

minutes



Meeting SOCIAL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 10th January 2006 (commencing at 10.30am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

Steve Carroll (Chair)
Joe Lonergan MBE (Vice Chair)

John Allin
Steve Carr
Jen Cole
Jim Creamer
Keith Girling

Rod Kempster
John Knight
Pat Lally
A Sheila Place
Lynn Sykes

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor M Brandon-Bravo
“ Mrs K Cutts

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the Select Committee held on 21st November 2005 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sheila Place.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

CABINET MEMBER'S REPORT OCTOBER 2005 – JANUARY 2006

The report was noted.

PRESENTATION: KEY ISSUES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

David Pearson, temporary Director of Social Services gave a presentation to the Select Committee on key issues and challenges for the Social Services Department. He indicated that the advertisement for a Director of Children and Young People's Services would be placed by the end of the month. He felt that overall we could be

proud of Children's Social Care Services. He reported that the Department were on the cusp of being considered to serve children well. He explained that the Department had gone from the regional level to the national level but had been given a judgement of serving most children well at national level. One of the reasons for this was the end of involvement of children in care in reviews which is now improving. He emphasised that it was important to maintain current standards during all the forthcoming changes.

With regard to adult social care, David Pearson reported that a project had been set up to respond to the White Paper, County Council restructuring key areas of performance. He indicated that the Department was making good progress achieving the required Gershon savings to obtain £4m savings as part of the Gershon exercise. He reported that 42 services from the Department were being incorporated into the Contact Centre. He added that the new strategic plan from April will include targets for social services and other departments.

David Pearson stated that he was pleased with the results of the performance inspections but commented that indicators and star ratings were not everything. He referred to the prevention work which was being undertaken and stressed that there was no room for complacency. He pointed out that there would be a report on learning disabilities services shortly which would set the Department challenges around the rate of change, integration and some aspects of care planning with health. He referred to the value of rota visit reports alongside complaints in helping to improve quality. With regard to the social services budget he indicated that action had been taken to tackle the £8m deficit projected for 2005/06 and that an underspending of £½m was now projected. He pointed out that the authority was facing a £21m deficit in the next two years and that the Department was looking at proposals to contribute £7.4m to meet this. If a higher level of underspend could be generated in 2005/06, this would help to manage the financial situation next year. He commented that managing change was a constant theme at the present time. He added that most of what the Department did was in partnership with other agencies and organisations. He pointed out that partnerships were challenging particularly with health where there were significant changes around Primary Care Trusts and that health also had budgetary problems. There are potential knock on consequences for social services. He added that there was a need for financial viability for all concerned.

Councillor Girling referred to savings which he felt could be made from procurement. David Pearson explained that there was a corporate procurement project and a project manager had been recruited. He thought there may be a need to bring a report back on what steps the Department could take. Councillor Girling suggested that the Department should look at multi tasking rather than bringing in extra staff. David Pearson stated that as part of efficiency savings there had been configuration of posts in particular areas. He added that they were looking at the whole issue of skills mix as part of value for money.

In response to a question from Councillor Lally, David Pearson explained that they were looking to introduce a finance model on framework and that in the future it would have an impact. Linda Bayliss added that a decision had been made to delay the introduction of this module to provide extra assurance of correct transfer of budgets and compatibility with other financial systems to ensure the programme was right. She indicated that it would make a difference to budget control in time.

Councillor Steve Carr asked whether there had been discussions with hospital trusts concerning the impact on Social Services of budget cuts at the acute hospitals. David Pearson stated that there had been a lot of discussions with health around changes and they were heavily involved in dialogue. He added that they wanted to work collaboratively. Councillor Lonergan felt that the demise of Primary Care Trusts would leave a vacuum for Commissioning Services from health which was a danger to Social Services. He asked whether the forthcoming White Paper would address the issues about commissioning. David Pearson outlined the three models put forward by the Strategic Health Authority for the reconfiguration of Primary Care Trusts in the county. He added that at the moment one Primary Care Trust led on commissioning for a particular area but then there can be a difficulty of making arrangements stick with other Primary Care Trusts.

DAY SERVICES MODERNISATION STUDY GROUP – PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Steve Carroll welcomed the progress being made on the implementation of the recommendations. He expressed disappointment that due to lack of funding the post of Transport Liaison Officer had not been funded. Jon Wilson, Assistant Director of Social Services indicated that there was a balance to be struck between the pressures on the learning disability budget and the need to prioritise new funds. He indicated that the funding for the post would be considered in the future following the outcome of the integrated transport review.

Councillor Girling raised a question about charges for transport. Jon Wilson indicated that he would look into this. In response to a question from Councillor Steve Carr Jon Wilson indicated that there would be a report back on the outcome of discussions with the trade unions around a more flexible delivery of services. He added that the pilots had gone well and they were hoping to take this forward.

Councillor Lally referred to the future of Barncroft. Jon Wilson indicated that they had scaled down the staffing in response to the withdrawal of funding from the City.

BEST VALUE REVIEW FOR THE PROMOTION OF INDEPENDENCE FOR OLDER PEOPLE – IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Jane North, Project Implementation Manager from the Social Services Department introduced the report. She reported that by the end of March 2006 handy person schemes would be in various parts of the county. In response to a question from Councillor Brandon-Bravo, Jane North stated that she understood that organisations contacted people in advance of appointments. She added that they were testing different models of providing the service. Councillor Allin stated that the Department needed to work with the Warsop group.

In response to a question from Councillor Brandon-Bravo on the First Contact Signposting Scheme, Jane North stated that she understood that organisations contacted people in advance of appointments. Councillor Steve Carroll commented that it was important to support preventative schemes and he hoped that it could be rolled out across the county.

It was agreed that a final update report be presented to the Select Committee at the end of the project in May 2006.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE – CONSULTATION ON SUPPORTING PEOPLE

Ruth Rigby from the Social Services Department introduced the report. She indicated that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was waiting to take stock of the scheme. She pointed out that the way it had been implemented varied across the country. She explained that there were 16 organisations represented on the partnership and Nottinghamshire was one of a small number of councils getting a two star status. She added that all the partners agreed that progress in Nottinghamshire had been good. Ninety per cent of the services in Nottinghamshire were provided for the elderly and prevention work was key. She added that local authorities were looking for more flexibility in the scheme as it had tended to be prescriptive from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Councillor Brandon-Bravo asked whether we were at risk of losing £6m. Ruth Rigby explained that the term used by the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister was redistribution. It was expected that locally the grant would be reduced but that nationally the level of grant would remain the same. Councillor Lonergan referred to the Audit Commission's report and the Director of Resources' financial comments in the report. Malcolm Dillon, Assistant Director of Social Services indicated that there was some risk as next year the Department would be picking up some costs of people transferred from Supporting People Programme. He added that there was uncertainty as it was clear there would be a review but we were not sure of the effect on Nottinghamshire. He added that Councillor Anthony, the Cabinet Member had written to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister stressing that this uncertainty was affecting planning of the service. Councillor Girling commented that there was a danger of raising aspirations and then withdrawing funding. Malcolm Dillon pointed out that the programme itself and making connections has meant that the quality of the service has improved. He added that reviews under value for money had led to savings.

PATHFINDER CHILDRENS TRUST - UPDATE

Susan Twemlow, Development Manager, Nottinghamshire Pathfinder Trust introduced the report on the progress of the Pathfinder Childrens Trust. She explained that a childrens trust was a way of working that builds frontline services, processes, strategies and partnerships; and has a shared vision around the delivery of improved outcomes for all children and young people. The Trust worked with children and young people with additional needs where two or more agencies needed to work together to meet their assessed needs. It involved the use of a Team Around the Child approach with agreed information sharing which attempted to reduce the need for parents and carers to retell the story. It also co-ordinated service provision around the child/young person and involved having a key worker/lead professional. She gave details of six specific projects they were working on with frontline staff. She pointed out that evaluation was integral to the process and the need to establish a baseline to capture staff's experience of partnership working. She explained that the Trust started working with a small group of eight children and one of the challenges was how this approach could become mainstreamed. She also explained that the development of Childrens Centres and Extended Services in and around Schools provided an opportunity to take forward the learning from the Pathfinder. Success would be achieved as the culture of how

agencies worked together moved to one of solving problems and seeking solutions

Councillor Lonergan felt that the families who were receiving this service were very lucky as it seemed to be beneficial. He asked how this approach would be mainstreamed as it applied to only 50 children/young people at the moment. Susan Twemlow stated that they were trying to build on the existing partnerships so they became action orientated. She added that they may need only five or six people to come together to meet the needs of a particular child. She explained that there was an opportunity to cascade through a step by step approach. She indicated that there was a need to look at training to expedite the process. She commented that there were issues around resources and also attitudes of how agencies worked together. Councillor Creamer felt that from a parents point of view this development was to be welcomed. In response to a question from him, Susan Twemlow stated that they tried to identify a lead professional but that if there was a statutory involvement under The Children Act(1989) it tended to be a Social Services staff member.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT – THE ANNUAL REVIEW 2005

Al Kestenbaum from the Social Services Department introduced the annual report. This was noted.

PREPARATION FOR A INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

Linda Bayliss, Assistant Director of Social Services introduced the report. In response to a question from Councillor Allin, Linda Bayliss stated that no vaccine for an influenza pandemic had yet been developed. She added that when the anti viral drug was available there would be a need to decide priorities for making it available. In response to a question from Councillor Lally, Linda Bayliss stated that there was infection control protocols already in place in residential establishments and guidelines for managers were being prepared. She commented that the majority of staff did take the flu jab and that more had done so this year but this should not be confused with the anti-virals for flu pandemic. Members were reassured that the department was preparing for such an event.

INTERIM REPORT OF THE AFTER CARE STUDY GROUP

It was agreed:-

- (1) To endorse the approach being taken by the After Care Study Group.
- (2) That the After Care Study Group provides its final report to the Social Services Select Committee on 16th May 2006.

SOCIAL SERVICES FORWARD PLAN

This was noted.

SELECT COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK

This was noted.

The meeting closed at 1.00 pm.

CHAIR

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