

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2010 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Tony Hall in the Chair.

County Councillors: John Fox, Dave Peart, Peter Popple, Melva Steckles, Helen Swiers and Herbert Tindall.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: Alex Bird and Bridget Hardy.

Present by Invitation: County Councillor David Jeffels, Jane Taylor (CODA), Nikki Orrell (Cambridge Centre) and Ruth Garrett (HARCAS).

Officers: Seamus Breen (Assistant Director, Commissioning & Partnerships, Adult and Community Services), Debbie Hogg and Linda Porritt (Adult and Community Services), Ray Busby (Scrutiny & Corporate Performance) and Mary Davies (Legal & Democratic Services).

Apologies: Peter Blackburn.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

In respect of Minute 32 - That the information detailed on the first bullet point to the minutes had not been sent out to Members. Seamus Breen agreed to send the information.

In respect of Minute 31 - Seamus Breen assured Members that there had been no evidence to substantiate the claims of dereliction of care.

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2010, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

38. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

The Committee was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

39. SCRUTINY OF THE DRUGS AND ALCOHOL TEAM

County Councillor Melva Steckles declared a personal interest as a licensee of a public house.

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance highlighting the work of the Drugs and Alcohol Team (DAAT).

Seamus Breen, the Chair of the DAAT Board, explained that the Drugs and Alcohol Team (DAAT) were responsible for ensuring the delivery of drugs and alcohol services across the County. Seamus Breen gave a powerpoint presentation to the Committee. (A copy of the presentation is in the Minute Book). He highlighted concerns that had been raised and local drivers for change:

- Under performance and under spend year on year;
- Lack of local needs assessment;
- Lack of user, carer, service provider engagement;
- Concerns about governance and accountability;
- Concerns about commissioning approach;
- Missed opportunities for closer joint working with eg. NYSP, Safer Communities Forum, CYPSP, CDRPs;
- Pressures on shared DAAT support team;
- Impending significant changes in Partnership Board membership.

Seamus Breen acknowledged that the Drugs and Alcohol Services and its partners had spent a lot of time chasing acute NTA funding rather than focussing on early intervention, prevention and raising the profile of drugs and alcohol in North Yorkshire. He noted the case studies in the report and advised Members that he wanted those people who had come through the system to help raise awareness in their community. Seamus Breen welcomed Members' interest to become involved and their desire that the DAAT be put on the Committee's work programme so that Members could become involved, as part of the Committee's scrutiny role, to see whether recommendations were being implemented from the Strategic Review.

June Taylor (CODA) welcomed the open dialogue between the Local Authority, PCT and Providers, advising that she felt it was a positive way forward to look at building services that meet local people's needs. She noted that in the Craven District the PDU rate had decreased over the last 10 years; needle exchanges had been reduced from 75,000 to 25,000 in 2009 and that funding had fallen accordingly but she advised that other substances were now increasingly being used.

Nikki Orrell (Cambridge Centre) highlighted a different drug scene now coming through and the increasing use of alcohol with young people. She welcomed the work, highlighted by Seamus Breen, being started.

Ruth Garrett (HARCAS) highlighted the drugs and alcohol scene in Hambleton and Richmondshire which she said had underlying problems similar to those in Leeds and Bradford. She highlighted how lives could be quietly blighted by the range of drugs and alcohol available.

Nikki Orrell suggested that early intervention from young children to the elderly in drug and alcohol awareness was needed. Seamus Breen highlighted the link between drugs and alcohol to dementia and he asked Members to consider the cost through lack of investment in the longer term.

Nikki Orrell highlighted that many domestic violence cases were linked to alcohol and she spoke of the increase in levels of violence in North Yorkshire.

Members made the following comments:

- More should be done in Primary Schools to raise the awareness of young people to the harmful effects of substance abuse.
- Concerns for young people's health and the cost to the NHS.

- Parents were unsure how to help their children. When a child became 16, parents were unable to speak to a doctor concerning their children unless invited to do so.
- Although young people and substance abuse attracted most attention, especially by the media, there were many other sectors of the community for example older people with drug and alcohol problems, homeless and prisoners on release. Where did they go for information, in many cases there were more barriers in place for older people; loneliness and isolation compounded the problem. June Taylor informed Members of research being carried out by York University on alcohol for the over 55's. It was noted that all areas in North Yorkshire had waiting lists for referrals and if these referrals were not picked up in the first three weeks it was possible that they could be lost until there was another crisis.
- Alcohol could be purchased easily on line and delivered to the home. It was noted that the District Councils were the Licensing Authorities and it may be something that the LSP and NYSP needed to look into.
- How North Yorkshire dealt with the rehabilitation of users when many of the drug dependency units were situated outside of the County. It was felt that sometimes people needed to get away to help them deal with their problems.

County Councillor David Jeffels highlighted a conference he had recently attended which focussed on alcohol and a binge drinking culture that seemed to be very prevalent in sections of the young people population. He suggested that early intervention in Primary Schools could be a possible way forward. The cost to the NHS and the damage to the economy needed some form of legislation put in place as there had been for the wearing of seat belts and smoking in public places. He also considered that the reduction in the percentage of alcohol in drinks could alleviate the problem.

Ray Busby suggested possible areas of work for the Committee to consider: In essence they fell into three phases:

- Phase one would be focussed around the strategic assessment on the fitness of the DAAT to deliver against its core objectives. The proposals and recommendations within the Strategic Review would, if implemented, provide a better service to the community. The Committee would want to be not just reassured of that strategic level commitment from leaders of partner organisations, the important factor would be to receive demonstrable evidence of change. The Committee would want to assess whether change had not just happened but that the results for the community were positive. Arrangements would therefore be made for representatives of the Committee to meet with leaders of organisations that represented the partnership but also the DAAT Team and Practitioners on the ground. This would be all part of the process of being able to gauge not just the DAAT's commitment to the agenda but the effectiveness with which it approached implementation of the recommendations.
- Phase two would be a review of the structure approach to tackling the corrosive effects of substance abuse in the North Yorkshire county area. This would entail a wider perhaps more thematic view of the service delivery arrangements in the County; were the correct range of services in place; were funding arrangements sensible and working well.
- Phase three would be a wider analysis of the balance of activity and relationship between alcohol and drug use in our communities. Arguably this fell within the remit of the Safe and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Bearing in mind that the Committee would not be meeting until October and recognising that the Committee's ambitions to make progress on this important agenda, Ray Busby suggested it be a matter for consideration at the Mid-Cycle Briefing on 15 July 2010.

Ray Busby advised that by September/October 2010 the Committee would be starting to see a delivery of the action plan. The Committee may then be able to consider some of the wider issues in the scrutiny of the DAAT.

The Chairman thanked Jane Taylor, Nikki Orrell and Ruth Garrett for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and Members' comments be noted.
- (b) That the Group Spokespersons, at the Mid-Cycle Briefing on 15 July 2010, determine how the Committee will approach this work in line with the suggestions made, and be authorised to make appropriate arrangements to initiate and conduct the work.

40. CHARGING AND ASSESSMENT OF CLIENT CONTRIBUTIONS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services, updating on the proposed changes to the way the Local Authority charge for social care services in the community; and the proposed dialogue with members of the public and a wide range of representative groups regarding the proposed changes.

Debbie Hogg (Assistant Director Resources) and Linda Porritt (Benefits, Assessments and Charging Co-ordinator, Adult and Community Services) presented the report detailing proposed changes to the charging policy for social care services in the Adult and Community Services Directorate. The changes to charging were as a result of guidance issued by the Department of Health on 'Fairer Contributions' for social care services. Local Authorities were required to consider the total level of financial assistance being made available through the form of a personal budget. The guidance advised Local Authorities to consider charging a realistic and consistent price for services and adopt a revised and more equitable approach to charging.

Debbie Hogg highlighted the two aspects that the Directorate needed to consider when charging for services; the level of benefits of an individual's care package and the ability to contribute. The Authority's policy assumed that 90% of the available income would be considered against the current cost of the service and that there would be no change to this approach. She highlighted Appendix 1 to the report which illustrated different approaches based on different age bandings and benefits and she advised that the new proposed changes would mean a more realistic basis for the pricing of services. Debbie Hogg advised that the Directorate would now begin a series of consultation exercises throughout North Yorkshire explaining the changes to the policy with area committees followed by user representative forums such as Older People's Forums. Debbie Hogg said that after the consultation exercise a further report could be brought back to the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee to summarise the outcome of this consultation process.

Members made the following comments:

- With regard to the removal of the cap on charges, it was essential to have flexibility and good communication in place. Linda Porritt advised that if a person's financial circumstance changed the care service charges could be reviewed at any time.
- The Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee already had a Task Group that engaged and consulted with older people's groups across the county and also had links into each of the Directorates. Ray Busby noted that key members of the Task Group would now take a greater role in regards to the Equalities Impact Assessment and that they would be consulting with the Executive at its next meeting.
- Discussion also took place on the recent changes to remove the maximum charge of £260 per week, and the impact on those people currently using the service.

The Chairman thanked Debbie Hogg and Linda Porritt for their report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the proposed changes to the charging for social care services be noted.
- (b) That the proposed formal dialogue exercise be noted.
- (c) That a further updated report be brought to the October 2010 meeting.

41. UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTING TELECARE

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services to update on progress in telecare as a service offered to enable people to remain as independent as possible in their own homes.

Seamus Breen advised that North Yorkshire County Council continued to implement the telecare service and that the Local Authority had achieved national profile and was recognised as a leading Authority in the Country. He said that there was clear evidence that the service was making a difference to people's lives in the community and noted that there had been a 10% increase in targets for increasing telecare services.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee expressed his congratulations.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

42. INTEGRATED COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT

CONSIDERED –

A verbal update from the Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services.

Seamus Breen advised of a Visioning Day meeting taking place between the PCT, Local Authority, User/Carer groups and Stakeholders to discuss the future direction for the service. The PCT were committed to changes for the Harrogate store and work was about to begin; Seamus Breen agreed to bring an update report to a future meeting. Seamus Breen advised of on-going work to develop a catalogue for the procurement of services on-line which should reduce the need for equipment stores in future.

The Chairman asked for feedback from the Visioning Day to be added to the Work Programme, so that it would be discussed at a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

43. VALUING EMPLOYMENT NOW UPDATE ON TASK GROUP AND PLANNED ACTIVITY

CONSIDERED –

County Councillor Dave Peart highlighted the work undertaken by the Task Group examining the implications of the National Strategy – Valuing Employment Now and the proposed work for the Task Group to consider.

Ray Busby advised of a Task Group meeting on 7 June at 2 pm in Meeting Room 4 which would look at any further information that the Task Group needed. He invited any Member of the Committee to attend the meeting.

Seamus Breen highlighted the more strategic approach in the Directorate with Officers and Members working together to move the agenda forward.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

44. WORK PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance to agree the work programme at Appendix 1 to the report and update the work programme items and review the shape of the work ahead.

Ray Busby presented the report and highlighted paragraph 5 to the report, the Dementia meeting on 2 September 2010. It was proposed that the entire meeting would focus on Dementia and that the 7 October 2010 mid-cycle briefing would be turned into a full Committee meeting to discuss updates on Safeguarding, the Drugs and Alcohol Team (DAAT) and any response to budget changes and the impact on public services. It was suggested that the 7 October 2010 meeting should begin at 2 p.m.

In regard to Safeguarding, the Chairman highlighted the pamphlet from the Adult and Community Services Directorate 'Keeping People Safe'.

The Chairman thanked Members for all their hard work over the last year.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the content of the report be noted.
- (b) That the Mid Cycle Briefing on 7 October 2010 be changed to a full Committee meeting to start at 2 p.m.

MD/ALJ