

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

22nd November, 2006

- Members Present:-
Councillor Asif
Councillor Bains
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Lee
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Ridge (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Sawdon (Chair)
Councillor Williams
- Co-opted
Member Present:- Councillor Clifford
- Other Scrutiny
Members Present:-
Councillor Batten
Councillor Crookes
Councillor Kelly
Councillor Nellist
- Cabinet Members
Present:-
Councillor Blundell (Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People))
Councillor H. Noonan (Cabinet Member (Community Services))
- Employees Present:-
P. Barnett (Chief Executive's Directorate)
S. Brake (Community Services Directorate)
J. Bolton (Director of Community Services)
L. Bull (Community Services Directorate)
N. Clews (City Development Directorate)
A. Green (Community Services Directorate)
M. Godfrey (Community Services Directorate)
C. Hinde (Director of Legal and Democratic Services)
R. Hughes (Head of Corporate Policy)
J. Jardine (Chief Executive's Directorate)
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. Townsend (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
C. West (Finance and ICT Directorate)

111. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th October, 2006, were signed as a true record.

112. **Delivering Modernisation Efficiencies in Social Care in Order to Balance the Budget in Learning Disability Services**

Further to minute 107/06, the Committee considered a joint report which had previously been considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 31st October, 2006 (their

Minute 120/06 refers) and was the subject of three call-ins. The first by Councillors Mutton, Kelly and Clifford, the second by Councillors Maton, Kelly and Clifford and the third by Councillors Nellist, Windsor and Ms. McKay [the validity of two of these call-ins had been confirmed by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (paragraph 4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers)]. .

The Committee noted that at their meeting the Cabinet had amended the report's recommendations by adding the following to the end of paragraph 2.1:-

"subject to any further consultation with the appropriate Trade Unions, and that any amendment to the proposals be submitted to the Cabinet Meeting on 12th December, 2006."

The report set out to Cabinet the budgetary pressures in respect of Learning Disability Services for 2006/07 which would be managed within the overall bottom line for the Community Services Directorate and brought forward proposals for efficiencies to close the projected gap between budget and expenditure for 2007/08. The report sought Cabinet's approval to the proposed future direction of commissioning developments for people with learning disabilities to promote independence, deliver better outcomes and improve people's quality of life.

The Members calling in the report and Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and Officers on aspects of the report, in particular:-

- The number of people with learning disabilities for whom the disregard payment would cease that would be able to gain mainstream employment.
- The impact on the reduction in numbers of administration staff would have on front line staff.
- The review of Older Peoples' Day Care Services that was due to commence shortly.
- How savings may be made by contracting in occupational therapy services.
- The number of people employed by the City Council with learning disabilities.
- Whether an impact assessment had been undertaken to examine the consequences of the changes for affected Service Users.
- The consultation process.
- How the removal of the disregard payment and subsidised meals would contribute to increasing the independence of people with Learning Difficulties.
- The level of savings that would be achieved in the 2006/07 financial year and whether the proposals could have been put forward as part of the 2007/08 PPR process.

The Chair invited representatives of MENCAP who were present at the meeting to briefly address the Committee. Issues raised included the fact that people attending careers and Curriers Close and Coventry Recycling of waste (CROW) considered the activities they undertook to be a proper job, they were not happy they would lose their disregard payments as they felt they would not be able to gain mainstream work. There were concerns that if the Centre for Integrated Living and Wilfred Spencer Centre were merged on the Wilfred Spencer site the facilities would be overcrowded. The previous closure of the Torrington Centre and the way this had been managed had given users a bad experience. MENCAP indicated that they had always tried to work with Community Services and that they did encourage independence however they felt that some people would never be able to contribute to the mainstream workplace.

The Cabinet Member and officers responded to the questions raised, it was noted that work was ongoing to improve the number of people with learning disabilities employed across the City Council. The Director explained that he was trying to transform the service provided to Service Users, using Curriers Close as an example, he explained that the centre catered for people with a vast range of abilities and disabilities, many of whom worked very hard although others were unable to contribute to the packaging work that took place at the site, he felt that the needs of these people would be better met with day care. The Officers felt that there were good opportunities for a proportion of the Service Users to take up some form of mainstream employment, some form of protected working environment, for example as was provided by Coventry Recycling of Waste (CROW) would be appropriate for many others.

The Committee went on to discuss the level of disregard payment being made, it was noted that the payment was set at a level that would not benefit payments received by Service Users. Officers acknowledged that it was possible that the maximum level of payment that could be made without affecting benefit payments may now have risen above that currently being paid.

With regard to the proposal to cease providing subsidised meals for service users the Committee noted that lunches were not provided at Curriers Close although they were at the Centre for Integrated Living. The Committee noted that take up of these meals was around the 50% level and the proposals were aimed at removing the inconsistencies across the service.

The Director indicated that the Chief Executive had requested that the administrative side of the service be reviewed, it had been established that with the aid of new technology and procedures that the reduction in posts would not have any effect on the front line service. With regard to the Deaf Development Officer post which was to be deleted it was confirmed that this was not an interpreter post, the Committee noted that many of the posts which it was proposed to delete had never been filled since their creation.

The Committee went on to discuss the consultation process, it was acknowledged by the Director that much dialogue had taken place with Service Users after the decision had been taken by Cabinet. For this reason Cabinet had amended the recommendation in the report and a further report would be submitted to Cabinet on 12th December going on to Full Council that evening outlining the final results of the ongoing consultations and would include any amendments to the proposals that may be necessary to respond to this.

The Committee noted that this report would be considered by this Committee at their meeting on 6th December, 2006.

The Committee went on to consider proposals to transfer day service activities for people with learning disabilities from the Centre for Integrated Living to the Wilfred Spencer Centre. The officers explained that there was sufficient capacity within the centre to accommodate the additional users and indicated that space in the centre had recently been freed up due to the vacation by other agencies. It was felt that location of the Wilfred Spencer Centre was better and closer to local shops which meant that Service Users could access and interact with the local community more fully. It was confirmed that although hot meals would not be provided at the Wilfred Spencer Centre facilities would be available within the centre for food to be heated if required, this was in line with the provision at other centres.

As part of the process a review of external placements had been undertaken, it was believed that 40 people should be able to change placements to city based services. The Housing Regeneration Fund was being used to support this and to date 12 service users had moved to new accommodation within the city.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee concur with the decision of the Cabinet Member noting that a full report on the final proposals including the results of the consultation process would be presented to the Committee on 6th December, 2006 going on to Cabinet and Council on 12th December, 2006.**
- (2) That officers be requested to provide the following information for consideration as part of that report:-**
 - Impact assessment**
 - Clearer, more detailed information about the financial implications for the current financial year and the possibility of including the proposals in this report in the main PPR process.**
 - Justification for removing the disregard payment and clarification of the current benefit rules in relation to these payments**

113. Review of Library Buildings

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community Services which had previously been considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 31st October, 2006 (their Minute 122/06 refers) and had been called in by Councillors Nellist, Windsor and McKay. The validity of the call-in had been confirmed by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (paragraph 4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

The report informed the Cabinet of the progress made towards achieving Government targets that stipulate the level of service provision which Local Authorities

should provide through the use of Public Library Service Standards. The report indicated that for some time Coventry had had an over provision of libraries, the report sought to begin the process of bringing Coventry into line with Government recommendations on the level of service provision.

The Members calling in the report and Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and Officers on aspects of the report, in particular:-

- the consultation process for library users, library staff and local Ward Councillors.
- the reference in the report to the Public Library Service Standards as a target, in particular whether the target was a minimum, maximum or a precise prescribed target against which there were sanctions for non-achievement.
- any work that had been undertaken to establish if the Arena Park Library, which was promoted as a replacement, satisfied the needs of all the users, in particular families with young children with no transportation, older children that may be able to walk to a library alone and elderly people.
- the environmental effects of the promotion of car use for accessing the Arena Park Library; and
- the cost per issue standards that were applied to the Holbrook Library which was a community resource as opposed to the Arena Park Library which was a resource for the whole of the city.

It was acknowledged that the Arena Park Library was only half a mile away from the Holbrook Library but it was felt that Phoenix Way created a barrier to access particularly for young people.

The Cabinet Member indicated that the public library service standard was a minimum target which stipulated that 95% of households should be within one mile of a library and 100% of households within two miles. He explained that Holbrook Library was a poorly performing library which had been affected by the creation of the new library at the Arena Park, four out of 10 people registered at Holbrook Library now used the Arena Park Library. The officers briefly outlined the process for consultation with the staff, who were visited on the day the report became public, Local Ward Councillors and the Opposition Spokesperson had been briefed as had Senior officers within the Community Services Directorate. Flyers had been put up in the library and sent out to all those who had used the Holbrook Library within the last two years, 'meet the manager' sessions had also been held.

The Committee were concerned that it was misleading to compare the Arena Park Library with Holbrook Library as the Arena Park Library had been created to attract non-users of libraries to the facility. Combined with this the opening hours at the Arena Park Library were considerably longer than that at Holbrook, it was suggested that if the Holbrook Library opened longer there would be more users. Members went on to question the accuracy of the table contained at Appendix 2 to the report which suggested that the Holbrook Library was ranked 16th within the city although all but one of the performance

measures were placed above this level; Members enquired whether the figures were weighted in any way, the Officers indicated that this was not the case.

The Cabinet Member explained that Holbrook Library had not been identified for closure on a cost per issue basis, three libraries were ranked below Holbrook in the performance table which could be removed without affecting the service standards, however, two of these were currently in temporary accommodation and would be opening in new permanent facilities shortly which were expected to improve their user figures, the third was funded by ERDF money, it was not considered sensible to close these locations.

The Members briefly questioned the Cabinet Member and Officers on the potential future use of the building. It was noted that once vacated the building would revert to the ownership of the City Development Directorate although discussions were under way to explore its transfer to one of the services within the Children, Learning and Young People Directorate who were looking for premises, it was noted that costs to keep the building empty were in the order of £11,000 per year.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee request the Cabinet reconsider the report with the following additional information:-

- **Full details of the financial implications of the closure.**
- **The results of the consultation process.**
- **Impact assessment on the effect of the closure on users of Holbrook Library.**
- **A reworked Appendix 2 to ensure that the information contained in it was correct, in particular the ranking.**

114. Lease Terms for New Academy to Replace Woodway Park School

The Committee considered a joint report which had previously been considered by the Cabinet (their Minute 121/06 refers) and had been called in by Councillors Nellist, Windsor and Ms. McKay. The validity of the call-in had been confirmed by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (paragraph 4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

The report sought approval to the Heads of Terms for the lease of Woodway Park School site for the establishment of an Academy. Cabinet had approved the proposal to replace the current Woodway Park School with a new seven form of entry Academy on 7th March, 2006. This report indicated that the terms of the lease to the Academy would be reported to Cabinet for approval.

The Members calling in the decision and the Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and Officers on aspects of the report, in particular the length of the lease to the academy which was 125 years; the expected life of the school buildings was 30 years, on this basis Members questioned why the lease needed to be so long. The Officers explained that a long lease was a requirement of the academy programme and was intended to give the Academy Trust a long life. Councillor Nellist acknowledged that most other authorities were taking a similar approach with leases to Academies and agreed to take up any outstanding issues with Officers outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee concur with the decisions of the Cabinet.

115. Call-Ins Stage 1

The Committee noted that no call-ins had been received yet this week. The deadline for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 13th November, 2006, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday 24th November, 2006. Any call-ins received after this meeting and before that deadline would be considered for validity by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Paragraph 5.4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

116. Scrutiny Annual Report

The Committee considered a draft report of the Head of Corporate Policy which detailed the work of the Scrutiny Boards and the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee during the municipal year 2005/06, in accordance with the City Council's Constitution. The report was divided into two sections one which set out the factual information about the Scrutiny Boards and their work and other areas relating to the scrutiny function, the second part of the report provided an analysis of the performance of Scrutiny during the period. The report concluded that Scrutiny had continued to develop slowly and that leading Scrutiny Members acknowledged the continuing need to improve and had identified further ways of doing this which had already commenced in the 2006/07 municipal year.

RESOLVED that the report be submitted to the meeting of Full Council on 12th December, 2006.

117. Outstanding Issues

The Committee considered and noted a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested in order that Members could monitor progress.

118. Work Programme 2006/2007

The Committee considered the work programme for the Scrutiny Co-Ordination Committee for the 2006/2007 municipal year.

The Committee noted that the items headed "Cabinet Member Progress Report", "The Report Back on the Centre for Public Scrutiny Select Committee seminar" and "The Report Back on the LGA Annual Conference" had been deferred to the meeting on 6th December, 2006. This meeting would also be considering a report on the Coventry Sports Trust which had been referred to them by the Cabinet at their meeting on 14th November, 2006.