

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

14 DECEMBER 2011

## CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

***“THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE MORE WE CAN HELP”***

We have met twice in the last month, once for general business and then to consider the final Library proposals.

1. Future of the Library Service

When we considered the final package of proposals regarding the future of the Library Service we also heard from two Great Ayton community groups and local Members who represent divisions with libraries in various categories.

Our conclusions below reflect the recognition that the proposals are an integrated package:

- There has clearly been meaningful dialogue and engagement with communities and the Council has responded well to expressions of community interest.
- The proposals are consistent with the decision to reconfigure the service for the long term within the budget envelope, based on the principle of “sharing the pain”.
- We were satisfied that the total package stands up in process terms; that is all relevant aspects, eg, legal and financial issues, TUPE and so on, have been properly explored and accounted for.

We supported the recommendations in the final report but suggested the following be added:

- a) A better description of “proposed opening hours” would be “paid support hours supplemented by resources provided from within communities”. This reflects more accurately the contribution communities are making to bridge the funding gap.
- b) To help some community groups in this initial transition phase, further consideration be given to local “pump priming” measures which will assist in the successful launch of community led libraries.
- c) A statement confirming the express commitment to expand the home delivery service, local collections and outlets.

- d) As part of ongoing monitoring, local members be informed directly on the impact of changes in their divisions.

As far as libraries are concerned, this concludes the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work. The responsibility to scrutinise this service now passes over to the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 2. Carers Strategy

Over the last year, carers issues have featured in much of our work, on dementia and on learning disabilities for example; but not as a separate topic. This time we focussed exclusively on carers by looking particularly at how the County Council supports carers. When we reviewed activity against the North Yorkshire Carers Strategy, we were impressed at the achievements and progress made. There are challenges ahead particularly the greater personalisation of social care but the Directorate is well placed to respond.

## 3. Charging and Assessment of Client Contributions

We reviewed the implementation of the changed arrangements around care charging and assessment of client contributions introduced earlier this year.

Many service users have not experienced the full impact of the changes because we are still in a period of transitional relief. Although figures are not commensurate, it does look as though projected income could be down on last year's amount. Some of this reduction could be attributable to the success in reablement services, which reduce long-term social care support and move people to independence and therefore "out of the system".

Overall implementation appears to have gone well, however it is too early to gauge the full effects. In six months as more people move out of this transition period, we should be able to assess the full impact more accurately.

## 4. Vision for Social Care

We have now had the opportunity to look more in detail at the Directorate's Vision for Social Care. This sets out how the County Council will ensure services are delivered for people, seeking to put personalised services and outcomes centre stage.

Any future proposals for service development will need to be "stress tested" against this vision. Our only comment on the narrative was the importance of emphasising the advantages of low-level intervention and prevention and the challenges of commissioning in this context.

This will be a key concern for the Committee as we look to refresh our work programme for next year.

5. Safeguarding

All Councillors share a responsibility to safeguard those adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Reviewing the annual report of the North Yorkshire Adults Safeguarding Board is one way we discharge that obligation. It is the main source of evidence we use to satisfy ourselves that there is clear and effective partnership commitment to the safeguarding agenda.

Although the 2011 report was available for our last meeting, because of other items on the agenda we would have struggled to do more than briefly review the content. It is important we do justice to this topic by looking not just at the Board's achievements, but also at how safeguarding is being embedded in the community. For that reason, we will major on this topic in its broadest sense, at our next meeting on 2 February.

6. Welfare Benefits

Members of the Committee attended a Welfare Benefits information session in October. This examined recent changes and those the government may introduce as part of universal benefit reform. These affect some of the service users the Directorate currently supports but also potentially some service users who may turn to the County Council for additional support. It is important therefore that we keep progress under review.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR TONY HALL  
Chairman  
Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall  
NORTHALLERTON  
2 December 2011

Background Documents: None