

ITEM 4

Time commenced : 6.00pm
Time finished : 7.25pm

SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH COMMISSION 14 JUNE 2005

Present: Councillor Hussain (in the Chair)
Councillors P Berry, Chera, Hird, Leeming, Nath, Turner and Willitts

In attendance Philip Johnson, Pat Hill and Sir Michael Raymond

01/05 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Winter.

02/05 Late items

There were no late items.

03/05 Declarations of Interest

Pat Hill declared a personal interest in item number 07/05 Modernising the Fostering Service – Proposed Development in 2005/06 as she was Chair of the Fostering Panel.

04/05 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2005 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

05/05 Call-in

There were no call-ins.

06/05 Co-option of Members to the Commission

The Commission considered a report of the Chair of the Social Care and Health Commission asking Members to re-appoint Pat Hill and Elaine Jackson who were initially co-opted to assist the Commission with its review of Health Inequalities. On completion of the final report, they were asked to continue and support the Commission as they had made valuable contribution and had skills and knowledge that could be applied to the wider role of the Commission.

Members were also asked to re-appoint Philip Johnson and Sir Michael Raymond as the two representatives from the Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forum who were co-opted last year. Their re-appointment would continue the close relationship established with the PPI Forums as recommended by the Department of Health.

Resolved to recommend to Council the re-appointment of the following individuals to the Social Care and Health Commission:

- **Pat Hill**
- **Elaine Jackson**
- **Philip Johnson and Sir Michael Raymond, the two representatives from the Patient and Public Involvement Forum.**

07/05 Modernising the Fostering Service – Proposed Developments in 2005/06

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Social Services detailing the draft proposals in relation to foster care allowances. This matter was due to be considered by Council Cabinet in July.

Keith Woodthorpe, Assistant Director - Social Services, advised the Commission that despite a small net increase in the number of carers recruited in Derby in 2004/05 and a continuing slow reduction in the number of children looked after to it's lowest ever, pressure for new placements continued and could not be met from within existing resources. The department had not yet achieved a planned downturn in the use of IFAs and at present, there was no certainty that without further action to improve our competitiveness and offer Derby carers a fair deal we would be able to achieve this. Moving towards this by a combination of paying national foster carer network rates as our basic position with a simplified but extended fee structure for the more demanding children would enable us to offer an easily understood package to potential foster carers.

The intention was to fund this by a combination of streamlining existing extra allowances, using the Choice Protects special grant and whenever possible reducing over time the use of IFA's. The Choice Protects grant was time limited, but in the past grants of this nature had been consolidated into the FSS, and there was no reason to doubt that this would happen in this case. Reducing the number of placements remained a positive intention but was not currently able to be evidenced by success to date.

Members were advised that the department currently spent £1.8 million on purchasing 40 foster placements from independent providers. The Council had made significant investment in 2004/5 into in-house fostering allowances and had made an above retail price index increase for 2005/6. This was part of the commitment to strive towards achieving the fostering network recommended rates. However, in 2005/6 we would still be paying almost 30% below these recommended rates in our basic allowances. Nationally, over half of all local authorities with social services responsibilities were now paying at this level or above. The report detailed the weekly fostering allowances for 2005/6 by age group against the IFA payment of carers. Members also considered the comparison with neighbouring local authorities for 2004/5.

Keith Woodthorpe advised the Commission that some authorities had introduced contract carer schemes where in addition to the allowances for children, carers received a substantial fee. Usually such schemes were small in size, typically four to ten carers and were targeted at the most difficult to place young people

who would otherwise be in expensive externally purchased placement, usually in the residential sector. Members were advised that embarking on a contract carer scheme was not proposed at this time. Such a scheme would deliver only a small number of placements and at this point we needed to concentrate on building up our stock of mainstream carers.

Councillor Nath commented that although foster carers were receiving an annual performance payment of £1000 we still did not have the number of foster carers that we would like and was there any other way to attract carers. Keith Woodthorpe responded that the Council were very innovative in ways that they advertise for foster carers. There was never a steady stream of potential foster carers approaching the Council. The peaks usually coincided with things that happened locally.

Councillor Nath asked if the Council supported people in training and qualifications. Keith responded that some carers were completing or had completed NVQ qualifications in childcare and there was continuing training for all foster carers.

Councillor Hussain stated that the Commission welcomed the recommendations as this would take the Council forward in a significant way. The Commission also welcomed the recognition of the link between remuneration and the number of people who came forward to be foster carers.

Resolved to note the report.

08/05 Developing the use of Performance Eye

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services asking members to consider the action it wished to take in monitoring the performance under its area of responsibility. Mahroof Hussain, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer, advised the Commission that during the past year, the Commission had been using the performance eye to monitor services. There had been suggestions that the Commission's use of Performance Eye had to some extent duplicated the performance work of the Council Cabinet and also that it may not be representative of some of the service areas.

At it's meeting on 13 July 2004 the Scrutiny Management Commission resolved that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission should:

- monitor the performance of the Council, giving attention to key indicators relevant to the Council's priorities and objectives included in the performance plan that fell within the responsibility of each commission
- comment on the draft priorities that formed the basis of the Council's Corporate and Performance Plans and budget planning process, taking account of performance monitoring information to identify key issues.

It was also suggested that the Commission might wish to designate a member as a 'performance eye champion' who would develop expertise in the field and

would take a lead on performance management issues. The Co-ordination team would provide support to the performance eye champions.

Members of the Commission were concerned that the information contained within performance eye was not easy to understand and should be made simpler and should explain how the indicators related to other government targets. Councillor Hussain responded that the format used for performance eye was suggested by the government as they want local authorities to collate information in this way to bring consistency and enable better comparison between other authorities. He added that the role of the Champion was to facilitate dialogue between the Commission and the Council Cabinet, to make the Cabinet more accountable to the Commission.

Councillor Hussain suggested that Members consider a representative from the Commission to be the Performance Eye champion at the next meeting of the Commission. This gave members a chance to reflect the role on performance eye and understand the work involved.

Members agreed that it would be useful to take the 20 indicators that fell within the Social Care and Health Commission's remit to each pre-meeting for the Chair and Vice Chair to decide which issues should be discussed by the full Commission and the relevant officers who would be invited to respond to these issues.

Resolved

- 1. to note the report**
- 2. to consider a champion for performance eye at the next meeting of the Commission**
- 3. to present the performance eye indicators to the Chair and Vice-Chair at the pre-meetings of the Commission to decide which issues will be discussed at the full meeting and the relevant Officers who will be invited to respond to these issues.**

09/05 Overview and Scrutiny Objectives and Work Planning for 2005/6

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services asking them to consider objectives and work planning for 2005/6. Mahroof Hussain advised the Commission that the 2004/5 annual report of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commissions set out the following objectives for 2005/6:

1. to improve the engagement between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Commissions
2. for the Commissions to increase their involvement in scrutiny
3. for the Commissions to review their work processes with a view to improving outcomes and the linkages to Council priorities

4. for the Commissions to identify the skills needed by Chairs and Members to deliver effective scrutiny, and prepare training programmes designed to address any skills shortages they identified.

It was suggested that the Commission consider and agree the actions it would take in order to meet the annual report objectives.

The Commission were also asked to confirm whether they wished to continue with the review of Children Looked After services that was started earlier this year.

To facilitate the development of the Commission's work plan, it was suggested that prior to the meeting in July 2005, members should inform the Co-ordination Officer of any issues or topics that they consider would be of benefit for the Commission to scrutinise or review. The Co-ordination Officer would collate this information for circulation at that meeting together with the suggestion from the lead Cabinet Member.

Councillor Willitts asked that Members consider ensuring that all reviews or scrutiny items were completed by April 2006 so that they are completed before the end of the municipal year.

Resolved

- 1. to continue with the review of Children Looked After Services**
- 2. to inform the Co-ordination Officer of any issues or topics that the Commission consider would be of benefit to scrutinise or review.**

10/05 Appointment of Members of the Commission onto the Corporate Parenting Joint Sub Commission

The Commission were asked to consider nominations from the Commission for the Corporate Parenting Joint Sub Commission 2005/06

Resolved to appoint Councillors Hird, Hussain and Turner from the Social Care and Health Commission onto the Corporate Parenting Joint Sub Commission for 2005/6.

11/05 Update from the Patient and Public Involvement Forum members

Members received a verbal update from Philip Johnston and Sir Michael Raymond on the activities on the Public and Patient Involvement Forum.

Members were advised that the annual reports of the forums had been produced and it was suggested that these should be emailed to the Co-ordination Officer to be uploaded onto CMIS for members to look at individually.

Councillor Nath stated that the forums produced a good report but how did the public find out about their work. Philip Johnston responded that meetings were conducted in public but it was difficult to get members of the public to attend. Councillor Nath asked if there was a website and stated that the public should be engaged in a lot of these issues particularly provision of NHS dentists, and issues regarding GPs. Mahroof Hussain stated that he would speak to the forum administrator to find out how the meetings were publicised.

Resolved to note the report.

12/05 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

There were no items.

MINUTES END