

Social Services Committee
30 May 2006

IRVINE, 30 May 2006 - At a Meeting of the Social Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Alan Munro, Ian Clarkson, Margie Currie, Jane Gorman, Jean Highgate, Alan Hill, Elisabeth Marshall, John Moffat, David O'Neill, John Reid, Samuel Taylor and Nan Wallace.

In Attendance

B. Docherty, Corporate Director and S. Gault, Manager, Community Care (Adults) (Social Services); and J. Stevenson, Communications Officer and M. McKeown, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Munro in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Anna Donn, Drew Duncan, Margaret McDougall and Margaret Munn.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 11 April 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Social Services Standing Sub Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix SS1), being the Minutes of the Meeting of the Social Services Standing Sub Committee held on 10 May 2006.

The Committee agreed to approve the Minutes.

3. Guide to Social Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the preparation of a guide to Social Services in North Ayrshire.

At the outset of the 21st Century Review of Social Work in October 2004, the Review Group expressed concerns that local authority social work services across Scotland did not provide the public with accessible, attractive information about the services they provided. The Social Work Inspection Agency has also expressed this concern.

Senior Management within Social Services have sought to address this concern by commissioning the preparation of "Bright Ideas: A Guide to Social Services in North Ayrshire". The Guide, which has been developed by the Council's Communications Team, provides information about the range of services provided by Social Services in North Ayrshire, and highlights the personal experiences of a number of service users. The Guide presents a positive view of Social Services and will be widely disseminated throughout Council offices, libraries, GP Surgeries, and other relevant outlets where people who may benefit from social services might access information.

The Committee agreed that the Guide be disseminated, as set out in the report.

4. Income Maximisation

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the work carried out by the Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Services during 2005/06, to reduce the impact of poverty and over-indebtedness on vulnerable service users.

Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Services operate a telephone Helpline 5 days a week for frontline Social Services staff and other statutory and voluntary agencies. During 2005/06 the Helpline handled 1500 enquiries. The Helpline is operated by experienced advisers who can provide information to service users on their benefit entitlements and assist with debt problems.

Income maximisation work carried out during the year resulted in some £2,264,933 in additional income being secured for vulnerable service users. The Debt Advice Service handled debts totalling £4,486,370.

The Committee agreed to approve the activity of the Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Services as detailed in the report.

5. Social Work Charges 2006/07

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on proposed Social Work charges for 2006/07.

North Ayrshire Social Services charge for a range of services. The report set out proposals to apply inflationary increases to charges levels for 2006/07, and to bring thresholds in line with COSLA guidance. The Council will continue to assist service users to maximise their incomes wherever possible.

Discussions are ongoing between the Scottish Executive and COSLA with regard to the interpretation of Scottish Executive guidance on free personal care and the relevant statutory instrument. At present the Council, in line with the majority of Scottish local authorities, charges for "assistance with the preparation of food". Any change in Scottish Executive guidance in this area will result in a significant loss of income to the Council.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed Social Work charges for 2006/07, as detailed in the report.

6. Residential and Day Care Provision: Outcome of Care Commission Inspections

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the outcome of Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (Care Commission) inspections of Residential and Day Care provision within North Ayrshire.

The report set out issues arising from the Commission's inspections of Residential and Day Care services in North Ayrshire registered with the Commission between 1 April 2004 and 31 December 2005. The report highlighted areas of good practice identified by the Commission, as well as areas where improvements can be made. Remedial action plans have been put in place to address the areas of improvement identified by the Commission.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the outcome of the inspections by the Care Commission; and (b) approve the approach taken within Social Services to address any recommendations highlighted in the inspection reports.

The meeting ended at 2.55 p.m.

**Social Services Committee
30/05/2006**

Appendix No
SS1

Social Services Standing Sub Committee
10 May 2006

IRVINE, 10 May 2006 - At a Meeting of the Social Services Standing Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Margaret Munn, Jean Highgate and Nan Wallace.

In Attendance

L. Skehal, Head of Service (Community Care) and A. Beattie, Manager (Children and Families Services) (Social Services); and M. McKeown and C. Graham, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Munn in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Ian Clarkson, Margie Currie and Alan Munro.

1. Strategic Review of Residential Children's Services & Fostering Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the outcome of the Strategic Review of Residential Children's Services and Fostering Services.

At its meeting on 28 February 2006, the Social Services Committee considered a report on the outcome of the Strategic Review of Residential Children's Services and Fostering Services, approved the implementation of preferred option 'C' set out in the report, and agreed to remit the report to the Standing Sub Committee for further scrutiny.

The 4 Strategic Outcomes of the Review were as follows:-

(a) Residential Services

- To create smaller, purpose-built residential units designed to meet the individual needs of up to a maximum of 6 young people;
- To deliver a qualified and registerable residential Childcare workforce by 2008; and

- To improve unit management structures, including better staff/child ratios.

(b) Fostering Services

- To change the balance of care between Fostering and Residential Services by the creation of a fee-based Foster Carers Scheme;
- To create, over a 5-year period, 20 fee-based Foster Carers and 10 contract Respite Carers to provide a minimum of 40 Foster placements; and
- To provide training opportunities, regular respite and other supports as well as financial incentives commensurate with other caring professions.

(c) Crisis Intervention

- To maintain children within their families and provide support where necessary to prevent long-term admission to care;
- To increase the number of area team Social Work staff; and
- To further develop the Rosemount Team to increase capacity for intensive support and crisis intervention.

(d) Investment in Services

- To develop services within North Ayrshire to prevent children and young people requiring to be accommodated outwith the authority; and
- To provide local employment.

The intention is to invest in fostering and crisis and support services over the period 2006/07 to 2011/12, in order to change the balance of care from residential to more community based options, to keep children with their families so far as possible, and to improve the overall quality of the residential services provided by the Council.

The officers present provided further information and clarification on the proposals set out in the report and responded to Members' questions. The need to regularly review the implementation of the proposals was emphasised to ensure that the Council is able to respond to changing demands on residential children's services and fostering services.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.