 Primary Care Trusts and the Probation Service.
- 2.4.2 The inspection was led by the Audit Commission, with involvement from the Social Services and Probation Inspectorates. The inspection was on site for a week and a half and a team of 8 inspectors were involved. They had a very full programme of interviews with staff and Members in the authority, service providers and other organisations involved in the programme.
- 2.4.3 This Inspection was part of the routine programme of inspections that the Audit Commission is carrying out of all Administering Authorities.
- 2.4.4 The ODPM is also concerned nationally at the increased costs of the Supporting People programme and are reviewing costs overall. They have commissioned detailed 'Value for Money' inspections of 19 authorities which have some very high cost services. Nottinghamshire is one of the 19 and this 'Value for Money' element was part of the review.
- 2.4.5 Initial feedback from the Inspectors has been very positive about several areas of work in Nottinghamshire, though they have also identified some areas of concern. The whole process has been a useful learning exercise. The Inspectors are due to publish their findings in June and their report is awaited with interest.

## 2.5 Meals Service – Oven Vans

2.5.1 The meals service has traditionally been served from three distribution units. The main unit is based at Rainworth and there were two other units, one in Lenton, Nottingham which served the city and adjacent districts and one at Retford Hospital which served the north of the county.

2.5.2 Due to the modernisation of the Retford hospital site by the Health Authority the Social Services department was asked to fund alternative accommodation.

2.5.3 As the cost of the meals supplied by the Lenton distribution unit, which has been managed by the Unitary City since 1<sup>st</sup> April 1998, are considerably more expensive than the other units operated by the County, it was decided to review the whole distribution unit process and several options were put forward to the Social Services Standing Select Committee. The Select Committee subsequently recommended the option of further developing the Rainworth Unit as the main distribution unit and the deployment of 14 oven vans. The oven vans are a relatively new concept in the meals at home field. The vehicles will all operate from the Rainworth Unit and regenerate the individual meals in transit. Effectively, every recipient of the meals service will soon be enjoying a service delivered straight out of the oven. Previously the meals had been in transit for as long as 2 hours before being delivered to people living on the outskirts of the county.

2.5.4 In addition to the improved quality of services comes a reduction in unit costs. The operation of one distribution unit together with the deployment of the oven vans has considerably reduced the infrastructure costs.

2.5.5 As a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the recent Meals Service Review the delivery of hot meals has been reduced from 80% of turnover to 63%. As cold meals for self regeneration can be delivered within a more extensive time envelope there have been further cost reductions, mainly through staff leaving or retirement and a reduction in routes from 48 to 41. It is anticipated that when all the oven vans are operational 41 routes will still be in operation. However if the trend to less hot meal deliveries continues there will be a further reduction in the overall number of routes.

2.5.6 The Meals Service unit costs will benefit substantially as a result of the modernisation programme and the implementation of the recommendations of the Meals Service Review. It is therefore not proposed to review the cost of the service to service users until October 1<sup>st</sup> 2004. Looking beyond it may be possible to hold the charge until well into 2005.

## 2.6 Appointment of an Assistant Director

2.6.1 Linda Bayliss has been appointed to the post of Assistant Director, Development and Support Services after temporarily filling the post since January.

2.6.2 Linda joined Social Services in 1994 and has had a variety of managerial roles. In 2002, she led the Department through the Joint Review and is currently Business Change Manager for the ICT modernisation programme.

2.6.3 As Assistant Director, Linda now leads on organisational development, ICT, personnel, finance, administration, property services, performance review and staff learning. Her role also covers organisational performance and business planning.

## 2.7 Retirement of David Giles

2.7.1 David Giles, Head of Supported Employment, retired on the 30<sup>th</sup> April this year. David joined Social Services in 1989 from a background of private industry, having spent 30 years with Thorn EMI and 2 years with Volvo. He has managed the Supported Employment service since joining the authority.

2.7.2 Many Members who have been part of the Supported Employment Steering Group (formerly the Sheltered Employment Board) will be familiar with David's commitment to the development of supported employment. Through careful stewardship, he has managed to achieve the balance between having viable businesses and promoting the needs and aspirations of the employees. He has made a tremendous contribution to the service.

## **COUNCILLOR DICK ANTHONY** **Cabinet Member for Social Services**

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