

Lancashire County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 9th March, 2012 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor John Shedwick (Chair)

County Councillors

T Aldridge	D O'Toole
S Chapman	Mrs L Oades
Mrs F Craig-Wilson	M Skilling
M Devaney	V Taylor
K Ellard	B Winlow
P Malpas	

County Councillor T Aldridge replaced County Councillor J Hanson for this meeting only.

County Councillor M Skilling replaced County Councillor C Crompton for this meeting only.

1. Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None were disclosed.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 February 2012

Resolved: That, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Lancashire Supporting People Programme

The Chair welcomed Sarah McCarthy, Head of Supporting People Programme, to the meeting.

The Committee was informed that the Supporting People Programme was responsible for the planning, commissioning and procurement of housing related support services that would enable people to develop independent living skills. The success of which was dependent on effective partnership working between the County Council and other partners including; District Councils, Probation Service, Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team and the Primary Care Trusts. Most of the services provided by the programme were on a short term basis – less than two years.

It was explained that housing related support services would assist people to:

- Setup and maintain a home;
- Develop domestic / life skills;
- Develop social skills;
- Manage finances and benefit claims;
- Access other services;
- Get involved in community activities;
- Maintain their personal safety and security;
- Find alternative accommodation;
- Help find a job; and
- Access education and training.

The following types of services were funded from the supporting people budget:

- Supported housing projects;
- Refuges for women at risk of domestic violence;
- Sheltered accommodation with a scheme manager;
- Home improvement agencies;
- Community alarms; and
- Floating or visiting support where support was flexible and could be delivered anywhere.

The Committee was also informed that services provided by the programme were preventative in nature and that social care eligibility criteria did not apply. The Committee noted that there was also no statutory duty to provide housing related services.

The Supporting People Programme was implemented by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in 2003 where upon partnership arrangements were defined to ensure that Supporting People funding would contribute to a range of strategic agendas such as; community safety, housing, social care and health. Initially, funding was centrally managed until it was transferred into Area Based Grants and then on to the County Council as part of its mainstream funding in 2010. The Committee noted that the CLG had also implemented systems to record data which subsequently enabled the County Council to benchmark its services. Data regarding outcomes for people leaving short-term services was set out at appendix 'A' to the report.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in respect of the Lancashire Supporting People Programme, a summary of which is provided below:

- One Councillor asked where other than the Scrutiny Committee did the supporting people programme obtain political input from. It was reported that the Commissioning Board would identify issues of a significant political nature that would require consultation with the Lancashire Chief Executive's Group in advance of a decision being made. The Lancashire

Chief Executive's Group would then determine if any issues needed to be referred to the Lancashire Leaders Group.

- Councillors were clear that the SPP was a large body of very important work. It was also very relevant to the safeguarding agenda. Members of the overview and scrutiny committees, as well as the Executive and other elected members would wish to continue to advocate for this service.
- There was strong support by members of the committee for the benefits and dividend from investing in the Supporting People Programme Councillors. They were pleased that funding was largely in place and commented that the preventative nature of the service would save money in the long term when compared with other reactive services. Ms McCarthy herself was congratulated for her contribution to delivering a high standard of service.
- There was also agreement that there might be a case for the service to be placed on a statutory footing, and that this possibility should be given further consideration.
- A question was asked in relation to the overall trend since 2003 and how the future was envisaged. The Committee was informed that the figures since 2003 were not to hand. However, the quality of services had improved and that a lot of time and effort was spent on procuring services from quality providers. It was acknowledged that further improvements to the service could still be made.
- One Councillor asked how people's progress was tracked once they had left short/long term services. The Committee was informed that this was something officers would look towards implementing in the future.
- A question was asked in relation to the County Council intending to offer more flexible contracts to provide a support service to people living in local communities and what the timescale would be to implement such contracts. The Committee was informed that internal audit was happy with the mechanisms drawn up to establish such contracts. It was hoped that flexible contracts would be rolled out from April 2013.
- One Councillor asked how short-term and long-term services were defined. The Committee was informed that short-term services were those provided up to two years and were free of charge. Long-term services were defined as anything over two years and would be charged accordingly.
- A comment was made in relation to the apparent low figures reported for women at risk of domestic violence. The Committee noted that the figure related to Domestic Violence as a client group and that the amount related to the number of contracted places available and not the total number of people supported.
- Councillors queried the 'not known' figures reported in tables 2 and 3 in the appendix to the report and wondered if they represented people who had 'slipped the net'. It was reported that the 'not known' figures related to people who had abandoned support. However, it was important to acknowledge that some things do breakdown and that there would never be a 100% reporting of the facts and figures.

- One Councillor asked if there was any analysis of the 'not known's' carried out by other authorities. A request for an internet link to the University of St Andrews' report on figures relating to the service was also requested. It was not known if any analysis of those 'not known's' had been carried out.
- Another Councillor suggested that it would be helpful to provide data relating to cost by group supported. A question was also asked in relation to what services were provided for men at risk of domestic violence. It was reported that officers were identifying need for services, however, there was no specialist services available for men as of yet.
- A question was asked on how the County Council compared with neighbouring authorities and whether people came from outside the County's boundaries to access services. The Committee was informed that this was a complex issue and that officers would look into the matter.

Resolved: That;

- i. The key points made by the Scrutiny Committee members be noted and submitted to the Executive for their consideration and comment
- ii. That the Chair, in consultation with the Executive, decide upon an aspect of the Supporting People Programme that would benefit from further consideration by Overview and Scrutiny
- iii. The workplan be updated to include such a further report on a date to be agreed in consultation with the Chair.

4. Rail Improvement Schemes - Report of the Task Group

The Committee received the final update report of the Rail Improvement Schemes Task Group which had reconvened in January 2012 to consider some outstanding issues.

County Councillor Sarah Fishwick, Chair of the Task Group attended the meeting to present the report.

The Committee was informed that the Task Group was keen to ensure that the schemes it had considered continued to be supported and promoted by the Council in accordance with its original priorities. In addition, the link between the economic development of Lancashire and the transport network was recognised as crucial, and the Task Group was therefore keen to see the rail improvement schemes continue to feature highly in the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Councillor Fishwick endorsed the recommendations of the Task Group as set out in the report to the Committee.

Councillors raised a number of comments and questions, a summary of which is provided below:

- In relation to the Kirkham and Wesham station, there was a query about whether any further work would be carried out as the station was not DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant.
- The electrification of the Preston to Blackpool line was welcomed. However, one councillor pointed out that considerable work would need to be carried out on two bridges either side of Kirkham and that it had been estimated that the work combined with road closures would take some three to six months to complete. Concern was expressed that this would have a detrimental effect on businesses in Kirkham and Treales and it was therefore hoped that Network Rail would consider alternative methods of construction work to reduce the length of time it would take to carry out the work. Councillor Oades sought assurance from the Committee to ensure that any such road closures could be limited to a shorter time span and that the County Council look into the matter further. It was suggested that the minutes of this item be passed to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport for further consideration.
- Councillors raised concern that the Skelmersdale link was not considered to be of a higher priority for the County Council to lead on as it was suggested that such a scheme would be an important aspect for the prosperity of the area.
- Some disappointment was expressed that electrification of the Blackrod to West Coast Line and the Liverpool to Preston Line had not been included in the Task Group report.
- One Councillor asked why a Lancashire Passenger Transport Executive had not been established as it was felt that such a body would be much more effective in co-ordinating public transport matters for the County. Councillors seemed keen to establish a passenger transport executive for Lancashire.

Resolved: That;

- i. The schemes remain in the categories as originally agreed and that the positive progress to date be noted;
- ii. Lancashire County Council continue to play an active role in the development and promotion of rail schemes in the County in accordance with the priorities set by the task group;
- iii. The importance of rail improvements continue to be part of the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP);
- iv. Lancashire County Council continue to seek investment in the rail network in Lancashire, including via a response to the forthcoming government consultation based on the McNulty Report and as electrification of the Lancashire Triangle is progressed;
- v. The work of the Task Group is complete and that no further meetings be required; and
- vi. The minutes of this item be passed on to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport for consideration.

5. Task Group Updates

The Committee received an update on current task groups and their proposed completion dates.

Resolved: That, the update on existing task groups be noted.

6. Recent and Forthcoming Decisions

The committee had been given the opportunity to view and consider recent relevant decisions made and also forthcoming decisions including those set out in the current Forward Plan.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

7. Workplan 2010/11

The workplan for the committee was presented for noting and comments. The Chair gave an outline of the work to be carried out by the Committee over the coming months including the additional work agreed earlier in the meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on 13 April 2012 at 10:00am at County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston