

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28th July 2003

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Harrington (Chair), Councillor Bambrick (Vice-Chair).

Conservative Group

Councillors Hood and Lemmon.

In Attendance

Simon Griffiths (Deputy Executive of the Primary Care Trust) and Helen Bailey (Public Health Projects Manager).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Lane (Labour Group) and Councillor Martin (Conservative Group).

Apologies were also received from Kevin Matchett (Social Services Area Manager (Children and Families) South Derbyshire and South Dales).

CYS/6. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th June 2003 were received.

CYS/7. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

The Chair advised that he had met with John Simmonds, Deputy Director of Social Services regarding the Best Value Review into Older Peoples' Services. He had offered to make a presentation to the Committee and accordingly a special Meeting of the Committee would be held on 29th September 2003 at 4.00 p.m.

CYS/8. **BEST VALUE REVIEWS – PROGRESS REPORTS**

Sheltered Housing

D. Dawson introduced this item and reminded the Committee that the Sheltered Housing Service had been re-inspected in December 2002 and received a 'one star with promising prospects for improvement' grading which was a great improvement on the initial grading for the service. A revised Improvement Plan was circulated. Officers were planning to meet to analyse the data from the survey of older people and a "vision" for the Sheltered Housing Service was to be finalised.

The Chair queried what service arrangements were in place for grounds maintenance at sheltered housing accommodation. D. Dawson advised that the service development bid for grounds maintenance had been approved but due to a change in staff at the Depot, grounds maintenance arrangements were in need of formalising. It was agreed that appropriate documents relating to grounds maintenance would be submitted with the Improvement

Plan to future meetings. It was also agreed that all completed issues within the Improvement Plan should be written off.

Housing Services Part 1 (Strategic Housing)

B. Wagstaffe advised that no further work had been carried out on this Review since February 2003. The final Best Value report was to be completed at the end of September.

Housing Services Part 2 (Landlord and Tenant Function)

B. Wagstaffe advised that the Best Value Working Group had postponed this Review until April 2004 to allow work to be carried out as part of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

CYS/9. **HOUSING STRATEGY AND HRA BUSINESS PLAN (SUPPORTING PEOPLE)**

B. Wagstaffe gave a detailed presentation appraising Members of the Supporting People initiative. The key aims of this initiative were to fund, co-ordinate and commission housing related support services to vulnerable people to ensure that support services met local needs and to consult with stakeholders regarding overall direction of the Supporting People strategy.

It was noted that Supporting People was for vulnerable groups and the committee was advised in detail of the types of people which were classed as vulnerable. The Committee received in detail a list of the sort of tasks that 'Supporting People' paid for such as emotional support, counselling and advice, help managing finance and benefit claims, help finding accommodation etc.

The Committee was advised that from 1st April 2003, Supporting People would make payments to providers, monitor and review schemes, identify the need for further improved services, fund/co-ordinate/commission services and have a clear evidence of priorities.

The implications of Supporting People for the Council were outlined. For this Council, Supporting People embraced people within the Council's Sheltered Housing accommodation.

It was reported that for new Housing Association supported schemes the capital funding would be supplied mainly by the Housing Corporation. Revenue funding would be supplied mainly from Supporting People. It was important to demonstrate the need and fit within the Supporting People strategy and the District Housing strategy in order to qualify and the provider would be appointed by a tendering process.

Existing schemes would be reviewed within three years and performance monitored. Providers would need to carry out quality assessment checks by October 2003 to attain a minimum standard within six months of the service review and services must meet a need. B. Wagstaffe advised that the Supporting People Strategy was being reviewed.

CYS/10. **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS**

D. Blyde gave a detailed presentation on the Disabled Adaptations service. Traditionally, the provision of disabled adaptations had differed across the

private and public sectors leading to considerable variation in the quality and level of service provided. The main weaknesses of the previous regime were outlined. A key recommendation of the Best Value Review (Housing Strategy, Private Sector Housing, Homelessness and Allocations Review) in 2002 was to unify the Disabled Adaptations Service within the Environmental Health Department. These changes were implemented on 1st April 2003. Accordingly, a number of staffing and procedural changes had been effected since that date to improve the service to disabled residents of South Derbyshire.

All disabled people, irrespective of tenure undergo an assessment of need carried out by a qualified Occupational Therapist. The assessment procedure was carried out according to “Fair access to Care Services” criteria set by the Government. The outcome of this course of action was that the number of referrals requiring adaptations to Council stock had been reduced by approximately 86% (based on the period 1st April to 1st July 2003). Also, it was expected that the number of adaptations to Council stock would be drastically reduced on the year, but the standard of specification and complexity of individual schemes would increase.

As a result of the changes, all disabled people referred by Social Services are required to apply for a Disabled Facilities grant and are subject to a “test of resources”, irrespective of tenure. Council tenants had been made aware of the changes. No objections had been received to date.

The Committee was advised that all adaptation work was now undertaken in one location within the Civic Offices. Staff were dedicated, well informed and accessible. The design specification for adaptations was uniform across tenures and was considered satisfactory by the Occupational Therapist. The County-wide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) Steering Group attended by representatives from the County Council Architects, Social Services and District Councils met quarterly to monitor performance and facilitate improvements to the service. The Group had recently joined a benchmarking club. This had resulted in a county-wide DFG co-ordinator employed by the County Council operating a helpline for clients. A Clerk of Works had been appointed for the south of the County to check works. Architects had upgraded and expanded their list of builders available to undertake DFG work. Time intervals between elements of the grant procedure had been agreed, were monitored by the DFG co-ordinator and were reported to be on target.

D. Blyde advised that in summary the original concept of a One Stop service for disabled adaptations envisaged all components to be housed in the private sector housing section. In practice the Occupational Therapist’s role could not be transferred to the Council and must remain within Social Services. In the light of recent improvements by the County Council it had been recommended that the County Council Architect/Agency Service for the private sector be retained, at least for the immediate future. All other work, including adaptations in the public sector would be carried out in-house, within the private sector housing section.

Only eleven public sector grant applications had been received since the new arrangements began on 1st April 2003 and none were yet completed. When sufficient data became available there would be an opportunity to compare the in-house architect service with the County Council agency service and review arrangements accordingly.

CYS/11. **DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT – PROGRESS REPORT**

D. Dorman was in attendance at the Meeting and gave a progress report on the Disability Discrimination Act advising that the audit was to be published by the end of July 2003. The Chair queried what formal consultation had been undertaken with disabled groups and emphasised a need to recognise such groups and contact them accordingly. The Chair expressed concern that the Depot was inaccessible at the moment and was advised that this was to be addressed.

Councillor Lemmon advised that he had recently attended a stakeholders conference and it had become apparent that people in the voluntary sector were providing services which were being duplicated elsewhere. He suggested that through the E-Government initiative, an easily accessible register identifying bodies which provided such services which could be made available.

CYS/12. **LIFT PROJECT**

B. Wagstaffe advised that this was a public and private finance initiative. The scoping exercise for the project had been completed. A walk-in health service plus specialised clinics was to be provided on the former ambulance station site at Civic Way, Swadlincote. Simon Griffiths of the PCT advised that this project would provide new health services for Swadlincote. A meeting with stakeholders was to be held on 6th August 2003 followed by a formal consultation process. The Ambulance Station was to be demolished by the end of 2003 and the new buildings were to be completed by mid to end of 2004. It was suggested that those involved with the Lift Project could utilise the next cycle of Area Meetings to promote this new project.

CYS/13. **SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

P. Woolrich advised that a Forum Event was held in June 2003. The first Shadow Board Meeting was held with a full introductory programme. Two Board nominations were yet to be made. Commander Hurrell was elected Chair and Councillor Whyman M.B.E. was elected Vice-Chair. There were several actions arising from the first Board Meeting, one of which was to appoint a sub-group of Officers to consider the key themes and project brief on the development of the Strategy. Offers from partners to provide support for capacity building and to host meetings had also been received. The next two Board Meetings had been arranged and the Forum's AGM was to be held on 24th October 2003 at the Bretby Conference Centre.

CYS/14. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee reviewed the work programme and paid particular attention to the proposed agenda for the meeting to be held on 8th September 2003. It was agreed that the agenda for this Meeting should include Best Value Reviews on Cleansing the Environment and Community Safety. Policy items on Crime and Disorder Strategy (concentrating on anti-social behaviour), the Cultural strategy and the South Derbyshire Community Strategy should be received. Agenda items on special projects for management arrangements for the BMX facility, abandoned vehicles, litter plan and scoping the car parking review should also be considered. The Committee also agreed that a site visit be arranged prior to the Meeting to look at the BMX facility and subsequently

invite young people using the facility back to the Meeting to take part in the discussion thereon.

The Chair circulated a leaflet which had been designed for circulation at the Council's Area Meetings advising members of the public about the Overview and Scrutiny function.

S. Knight advised that the Policy Team were to review recommendations made by the Committee to policy committees and compile information as to whether such recommendations had been accepted and implemented.

K. HARRINGTON

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 5.35 p.m.