

Committee: **Scrutiny Committee for Social Services and Health**

Date: 25 September 2003

Title: Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Social Services and Health held at 10.00 am at Pelham House, St Andrews Lane, Lewes, East Sussex

Subject: Minutes

Attending: Garvican Lock McPherson Neighbour Tunwell Webb Whetstone

Lead Officer - Peter Davidson

Legal Adviser - Richard Partridge, Assistant Director of Law and Performance Management

Chief Officer - David Archibald, Director of Social Services

16. MINUTES

16.1 RESOLVED – to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2003.

17. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT ITEMS

17.1 The Chairman informed the Committee that he proposed to take as an urgent item of business a discussion of the Scrutiny Committee's role in the "reconciling policy and resources" exercise and to seek advice from the Director of Social Services.

18. REPORTS

18.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

19. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE: SIX MONTHLY MONITORING REPORT

19.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Social Services and heard from the Head of Looked After Children, Mr Jack Cordery.

19.2 The Committee noted that the report had been previously presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 24 July 2003 and the Panel's comments had now been incorporated into this report. The Committee noted that the Panel concluded that there had been considerable progress on several of the recommendations made by the Best Value Review and in particular progress had been made in improved contracting arrangements, the establishment of designated nurses for looked after children and general arrangements with the CAMHS service. The Corporate Parenting Panel had also commented on the ongoing challenges for the service which included finalising the strategy for residential care, enabling looked after children to maximise their potential educationally and maintaining progress in the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

19.3 With reference to the recommendations contained in the action plan of the report the Committee asked the Director of Social Services for an update concerning the timescale of recommendation one. The Director was able to inform the Committee that a long term plan was envisaged, but work was continuing with Boroughs and Districts to enable the recommendation to progress further.

19.4 With regard to recommendation 14 the Director of Social Services Informed the Committee that a steering group had been established to strengthen the work of the TEST (The Educational Support Team) in terms of personnel and pooled budgets. The Committee also noted that a system of bursaries was now in place for looked after children to help with their personal education plans. The Director also informed the Committee that most of the schools in East Sussex where looked after children are placed designated teachers have been allocated. Each designated teacher has also been given a handbook by Social Services to enable them to fulfil this role.

19.5 The Committee agreed that it would be useful to receive a further update with regard to progress made on the action plan at their next meeting in December.

19.6 RESOLVED – to note the contents of the report.

20. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICES

20.1 The Committee considered a report by Director of Social Services.

20.2 RESOLVED – to note the progress being made towards a joint integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES).

21. HOME CARE SERVICES

21.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Director of Social Services. The Committee had requested the update at their last meeting in July as it was a report due to be considered by the Cabinet arising from the Forward Plan.

21.2 The Director of Social Services explained the key developments with Home Care Services over the last few years and it was noted that in July 2001 Cabinet had considered and agreed a report which outlined a programme of re-provisioning services. This programme had now been completed and the Committee noted that the Council was now able to provide more intermediate services and there were more joint initiatives with Health which had led to improved performance.

21.3 The Committee noted that there were remained a good number of high maintenance cases which would be better supported and delivered by the independent sector, but that there was still a need to establish stability for the directly provided services which would need established service level agreements which would be linked with health. A further report to Cabinet likely to be in November, would detail the changes still to take place within the service.

22. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS

22.1 The Committee considered a report by Director of Social Services. The committee had requested a report on this subject at their last meeting on 31 July 2003.

22.2 The Committee noted that the service was a target to recruit 30 new foster carers in 2003/04 and that a target has been set in the Service Business Plan to reduce the number of resignations due to dissatisfaction with any element of the retention strategy.

22.3 RESOLVED – to note the contents of the report.

23. REVIEW OF DIRECTLY PROVIDED HOMES

23.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Social Services.

23.2 The Committee noted the level of savings achieved through the directly provided residential homes review and requested that further information should be circulated electronically by the Director of Social Services to the Committee concerning how the clients from the homes have resettled since the changes instigated by the review.

23.3 The Chairman of the Committee also requested that the Director of Social Services circulate an update about the Moreton Centre and the provision of day care to all members of the Committee.

23.4 RESOLVED – to note the level of savings achieved through the directly provided residential homes review.

24. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES: ICT DIFFICULTIES

24.1 The Committee received an oral update from the Director of Social Services concerning the ICT difficulties and installation of PC's into Ocean House, Hastings.

24.2 The Committee noted that the difficulties had now been resolved and it was expected that the upgrading of ICT facilities within the Social Services Department should be completed by end of October 2003.

24.3 RESOLVED – to note the comments made.

25. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES PROJECT BOARD

25.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Project Board.

25.2 The Chairman of the Project Board, Councillor Tunwell informed the Committee that recently he was unable to make a comment on a press release as Chairman of a Project Board as protocol stated that the Chairman of the appropriate committee was only allowed to be quoted.

25.3 The Committee recognised that this had been an ongoing issue which was difficult to resolve, but requested that the matter was raised on the agenda of the next Scrutiny Chairmen meeting.

25.4 RESOLVED – to note the report and the scope of the review.

26. FORWARD PLAN

26.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 September 2003 to 31 January 2004.

26.2 The Committee requested that with regard to a forthcoming decision in relation to the allocation of the Community Partnership Finance Grants, the Director of Social Services would circulate to members of the committee a breakdown of how members are involved in the process of allocating these grants.

26.3 RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan.

27. URGENT ITEM

Reconciling Policy and Resources Exercise

27.1 At the request of the Chairman, the Committee agreed to consider this matter as an urgent item of business because the reconciling policy and resources exercise had already started and the role of the Scrutiny Committee in the process needed to be clarified before the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on 5 December 2003.

27.2 At the request of the Committee, the Director Social Services reminded members about the preparatory process, known as the “Reconciling Policy and Resources” exercise which was used to identify the service priorities which would be reflected in the County Council’s budget for the next financial year. The Director agreed to circulate a note setting out the details of the process to members of the Committee, together with a note on the major budget headings. At this stage, it was not entirely clear what form the consultation with Scrutiny Committees would take.

27.3 The Committee agreed in principle that if after receiving the note and further information from the Director of Social Service they may request to hold a special meeting. If the Committee requested a meeting it would have to be when clearer information about the policy steers and required savings for the Social Services Department became available and in any event in good time to make any representations to the Cabinet meeting on 19 November. The Director of Law and Performance Management was asked to liaise with the Director of Social Services concerning the need for a special meeting once the note to members had been circulated.