

SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING COMMITTEE
15 SEPTEMBER 1998

Present: Councillor Angell (Chairman), Councillors Bayle, Mrs Clifford, Egan, Flood, Harrison, Miss Haydon, Mrs Hirst, Jones, McCormack, Mrs Pile, Ryan, Mrs Shillcock, Simonds, Mrs Sutcliffe and Worrall

196. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 March and 9 June 1998 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

197. **Housing Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Sub Committee held on 1 September 1998 as set out in Appendix A hereto be received and noted.

198. **Social Services Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Sub Committee held on 8 September 1998 as set out in Appendix B hereto be received and noted.

199. **Joint Advisory Sub Committee on Children's Services**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Advisory Sub Committee on Children's Services held on 2 September 1998 as set out in Appendix C hereto be received and noted.

200. **Quarterly Operations Report (Item 1)**

The Director of Social Services & Housing introduced the first Quarterly Operations Report for the Social Services & Housing Department. The report gave details of the current issues affecting the department, the main activities of individual sections of the department and monitored process in achieving the service objectives set out in the main service plans of the department as well as summarising the key tasks of each section.

It was reported that the department had achieved a remarkably smooth transition of service responsibility to the new unitary authority and that work had continued after vesting day to ensure that this work continued. Key task areas and opportunities had been identified and work progressed towards achieving these. Work was also underway to address issues raised by new Central Government green and white papers and new legislation. The Committee considered the work of individual sections undertaken and detailed in the report together with the details of resourcing and the Appendix to the report giving details of the key tasks within the departmental focus for 1998/99.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Social Services & Housing for a full and informative Quarterly Operations Report developed in the early stages of the new department and requested that the Committee's thanks be forwarded on to all the staff within the department for their hard work in achieving the smooth transfer.

RESOLVED that the Quarterly Operations Report be received.

201. **Commitment Budget and Service Plans 1999/2000 – 2001/02 (Item 2)**

The Director of Social Services & Housing introduced a report developed in response to the Strategy & Policy Committee's request that committees' review existing commitments in detail and consider medium term priorities in order to ensure that resources would be directed towards priority areas in light of the funding gap which was likely in next financial year. The report outlined the proposed commitment budget for the years 1999/2000 to 2001/2002 which brought together the Committee's existing expenditure plans taking account of existing commitments and ongoing affects of service development and efficiencies that were agreed during March 1998. The report highlighted specific issues which would be addressed as part of the continuing budget monitoring and control process during the course of the financial year. Medium term objectives would be used a basis for determining and assessing possible service developments as part of the budget process during the autumn. The objectives for Social Services & Housing Committee were currently being developed and would be reviewed annually as part of the financial policy planning process. The Director of Social Services & Housing highlighted key issues within this process.

RESOLVED that the officers be requested to produce further reports considering the options required in responding to financial trends.

202. **HIP Strategy Statement - 1999-2002 (Item 3)**

The Committee received a report summarising the responses received to the consultation undertaken to partner organisations with regards to the draft Housing Strategy Statement.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Committee notes the comments received from consultees; and
- (ii) the detailed changes to the wording of the HIP Strategy Statement document be delegated to the Director of Social Services & Housing and consultation with the Chairman of the Social Services & Housing Committee.

203. **Compulsory Competitive Tendering in Housing Management (Item 4)**

The Committee considered a report giving details of proposals to prepare for the Compulsory Competitive Tendering of the Housing Management Service in light of the parallel development of the Best Value policies. It was noted that discussions with the DETR had not established any clear grounds to secure exemption from CCT and that such exemption would be likely to be by exception within very specific guidelines and with no clear timeframe. In light of this the department was proceeding with a positive approach towards completing preparations for HMCCT in order to make a successful bid to run the services in the future.

The report gave details of the defined activity services which could be included within the CCT exercise, and the exception of Reception Services and legislation. Further work will be done on establishing the client/contractors split for Housing Management and consultation would be undertaken with staff and UNISON on the implications for staff. The Housing Management specification would be reviewed and tenants consulted on this. Best Value requirements in all these areas would be addressed.

RESOLVED that the Committee

- (i) confirms its support for the HMCCT arrangements and the preparation of an 'in-house' bid;
- (ii) the packaging arrangements for the contract be confirmed as those which are defined activities for the purposes of HMCCT with the exception of Reception Services; and
- (iii) that the revised timetable for HMCCT preparation be approved.

204. **Joint Commissioning Agreement (Item 5)**

The Committee considered a report giving details of the work underway on the Joint Commissioning Agreement relating to the re-provision of people with learning disabilities resident in long stay hospitals. The Memorandum of Grant would expire on 30 September 1998 and it was proposed that this should be extended in order to allow negotiations to continue with Berkshire Health Authority in the five other unitary authorities in order to enable a final agreement on the details of this service to be reached.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Committee agrees to a further extension of the current Memorandum of Grant Agreement until 31 March 1999; and
- (ii) that officers be requested to provide a report outlining the proposed new agreement to the January meeting of the Social Services & Housing Committee.

205. **Adoption Agency Policy Issues (Item 6)**

In a detailed report, the Director of Social Services & Housing outlined the operation of the Adoption Agency assisted by the Specialist Adoption Advisory Service which had been provided through a joint arrangement with the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. The policy and practice of the Adoption Agency had been revisited in the context of the unity authority and minor changes recommended by officers were detailed within the report, in particular paragraph 4.11 (ii) relating to the relaxation of the upper age limit for adopters which had been included in guidance adopted by the previous policy for Berkshire.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the arrangements for the Adoption Agency within Bracknell Forest Borough Council, operating in conjunction with the Adoption Advisory Service be endorsed; and
- (ii) the change to the Adoption Policy outlined in paragraph 4.11 (ii) of the officer's report be endorsed.

206. **Home Care (Item 7)**

The Director of Social Services & Housing submitted a report updating the Committee on the review undertaken of the Home Care Service and the possible opportunities for outsourcing parts of that service, further to the endorsement of proposals to achieve budget savings. Currently the total expenditure on providing domiciliary care was split 60% to the In-House Home Care Service while 40% was purchased through the external market. Much of this purchasing is undertaken on an individual care package (spot purchase basis) and it was anticipated that savings could be made by block contracting with a limited number of suppliers a significant proportion of the current external purchasing. Tendering on a block contract basis as such would enable more effective market testing of both suppliers and costs for service. This testing would enable Members to assess issues of further externalisation of the In-House Service.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the proposal to tender, on a block contract basis, the service currently purchase on an individual care package basis within the independent sector be endorsed; and
- (ii) the following the outcome of the tendering process, consideration be given to further externalisation of the In-House Service.

207. **Progress Report on the Development of Primary Care Groups (Item 8)**

The Director of Social Services & Housing updated the Committee on the developments made in relation to the formation of Primary Care Groups as part of the development of a new model for the planning and delivery of health care. G.P.s within the Berkshire Health Authority had been requested to identify the groupings that they would wish to join which would form the core of PCG in the Berkshire area and this process indicated the likely formation of 8 PCGs including one for Wokingham and one for Bracknell Forest. A steering group had been formed to take developments forward.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the developments in relation to Primary Care Groups be noted; and
- (ii) the nomination of the Assistant Director – Social Services as the local authority's Social Services representative on the Primary Care Group Board when established in the coming months, be endorsed.

208. **Items Submitted for Information**

The Committee received and noted the following item which was submitted for information only:

- (i) Social Services & Housing Focus Group on Performance Indicators (Item 9)

The meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m.
and concluded at 10.20 p.m.

CHAIRMAN