

Social Services Committee
15 August 2006

IRVINE, 15 August 2006 - At a Meeting of the Social Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Alan Munro, Margaret Munn, John Bell, Jack Carson, Ian Clarkson, Margie Currie, Drew Duncan, Jane Gorman, Jean Highgate, Alan Hill, Elisabeth Marshall, John Moffat, David O'Neill, John Reid and Nan Wallace.

Also Present

Gordon Allison.

In Attendance

I. Snodgrass, Chief Executive; B. Docherty, Corporate Director; L. Skehal, Head of Service (Community Care); S. Paterson, Head of Service (Children, Families and Criminal Justice) and S. Gault, Manager, Community Care (Adults) (Social Services); I.T. Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective); A. Grossart, Finance Manager (Finance); J. Stevenson, Communications Officer and M. McKeown, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Munro in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Margaret McDougall and Samuel Taylor.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 30 May 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Eligibility Criteria for the Purchase and Provision of Non-Residential Services for Adults and Older People

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on proposed eligibility criteria to be deployed within North Ayrshire for the purchase and provision of non-residential services for adults and older people.

In February 2006, the Committee received a report on the major challenges facing Social Services in funding and providing support to vulnerable adults and older people living in North Ayrshire. In this context, the Committee approved the principle of using a framework of eligibility criteria for the purchase and provision of non-residential services for adults and older people.

The aim of the eligibility criteria is to ensure that: the people in the greatest need and at most risk receive priority services; everyone who asks for, or requires, a service is dealt with fairly using the same criteria; short-term intervention is provided that maximises an individual's capacity for self care, and reduces the need for ongoing services; and everyone understands the decisions arrived at and why they are made.

The proposed eligibility framework will allow staff carrying out community care assessments to examine the risks facing people seeking services and thereafter to categorise their needs as being either critical, substantial, moderate or low. Services will be primarily targeted at people with substantial and critical needs. For people with moderate or low needs, the focus will be on exploring appropriate alternatives to the provision of community care services by the Council, including seeking contributions from family members, the wider community, voluntary sector, and other agencies. Some service users, following a review, may have their current level of service re-assessed. The framework will however help service users, carers and others to understand how resources will be targeted in future and will facilitate equity and transparency in the provision of services.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the implementation of the eligibility criteria, as set out in the report; (b) that the threshold for guaranteeing community care services be set at no less than substantial; and (c) that promotional materials be prepared and disseminated to service users, carers and other stakeholders.

3. Revenue Budget 2006/07: Budgetary Control

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Social Services at the end of June 2006, and on projections to the end of financial year 2006/07.

The Council approved the revenue budget for 2006/07 at its meeting on 7 February 2006. The original budget for the financial year was set at £57.765m. The revised budget now stands at £56.327m. Explanations for the current and projected end of year variances were given in the report. The Corporate Director (Social Services) will take appropriate measures to bring the budget back on target by the end of the financial year.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the budgetary control position for Social Services at the end of June 2006 and the end of year projections; and (b) that the Corporate Director (Social Services) take appropriate measures to bring the budget back on target by the end of the financial year.

4. Preferred Provider - Fostering Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) seeking authorisation to enter into formal negotiations with Barnardo's Shield Fostering Services in order to progress a formal purchasing contract for foster places.

The demand for foster care places continues to rise as a result of increasing numbers of young people being accommodated through parental alcohol and drug use. The Committee recently approved a Fostering Strategy for North Ayrshire which will include the development of a fee-based scheme. The Strategy will take up to 3 years to fully implement. To bridge the gap meantime, it was proposed that Social Services should enter into negotiations with Barnardo's with respect to a formal purchasing agreement for a number of foster places for young people aged up to 13 years to be provided by Barnardo's Shield Fostering Service. Barnardo's is currently on the interim approved providers list and on the basis of their experience and success in recruiting and sustaining placements, are considered to be preferred providers. It is proposed that the Shield Fostering Service will increase the existing 11 places up to 24 places by March 2007.

The Committee agreed (a) to adopt Barnardo's as preferred provider for the provision of fostering places as set out in the report; and (b) that the Corporate Director (Social Services) enter into formal negotiations with Barnardo's in respect of the provision of fostering places.

5. South West Scotland Community Justice Authority

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the current position of the South West Scotland Community Justice Authority.

The Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005 provides a legislative framework for reforming the Scottish criminal justice system and makes provision for the creation of 8 Community Justice Authorities across Scotland. Community Justice Authorities have a strategic and monitoring function although the operational delivery of criminal justice services remains the responsibility of the local authority and Scottish Prison Service.

The South West Scotland Community Justice Authority is made up of the Councils of Dumfries & Galloway, East, North and South Ayrshire, together with the Scottish Prison Service. Each of the local authorities has appointed 2 elected Members to the Authority. North Ayrshire has appointed Councillors Munro and M. Munn to the Authority, and Councillor Munro has been elected as Convener of the Authority in its first year. The South West Scotland Community Justice Authority held its inaugural meeting on 5 April 2006, when it agreed dates for further meetings, adopted draft Standing Orders and approved the establishment of a relevant Committee Structure. A Chief Officer also took up post on 7 August 2006.

The Committee agreed to approve the progress made to establish the South West Scotland Community Justice Authority, as set out in the report.

The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.