



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, 22 FEBRUARY 2002 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 1.10 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr T J Fowler (in the Chair)

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

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Mr W Lidgate and Mrs L Clarke

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2001 were confirmed.

2 REPORTS BY MEMBERS ON THEIR VISITS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND DISTRICT COUNCILS

Member of the Committee reported back on their visits to Voluntary Organisations and District Councils.

Wycombe Race Equality Council

Mr Fowler reported on a meeting with Ranjit Dheer, Director and Shaid Aktar, Welfare Officer of Wycombe Race Equality Council. It was noted that generally the WREC felt the County Council was sensitive in the way in which it dealt with the REC, although stronger links needed building at ground level to match the already good relationships with senior officers. He reported the WREC felt that since 11 September, a marked difference in attitudes had been noticed, particularly with relationships in the Asian Community.

Members noted that the introduction of a Service Level Agreement with the County Council had led to a mutual understanding and commitment between both organisations. It also ensured the REC three-year inflation proof funding which they welcomed.

In terms of monitoring the service, it was noted that REC's were closely monitored by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) on the work programme. It was further noted that the County Councils more softly approach to monitoring, compared to that of the CRE was less onerous and welcomed.

Meeting with Chiltern District Council

Mr Fowler and Mr Rowlands reported from a visit to Cllr Dodd and Mrs D Gullet, Communications Officer, Chiltern District Council. The District Council had a clear method for determining grants to voluntary organisations. Forms are issued which outline the specific criteria to which grants are issued. It was felt that the grants were given for pump-priming with a hope that organisations would stand alone. Organisations were less likely to receive grants if they had a surplus of money greater than the grant application.

During discussion a member commented that some local organisations found the forms to be long and difficult to fill in. In terms of reserves, she reported that the Charity Commission laid down in its constitution that organisations should hold a certain amount of reserves to cover unforeseeable events like redundancy.

Visit to Wycombe District Council

Mr Rowlands reported from a visit with Mr Lidgate to Cllr Langley and David Picken at Wycombe District Council to discuss how the authority deals with grant applications from voluntary organisations. It was noted that Wycombe were very organised in the way grants were awarded. Officers at Wycombe assessed and processed applications and report to Cllr Langley, Cabinet Member, before approval was given by Cabinet.

During discussion members expressed surprise to Wycombe's view to the Sure Start programme, commenting that the programme was a government policy designed to target local pockets of deprivation, therefore funding was locally focused. Members were reminded that this was the view of Wycombe District Council and the visit was not aimed at scrutinising but of fact finding to determine the attitude of partnership working.

It was reported that agencies held contingency funds to address shortfalls in direct payments and redundancy, Wycombe had recently approached voluntary organisations proposing and outlining the benefits of holding a central contingency fund. Initial response was not favourable. Mr Rowlands felt that WDC were sensitive and aware of the issues relating to the organisations. Discussing the issue, it was agreed that Mrs Bacon would investigate this area more thoroughly and report back to the Committee.

SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIPS

The Committee discussed the first draft of the report on the Review of Social Care Partnerships and made the following comments and amendments to the recommendations:

The Review

- Add a bullet point on *Improvement*
- Names and organisations should be carefully checked for accuracy
- The objectives of the report outlined on a coversheet to Cabinet

Why Partnership

- Provision made within the report for the work of the Committee to be ongoing
- In relation to comments it was agreed that a recommendation to incorporate a policy in the Council Plan relating to the development of partnership working and include a supporting document which addresses particular areas.

Voluntary Sector Infrastructure

- To continue the already good relationship with voluntary organisations the County should ensure Council representatives attend Management Committees.
- As some National Organisations deal with the 'whole' County, address issues common to County and District Councils and voluntary organisations to harmonise partnerships

Service Level Agreements

- Include a third recommendation for 'Two Way Commitment' which involves all organisations who do or do not receive SLAs.
- Further discussing SLAs, members commented on the following:

- To enforce commitment of the Council to partnership working, an identified ‘partnership person’ whom organisations can contact for advice could be delivered by BCC and/or District Council;
- It was noted that resources were not available to extend SLAs to smaller groups;
- As a way of moving forward relationships, the committee suggested looking at the Hampshire Compact model for identifying and establishing new approaches to working together.

Communications

- The first recommendation to be incorporated in the body of the text and instead of named contacts replace with a phone number;
- Change recommendations two and three from statements.
- Concerns were raised at the lack of ethnic minority representation. It was agreed this needed addressing before the draft recommendations could be finalised;

Working Together

- Comments emphasised the need for Chief Executives and Leaders of all Authorities within Buckinghamshire to work together to strengthen links and relationships with voluntary organisations and avoid duplication.
- The third recommendation, *persons* be replaced with a *number*.

Funding

During discussion with a number of organisations, the issue of funding arose. Although it was reported that Buckinghamshire Community Action (BCA) had an advisor for external funding it was noted that they also felt more co-operation from the County would further this avenue of funding as it was difficult for them to influence major fund givers.

Monitoring

- It was recognised that voluntary organisations would prefer one monitor;
- Smaller organisations who are not in receipt of SLAs but receive other forms of funding should be monitored similarly to those in receipt of SLAs

Members Involvement

It was noted that all organisations would welcome greater contact with Council Members.

Are Compacts the Way Forward?

- A Compact between voluntary and statutory bodies to include Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to be included in the body of the text at paragraph 49;
- Move the second recommendation into the body of the text;
- Attach the booklet ‘Hampshire Compact’ as an appendix to the report;
- Attach as an appendix to the report the names of voluntary and statutory bodies;

During discussion it was agreed that a copy of the Hampshire Compact booklet would be sent to each Member.

District Councils

The Committee agreed to delete ‘clear’ from paragraph 51 as voluntary organisations had indicated through the visits by Members that sometimes procedures for grants were not clear.

Training

It was reported that further investigations on training was required before any findings could be incorporated into the report.

The Committee congratulated the Chairman on the quality of the draft report. It was agreed that a summary of the recommendations would be circulated to Members for comment.

UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF HEALTH SCRUTINY

It was reported that a meeting with the Chief Executive of Chiltern and South Bucks PCT had taken place in which it was outlined how Chiltern District Council were proceeding. Further meetings had also taken place with Wycombe PCT. A meeting with Sean Brogan of Aylesbury PCT and Bucks Mental Health Trust were to be arranged and will be reported at a future meeting.

During these meetings the PCT Chief Executives were given a briefing on how the New Health Committee was expected to be developed. Questions were raised regarding PCT representation. It was noted that membership on the new committee was still to be confirmed.

It was also noted that Mr Fowler and Mr Edwards had spoken at an LGA conference on Health Scrutiny and been invited to speak on the subject at Birmingham University.

PLANNING THE RESOURCES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DOCUMENT – “LOCAL AUTHORITY HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY. A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT.”

It was agreed that a response would be drafted in reply to the document and circulated to Members for comment.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The committee discussed the future work programme keeping in mind that there were only two meetings before the Committee was disbanded.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member and Strategic Manager for Adult Social Care had been invited to attend the meeting in March to discuss and update members on the Winter Pressures report. The agenda would also contain a further update on Health Scrutiny and the reports of the following three visits:

- Monday 25 February at 2.30pm, Mrs Willetts and Mr Appleyard to visit Wycombe Women’s Aid
- Tuesday 26 February at 2.30pm, Mr Fowler and Mrs Woolveridge to visit HomeStart in Wycombe
- Friday 1 March at 10.00am, Mrs Willetts, Mr Fowler and Mrs Bacon to visit the Regional Office of Mencap in Wycombe.

It was agreed that at the last meeting of the Committee in April, members would conclude the report on Social Care Partners and look at the response to the Health Service document.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 22 March 2002