

**To: All Members of the County Council
All Chief Officers**

**From: COUNTY SECRETARY'S
DEPARTMENT**

**cc: ACS officers)
Officers named for action) e-mail
Committee Section)**

**Ask for: Peter Hull
Ext: 5565
My Ref: PH/ahp
Your Ref:**

**ADULT CARE SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE
22 MARCH 2001**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

P T J Channell, K J Coleman (Chairman), J M Dwerryhouse-Spears, J Gipps, D L Kerr, A Kilkerr, B J Lamb, A Lee, D B Lloyd, R Mills (Vice-Chairman)

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

J E Price

Other Members in Attendance

J D Beesley, K F Emsall, T G M Kent, M H O'Neill, R H Smith, R J Smith, M H T Janes, J W A Usher

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Adult Care Services Select Committee meeting on 22 March 2001, as circulated, copy annexed, action was taken or decisions were reached on individual items as recorded below.

**SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE INSPECTION OF WELFARE TO WORK
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE**

Chris Battye, Social Services Inspectorate made a presentation to the Committee and other Members of the County Council on the outcome of the SSI's Inspection of Welfare to Work for Disabled People.

Whilst congratulating the SSI on the report Members questioned the Inspector on matters concerning amongst other things:-

- Direct Payments
- Eligibility Criteria
- The Need to Work with Job Centres
- Links with specialist Career Service
- Links with Employment Direct
- District Councils and their Role
- Staff Training/Staff Development Plans

- Tax Credits

Members noted that the recommendations contained in the SSI report had been addressed by the action plan referred to in the report of the Director of Social Services. See Minute 5.

INTRODUCTIONS

Clare Kaye, Assistant Chief Executive and Support Officer for this Select Committee, welcomed all concerned to the meeting and explained the purpose of the Select Committee and identified the members and officers involved with the Committee.

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 January 2001 be agreed as a correct record.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Membership Changes

None.

(b) Order of Business

The Chairman explained that Item 5 - Inspection of Welfare to Work for Disabled People by the Social Services Inspectorate - report of the Director of Social Services on the findings of the SSI would be taken as the first item. Items 2 and 3 would be taken before lunch and Item 4 at approximately 2.00 p.m. (when carers representatives would be in attendance).

(c) Chris Burgon

The Chairman referred to the retirement of Chris Burgon, Assistant Director in the Social Services Department after 34 years in Social Services, 15 of which had been spent in Hertfordshire. The Chairman and Members of the Committee thanked Chris for all his hard work and wished him well for a long and happy retirement.

PUBLIC PETITIONS

No petitions were submitted.

QUESTIONS (STANDING ORDER SC8)

Question to the Executive Member (Julia Price) from Roma Mills

Q1 *On 12 December 2000, the Director of Social Services wrote to confirm underspends on Specific Grants in 2000/2001 as follows:*

Mental Health Grant - £200,000, ie 23% of the full grant of £871,000.

Partnership Grant - £240,000, ie 6% of the full grant of £4,104,000.

Prevention Grant - £100,000, ie 17% of the full grant of £573,000.

Carers Grant - £110,000, ie 12% of the full grant of £910,000.

Since that time the underspend on the Carers Grant has risen to £129,000, (ie 14% of the total), has there been any movement on the other underspends?

Whilst the projected underspend on the Partnership Grant is small in percentage terms, the other underspends are significant. What steps are being taken to ensure that the Specific Grants available for 2001/02 will be utilised as specified in the forthcoming financial year?

NB. The grant for Mental Health is somewhat unclear for the year 2000/2001 as the figure of £1,888,000 which I have had quoted to me by Ralph Paddock includes £919,000 up to 1998/99, which I presume is a recurring figure; £98,000 for Target Grant in 1998/99 and £817,000 for 2000/01 and 2001/02, which I have quoted above.

Answer:

The underspend on the various schemes which were to be funded by Specific Grants are now estimated to be:-

Mental Health Grant - £200,000 ie the same amount as was reported previously.

Partnership Grant - reduced by £22,000 to £218,000 ie 5% of the full grant of £4,104,000.

Prevention Grant - increased by £20,000 to £120,000 ie 21% of the full grant of £573,000.

These resources have instead been spent on other services which support the same client group.

Planning for the use of 2001/02 grants is already underway as evidenced by today's report on Service Plans and Specific Grants. We expect to be able to avoid slippage in 2001/02 though circumstances sometimes make this unavoidable.

NB The total Mental Health Grant for 2000/01 is confirmed as being £1,888,000. £919,000 and £98,000 for Target Grant are both recurring figures. The Grant amount quoted of £817,000 should be £871,000. Therefore the total Grant for 2000/01 is made up of £919,000, £98,000 and £871,000.

Q2 *I note the significant reduction in the overspend on Homecare (£900,000 down to £400,000) and would be grateful for an explanation as to how this has been achieved.*

Answer:

There are two main reasons for the significant reduction in the projected overspend on the homecare budget of 23m.

A plan was implemented in late summer to ensure that all packages are reviewed on a more regular basis, especially for those clients recently discharged from hospital where the support tends to reduce over a relatively short period of time. The earlier projection (£900,000) was based on the level of commitments as at 31 October 2000. The most recent projection assumes that the current downward trend in the level of overspend as a result of the implementation of the plan will continue to the end of the financial year. This will deliver an estimated underlying overspend of £600,000 on homecare.

In addition, given the ability of the authority to fund increased levels of homecare service from specific grant, £200,000 from resources available from Partnership Grant, referred to in Question 1 above, has been spent on homecare.

Supplementary Question:

I do not like budget monitoring taking place like this. The information should be available within a budget monitor report for the Select Committee. Can this be looked at at the Cabinet/Executive Committee?

Answer:

Yes this will be looked at.

Question to the Executive Member (Julia Price) from Tanis Kent

Q1 *A 90 year old constituent was referred to Social Services in October for a general assessment. She received a letter saying she would be put on a waiting list for assessment and was still waiting in March.*

The same lady was diagnosed as partially sighted in December and a BD8 form from the hospital was sent to the Sensory Disability Team. She had a letter in January saying she would be put on a waiting list, but it could be up to 16 weeks before she is seen.

Is it a County wide problem that people have to wait so long for assessment by our Elderly and Physical Disability teams?

Answer:

Referrals coming into EPD teams are checked against our eligibility criteria straight away and cases waiting for a full assessment are prioritised to ensure that clients who may be at risk are dealt with very quickly.

Urgent assessments are dealt with immediately. What this means in practice is that some lower priority cases have to wait some time for a full assessment. The priority status of all cases is regularly reviewed to ensure that any changes in circumstances are taken into account.

Q2 *What is being done to ensure that people referred to the sensory disability service do not have to wait 16 weeks for help?*

Answer:

Practice has been changed so that registration is now on receipt of a BD8 form and, in addition, a letter is sent explaining that the client will also receive a visit in due course. This means clients can register as blind or visually impaired and access benefits and some services immediately and will receive a follow up visit to consider their needs.

The sensory disability team has funding to recruit another rehabilitation worker for people with a visual impairment. The postholder will start in May. This will reduce the wait for a visit from the team.

Q3 *What financial contribution do the County make to Herts Society for the Blind to assist them in the valuable work they are doing for Social Services?*

Answer:

We do not make a financial contribution to Herts Society for the Blind. A clarification of policy in 1996/7 meant that they were ineligible for funding due to the size of their reserves. They have not, as far as I am aware, re-applied for funding since that time.

Q4 *Can the executive member give me the latest numbers of people in the Lister hospital (or Hitchin whose health treatment has finished and who are waiting for placements in residential or nursing homes?*

I was informed in February that we were working with Quantum Care to create additional places in their homes. Has it been possible to find these additional places?

Answer:

As at 20th March there were 11 people awaiting a residential or nursing home placement in the Lister and 32 in Hitchin and Royston hospitals.

Work with Quantum care achieved an extra 13 beds, some of these are temporary. We are also working with Runwood, the company that operates 4 ex county council homes including Wisden Court in Stevenage, to provide a further 21 places - these on a permanent basis.

Supplementary Question:

Have you any idea when the 21 further places including Wisden Court in Stevenage will be provided or will Wisden Court have to be extended unless of course you cut day care provision.

Answer:

The 21 places will be provided across the County and not just at Wisden Court.

PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS

ACTIONS

2 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTION UNIT

[Officer contact: Pat Sanders, Group Internal Auditor (Internal Audit) Tel: 01992 555329]
Joan Mansfield, Head of Registration Unit Tel: 01992 556428]

2.1 The Select Committee considered a response to questions raised by the Select Committee on 12 October 2000 and reports from Internal Audit on behalf of the Chief Executive and the Annual Report of the Social Services Inspection Unit.

2.2 Caroline Tapster introduced representatives who had been invited to the meeting as follows:-

- (a) Herts Health Authority - Anne Southworth
- (b) Head of Registration - Joan Mansfield
- (c) Two representatives from the HNRCA - Jerry Wakefield and Martin Wigg.
- (d) Lay Assessor - Terry Ware.
- (e) Pat Sanders, Group Internal Auditor.

2.3 There was a wide ranging discussion of issues surrounding the registration and inspection of homes. Whilst there was appreciation of the work of the unit from some participants concerns were also expressed.

There was a recognition of the need to improve the working relationship between home owners and the unit. The need for a robust inspection regime was recognised and there was an awareness that the partnership is therefore likely to be uneasy at times. The positive steps taken by the Director to work with home owners through the HNRCA were praised and it was agreed that this should continue.

2.4 It was AGREED:-

1. That whilst recognising the need for a robust inspection regime the relationship between home owners and the unit should be a professional partnership. Action was needed to improve this relationship in order to continue to protect vulnerable people and support all those providing quality care.
 2. That the Director of Social Services continue to work with home owners and to report to members particularly in the areas of:-
 - Improving communication and achieving a common understanding
 - Developing informal meetings and revitalising the Consultative Forums
 - Clarification and development of procedures
 - The development of new protocols/code of conduct, which all parties can agree, covering the conduct of inspections.
 3. That the Executive Member be requested to renew the commitment to the continued working of the Registration Consultative Forum.
 4. That the following recommendations from the report from Internal Audit be implemented:-
 - (a) That the Assistant Director of Social Services Operations ensure the priorities given to the current review of the follow-up policy and that the revised document is widely distributed to all service providers.
 - (b) That the Head of the Inspection Unit ensure that adequate checks are introduced to preserve the independence of the Unit and avoid any conflicts of interest, in the event of the Officer who has recently been responsible for commissioning for homes returning to the Unit as an Inspector.
 - (c) That the Head of the Inspection Unit continue to also explore the need to provide inspection information and report in large print and/or other languages.
- 3. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STAFF**
- [Officer contact: John Cooper, Head of Human Resources, Social Services Tel: 01992 556349]
- 3.1 Arising from the Select Committee's work programme agreed at the meeting on 12 October 2000 a report was considered on the recruitment and retention of staff in the new Adult Care Services Department.
 - 3.2 Members made the following comments:-

Caroline Tapster

Joan Mansfield

Joan Mansfield
Caroline Tapster
Pat Sanders

- (a) Recruitment and retention of staff needed to be taken forward positively and it was recognised that this was initial work.
- (b) Recruitment and retention of staff generally in Adult Care Services was good.
- (c) Housing and relocation packages needed investigating.
- (d) There was a need to explore the viability of overseas recruitment. Consideration was being given to dealing with this in partnership with the Children, Schools and Families Department.
- (e) The use of bursaries should be considered together with partnerships with colleges.
- (f) Meaningful responses should be obtained from people when they left their employment particularly to ascertain why they had left.
- (g) The department should be more specific and targeted in external recruitment.

3.3 It was AGREED:-

1. That a short life topic group consisting of 3 Members (3:2) be constituted with terms of reference:-

To consider issues of staff retention and recruitment which has specific significance to Adult Care Services.
2. The names of County Councillors appointed to the short life topic group be appointed by the County Secretary following notification by spokesmen.
3. That 2 Members of the above Topic Group would be nominated to join the Resources, Prosperity, Partnership and Consultation Select Committee's Panel on staff retention and recruitment generally throughout Council services.
4. That a report on the outcome of 3 above be submitted to all members of the Adult Care Services Committee.

4. SERVICE STRATEGY AND SPECIFIC GRANTS

[Officer contact: Sarah Pickup, Assistant Director of Social Services Commissioning Tel: 01992 556350]

Caroline Tapster
Peter Hull
Sally-Ann Cole
Alan Warner
John Cooper

4.1 Cabinet Proposal

“That the proposed strategy, plans and use of specific grants be referred to the Adult Care Services Select Committee for their comments and that the proposals for use of carers break grants be considered by both Adult Care Services and Children, Schools and Families Select Committees”.

4.2 The Chairman introduced Carers representatives who had been invited to attend for this item.

4.3 Members discussed the two reports and made a number of comments. These included:-

- (a) There was a need to involve Primary Care Trusts in service plans in a positive way.
- (b) Members felt that the Select Committee could only fulfil its scrutiny role if budget monitoring was regularly presented to the Select Committee as an issue for scrutiny.

4.4 Response to Cabinet

- (a) That the proposed strategy plans and use of specific grants as referred to in the Director of Social Services report be recommended for agreement.
- (b) That the Cabinet be requested to approve the proposals for the use of carers break grants as referred to in the report of the Director of Social Services.
- (c) That, with this item as an example, the Adult Care Services Select Committee feels that to fulfil successfully its scrutiny role a budget monitor should be regularly presented to this Select Committee.

Accordingly the Executive Member was asked to investigate how Select Committees could have a budget monitoring process.

D Roberts

Julia Price

5. INSPECTION OF WELFARE TO WORK FOR DISABLED PEOPLE BY THE SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE - ACTION PLAN

[Officer contact: Jean Farrer, Head of Standards, Social Services Tel: 01707 28065311]

The Select Committee considered the report of the Director of Social Services on the findings of the SSI Inspection of Welfare to Work Services for Disabled People undertaken in October 2000. See Minute 1 above as to the presentation by the SSI Inspector.

- 5.1 An action plan based on the recommendations in the SSI Inspection Report was considered.
- 5.2 Members discussed the report and made a number of comments and AGREED:-
- (a) That the action plan responding to the Social Services Inspectorate's specific recommendations be recommended for agreement.
 - (b) That the Director of Social Services circulate the report to the SSI following the Cabinet/Executive Committee's approval of the action plan at their meetings on 23 April 2001.
 - (c) That a progress report be circulated to members with a six month's progress report presented formally to the SSI in September 2001.
 - (d) That the Director of Social Services:-
 - 1. consider how Employment Direct can address their waiting list and assist the process of gaining work for disabled people.
 - 2. inform the appropriate Government departments the difficulties that are becoming prevalent concerning benefits.
 - 3. ensure that the training needs of individuals are properly addressed through Performance Management and Development.
- 5.3 Response to Cabinet
- 1. That the Committee's action plan based on the recommendations in the SSI Inspection report as attached to the Director of Social Services report at Appendix "1" be referred for approval to the Cabinet/Executive Committee on 23 April 2001.
 - 2. That the Director of Social Services circulate the report to the Social Services Inspectorate following approval by the Cabinet/Executive Committee.
- 5.4 Press Release
- A Press Release from this Committee will be issued regarding this item.

Dave Roberts
Caroline Tapster

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

No items were reported to the County Council. |

Andrew Laycock
County Secretary