



Leicester
City Council

**MINUTE
EXTRACT**

Minutes of the Meeting of the
SOCIAL SERVICES AND PERSONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2004 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Gill - Chair
Councillor Mrs Chambers - Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor Getliffe -Labour Spokesperson

Councillor J. Blackmore Councillor Garrity
Councillor Farmer (for Cllr Beck) Councillor Nurse

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Mr J. Scruton – Voluntary Sector
Ms S. Bray – Voluntary Sector

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ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Coles – Cabinet Link Member for Social Services and Personal Health

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72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Act applied to them.

Mr Scruton and Ms Bray declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Appendix A 'Social Care and Health Directorate: Draft Departmental Revenue Strategy 2004/05 to 2006/07' as they represented voluntary sector organisations which received grants from the departments revenue budget.

Under Procedure Rule 7b Scrutiny Committee invited the members to remain in the meeting during consideration of the item.

Councillor Mrs Chambers declared a non-prejudicial interest in Appendix A 'Social Care and Health Directorate: Draft Departmental Revenue Strategy 2004/05 to 2006/07' as a member of her family was in receipt of a care package provided by the department. It was noted that the interest was inconsequential in respect of the item to be considered.

76. SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH DIRECTORATE: DRAFT DEPARTMENTAL REVENUE STRATEGY 2004/05 TO 2006/07

The Corporate Director of Social Care and Health and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a joint report which gave details of the Corporate Director's draft departmental Revenue Strategy and of the budget process. The report also passed on a request from the Cabinet Link Member for the Committee's views on the draft Strategy and whether the Committee endorsed it as the best way forward, or had any alternative proposals it wished Cabinet to consider. The draft document gave details of key issues, objectives and policy context of the proposals together with details of the proposed reduction and growth proposals.

It was stated that in relation to changes in voluntary sector funding the proposals were not meaning a reflection on the quality or value of individual projects but instead that the Council's budget strategy required a tighter concentration on core services. Certain services had been identified as either not specific to core statutory responsibilities or not a direct service to meet substantial and critical need and as a consequence it was proposed that funding be withdrawn. Other services had been identified as providing high priority services but potentially could achieve efficiencies through greater collaboration and/or merger, and so would be reviewed during 2004/05. It was intended that the changes would be approached collaboratively and if an organisation did not feel they had been judged fairly, performance would be looked at again. A summary of the organisations affected was distributed at the meeting. In addition, attention was drawn to proposed increases in charges which were felt to be fair and below the real cost of providing such services. It was stated that a funding gap of £223,000 remained which would need to be met. If, however, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund bids submitted for service development and modernisation were not successful this figure could be much higher.

The Committee agreed to accept representations from Sandra Moore (Leicester Counselling Centre), and Judy Hardman (National Childrens Homes). The attention of the Committee was drawn to the value for money given by voluntary organisations and the services provided. It was stated that the proposals would greatly impact on other services working in the City, undermine work towards meeting the Council's strategic aims and the aims of the 'Every Child Matters' green paper and preventative work which saved money and reduced suffering.

Representations were also received from Janet McKenna (UNISON) who referred to the role of funding shortfalls in increasing workplace stress and the potential negative effects of the budget on recruitment and retention. She also emphasised that front line staff needed adequate back room support and that it was felt that there was no scope for further funding reductions within the department.

Members referred to the impact of government funding decisions and urged groups affected to lobby government for additional funding. Attention was also drawn to the effects of voluntary sector reductions with services in the most deprived communities affected and that many organisations were only recently classed as priority. It was suggested that the meeting held on 17 December 2003 (minute no.70 refers) had been wrong to not seek to influence the decision making process and that a price

could not be put on the outcomes achieved by voluntary organisations who delivered excellent value for money. The timing of the proposals was queried with it suggested that the timescale was unreasonable and could lead to a reduction in the department's 'star rating'. Concern was raised that the proposals could have a multiplier effect on voluntary organisations with the department urged to undertake a risk analysis to ensure that savings were not outweighed by the potential damage done.

Councillor Getliffe seconded by Councillor Nurse proposed the following motion:

'That the draft revenue strategy be referred to Cabinet with the recommendation that resources be identified to ensure that the cuts to the voluntary sector and rise in charges detailed in the report be not pursued.'

Councillor Getliffe requested that voting be recorded.

Upon being put to the vote, Councillors J. Blackmore, Getliffe and Nurse voted in FAVOUR of the motion. Councillors Farmer, Garrity and Gill voted AGAINST the motion. Councillor Mrs Chambers ABSTAINED.

As there was an equality of votes the Chair used his casting vote against the motion and the motion was LOST.

Councillor Farmer seconded by Councillor Garrity proposed the following motion:

That the Scrutiny Committee is:

- (1) concerned about the cuts to the voluntary sector and that Cabinet take note of this concern
- (2) concerned about the current government's failure to invest in social services nationwide.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Committee is:

- (1) concerned about the cuts to the voluntary sector and that Cabinet take note of this concern
- (2) concerned about the current government's failure to invest in social services nationwide.