

SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING COMMITTEE
13 OCTOBER 1999

Present: Councillors Barnard, Bayle, Bettison, Mrs Clifford,
Mrs Doyle, Egan, Grayson, Harrison, Hirst, McCormack,
Mrs Pile, Mrs Shillcock, Mrs Sutcliffe, Thompson,
Wheaton and Worrall.

Apologies: Councillors Miss Haydon and Ryan

277. Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute members on Standing Order 38:

Councillor Thompson for Councillor Miss Haydon
Councillor Grayson for Councillor Ryan

278. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 June 1999 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

279. Housing Sub Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Sub Committee held on 7 September 1999, as set out in Appendix A hereto, be received.

280. Social Services Sub Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Sub Committee held on 28 September 1999, as set out in Appendix B hereto, be received.

281. Quarterly Operations Report (Item 1)

The Director of Social Services & Housing presented the quarterly operations report regarding the activities of the Social & Housing Department for the second quarter of the 1999/2000 municipal year. The report summarised current issues affecting the department and progress in achieving service objectives as set out in the main service plan for the department. The progress within the individual section was detailed within the report and the Director noted in particular that the Quality Protects initiative and the Management Action Plan had been well received by the Department of Health and had encouraged a visit by John Hutton MP to the Borough to see for himself how the Quality Protects agenda was being delivered. The Director gave details of other areas of the Department's work and included details of this year's financial position, and likely underspend that would be incurred during this financial year. The Director of Social Services & Housing answered questions on the report.

RESOLVED that the quarterly operations report be received.

282. Commitment Budget and Medium Term Objectives 2000/01 to 2002/03 (Item 2)

The Director of Social Services & Housing introduced a revised report on the commitment budget and gave details of key issues within both the Service's and the overall Council's objectives and framework which had particular influence on the way the department's objectives were developed.

It was noted that the department predicted a projected underspend of £1.006m in this financial year, and of this £0.732m would be recurring. It was considered that the department was currently some way behind other departments in development of the Council's corporate IT strategy and that it would therefore be beneficial to apportion part of the projected level of underspend by an authorised virement to enable the corporate IT programme to be accelerated and address most of the outstanding items in the strategy from the department's perspective.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Strategy and Policy Committee be requested to add to the commitment budget the items shown in tables 2 and 3 of the report and to approve the virement of £280,000 to support the department's implementation of the Council's IT strategy; and
- (ii) the medium term objectives shown in Annexe A of the report be agreed.

283. Berkshire Chief Executive's Annual Report to the Joint Inspection Unit (October 1998/September 1999)

The Chief Executive introduced the Berkshire Chief Executives' annual report regarding the work of the Inspection Unit and of the Social Services Department's responses to the Inspection Reports. It was noted that confidence in provision of the inspection service came through the auditing of the Social Services Inspectorate as well as the Chief Executive's requirements for a few procedures and processes. The committee's attention was drawn to the focus for the review in paragraph 4.3 of the report and the recommendations made in respect of the Berkshire-wide Inspection Unit on page 17 of the report, with particular reference to the apparent inconsistency regarding the time lag between visits and feedback to the home, and to feedback in the next report. A target of four weeks for providing feedback had been set by the Inspection Unit and this would be monitored at the time of the next annual report. It was highlighted as an important issue to ensure that follow up action had been taken quickly and was demonstrable. The Chief Executive and Director of Social Services & Housing answered members' questions on the report.

RESOLVED that :

- (i) the Chief Executive's Annual Report: October 1998 - September 1999 attached as Annex A of the report, be approved and that the actions taken from the previous report be noted;
- (ii) the progress made by the department in its own follow-up practices and reporting be noted; and

- (iii) the options that officers are currently considering for distribution of the Inspection Report be noted.

284. Foster Care Allowances (Item 4)

The committee considered a report seeking approval from the department to review its scheme of foster care allowances due to difficulty in retaining and recruiting foster carers. The Quality Protects Initiative, as well as its key objectives, sought to increase the range and choice of foster placements and was supported by a recent publication by the Department of Health of the UK National Standards for Foster Carers. Recently the emergence of the private fostering agencies had led to competition for foster carers who could receive considerably higher levels of remuneration from private agencies than from Local Authorities.

RESOLVED that the Social Service & Housing Committee request the officers to commission and undertake a review of the foster care allowance scheme in consultation with foster carers, and to make recommendations to the next committee meeting for decision.

285. Housing Register – Transfer Incentive Scheme (Item 5)

The Committee received a report giving details of the proposal to develop a more comprehensive transfer incentive scheme to encourage Council tenants underoccupying their homes to move to smaller accommodation by providing a some financial assistance and by designating staff to assist older people in arranging and effecting a move. It was noted that the transfer incentive scheme was one of a number of new initiatives and policies which were focusing on the issue of owner occupation of the Borough's housing stock. The Director of Social Services & Housing clarified that the outline pilot scheme gave straight forward and open encouragement to people to make moves to smaller accommodation where possible.

RESOLVED that the Committee approve the development of a listed scheme to provide incentives and practical and personal assistance for people underoccupying their homes to move to smaller accommodation and that this be included as part of the budget preparation for the housing revenue account in the year 2000/2001.

286. Housing Management Compulsory Competitive Tendering (Item 6)

The Committee considered a report giving details of the Housing Management Compulsory Competitive Tendering process which had been completed in accordance with the agreed timetable, and three bids were received on 20 August 1999. Following this an evaluation process taking account of both quality and price took place and the Department was now in a position to make a recommendation to the committee. Thanks were given to officers involved in the process and the tenant panel representatives for their hard work.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the contract to manage housing services in Bracknell Forest be awarded to organisation A; and

- (ii) the operational arrangements to implement the Housing Management Contract be approved at the next meeting of the Housing Sub Committee on 23 November 1999.

It was noted that Bracknell Forest Housing Management Services were the successful tenderer.

287. Modernising Mental Health Services – Mental Health Grant and Strategy (Item 7)

The Committee considered a report giving details of the new Mental Health Grant and the requirement on each local authority to develop a draft mental health strategy in order to receive the grant.

RESOLVED that the Committee endorse the Draft Mental Health Strategy which was forwarded to the Department of Health by the deadline of 30 September 1999.

288. Prevention Grant (Item 8)

The Committee considered a report giving details of the Department of Health Circular LAC (99) 13 on the provision of a three-year prevention grant to the department, and the grant conditions required to be met.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Committee endorses the approach adopted to meet the grant conditions; and
- (ii) the Committee agrees that the Director of Social Services & Housing, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Committee gives final approval to the submission to the Department of Health by the specified deadline.

289. Carers' Grant (Item 9)

The Committee considered a report giving details of a new carers' grant referred to in Department of Health Circular LAC (99) 13 to be provided over a three-year period to the department and intended to enhance provision of community care services to allow carers to take a break from caring. The department would have to work in partnership with the National Health Service and carers in deciding how the money should be spent. The Committee considered the draft policy attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Committee approve the new Social Services & Housing Department's Carers' Policy; and
- (ii) the Committee agreed that the Director of Social Services & Housing, in conjunction with the Chairman, be given delegated authority to give final approval to the submission to the Department of Health by the specified deadline.

290. **Review of Social Services Joint Arrangements (Item 10)**

The Committee considered a report giving details of the review of the Social Services Joint Arrangements which covers a variety of types of services which have been provided in order to assist the seamless transfer from County to Borough arrangements. The evaluation had demonstrated satisfaction and confidence in the services, but it remained of concern that legal agreements had not been completed for three of the services as yet, although relevant host authorities had been pressed for progress on this. Negotiations over the renewal of joint arrangements had indicated that all partner unitary authorities intended to maintain the status quo by renewing arrangements to 2002.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Committee notes the ongoing evaluation process for joint arrangements and the contribution these arrangements make to the overall provision of Social Services in Bracknell Forest;
- (ii) the Committee approved the recommendation to extend the joint arrangements (as detailed in 4.4 of the report) to April 2002, subject to agreement by the other partner unitary authorities;
- (iii) the Committee notes that the decision in relation to the joint arrangement for Childcare Lawyers needs to be made by summer 2000 and will be the subject of a further report to committee next year; and
- (iv) the Committee notes the delay in the completion of three of the formal arrangements for joint arrangements and instructs officers to continue to use their best endeavours with the respective host authorities to secure the completion as soon as possible.

291. **Items Submitted for Information**

The following items were submitted for information only:

- (i) Social Services & Housing Department IT Strategy three-year Plan 1999/2000 – 2001/2002, Progress Report April 1999 to September 1999. (Item 11)
- (ii) Aids Support Grant – 1999/2000 (Item 12)
- (iii) Planning for the Millennium: - further update (Item 13)
- (iv) Me, Survive Out There? New arrangements for young people living in and leaving care – consultation document LASSL(99) 15 July 1999 (Item 14)
- (v) You and Your Services (Item 15)
- (vi) Development of the Bracknell Forest Youth Support Team Progress Report (Item 16)

RESOLVED that the above items be noted.

292. **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 items 17 and 18 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

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|-----|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| (1) | Information Relating to Employees | (Item 17) |
| (9) | Terms Proposed to a Contract | (Item 18) |

293. **Development of Bracknell Forest Youth Support Team – Progress Report (Item 17)**

The Committee received a replacement report for Item no. 17 tabled at the meeting due to the need to enclose a recommendation with the report which had not been included in the original. The Director of Social Service & Housing introduced the report containing exempt information giving details of the restructuring within the Youth Resources Team involving the deletion of the post of Youth Resources Team Manager.

RESOLVED that the action for the Director of Social Services & Housing be endorsed in relation to the redundancy of the Youth Resources Team Manager.

294. **Domiciliary Care Contracting (Item 18)**

In an information report containing exempt information, the Director of Social Services & Housing outlined the outcome of the tendering process for domiciliary care contracting and the development of the approved list of suppliers.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm
And concluded at 10.15pm

CHAIRMAN