

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Adult Social Care held at County Hall, Lewes on 15 November 2007

PRESENT - Councillor Gubby (Chairman)
Councillors Forster, Murphy, Taylor (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs Tidy, Webb and Woodall

Chief Officer: Mark Stainton, Assistant Director Operations

Legal Adviser: Angela Reid, Head of Legal Services

Scrutiny Lead Officer: Gillian Mauger, Scrutiny Lead Officer

ALSO PRESENT - Councillor Bentley, Lead Member for Adult Social
Care
- Councillor St Pierre
- Councillor Healy
- Janette Lyman, Complaints Manager ASC
- Samantha Williams, Head of Performance and
Engagement
- Jessie McArthur, Head of Policy and Service
Development
- Rita Stone, Assistant Director Resources
- Alison Horan, Head of Community Partnerships

22. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

22.1 RESOLVED to (1) confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 September 2007 and;

(2) confirm the notes of the Directly Provided Services Board held on 11 October 2007.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

23.1 Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest in item 9 as he was involved in running and managing a residential care home. Councillor Taylor did not regard the interest as prejudicial.

24 REPORTS

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

25. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

25.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that provided details of the functioning and effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure.

Janette Lyman, Complaints Manager for Adult Social Care reported on the Complaints Procedure Annual Review Report for 2006/2007. The Committee were advised that it was a statutory requirement to produce a report on the operation and effectiveness of the Adult Social Care Complaints procedure annually and present it to an appropriate Committee.

25.2 Members were advised that despite providing 14,000 services a year only 360 complaints had been received in 2006/07, compared to 509 in 2005/06. It was also noted that 888 compliments had been received.

25.3 In response to queries from the Members it was confirmed that:

- Funding was still an issue and would continue to lead to a number of complaints. Communication has also featured highly. The key in both instances was to ensure that the department continued to be honest and transparent with service users at all times.
- The rise in complaints in relation to the Learning Disability Service had been due to issues around choice and financial availability. A number of these complaints had been complex and mediation had been used in a number of instances, with varying success.
- All complainants were sent a questionnaire following their complaint to gain feedback on how it has been handled.
- There was a lack of complaints from ethnic groups, which was of concern. It was important that people knew how to make a complaint and felt confident enough with the system to do so. This was an area for continued work.
- All stage 2 complaints had individual action plans which were monitored on a 3 month basis.
- Complaints regarding services provided by independent providers went directly to those providers who had their own complaints procedure. The department did monitor the levels of complaints received though through contract monitoring and regulation of the provider.

25.4 Members queried the definition of complaints and expressed concern that all grievances were not actually recorded as a complaint. The Committee were assured that all complaints were taken seriously, but the Complaints Manager was reliant on officers passing complaints on so that they could be formally recorded. Training was provided to managers to enable them to recognise when an issue should be formally recorded as a complaint.

25.5 Members considered the reduction in complaints to be a good indication that the Business Transformation programme was not impacting heavily on service delivery and congratulated staff on their achievements.

25.6 RESOLVED to (1) note the Complaints Procedure Annual Review Report for 2006/2007
(2) congratulate staff on the reduction in complaints over the previous year.

26. RIDGEWOOD RISE – UPDATE ON FUTURE COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS

26.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that outlined the consultation that had been carried out and the proposed alternative provisions for the services at Ridgewood Rise, Uckfield should Cabinet agree to close

it. Mark Stainton, Assistant Director Operations was in attendance to address any questions from Members.

26.2 The Committee was informed that Cabinet was being recommended to agree to the closure of Ridgewood Rise following the re-commissioning of the current services; and declare the site surplus to requirements unless it is a suitable site for the Age Well Project.

26.3 Members were advised that there were currently 26 users attending the day centre. Of the current users 16 were identified as requiring a service similar to Ridgewood Rise, 6 were assessed as not meeting Council's Eligibility Criteria, 2 required more specialist care than being provided and 2 did not require such an intensive level of support. It was also noted that only 5 of the users were from the Uckfield area and in order to keep the service operating at its existing level required drawing on users for further a field to attend.

26.4 The Committee welcomed the comprehensive consultation process that had been carried out with service users, staff and key stakeholders. It was confident that all necessary consultation had been fully undertaken and was reassured that the Unions had been fully consulted.

26.5 Members requested that service users at Ridgewood Rise who were eligible for a continued service would receive an enhanced service at another site and not just a 'like for like' service with the one they were currently receiving.

26.6 Members raised concerns that some service users could be relocated to centres such as the Phoenix Centre, which would be subject to a DPS review in the near future. Whilst this would increase usage at the centres in question and add weight to the necessity for a provision in that area, it was also likely to increase stress and anxiety for these particular service users. It was requested that future reviews at these sites be handled with particular sensitivity and compassion.

26.7 The Committee had concerns about the accessibility of facilities at United Reform Church in Uckfield. It asked that the accessibility study and risk assessment of the site be provided to members of the ASC committee and local members. Members were supportive of the suggestion to use Hookstead Day centre as an alternative facility in the North Wealden area as it recognised the excellent service already provided there.

26.8 The Committee raised concerns regarding staff who work at Ridgewood Rise. Assurances were given that the department would endeavour to meet the wishes of staff regarding their futures, whether it was to re-train, redeploy or consider redundancy.

26.9 The Scrutiny Committee felt that further information around the Age Well projects was needed by the Committee and requested a briefing on the schedules and time scales for Age Well to be provided to ASC committee and local members.

26.10 RESOLVED that the Committee would be supportive of a decision by Cabinet to close Ridgewood Rise

Councillors Forster, Webb and Woodall wished their abstentions to be recorded

Councillor Taylor left the meeting after this item.

27. PROVISION FOR LEARNING DISABILITY CLIENTS

27.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that provided an update on the progress of the re-provisioning of services for Learning Disability clients at St Nicholas and through the Southdown Housing Association (SDHA) following the closure of Avis Way. Mark Stainton, Assistant Director Operations was in attendance to address any questions from Members.

27.2 Members were advised that all service users had received a review 6 weeks after the transfer. The feedback had been mainly positive, with service users enjoying a wide range of facilities, including more community based activities. Some service users did state that they missed the social aspect of Avis Way and the service being provided to one client had been changed as it was found to not be working well. Service provision would now be monitored through the annual review that all clients receive.

27.3 The Committee raised concerns regarding the transport issue to St Nicholas, particularly in relation to the length of the journeys. This was mainly due to the road works at Beddingham and the large catchment area. The department had tried to alleviate the issue by providing additional transport to help shorten journey times and would continue to monitor the situation. It was hoped that this would improve in January 2008 when the service to Brighton ceased to be delivered. Members requested a further progress report in a month's time on the transport issue.

27.4 The Committee requested that future update reports on DPS reviews contained greater detail and outlined what lessons had been learnt from that particular review and how these had helped improve processes and procedures during future reviews.

27.5 RESOLVED to (1) note the progress to date of the re-provisioning of services for Learning Disability clients at St Nicholas and through the Southdown Housing Association following the closure of Avis Way; and

(2) a progress report be sent to committee members in one month's time regarding the transport issue.

28. QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE MONITORING

28.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Policy and Communications that provided an update on performance against the Council Plan for the second quarter of 2007/08. Samantha Williams, Head of Performance and Engagement was in attendance to address any questions from Members.

28.2 Members were advised that the amber rating for delayed transfer of care from hospitals was not as a result of social service delay but was an issue for Health. In fact the Council had been nominated for an award for what had been achieved in relation to reducing delays in transfers.

28.3 Members highlighted that those targets where the indicator was an average figure taken over a 12 month period were not helpful. It was suggested that future reporting of these targets could be provided in a clearer format.

28.4 Officers agreed to work on the format of the performance monitoring reports with the aim of bringing a report more tailored to the Committee's needs.

28.5 RESOLVED to note the achievements made by the Adult Social Care Department and performance against the Council Plan for the second quarter of 2007/08.

29. ADULT SOCIAL CARE SUPPORT FOR SELF FUNDERS

29.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that provided details on the performance indicator relating to support for Self Funders and the improvements made in how people access advice, help and support. Jessie McArthur, Head of Policy and Service Development was in attendance to address any questions from Members.

29.2 In terms of performance the indicator linked to this area of work was amber. This was due to the initial baseline not being well set and changes in recording practices, which had meant the relevant information could not be captured. Counter measures were now being put in place to improve the recording processes.

29.3 The Committee was advised that since the pilot began a number of other authorities were beginning to look at the possibility of taking up the initiative. It was reported that savings could be expected for service users over the next six months, with future financial benefits for the department. The project would now continue through 2008/09 and would then be mainstreamed.

29.4 RESOLVED to (1) welcome and support this innovative area of work; and
(2) note the progress to date on the work around the relevant performance indicator

30. BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

30.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that provided an update on the progress of the Business Transformation Programme. Rita Stone, Assistant Director Resources and Alex Garnett, Head of Business Development were in attendance to address any questions from Members.

30.2 It was reported that there could be delays with some of the systems going live and this in turn could impact on other services in terms of the resources that they are using. The department was keen not to rush the implementation of systems though and then risk problems with them in the early months as this would be counterproductive.

30.3 The Abacus system was in use and £10 million of payments to home care had been made through the system. The payments had gone through reasonably smoothly given the amount different people that had been paid.

30.4 The Committee were advised that the review of Social Care Direct had been completed and that the new version of Care First would be available in 2008.

30.5 RESOLVED to note the progress of the Business Transformation Programme

31. EAST SUSSEX SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

31.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Policy and Communications that detailed the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy. Alison Horan, Head of Community Partnerships was in attendance to address any questions from Members.

31.2 The Committee was advised that this Strategy would replace the original 'Pride of Place' strategy and would also address a range of environmental and spatial issues as well as being updated to reflect other emerging local issues. The Strategy had been developed through considerable multi-agency work with Local Strategic Partnerships, District and Borough Councils and other partners. The Strategy was a high level document outlining the vision, objectives and priorities for East Sussex and would, in time, be supported by a detailed action plan showing how it would be delivered.

31.3 RESOLVED to (1) ask the Scrutiny Chairmen to consider the draft at their meeting and respond on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees;

(2) to request that Members respond individually (with the proviso that, if on having seen the document, Members felt that there were key issues that required a Committee response, to feed this back to the Chairman and a meeting would be arranged).

32. IDEAS FOR TABLETOP REVIEW

32.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Law and Personnel that detailed suggestions for future tabletop reviews that Members of the Committee may have wished to carry out.

32.2 RESOLVED to (1) carry out a table top review of the provision of short term respite in the independent sector. Membership of this review board to be Councillors Taylor and Webb;

(2) carry out a table top review of services to clients following a change in provision as a result of a Directly Provided Services Review. Membership of this review board to be Councillor Forster and Tidy; and

(3) carry out other suggested reviews on Integrated Equipment Services and Safeguarding Adults in due course

33. FUTURE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

33.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel setting out the Committee's planned programme of work for the forthcoming year.

33.2 RESOLVED to note the Committee's planned programme of work.

34. FORWARD PLAN

34.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 November 2007 to 29 February 2008.

34.2 RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 4.40 p.m.

