

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Adult Social Care held at County Hall, Lewes on 17 September 2009

PRESENT - Councillor Waite (Chairman)
Councillors Belsey, Healy, Scott, Thompson and Mrs Tidy
Janet Colvert – LINK representative

Chief Officer: Keith Hinkley, Director of Adult Social Care

Legal Adviser: Angela Reid, Head of Legal Services

Scrutiny Lead Officer: Gillian Mauger, Scrutiny Lead Officer

ALSO PRESENT - Councillor Bentley
- Samantha Williams - Assistant Director of Planning, Performance and Engagement
- Janette Lyman - Complaints Manager (ASC), Complaints Unit
- Sally Goodey - Resource Officer
- Debbie Charman - Strategic Commissioning Manager - Carers
- Jennifer Twist – Partnership Manager, Care for the Carers

14. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

14.1 RESOLVED to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 July 2009.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

15.1 Councillor Scott declared a personal non prejudicial interest in minute number 20 as he had a distant relative that received mental health services.

16. REPORTS

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

17. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES

17.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel setting out the detailed planning for 2010/2011 and beyond as outlined in the State of the County report. The Committee's views were sought on the policy steers for the services under its purview and their contribution to the objectives of the whole Council, prior to their consideration by County Council.

17.2 The Director of Adult Social Care highlighted the key areas of work that the department would be concentrating on in the forthcoming year:

- specific objectives around implementing the Putting People First (PPF) agenda
- changes to how the department commissions services in the future
- developing advocacy services
- working in partnership with the voluntary sector to help them develop and provide services

17.3 The Adult Social Care department:

- expected at least a 4% growth in demand for services in the future
- following comparisons with other local authorities on funding levels for various services, considered that over the next 5 years it would need to shift funding from bed based care to community based services (especially for Mental Health and Learning Disability clients) and from working age adults to older people
- needed to ensure that it maintained investment in preventative and re-ablement services because without such investment there would be an even greater demand on intensive and potentially expensive services in the future.
- was not looking to make any major change to the policy steers, instead they would be grouping them together around PPF aims and refining the wording to fit better with PPF targets.

17.4 In response to questions it was confirmed that:

- it was important that resources focused on providing services that people felt were important and wanted to use. The department was working with statutory partners to identify which services were priorities;
- the department now had joined-up strategies with its statutory partners. The next big step would be to go from having integrated plans to delivering improvements;
- it was important that the voluntary and community sectors were able to provide the type of services that people will want to access in the future. The department would be carrying out substantial dialogue with stakeholders in future months to ensure these services are available.

17.5 The Committee made the following comments and observations:

- developing good contracts with the voluntary sector to provide services in the future will be important to ensure that high quality services which meet clients' needs are available;
- to ensure the successful development and delivery of Putting People First the department needed to ensure that staff development and training was maintained as it could often be an area which was cut when funding was tight;
- joint working with other departments to address issues that fell across more than one department was important eg improving pavements to reduce the number of trips and falls on them; and
- maintaining community transport for older people, particularly in rural areas, was important if services users were going to be able to access services

17.6 RESOLVED to (1) endorse the policy steers with specific comments as above; and

(2) establish a scrutiny board to act on behalf of the Committee to provide input into the RPR process until March 2010 and in particular to consider the detailed departmental portfolio plan.

18. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

18.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that informed them of recent and planned activity relating to stakeholder participation and consultation. Samantha Williams was in attendance to answer questions from Members.

18.2 In response to questions from Members the following points and observations were made:

- Feedback from the staff engagement events revealed that the majority of staff were well informed about the principles of Putting People First, although there was varying degrees of understanding of its impact across the department depending on how much it affected their work. The next step was for discussions to take place with staff about how Putting People First would change their roles in the future.
- the opportunity for staff to access well-being services such as mediation, physiotherapy and reflexology had been proven to reduce the levels of sickness across the department and therefore produced significant savings to the authority.

18.3 RESOLVED to note the report and information on the activities relating to stakeholder participation.

19. ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE ANNUAL REVIEW 2008/2009

19.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that provided details on the functioning and effectiveness of the complaints procedure. Janette Lyman was in attendance to answer any questions from Members.

19.2 In response to questions from Members the following points and observations were made:

- the department was dealing with a range of vulnerable people and complaints and comments from the public were welcomed as it allowed the department to identify trends and problems and enable them to improve services.
- complaints from older people were lower than they should be, given the demographic profile in East Sussex. There was a need to change attitudes amongst older people towards making a formal complaint.
- the rise in MP and Councillor enquiries could either be due and increase in the number of service users feeling unable or unwilling to make complaints themselves or as a result of the recent elections.
- complaints were becoming more complex and covered more than one agency. The department therefore needed to work closely with partners to ensure they provided a seamless response
- the department did not have to monitor complaints to independent sector providers as they had their own complaints process. The department chose to oversee them so that they could monitor any issues being raised. If necessary the department would stop using a particular provider as a result of persistent complaints not being addressed.

19.3 RESOLVED - to (1) note the functioning and effectiveness of the complaints procedure;

(2) congratulate staff on an excellent report and the work that they had carried out; and

(3) request that Councillors receive training on the complaints procedure.

20. DEMONSTRATOR SITES FOR CARERS

20.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Adult Social Care that provided an update on plans for the implementation of two successful bids to the Department of Health to deliver services for carers. Sally Goody, Debbie Charman and Jennifer Twist were in attendance to answer any questions from Members.

20.2 In response to questions from Members the following points and observations were made:

- the provision was free at the point of contact and then people would be signposted to the appropriate service.
- new members are staff were being recruited for the projects.
- evaluation of the projects was critical to enable the department to decide whether this work provided valuable outcomes for services users and was a good use of resources. The department would then need to consider if these services were mainstreamed when the projects end.
- it was acknowledged that some people were apprehensive of approaching Adult Social Care for services and it was imperative that information and signposting was available to them through other sources. GPs and staff on wards were being encouraged to signpost their patients to the service although it was acknowledged that many people learnt about services available through word of mouth. It was hoped that this project would help hard to reach group to access services.
- the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would welcome being kept up to date on these projects.

20.3 RESOLVED to (1) note the report; and

(2) receive an interim report on progress of the projects and then a final evaluation at the end, along with recommendations for the future.

21. TOPICS FOR FUTURE REVIEWS

21.1 The Committee considered a report from the Director of Law and Personnel on future reviews that Members may wish to undertake.

21.2 RESOLVED to (1) carry out a review on the alignment between the social care and financial assessment processes;

(2) agree that Councillors Belsey and Healy would undertake the review; and

(3) agree that future reviews that the Committee wished to undertake would be agreed at the Away Day on 3 November 2009.

22. FUTURE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

22.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel setting out the current work programme for the committee.

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Committee was received an update on the work being carried out by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Two key areas of work that it would be focusing on in the near future was nutrition and dementia.

LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK

The Committee considered an update from Janet Colvert about the work being undertaken by LINK. A workshop on closer working between the LINK and scrutiny was being held on 18 November 2009 and Councillors were invited to attend.

22.2 RESOLVED to note the scrutiny work programme.

23. FORWARD PLAN

23.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 December 2009.

23.2 RESOLVED - to note the Forward Plan.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 12.45 pm.