

North Yorkshire County Council

Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2012 at 10.30 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Present:-

County Councillor John McCartney in the Chair

County Councillors: John Batt, John Fox, Tony Hall, Bill Hoult, Margaret Hulme, Brian Marshall, Dave Peart, John Savage, Melva Steckles, Helen Swiers, Herbert Tindell

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: Alex Bird, Lynne Webb-Thorius

County Councillor Clare Wood, Portfolio Holder – Adult Services

Officers: Mike Webster (Assistant Director, Contracting, Procurement and Quality Assurance, (Health and Adult Services)), Anne Marie Lubanski (Assistant Director Social Care Operations, (Health and Adult Services)), Ray Busby (Scrutiny Support Officer, (Policy, Performance and Partnerships)), Sukhdev Dosanjh (Assistant Director Performance and Change Management, (Health and Adult Services)), Alastair Dewar (Commissioning and Change Implementation Officer, (Health and Adult Services))

Apologies: Mike Padgham, Pat Marsburg

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

114. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 and 16 November 2011, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Ray Busby advised that Bridget Hardy was still unable to attend the Committee for the time being. Her substitute, Lynne Webb-Thorius would therefore be one of the two Voluntary Sector representatives on the Committee.

115. 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.

116. Safeguarding Adults – Annual Report

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director – Health and Adult Services.

To receive the Annual Report of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board.

Anne Marie Lubanski reported on activity included in the Annual Report.

The Annual Report was being considered some three months after it had been published by the Safeguarding Board. The intention for this year's report was that it be available for the Committee to consider much earlier, probably around November.

County Councillor Clare Wood stressed the County Council's commitment to the safeguarding agenda on all levels, strategic performance and operational. She had been appointed to the Board in her capacity as Executive Member and Portfolio Holder, reflecting the importance the County Council placed upon representation from political leadership.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Annual Report of the Safeguarding Adults Board be noted;
- (b) That further ongoing reports of progress be received by the Scrutiny Committee so it could reassure itself that this agenda was receiving the highest priority;
- (c) That the Committee makes sure it was aware of national developments and best practice.

117. Older People's Champion Report

Considered –

The report of County Councillor Shelagh Marshall.

County Councillor Shelagh Marshall presented her report on activity over the course of the year in connection with her Older People's Champion role.

In particular Shelagh highlighted her work in relation to Dementia and her two other priorities for the coming year; fire safety within the home; and the recent campaign to combat isolation and loneliness for older people. The latter campaign was attracting interest across the country.

Member's impression is that isolation is a real and significant problem in North Yorkshire. It impacts upon the dignity and quality of older people's lives in the community. For this reason alone, it should be included in work by the Committee on low level intervention and prevention. Area Committees would be encouraged to consider how they too can raise the profile of the campaign.

Members emphasised how fortunate the County Council was to have Shelagh as its Older People's Champion. She was a valued and respected ambassador for the County Council on the regional and national stage in terms of older people's interests.

Resolved –

That the report be received and Shelagh be thanked for her tireless work on behalf of the County Council representing older people's interests.

118. Local Account

Considered –

The covering report of the Scrutiny Team Leader and main report of the Corporate Director – Health and Adult Services.

To introduce the local account.

Sukhdev Dosanjh explained that in previous years the Committee had considered the report of the Annual Performance Assessment. Following the Government's decision to abolish this system of reporting in favour of a Local Account, work had been done at short notice with local groups and service users to complete the Local Account.

The Portfolio Holder, supported by other Members, stated that the report had been well received. In feedback people had complimented its clarity, saying it was readable and largely free of jargon.

Members confirmed their preference for the Committee to be involved in the preparation of subsequent year's Local Accounts. The Committee had to reassure itself that the voice of the public was properly reflected in the final version.

Members referred to parts of the report relating to commissioning and personalisation. Concern was expressed that with the increasing personalisation of social care, some organisations, particularly in the Voluntary Sector, who were providers in the social care market, might not have the volume of business (the critical mass) to sustain their operation. If the diversity of providers diminished as a result, it would undermine the argument that increased personalisation meant enhanced choice.

It was agreed that this topic be a priority in the work programme with a detailed report being submitted to the next meeting.

Members commented upon the references to carers within the Local Account, especially how the Directorate supports their involvement in consultation events and service planning.

Whilst Members acknowledged that the Committee had recently taken an interest in the carer's strategy and further consideration might be premature until the anticipated national strategy was released, it was timely to assess how carers influenced Directorate planning. The work programme would therefore be amended to include this for the August meeting.

Resolved –

That the report on the Local Account be received and the Committee ensure that it plays a full and active part in compiling the subsequent Local Account so it can reassure itself that the voice of the local community is properly reflected.

119. Dilnot Funding For Social Care

Considered –

The oral report of the Corporate Director – Health and Adult Services.

Sukhdev Dosanjh advised that last year the coalition government asked economist Andrew Dilnot to look into how the system of funding social care in England could be changed amid concerns it was getting harder for people to get access to state support. His key proposals were:

- A £35,000 cap on care costs for people who acquire needs at age 65 or above.
- Free care for those who acquire needs before they turn 40.
- An annual cap of between £7,000 and £10,000 on living costs in care homes.

Under his reforms, which would cost an additional £1.7bn a year to deliver, Dilnot wanted people to spend no more than 30% of their assets on paying for care, compared with over 90% for some people at the moment. He also would encourage insurance companies to develop affordable products to cover people against their maximum care bill.

Last year the government welcomed the report without committing to implementation, nor did it outline a timeline as to when it might bring this in. Recent ministerial level statements contain warnings that implementing the £1.7bn package in full could prove too costly, and that Dilnot's proposals will need to be weighed against other priorities.

Sukhdev suggested this could open the way for Dilnot's proposals to be implemented in reduced form. For instance, a higher cap on care costs could be introduced, rather than Dilnot's preferred £35,000, reducing the state's liability for care but increasing the potential for individuals to face high costs. There is still good reason to believe, Sukhdev suggested that some reform will take place as part of the anticipated White Paper in the spring of this year.

Resolved –

That when the White Paper is released the Committee's strong preference would be for it, and any proposed response, to be considered first at this Committee.

120. Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader.

The Committee agreed the work programme.

Resolved –

The Committee agreed the work programme, subject to the following amendments:

1. The April Committee and pre-meeting be cancelled and the main Committee meeting be now held on 31 May at 2:30 pm with a Group Spokespersons Briefing at 1:30 pm.
2. A report to the next meeting on commissioning and personalisation, focussing especially upon the impact on social care providers.
3. The Self Assessment for Autism "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives", together with a report on the more detailed information on the work being undertaken by the Children and Young People Service on Special Needs insofar as it impacts upon this area be reported to the next meeting.
4. A report be made to the August Committee meeting on how NYCC supports carers to participate and contribute fully to consultation and engagement events and therefore influence service planning and development.
5. A report on commissioning decisions in relation to Day Services for people with Dementia in Hambleton/Richmond be made to the next meeting.
6. The proposals regarding an in-depth, continuing review of whether the authority is moving in the right direction on early intervention and prevention be adopted.
7. When the Government publishes a report on its thinking with regard to the future funding of social care, including a response to the Dilnot Commission, the matter be considered by the Committee at the first opportunity.
8. Information and feedback from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment exercise be brought to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

The meeting concluded at 12:35 pm.

RB/ALJ