

**SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSITION AND HOUSING COMMITTEE  
17 MARCH 1998**

Present: Councillor Angell (Chairman), Councillors Bayle, Egan, Grayson,  
Miss Haydon, Mrs Hayes, Jones, McCormack,  
Mrs Pile, Ryan, Mrs Shillcock, Simonds, Mrs Sutcliffe and Worrall

Also in Attendance: County Councillor Mrs Williams

Apologies for Absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Harrison and Mrs Hirst.

**583 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 1998 and the joint meeting of the Committee with Housing Sub Committee held on 4 February 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**584 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

The Committee received the minutes of the meetings of the Housing Sub Committee held on 20 January and 4 March 1998 and officers answered Members questions thereon,

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Housing Sub Committee held on 20 January and 4 March 1998, as reported at Appendices A and B attached respectively, be received and noted.

**585 Minutes - Social Services Transition Sub Committee**

The Committee received the minutes of the Social Services Transition Sub Committee held on 12 February and officers answered Members questions thereon.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Social Services Transition Sub Committee held on 4 February 1998, as reported at Appendix C, be received and noted.

**586 Environment Strategy 1998-2000 (Item 1)**

The Director of Public and Environmental Services presented the Environment Strategy for 1998/2000 which had been endorsed by the Public and Environmental Services Committee at its meeting on 8 January 1998.

The strategy document highlighted the work undertaken by the Council's Environmental Impact Group in enhancing further the corporate approach to environmental issues currently adopted within Bracknell Forest. The strategy sought to ensure that the Council's policies and practices reflected an informed decision making process that endeavoured to maximise benefits relevant to environmental consequences and accordingly much could be achieved with little or no extra cost.

Once the strategy had been informally agreed it would be officially launched at the Environment Fair in May and shortly afterwards it was hoped to organise a major seminar for local businesses to promote Agenda 21, to share ideas and encourage mutual commitment.

The Director of Social Services and Housing highlighted how the Department could contribute to the Strategy, particularly in the areas of purchasing and management policies, provision and maintenance of housing, renewal resources, energy conservation and energy management.

**RESOLVED** that the draft Environment Strategy, as reported, be endorsed.

587 **Capital Programme 1998/1999 - 2000/01 (Item 2)**

The Committee considered a joint report from the Director of Social Services and Housing and Director of Corporate Services which reviewed the 1997/98 programme and considered new schemes for 1998/99.

Members were asked to consider a range of projects for the 1998/99 capital programme to an estimated value of £5.5m.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the schemes summarised in Annexe B of the report be submitted to the Strategy and Policy Committee for inclusion in the capital programme for 1998/99; and
- (ii) the scheme for the proposed lift to Glenfield House be deleted from the 1997/98 programme and instead the budget be expended on improvements to garage areas.

588 **Joint Commissioning for People with Learning Disabilities (Item 3)**

The Director of Social Services reported that as part of the Government's programme of care in the community, long-stay hospitals for people with learning disabilities had been scheduled for complete closure and to achieve this Health Authorities had sought to enter into detailed planning agreements with local authorities to develop resources directly provided by Social Services or through placements in the independent sector. Berkshire County Council, through its Social Services Department, had developed a strategy with the Berkshire Health Authority to enable the re-provision of all people with learning disabilities who were in hospitals in their area. To facilitate this a strategic agreement was made with the County Council encompassing this broad objective and underpinned by individual agreements for each person transferred into community provision. The process has been pump-primed by the Health Authority through the transfer of funds to support and manage each package of care provided. Individual contractual agreements had been drawn up for each person currently supported in this way. An embracing Memorandum of Grant, signed by the County Council and the Berkshire Health Authority covered all of the individual agreements, and as part of the continuing strategy, the Borough Council, together with other unitary authorities, was being asked to take on the commitment previously agreed by the County Council. A new embracing Memorandum of Grant, entered into jointly and severally by the six new unitary authorities with the Health Authority, was also required covering the period of the existing agreement to 1 October 1998.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the Director of Social Services and Housing be authorised to enter into new Section 28(a) Agreements for each individual place made to date;
- (ii) Officers be authorised to agree a new Memorandum of Grant to cover the current Section 28(a) Agreement negotiated by Berkshire County Council to run until 30 September 1998;
- (iii) Officers be authorised to continue negotiations with the Health Authority, in conjunction with the five other Berkshire unitary authorities, to develop a new Joint Commissioning agreement to run from 1 October 1998; and
- (iv) Officers submit a report on the proposed new Joint Commissioning agreement (Memorandum of Grant) to the June meeting of the Committee.

589 **"People Like Us" - Report of Sir William Utting on the Review of the Safeguards for Children Living Away from Home (Item 4)**

The Director of Social Services and Housing informed the Committee of the Sir William Utting report "People Like Us" on the care of children living away from home and submitted a summary of the report for members' information.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted and that officers submit a report suggesting any changes which may be required to embrace the recommendations of the Utting Report.

590 **Social Services Complaints Procedure (Item 5)**

The Director of Social Services and Housing submitted details of a proposed policy, procedures and systems to support the complaints procedure and to fulfil its statutory obligations in respect of complaints relating to Social Services issues from 1 April 1998 and answered Members questions thereon.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the policy, procedures and systems, as detailed in the report, to support the complaints procedure and to fulfil its statutory obligations in respect of complaints relating to Social Services issues from 1 April 1998, as covered by the Children Act 1989 and the NHS & Community Care Act 1990, be endorsed;
- (ii) a written report on complaints that reach Stage 2 be sent to the Chairman; and
- (iii) a report on complaints be submitted to the Committee on an annual basis

591 **Joint Arrangements (Item 6)**

The Director of Social Services and Housing submitted a detailed report updating Members on the progress made in relating to the Joint Arrangements for specialist services and answered Members questions thereon.

**RESOLVED** that the progress made in relation to Joint Arrangements and the state of preparedness for specialist services to transfer to unitary authorities from 1 April 1998 be noted.

592 **Social Services Systems Strategy for CRIS and Homecare Year-2000 Compliancy (Item 7)**

The Director of Social Services and Housing submitted a report advising the Committee of the proposed strategy to ensure that the two major Social Services Systems, CRIS (the Computerised Records and Information System) and Homecare remained viable in the short term. Both the systems were central to the way Social Services operational activity had been developed in Berkshire. The systems, which were bespoke in character, were based on systems which, like many others, were not Year 2000 compliant and had a legacy of Oracle software problems which were now out of date.

An independent report had been commissioned by Bracknell Council on behalf of all six unitary authorities addressing the outstanding issues for both CRIS and Homecare and identifying available solutions. There was a high cost associated with the project if it was undertaken by only one unitary authority, and as all six unitary authorities had taken both CRIS and Homecare it was recommended that the work was undertaken as a joint project and the costs was shared amongst the six unitary authorities. It was noted that the other five unitary authorities had made the necessary financial commitment to undertake the work jointly because of the overall cost benefit involved. The cost to Bracknell Forest would be £55,075.

**RECOMMENDED** to Strategy and Policy Committee that:

- (i) investment by Bracknell forest Borough Council to upgrade CRIS and Homecare to be Year 2000 compliant and to resolve the legacy Oracle software problems be supported; and
- (ii) the works at (i) above be approved and funded from the IT Capital Programme.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Bracknell Forest Borough Council participate in the Unitary User Group(s) set up to facilitate the sharing of costs; and
- (ii) the Director of Social Services and Housing, in consultation with the Borough Solicitor, be authorised to conclude agreements necessary to secure Year 2000 compliance; and
- (iii) the Information Technology Section be congratulated on the work it has achieved in the above areas

593 **Foster Care Allowances 1998/99 (Item 8)**

The Director of Social Services and Housing submitted a report advising the Committee on the recommended annual increase in fostering, respite care and adoption allowances.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) approval be given to the allowances paid to carers being increased as reported from 30 March 1998; and
- (ii) a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on this issue.

594 **Community Care Plan 1998-2001 (Item 9)**

Further to Minute 404 (6 January 1998) when the Committee received an outline draft for the Borough Council's Community Care Plan, the Director of Social Services and Housing submitted a final draft of the Plan for Members information and answered Members questions thereon.

**RESOLVED** that the Community Care Plan for 1998 - 2001, as reported subject to minor amendments, be adopted.

595 **Children's Services Plan 1998-2001 (Item 10)**

Further to Minute 404 (6 January 1998) when the Committee received an outline draft for the Borough Council's Children's Services Plan, the Director of Social Services and Housing submitted a final draft of the Plan for Members information and answered Members questions thereon.

**RESOLVED** that the Children's Services Plan for 1998 - 2001, as reported, be adopted.

596 **Departmental Structure (Item 11)**

The Director of Social Services and Housing reported that the proposed departmental structure for Social Services and Housing Department had been considered by the Unitary Structures Sub Committee on 2 October 1997 when approval had been given to the overall structure.

Extensive consultation and discussion with staff had been undertaken and the Director brought forward a final version of the departmental structure which reflected some minor realignment of responsibilities and set out the intended titles of all postholders. No new posts had been identified.

**RESOLVED** that the departmental structure, as reported, be adopted as the final structure for the new Social Services and Housing Department, (excluding the Finance Section, details of which would follow).

597 **Programme for Service Reviews (Item 12)**

The Director of Social Services and Housing reported that at the meeting of the Committee in January (Minute 406 refers) it was agreed that a programme of service reviews should be developed with an outline programme being considered at this meeting.

Accordingly, Members were provided with additional information concerning the range, scope and detail of the services transferring from the County Social Services, together with the legislative basis for the services provided and the policies established by the County Council which had supported the implementation. The Committee was asked to accept a broad framework suggested for the review process and to endorse the first phase of the programme of service reviews, as presented.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the broad framework suggested for the review progress, as reported, be approved and that this be undertaken to the level of detail required in order to make an appropriate decision; and
- (ii) phase 1 of the programme of service reviews and the outline framework for their presentation to Committee be endorsed as reported.

598 **Item for Information (Item 13)**

The Committee received and noted the following item:

- Proposed Timetable for the Preparation, Consultation and Submission of the Council's Housing Strategy Statement (Item 13)

599 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (7) Terms proposed for a Contract (Item 14)

600 **Pricing Strategy for Residential & Nursing Homes for Older People - 1998/99 (Item 14)**

In a report containing exempt information the Director of Social Services and Housing proposed pricing strategy for residential and nursing homes for older people and sought Members approval to a policy of seeking to contain inflationary increases in the prices charges for residential care and nursing home placements in the independent sector within an overall ceiling of 1.5%.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the proposed pricing strategy, as reported, be implemented by the Social Services and Housing Department from 1 April 1998;
- (ii) the officers consult with the other five unitary authorities to identify the pricing strategy being followed by each one; and
- (iii) the policy of seeking to contain any inflationary increase in the prices charged for residential care and nursing home placements in the independent sector within an overall ceiling of 1.5% be endorsed.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 10.00pm.

**CHAIRMAN**