

Minutes of a meeting of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 7 June 2021.

PRESENT

Mr. B. Champion CC
Mr. N. Chapman CC
Mr. R. Hills CC
Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC

Ms. B. Newton CC
Mr. T. J. Richardson CC
Mrs. A. Wright CC

In attendance

Mrs. C. M. Radford CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Adults and Communities
Mr. T. Parton CC – Cabinet Support Member for Adults and Communities
Mr Mukesh Barot – Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire

1. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. T. J. Richardson CC be appointed Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

Mr. T. J. Richardson in the Chair

2. Election of Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. N. Chapman CC be elected Vice Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2021 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

6. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Members of the Committee who were also members of district councils in Hinckley and Bosworth and North West Leicestershire declared a personal interest in the report on the Provision of Short Breaks and Supported Living Services (agenda item 10 - minute 10 refers).

Members of the Committee who were also District Councillors declared a personal interest in all matters which affected district councils.

8. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

10. Provision of Short Breaks and Supported Living Services.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to provide an update and to seek the Committee's views and comments on the proposed changes to the provision of in-house short breaks services, pre-consultation engagement undertaken with those who access the Smith Crescent Short Breaks Service based at the Cropston Drive site in Coalville and responses received to date to the formal consultation ahead of a report being presented to the Cabinet on 20 July 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points arose:

- (i) The Director assured the Committee that the Department had been mindful that service users had been unable to access short breaks services (SBS) throughout the Covid-19 pandemic due to national restrictions being applied. Fortunately, and thanks to the cooperation and input from SBS staff, the Department had been able re-deploy staff throughout the pandemic to some of its other services which provided additional assistance in the areas that had remained open. There continued to be a number of vacancies in some of the Department's in-house services, as well as increased demand in certain areas so efforts would be made to continue to retain and make use of staff in this way should this be necessary and appropriate.

- (ii) A Member who represented electoral divisions in the Hinckley area commented on the importance of the views of former residents of The Trees. Given their unanimous wish to remain in their alternative accommodation and that, so far, the majority of consultees had expressed their support for The Trees facility to be used to provide SBSs, they agreed that the proposal would be a reasonable way forward.
- (iii) Noting that a copy of the report had been circulated to members of the Council that specifically represented those electoral divisions in the Hinckley and North West Leicestershire areas where the services were located, the Committee requested that a copy also be provided to all other members of the Council. This was to alert them to the consultation, should they wish to respond, Given the Service was County-wide, Members felt it important to encourage as many responses as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report regarding the provision of short breaks and supported living services be noted and circulated to all members of the Council to alert them to the consultation should they wish to respond.
- (b) That the comments now made by the Committee on the proposals be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration.

11. Unison's Ethical Care (Home Care) and Residential Care Charters.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities which provided information on the implications of signing up to Unison's Ethical Care (Home Care) and Residential Care Charters for the commissioning of care services. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion and questions, the following points were raised:

- (i) It was anticipated that, depending on the size and nature of the service provided, some of the requirements of the Ethical Care (Home Care) Charter would be more complex for care providers to implement than others. Details of the requirements had been included in the tender for the recommissioning of the Home Care Service which 142 providers had responded to. The evaluation of those submissions was expected to give a clearer indication of the position with providers and encourage engagement with the Council to determine whether a phased implementation would be realistically achievable for all providers and their workers. It was also hoped knowledge from other areas of the Country implementing the Charters could be obtained which would inform the way forward for Leicestershire. Members noted the intention that an update on progress with the commissioning and procurement of Home Care Services would be reported to the Committee later in the year.
- (ii) The Department planned to discuss those areas of the Charter that related to workers pay with providers, including as part of the process for recommissioning the Home Care Service. A key issue with encouraging providers to implement the Real Living Wage was that a number of workers in Leicestershire also operated in neighbouring areas, so any changes to workers pay in Leicestershire had the ability to create a two-tier workforce which it was thought most providers operating

in this way would be keen to avoid. Some of the implications of the Charters around workers' pay also related to issues expected to be addressed nationally as part of the Government's aims to reform adult social care. A White Paper outlining the Government's proposals was anticipated and discussions about this were underway nationally, which the Department was contributing to. The Paper was expected to include a section specifically related to the Workforce and there was potential for a national living wage specifically for care staff to be introduced.

- (iii) In reference to the cost implications of implementing the Charters, a Member commented on the importance of the Council continuing to lobby Central Government for fairer funding given that Leicestershire was the lowest funded County in the country.
- (iv) The Committee recognised that the implications of the Charters were complex, noted that further work needed to be carried out to determine the way forward for Leicestershire and welcomed further updates in due course. Thanks were extended to staff in the Department who were working with providers to make improvements to standards of care.

RESOLVED:

That the report regarding the Ethical Care (Home Care) and Residential Care Charters be noted, and future updates welcomed.

12. Visual and Sensory Impairment Service.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which set out the conclusions of a recent review of the Council's Visual and Sensory Impairment Service, and to seek the Committee's views on the forthcoming procurement for the service ahead of the new contract start date on 1 October 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points arose:

- (i) The decrease in numbers of people over the age of 18 on the Sight Register was because during the Covid-19 pandemic Vista had made contact with a large number of clients to ensure their needs were being provided for and during the course of that process determined that a number of people had died and could therefore be removed from the Register. A subsequent review had taken place to ensure the Register was fully up to date and to remove the records that were no longer applicable. Members were assured that effort would be made going forward to ensure data cleansing exercises were similarly undertaken for future years.
- (ii) Noting the decline in numbers of people attending appointments at Hospital Ophthalmology Departments where most referrals to the Service originated, Members sought reassurance that people's needs were still being met. The Director confirmed that since the pandemic Vista had adapted its services to respond to people's needs (including to those not listed on the Sight Register) in a more flexible way to ensure people remained supported despite the disruption. The Department did not currently have information on how hospital ophthalmology clinics were currently operating, but it was expected that given the national restrictions around the pandemic had eased clinic service levels would be returning to some level of normality.

RESOLVED:

That the report regarding the Visual and Sensory Impairment Service be noted and the proposed way forward for the forthcoming procurement be supported.

13. Procurement of Community Life Choices Services.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to present the proposals for the future delivery of Community Life Choices (CLC) services in Leicestershire including the timescales for the procurement of commissioned CLC services and proposals for the future delivery of in-house CLC services. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13', is filed with these minutes.

In reply to a question raised regarding proposals to redesign the future service, the Director confirmed that under the current framework individuals were assessed against the services available but there was opportunity to develop a framework for future years that was less service focussed, and more outcomes focussed for the individual. He clarified that the intention was to use the initial two-year contract framework period proposed to undertake detailed work and engage with service users and providers to inform any plans to re-design the service and that there would also be an option to extend the two year contract framework for a further two years should this be necessary.

The Committee confirmed its support for the proposed way forward and the potential for the Council to move to an approach focussed more closely on outcomes for individuals in future years was particularly welcomed. The Committee requested to be kept informed of future developments.

RESOLVED:

That the report regarding the procurement of Community Life Choices services be noted and the proposed way forward be welcomed and supported.

14. Provisional Performance Report 2020/21.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, which provided an update of the Adults and Communities Department's performance for the year 2020/21. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14', is filed with these minutes.

In response to a query relating to young carers, the Director undertook to confirm to Committee members outside of the meeting the age range of carers, in accordance with national guidance, that could participate in the biennial Carers' Survey which was planned to take place in Autumn 2021.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update of the Adults and Communities Department's (provisional) performance for the year 2020/21 be noted.
- (b) That the Director be requested to confirm to members of the Committee after the meeting the age range of carers that can take part in the Carers' Survey.

15. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 6 September 2021 at 2.00pm.

2.00 – 3.15pm
7 June 2021

CHAIRMAN