



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON PARTNERSHIP

AGENDA ITEM:3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON PARTNERSHIP HELD ON FRIDAY, 25 JANUARY 2002 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.20 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr T J Fowler (in the Chair)

Mrs P M Bacon, Mr D C T Graves, Mr W Lidgate Mr D J Rowlands and Mrs C Willetts.

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs J Kverndal and Mrs J Woolveridge, South Bucks District Council.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs K Whitbread, Community Care Information Officer, Bucks Community Action and Mr G Clarke Chairman, South Bucks Community Health Council.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Mr M Appleyard, Mrs C Jones, Mrs V Letheren and Mr R Lingham-Wood.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2001 were confirmed.

2 REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIPS

Members of the Committee reported back from their visits to Voluntary Organisations and District Councils.

Buckingham and District Mencap Committee.

Mr Graves and Mrs Willetts reported having met Gill Dickens of the Buckingham and District Mencap Committee. It was noted that the Committee had 60 clients in the area and that each member of the committee was a carer. The Committee raised funds to provide a range of activities which included:

- Monthly social club
- Visit to the pantomime
- Summer outings
- Assistance to purchase televisions/videos for clients

During discussion Members were informed of a number of difficulties for people with mental health problems which included the support needed to assist clients to live independent lives particularly those young people who had recently made the transition from the education system. The clients served had varying and complex difficulties; some were able to take on employment while others were more dependent. The need for respite care for carers was also emphasised. A copy of the report from the visit is appended at Appendix 1.

Crossroads

Mrs Bacon reported from a visit made to Crossroads, a national organisation concerned in supporting carers. A number of issues were raised during the visit which included:

- It was felt that there was too much monitoring by the County, less bureaucracy would be welcomed
- Payment was required for those attending courses run by the County. It was felt that training should be offered free of charge.
- More contact with County Councillors would be welcomed.

A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 2.

Peoples Voices

Mr Lidgate reported from a visit to Barbara Poole of Peoples Voices, an organisation that offers an advocacy service for clients over the age of 18. Members noted that Peoples Voices was responsible for administering the Direct Payments scheme for the County Council. The organisation highlighted issues of funding which at present was received via a bidding process with 6 monthly review monitoring, this was both costly and restrictive. Core funding for services would be the preferred option. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 3.

South Bucks District Council

Mr Rowlands reported from a visit with officers from South Bucks District Council. Members noted that support was given to organisations who would promote the wellbeing of the residents of South Bucks. This would include offering grants to organisations located in different areas but which residents of South Bucks could access. No evidence was received that the Council was monitoring any organisations that were monitored by the County Council offering no opportunities for rationalisation. A copy of the report is appended at Appendix 4.

Bucks Association for the Blind

Mrs Willetts and Mr Graves reported from a visit to the Bucks Association for the Blind an organisation with over 400 volunteers and 21 paid staff. The Association has a Service Level Agreement with the County Council and has quarterly meetings with officers of the County Council. This is seen as fair and not over bureaucratic. It was reported that over half of the Associations officers' time was spent in fund raising activities. It was noted that the Association would also benefit from additional rehabilitation staff in particular to work with children.

During discussion the Chairman invited Kim Whitbread to address the Committee. Kim is the Community Care Information Officer based at Bucks Community Action (BCA). She explained that her role was based in the voluntary sector bridging the gap between the voluntary and statutory sectors. She highlighted the misconception held by many that those working within the voluntary sector worked in an amateur capacity and were not seen as professionals. She advised the Committee that the voluntary sector was to a large degree reliant on grants from a number of agencies, each grant received was subject to stringent monitoring. Any measure, which could reduce the amount of bureaucracy, would be welcomed.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked all Members for their contributions. More visits would be arranged and the work drawn together at the next meeting in February. He acknowledged that there are a large number of voluntary groups in the County and that the work would only present a partial picture but that it could establish principles for use across the board.

3 SCRUTINY OF THE HEALTH SERVICE

a) Establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Health

It was reported that the County Council meeting on 24 January 2002 had agreed that a new Overview and Scrutiny Committee for health should be established to come into being in May 2002. In view of the resources, both of Member and Officer time, required to service and operate a Committee, it had been agreed that the Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be dissolved once the new Committee came into being. In future, the remaining Overview and Scrutiny Committees would deal with partnership issues. Members requested that recommendations arising from reports made by the Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be taken into account by the other Committees. Representation on the new Health Committee was expected to be 7 County Councillors and 4 District Council Members, representing one from each of the District Councils. Members were advised that all

partner bodies would be consulted on the way in which the County Council intended to proceed in due course.

b) Proposal for consultation on the amalgamation of South Bucks and Stoke Mandeville Hospital Trusts

The Committee received a draft work programme for scrutiny of the proposal to amalgamate the two Hospital Trusts. It was noted that the delays had been caused by the Health Minister who had advised that it would not be desirable to consult at a time when Stoke Mandeville Hospital had been categorised as poor performing. It was reported that the performance at the hospital was now good. A number of other factors were noted including the setting up of the Strategic Health Authority, a review of the Hospital Trusts which was about to be undertaken by the Commission for Health Improvement and a review of Primary Care Trusts expected over the coming months.

The start date for the consultation process is therefore uncertain but it is not expected to start in the very near future.

Members discussed the proposal and agreed that the item should be deferred and dealt with by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Health once established.

During discussion Members emphasised the importance of the work of the new Committee and the importance of close working relationships with partner organisations. The need for appropriate training for Members on Health issues was also raised. Officers confirmed that initial discussions with Health colleagues had taken place. A number of meetings with Health groups had also been arranged for the future. The Committee was advised that the Department of Health had issued a consultation document on Scrutiny of Health and it was agreed that copies of the document should be circulated to all Members following the meeting. Members requested that a draft response to the document should be prepared and submitted to the next meeting for comment.

4 FUTURE WORKLOAD

Members discussed the future work of the Committee and agreed to complete the work on Social Care Partnerships with a view to drawing a report together at the March meeting. It was also suggested that the remaining meetings could be used to further discuss Health issues including how to form links with the Strategic Health Authority and with the Primary Care Trusts who would be the major players in the future Health economy in Buckinghamshire.

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10am on 22 February 2002.