

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2011 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Tony Hall in the Chair.

County Councillors John Batt, John Fox, Bill Hoult, Pat Marsburg, Brian Marshall, Dave Peart, Joseph Plant, Peter Popple, John Savage, Melva Steckles, and Herbert Tindall.

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

In attendance: Executive Portfolio Holder County Councillor Chris Metcalfe, Kath Murray (North Yorkshire Link), Nan Sykes , Geoff Rennie.

Officers: Ray Busby (Corporate Development Officer, Chief Executives Group), Jackie Harvey (Legal & Democratic Services), Debbie Hogg (Assistant Director (Resources), Adult & Community Services), Derek Law (Corporate Director, Adult & Community Services), Anne-Marie Lubanski (Head of Self-Directed Care & Transformation, Adult & Community Services), Mike Webster (Assistant Director, Contracting, Procurement & QA, Adult & Community Services).

Apologies were received from County Councillor Helen Swiers.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

69. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

County Councillor Tony Hall welcomed visitors and officers to the meeting and reported that item 4, the presentation from Mike Padgham on the status of the independent care sector and future challenges, would not be considered today, due to Mr Padgham being unable to attend.

70. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2011, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

71. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

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

72. VERBAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE

County Councillor Chris Metcalfe commented that the coalition Government's vision for adult and social care was based on seven core principles – the "7 P's" – Prevention, Personalisation, Partnership, Plurality, Protection, Productivity and People. This was seen as a forerunner of the new Health and Social Bill which was due later in the year, the

content of which was expected to be quite controversial. However, the County Council had effectively been working on these core principles for the past three years.

The timeframe for the national move away from PCT's was challenging, with a new model required to be in place and operational by 2013. A Transition Board has been established, led by Adult & Community Services (ACS) with County Council, GP and PCT representatives, which was hoped would build on the synergy between the local authority and the PCT's and provide the opportunity to advise and inform the future shape of health services.

Councillor Metcalfe continued that transformation was not a new concept for the local authority, being at the heart of ACS strategy for the way forward. Budgetary constraints form only part of the challenges faced, with the focus being on identifying and meeting individuals' needs and aspirations, enablement and early intervention.

Extra care facilities in Richmond are progressing well with open days taking place in April, whilst those at Harrogate are seen as an innovative approach.

ACS is making its contribution to the County Council's budget reductions. Members are kept regularly informed of the financial situation via quarterly Executive budget monitoring meetings. Currently there is expected to be an overspend of around £3m by the end of the financial year but with approximately 400 new customers each year, it was anticipated that ACS would break even by the end of the year. Councillor Metcalfe applauded the efforts of Debbie Hogg for ensuring that managers continue to manage their individual budgets effectively.

Following Councillor Metcalfe's report, Members were invited to comment. It was queried whether the authority would inherit any historic debts from the PCT's when it assumes health responsibilities and, if so, what coping strategy was anticipated. Derek Law (Corporate Director, Adult & Community Services) explained that this possibility had been identified and, whilst it was not possible to offer any guarantees that this would not happen, the PCT's have pledged their commitment to not being in deficit by April 2011. Any deficits emerging after that date would therefore fall to the new regime to manage.

RESOLVED –

That the verbal report be noted.

73. COMPLEX NEEDS PLACEMENTS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services, to inform the Committee of an initiative to review the appropriateness and cost of current out of county complex needs placements for people with a disability.

Mike Webster informed Members that fresh services were to be developed, including for those service users in transition from the responsibility of CYPS to ACS. The aim was to provide personalised placements and to prevent the need for service users to move out of North Yorkshire; there was, however, no intention to require users to return to North Yorkshire against their wishes.

In discussion, it was queried how the process would work in conjunction with the newly formed GP consortiums. Mr Webster was unsure who would ultimately have responsibility for the placements but confirmed that work was currently being undertaken with existing PCTs. Members felt that it was crucial for the County Council to be in a leading, rather than lead, position.

The report was welcomed by the Committee with an update requested in 12 months time.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report on complex needs placements be noted;
- (b) the Committee receive an update report in 12 months.

74. THE FUTURE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE: CONSULTATIONS

CONSIDERED –

The verbal update of the Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services.

Derek Law reported that consultations had ended and officers were now working through the outcomes. In excess of 6650 responses had been received as well as 1000's of signatures via petition. Twenty public meetings had been held at which public attendance had been in the region of 2000 overall and presentations had been given at seven area committee meetings.

The public response had been very high and showed that the library service is held in high regard and is seen to represent good value for money. It was imperative to emphasise that it was not the intention to close libraries, nor had it ever been the Authority's policy to apply a 'slash and burn' approach; the intention was, and had been long before the advent of 'The Big Society', to identify and secure new ways of working in partnership with other compatible organisations, some of the possible solutions which were currently being explored being:

- Childrens' Centres
- Voluntary Sector organisations
- Schools
- Tourist Information Centres
- Book collections in village halls

Mr Law closed his report, saying that he was optimistic regarding the future of the library service and expectant of a positive outcome of the consultation process, particularly in view of the fact that so many of those affected by the proposals were enthusiastic and proactive towards finding a viable solution. What had been reported today was purely a snapshot of the current position, the detail of which had still to be decided upon.

Councillor Metcalfe added that a community model was also being developed, with the intention of creating a wider range of community services at one location, stating that today's service offers much more than just books and internet access; rather, libraries are becoming centres of communities with wider ranging facilities. It was therefore essential to develop and enhance the existing working relationships with those communities.

Ray Busby informed the Committee that the proposals would be considered by the Executive, probably at its May meeting. This Committee would, however, be given a prior opportunity to see those proposals and it was anticipated that a meeting may be convened for that purpose in advance of the Executive's May meeting.

Members raised a concern that they needed to be kept well informed of developments so that they were in the best position to speak to their constituents when the topic was raised with them.

RESOLVED –

That the verbal report be noted.

75. NORTH YORKSHIRE'S VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK

CONSIDERED –

Report of the Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services.

Ray Busby introduced the item, stating that this Committee had had previous involvement in this area. Voluntary organisations had been asking how this Committee were considering the Commissioning Framework; it therefore felt pertinent to have the draft Framework on the agenda to provide Members with an opportunity to comment on it, prior to the close of the consultation period at the end of May 2011. Derek Law added that he was keen to discover if Members felt they had got it right, hence seeking Members' feedback on the document.

It was noted that some areas appeared to have higher costs than others; it was queried whether there was a weighting factor to meet different areas individual needs. Mr Law commented that a culture shift was taking place, with dialogue ongoing with voluntary sector organisations in this regard. All investments were being looked at, but there was a need to focus on positive outcomes and value for money, as services would be decommissioned where these factors were not being met.

Whilst it was accepted that some cuts to voluntary sector expenditure was needed, it was considered that, particularly in light of the government's Big Society agenda, there was a continuing need for investment in volunteers; a careful and balanced approach was therefore essential. Greater understanding of the nature of the partnership between the County Council and voluntary sector organisations was necessary, as was smarter working practises. Members commented that care should be taken not to lose existing voluntary sector expertise, noting the good working relationship currently enjoyed between NYCC and its voluntary sector partners.

In conclusion, Members felt overall that the approach being taken was fair and reasonable. Mr Law was thanked for his report.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

76. FUTURE OF EXTRA CARE ON HARROGATE EXTRA CARE HOUSING PROPOSAL

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services.

Ray Busby introduced the report, which had been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 8 March, seeking its approval to a proposal of extra care housing schemes in Harrogate. This would be ahead of any other opportunities which may present themselves through the separate procurement for a strategic development partner. It was felt to be pertinent to give Members an opportunity to comment due to the previous involvement of this Committee.

Derek Law reported that the Executive had approved the Extra Care housing policy, which was considered to be a unique partnership arrangement, providing a creative pooling of resources. In the face of the loss of previously available funding streams, it provides employment and creative social enterprises, including, for example, sweet shops and florists, all on one site. Some of the units would be designated specifically for dementia sufferers. Mr Law stated that the support of Members during the forthcoming planning process was needed.

Members agreed it was an excellent and well-devised scheme, and thanked Mr Law for the report.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

77. CHARGING AND ASSESSMENT OF CLIENT CONTRIBUTIONS BASED ON EXECUTIVES REPORT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director Adult and Community Services to the Executive, to inform of proposed changes to the way that the Adult and Community Services Directorate (ACS) charges for social care services provided in the community; to provide an update in relation to the actions to date; to inform of the findings from the formal consultation exercise and to make recommendations and seek approval regarding the implementation of the new charging policy.

Debbie Hogg was asked to provide some background to the Executive report. Miss Hogg reported that regular contact with this Committee on the subject of the charging policy was sought, as the implications of that policy were not yet known. There was a need to monitor the impact of the policy on service delivery and individuals, with an opportunity to review such implications.

In discussion, it was identified that existing arrangements regarding the involvement of, and impact on, the voluntary sector needed to be identified, in respect of provision for people with physical disabilities. Miss Hogg reiterated that anticipated changes to service provision would impact and inform on what services the Council needs to procure, with choices having to be made on how money should be spent. The charge would be based on the cost of the service being provided, whether that provider was the County Council or the voluntary sector.

Miss Hogg stated that there was a duty for individuals needs to be assessed, which assessments would be carried out by care co-ordinators. The new charging regime would come into effect at the point of such a service review.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report to the Executive be noted;
- (b) an update report be brought to the Committee in 6 months time.

78. DRUGS AND ALCOHOL MISUSE REVIEW INTERIM REPORT

County Councillor Melva Steckles declared a personal interest, as licensee of licensed premises.

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance, to inform the Committee of the discussion at a recent meeting of representatives of the DAAT Board, provider organisations and County Councillors regarding the review of functions and effectiveness of the Drugs and Alcohol Team.

An extra paper outlining high impact changes and an addendum highlighting the principles and expected benefits were provided to Members (copies in the Minute Book).

Ray Busby provided Members with background information to the report, stating that this Committee had previously been invited to join together with the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at this topic. This report therefore had a twofold purpose; to finalise work regarding drug treatment, and to initiate and discuss the way forward. It was anticipated that this Committee would take ownership of this matter, having previously voiced its wish to be involved in partnership working with the Substance Misuse board.

The Chairman reported that, following the outcome of an independent report requiring substantial changes to both the structure and staffing of the board, Seamus Breen had subsequently been appointed as Chairman.

For many people, funding for the commissioning of alcohol treatment is arguably disproportionately high vis a vis that for combating drug misuse. The County Council was potentially in a strong position to address alcohol misuse in view of its impending public Health responsibilities. The support of Members was therefore sought.

Members voiced the view that education regarding responsible alcohol consumption and abuse was crucial, and perhaps should begin before children are of secondary school age, being aware that problems were beginning at younger ages. Whilst this view was noted, it was pointed out that the remit of the Committee is in respect of young people and adults.

Ray Busby also highlighted that the Substance Misuse Board had identified that middle-aged, employed people were a significant risk in terms of alcohol related harm; a suitable balance would therefore need to be struck and a comprehensive approach, with a focus on where best to target expenditure on service commissioning.

RESOLVED –

That the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee take ownership of the forthcoming agenda regarding combating alcohol misuse and related harm once compiled by the Substance Misuse Commissioning Team.

79. VALUING EMPLOYMENT NOW

CONSIDERED –

By way of background for this report not being available for consideration at this meeting, Ray Busby reminded Members of the Task Group which had been formed to look at this topic, chaired by County Councillor Dave Peart. The final report on the findings of the Task Group had been deferred due to affecting factors including the Comprehensive Service Review, general election and subsequent budget.

Mr Busby stated that the Adult and Community Services (ACS) directorate had been focussing on the development of a new strategy for people with a learning disability; there was, therefore, a need to dovetail the recommendations of the Task Group with that Directorate's policy and aspirations.

Anne-Marie Lubanski was asked to provide Members with a brief update of the current position and the aims of the strategy.

Ms Lubanski reported that the strategy would be focussing on the needs of people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable adults including physical and sensory impairment, older people and carers, in relation to their employment opportunities. ACS will need to work with people's expectations and the strategy will be vital to make it clear to service users what the County Council is able to provide.

Alongside the strategy, the core principle is to identify opportunities for service modernisation, which needs to be looked at as a cross-directorate issue, not resting solely with ACS.

It was anticipated that the final report of the Task Group may be brought to the Committee in the autumn.

RESOLVED –

That the verbal report be noted.

80. WORK PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance, giving Members the opportunity to be updated on work programme items and review the way forward.

Ray Busby informed Members that there would be a publicity campaign and press release forthcoming in respect of the Committee's agreed Dementia Declaration (paragraph 4.0 of the report), as part of National Dignity Action Day.

With regard to the involvement of the Independent Care Sector in the work of the Committee (paragraph 7.0), an options paper would be brought to a future meeting.

Further information in respect of the Independent Living Fund (paragraph 8.0) would be provided at the Committee's mid-cycle briefing.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the work programme be agreed.

The meeting concluded at 1.05 pm.

JAH/ALJ