

APPENDIX 4

SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26TH January 2006

REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07

Service Improvements

(i) **Learning Disability and Day Care Services**

Noted and welcomed the investment proposed particularly in relation to Learning Disability Services in the County and the modernisation of day services.

Demand/Cost Pressures

(i) **Homecare**

Noted the forecast increase in homecare demand which was lower than in previous years. The Committee welcomed the introduction of the new procurement regime which had resulted in reducing cost pressures and improved coverage across the County.

Noted the significant impact that the in-house Home Assessment and Rehabilitation Teams had made in reducing admissions to residential care and dependency on long term homecare.

With regard to forecasting and demand, the Committee was advised that this was not easy but that the Authority had a good track record. The Department was continually reviewing how demand was forecasted.

(ii) **Direct Payments**

Welcomed the additional increase in resources and noted the significant progress made in increasing take-up of direct payments which would result in the Authority meeting or exceeding the targets set nationally.

(iii) **Foster Care**

The increased provision for foster care was in response to additional demand and increased costs. The Authority was pursuing the policy that looked after children were better off being brought up in a family based environment wherever possible.

The cost pressures were in part a result of increased 'competition' from independent foster care providers.

(iv) Community Meals

The additional provision of £200,000 would fund the increased demand in 2005/06 and the Committee was assured that the growth of £140,000 in 2006/07 should be sufficient to meet the current demand trend.

(v) Learning Disabilities

The Department worked closely with the PCT's in managing and delivering this area of service. The cost pressures were primarily due to increasingly complex cases which required high levels of service and hence costs.

Work was being undertaken with the Regional Centre of Excellence in Procurement to consider how these services might be procured and how the market of service providers developed.

Reduced Income

(vi) Preserved Rights Grant

The reduction in the Preserved Rights Grant was occurring at a faster rate than the reduction in the Authorities Preserved Rights costs and hence additional provision had to be made in the budget.

Savings

(vii) Managing Demand

The continuing investment in and development of preventative services was welcomed and the impact that this had on reducing the demand on other services was noted.

(viii) Out of Hours and Emergency Duty Team

An assurance was given by the Acting Director of Social Services that the reduced demand for out of hours provision would not result in any cases that required intervention not receiving services.

(ix) Enhancements

The Committee was advised that the ongoing appeal against the decision of the High Court regarding the implementation of the Job Evaluation Scheme would have no impact on the proposals.

(x) Increased Income

Concern was expressed by some members at the level of increases proposed in relation to home care charges and community meals. It was noted that with regard to home care charges, the Fairer Charging Scheme would protect those on low income. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring the continuation of quality services for these groups.

The cost paid by the Authority for community meals was regularly monitored and the current cost of £5.10 was considered to be reasonable.

Other Issues Raised(xi) Occupational Therapy Services

The Acting Director of Social Services assured members that the budget provision for occupational therapy services was sufficient to ensure that assessments were now carried out in much improved timescales.

The Department, like other authorities and health bodies nationwide, had to tackle difficult issues relating to the recruitment and retention of occupational therapists.

The Acting Director undertook to provide details of the waiting and response times to a future meeting of the Committee.

(xii) Homeless 16 to 19 year olds

The Acting Director of Social Services advised that a multi-agency protocol had now been put in place to assess and provide the housing needs of homeless 16 to 19 year olds. This had led to improvements in joint working.

(xiii) Brain Injury

The responsibility for provision to people who were brain injured was managed jointly with the NHS. A joint strategy had been agreed and implemented. The NHS was responsible for meeting the medical and continuing nursing care needs whilst the Social Services Department would fund the social care aspects of the persons' needs.

(xiv) Overall Impact

The Committee was advised that the overall impact of the budget would be to reduce staffing. In terms of potential redundancies, these would be a small number of posts. However, given the size of the budget and

staffing establishment it was likely that these staff affected could be redeployed within the service.

The reduced provision would not have any impact on key prioritised front line services.

Medium Term Pressures

The Committee was advised that in the medium term the pressures on the Department were likely to include the following services areas:-

- Learning Disabilities
- Direct Payments
- High Dependency Residential Placements
- Preserved Rights

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the capital programme.

DECISION

That the proposed Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/07 to 2008/09 be noted and the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission.