

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Adult Social Care held at County Hall, Lewes on 3 September 2010

PRESENT: Councillor Waite (Chairman)
Councillors Belsey, Healy, Taylor and Mrs Tidy
Janet Colvert – LINK representative

Chief Officer: Keith Hinkley, Director of Adult Social Care

Scrutiny Lead Officer: Gillian Mauger, Scrutiny Lead Officer

ALSO PRESENT Councillor Bentley, Lead Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
Bev Hone, Assistant Director, Strategy and Commissioning
Samantha Williams, Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Engagement
Rita Stebbings, Assistant Director, Resources
Tina King, Head of Finance and Business Information

13. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

13.1 RESOLVED to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 June 2010.

14. APOLOGIES

14.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Scott and Thompson.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

15.1 Councillors Belsey and Healy declared personal interests as they were trustees of Age Concern. They did not consider this interest to be prejudicial.

15.2 Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest as he was a residential care home owner. He did not consider this interest to be prejudicial.

16. REPORTS

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

17. PRESENTATION – HEALTH WHITE PAPER

17.1 The Committee received a presentation on the Health White Paper: Equality and excellence: Liberating the NHS. The Director of Adult Social Care and the Assistant Director, Strategy and Commissioning, outlined the risks and opportunities that the changes could bring for the department.

17.2 The Committee made the following points and observations:

- There was a risk that these changes could create a vacuum at the beginning which would be filled by organisations motivated by profit and this could have a detrimental effect on the provision of health services in the county.
- The new public health role for the County Council could open up exciting opportunities, provide better joined up services and ultimately improve peoples' lives. However, if the County Council took on these roles without an assurance over long term funding there was a real risk that funding could be reduced in the future yet the responsibility to carry out the work would remain.
- There was concern that without a national blueprint for how this was going to be taken forward health care could become more of a postcode lottery for people in the future.
- It was also important that there was a strategic approach to commissioning and providing services to ensure that there was the right balance between hospital and community provision, that services were not duplicated and that they provided the level of services local people say they want.

17.3 RESOLVED to (1) hold an all Member seminar to bring everyone up to speed on the changes resulting from the White Paper. This needed to take place when more details on the proposals were known; and

(2) bring an update report to the November meeting of the Committee.

18. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES (RPR)

18.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive setting out the detailed planning for 2011/2012 and beyond as outlined in the State of the County report. The Committee's views were sought on the policy steers for the Adult Social Care Department.

18.2 The Director of Adult Social Care stated that the department faced a challenging time ahead with a reduction in funding and an increased demand for services. The proposed policy steers moved away from naming particular groups which the department provided services for and concentrated on key areas of work. Given the ageing population in East Sussex it was important to ensure that funding concentrated in those areas of greatest need. In comparison to other Local Authorities East Sussex currently spent a disproportionate amount on services for working age adults in comparison to services for Older People. This needed to be addressed and reference was made to these changes in policy steer four. The business plan would sit beneath the policy steers and it was these which would contain a set of targets that would measure how well the department was meeting the policy steers.

18.3 The Committee made the following points and observations on the policy steers:

Policy steer 1

- The wording of this policy steer was much clearer and explained exactly what the department was aiming to do.

Policy steer 2

- Concerns were raised regarding the removal of particular reference to transition in this policy steers and clarification was sought that this area of work would be captured within this policy steer in terms of protecting vulnerable adults from harm.
- The wording was not clear in terms of what the department was going to do to meet this policy steer.
- Members noted that it was difficult to consider the policy steers without knowing what the future funding was going to be.
- Members requested that whatever services the department provided in the future they needed to be excellent and this needed to be emphasised in the policy steers.

18.4 RESOLVED to: (1) amend the wording in policy steer two so that it included reference to 'in partnership and multi agency working';

(2) establish a RPR board, made up of councillors Belsey, Healy, Tidy and Waite, to act on behalf of the Committee to provide ongoing input into the RPR process until March 2011; and

(3) request a report on the shift of resources to Older Peoples Services be brought to the November meeting of the Committee.

19. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

19.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Adult Social Care, which informed Members about stakeholder engagement activity over the past year. The Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Engagement stated that stakeholder engagement was much more than just traditional consultation and also involved service users being actively involved in service development. In the current economic climate it was important that the department looked at the range of stakeholder engagement it carried out and considered which areas were most effective and sustainable.

19.2 The Committee made the following points and observations:

- Members wished to congratulate the department on the range of engagement that had been carried out in the last year.
- The work of the Older Peoples' Forums was highlighted as a positive area of engagement and the continuation of these was supported.
- It was recognised that those areas of stakeholder engagement which were not providing value for money needed to be reduced.
- The department might need to invest further in joint events with Health, particularly given the future changes resulting from the Health White Paper. These events would not only reduce costs for both organisations but also be more effective ways of getting across information from both organisations to the same group of people.
- Face to face meetings with people were often better than using letters or emails to engage with stakeholders as people attending these events were more likely to pass on information to other people in their community.

19.3 RESOLVED to (1) support the review of stakeholder engagement proposed in the report; and

(2) receive an emailed report in the future on the feedback from the review of stakeholder engagement and the approach the department was taking to develop a sustainable approach to engagement.

20. FAIRER CHARGING POLICY

20.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Adult Social Care which provided information on the intended review of changes to the Fairer Contributions Policy in light of Putting People First. The Committee was informed that a decision at national level had now been taken on Independent Living Fund recipients (appendix C of the report), and the department would not now be consulting on this change.

20.2 In response to questions from members the following points and observations:

- Appendix A – Charging for respite breaks would only be for those whose income was above income support plus 25% or whose assets were valued at over £23,500. Increasingly other Local Authorities were charging for these types of services and this change could provide an additional income of £170,000 for the department.
- Appendix B – The department currently spent £650,000 a year on grants for carers (approximately £300 per carer per year). These enabled carers to buy a piece of equipment or a service which supported them in their role. The proposal was that carers would receive a simple assessment to determine their level of income and their capital levels and if above specific levels in line with Government Guidance then they would not receive a grant. This could result in 20% of current carers' grants being redistributed.
- Appendix D – Rather than carry out visits to assess the level of Disability Related Expenditure a service user needed, funding would be banded depending on the level of disability people were on. The time saved by doing this would enable the department to shift resources into other areas and provide more support to a greater number of people.

20.3 RESOLVED to (1) support the approach being taken by the department to review the Fairer Charging Policy; and

(2) receive a report in the future outlining the outcome of the review and the impact that the changes have had on service users and carers.

21. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

21.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Governance and Community Services setting out the current work programme for the Committee. Members were informed that future agendas would focus on areas of work where the Committee could add value and reports provided for information would be circulated outside of formal committee meetings. Future items for consideration included respite provision, which would be presented at the November meeting and winter deaths, which would be addressed jointly with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

21.2 The Committee requested that a visit to the Isabel Blackman Centre in Hastings be organised.

21.3 RESOLVED to note the scrutiny work programme.

22. FORWARD PLAN

22.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010.

22.2 RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 4.15pm