

2 INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman welcomed Roger Edwards, Lead Officer – Overview and Scrutiny to the meeting. The Lead Officer – Overview and Scrutiny delivered a presentation which acted as an introduction to the Overview and Scrutiny process at Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and explained the areas of BCC services which would fall into the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Adult Services. During the presentation and subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committees met in public and the minutes of the meetings were published on the BCC website and were readily available to members of the public.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees played a key role in policy development and in monitoring the effectiveness of policies once implemented. The Chairman gave an example of a review of Direct Payments, which was undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Personal Care. On site visits to other local authorities, it became apparent that BCC was not effectively promoting Direct Payments and the report that subsequently went to the Cabinet, had a huge impact on the development of a higher profile Direct Payments system within BCC.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Adult Services would be responsible for looking at services within Adult Social Care, Adult Learning and Libraries and Museums. In addition, the Committee could usefully scrutinise the work of external partners, in relation to specific pieces of work that the Committee would undertake.
- A member asked if there was a danger that the work of the Committee might overlap with work being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Public Health. The Lead Officer – Overview and Scrutiny agreed that some areas, e.g. Mental Health services and areas where pooled budget arrangements might be introduced could be of interest to both Committees. The Policy Officers would keep up to date with the work of the other Committees and joint working between Committees might be a useful way of tackling these particular subject areas.
- A member expressed the view that BCC had a very good system of Overview and Scrutiny and this had been recognised by other authorities. He emphasised the importance of site visits to gather evidence for reviews and also praised the officers involved for the quality of the final reports. It was noted that the vast majority of recommendations to Cabinet had been accepted.
- BCC originally had five Overview and Scrutiny Committees but this had recently been reduced to four. This was mainly a reflection of the changes that were introduced under the Children Act and also to make better use of the resources available to support the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- Members expressed some concerns at the loss of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Corporate Performance as this Committee had played a crucial role in scrutinising the preparation of the budget on a council wide basis. It had been suggested that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee would scrutinise the budgets of the services which fell into their remit, but members had reservations as this meant that no-one would scrutinise the budget as a whole and

meant that no-one would scrutinise the budget as a whole and corporate wide issues might be overlooked.

- The Lead Officer – Overview and Scrutiny explained that in the Constitution a new body known as the Corporate Task Group had been established to investigate wider corporate issues including the budget and Medium Term Plan (MTP). It was envisaged that this group would scrutinise the budget whilst it was being prepared and then monitor its progress against the MTP.
- At the Cabinet meeting on Monday 6 June, Cabinet had suggested that the Corporate Task Group would scrutinise budget preparations from October to February and then the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be tasked with monitoring the performance and progress of the budget against the MTP thereafter. This change had not been discussed previously and the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had concerns about the proposal. The Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had therefore arranged a meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader in order to clarify the role of the Corporate Task Group. The Chairman agreed to inform members of the outcome of this meeting.

Chairman

3 ADULT SERVICES GREEN PAPER – INDEPENDENCE, WELL-BEING AND CHOICE

The Chairman welcomed Trevor Boyd, Acting Strategic Director for Adult Social Care to the meeting. For the benefit of new members, Trevor Boyd introduced himself and explained why he was Acting Strategic Director and the changes in the senior management structure that would ultimately see him revert back to his substantive post of Head of Older People's Services in 2006.

The Acting Strategic Director for Adult Social Care explained that his portfolio had always had a good working relationship with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Personal Care, who had always provided a rigorous critique of papers presented to the Committee, but also gave positive encouragement to service improvements. He hoped that, following his presentation, the Committee would be able to contribute their views on the Adult Services Green Paper, which was currently out for consultation. Questionnaires had been distributed to members for this purpose. The Acting Strategic Director would be collating the BCC response to the Green Paper to meet the Government's deadline of 28th July 2005.

The Committee received a presentation on the Adult Services Green Paper – Independence, Well-being and Choice. During the presentation and subsequent discussion the following points were noted:

- The Green Paper outlined proposals for the future of Social Care for Adults, which encompassed carers within the family or community as well as local authority social services.
- Traditionally there had been more support available from immediate family members, but with increased mobility this was no longer the case. The Green Paper sought to encourage the development of informal community networks.
- Members asserted that older people had a lot to contribute in terms of helping others. A member gave an example of people in their mid-80s doing volunteer work for age concern and wondered if there was

scope to tap into this valuable resource further. The Acting Strategic Director informed the Committee that the Green paper's proposals actively encouraged more involvement from the local community e.g. through Good Neighbour schemes.

- Supporting carers in the community was a priority. It was recognised that without the commitment of existing carers the burden on social services could greatly increase.
- The Green Paper advocated the extension of Direct Payments. It was recognised that older people had not readily taken up Direct Payments; which may in part be due to concern about the bureaucracy associated with managing the monies received.
- The principle of individual budgets was advocated in the Green Paper. This would enable clients to purchase care from the County Council or private care providers. This could be challenging for BCC, as block contracts had been increasingly developed to provide quality services at lower cost. If clients chose to purchase care elsewhere then BCC could be left with voids in the block contracts and would effectively be paying for care twice.
- The principle of self-assessment was also introduced in the Green Paper. Kent County Council had been piloting an online self-assessment form which allowed people to assess their own needs.
- There was an emphasis on developing preventative services. BCC's Intake Domiciliary Care service was an 'enabling' service which delivered intensive domiciliary care and rehabilitation services to clients on release from hospital. It had been found that provision of an intensive service in the first few weeks following discharge enabled clients to regain their confidence and a sense of well-being which meant they could then live independently again, in many cases, prevented the need for ongoing homecare. It was envisaged that BCC's Intake Teams would shortly integrate with Intermediate Care teams operated by Health. The Green Paper also advocated the development of 'low level' preventative services to delay or negate the need for people to receive services from the statutory sector. Such services could be developed in partnership with other statutory and voluntary and community sector agencies.
- A Director of Adult Social Services must be appointed, following the appointment of a Director for Children's Services. The primary role of the Director of Adult Social Services would be to lead other partners in developing a strategic future needs assessment for the local authority. It was recognised that this would be a challenging and pivotal role in the development of the vision outlined in the Green Paper.
- The implementation of the new vision for Adult Social Care had been assessed by the Government as being cost neutral. The Government envisaged that efficiencies would release funds to invest in the funding of the Green Paper proposals. The Acting Strategic Director expressed reservations about funding the changes within the existing budget. Although efficiencies were continuously sought in Adult Social Care, it was felt that some sort of bridging finance would be necessary to support the transition to a new system of care. It was anticipated that the Local Government Association would be leading significant lobbying for additional financing to support the implementation of this vision.

ACTION

- Members agreed that the overall vision outlined in the Green Paper was commendable. However it was challenging people to 'think outside the box' and revise traditional methods of working. It would be important for all partners to sign up to radical change at a similar rate - would this realistically be possible? The Acting Strategic Director reported that Government had developed it as a 15 year strategy, so recognised that change would take time.

**All
Members**

12.10pm Mr F Sweatman left the meeting.

The Committee agreed to consider responses to the questionnaire at the next meeting in July and to report back to the Acting Strategic Director thereafter. The Chairman thanked Trevor Boyd for attending the meeting.

4 WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06

The Committee considered the draft Work Programme for 2005/06. The Policy Officer reported that it had been agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would hold regular discussions with the Cabinet Members and Strategic Directors for both Adult Social Care and Community Services in order to inform the development of the Work Programme. It was agreed that the Work Programme would be discussed again at the October meeting, to enable members to propose any revisions or additional areas of work that they wished to include.

DSO/PO

A member suggested that it might be useful to receive an annual report from all agencies involved in community safety, such as the Thames Valley Police and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. Another member noted that it would be useful for the Committee to identify a specific countywide issue to discuss with these services as the Police in particular, often attended meetings at Parish or District Councils to address more localised issues.

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 13 July 2005 at 9.45am in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall

CHAIRMAN