



Leicester
City Council

DRAFT

Extract from the Minutes of the Meeting of the
SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2006 at 5.00pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor J. Blackmore - Chair
Councillor Mrs. Chambers (Conservative Spokesperson)

Councillor Dempster

Councillor Nurse

Also in Attendance

Councillor Gill – Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health

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37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Councillor J. Blackmore declared a non-prejudicial interest as a member of the Leicester City West Primary Care Trust in respect of Minute 46 (Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) and Joint Service Centres).

44. DRAFT REVENUE STRATEGY FOR THE SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Interim Corporate Director of Social care and Health and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a report that sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft revenue strategy for the Social Care and Health Department, which had been requested by the Cabinet Member.

The Interim Corporate Director of Social Care and Health gave a presentation on the Social Care and Health Budget 2006/07 – 2008/09 that set out the budget timetable and identified the sectors within the department where the money had been spent in 2005/06. To put the Budget into context the current performance of the department was highlighted against the anticipated national and local issues during 2006/07 that would impact on the budget, including the formation of the two new departments, as well as the themes identified for the department to focus on during the coming year.

The Committee were informed of the breakdown of the anticipated £7.8m additional funding proposed against the proposed reductions and additional income of £6.3m that resulted in a total of £1.5m of savings to be identified. Details of the charges for services were detailed, including those charges that were to be unchanged, those that were to be removed as well as the charges to be increased.

In concluding the Interim Corporate Director reported how the proposed £128m gross 2006/07 budget would be spent and stated that there would be very limited scope to further reduce services without very serious implications for vulnerable people. The budget proposals outlined in the report would enable existing services to be maintained, with developments in some areas.

With the sanction of the Committee a representative from UNISON addressed the meeting and stated that the Trades Unions had concerns regarding the proposed plans for Mayfield Family Centre and of the proposed re-location of services from that Centre. The City Council was facing increasing pressures to undertake more for less money, the recent Gershon review savings were likely to result in a reduction of support services, but the City Council had little control over some of the proposals as Government had imposed them. The one area of income that the City Council was able to exercise control was the setting of Council Tax and the expectations were to keep increases at or below inflation. Rather than create an additional financial pressure on the City Council the Trades Unions were generally of the opinion that an above inflation increase of Council Tax be implemented, with a full and detailed explanation being given to City residents outlining the full extent of services the City Council was able to offer for the tax levied.

The Committee considered the Budget proposals in great detail and sought clarification on a number of issues relating to items identified within the revenue section of the budget and of proposals relating to the re-location of services from Mayfield House to Barnes Heath House. Members were informed that the proposals identified had been researched thoroughly and that, regarding Mayfield House, full consultations were to take place with Trades Unions and staff to ensure that sufficient capacity for disabled children was provided across the City whilst making better use of the existing facilities available.

The Committee questioned why the budget had been put forward as one department, when the two new departments, Children's Services and Adult Services, were due to come into being as from 1 April 2006. Officers reported that work was still progressing on creating the two departments although the allocation of functions was now almost complete. A decision had been taken to complete the budget for the existing Social Care and Health Department, although there was a provision of £400,000 in the City Council budget to cover the initial cost of change to set up the two new departments.

RESOLVED:

- 1) the Scrutiny Committee welcomes the growth items contained within the Draft Revenue Strategy for the Social Care and

Health Department,

- 2) that Cabinet be informed that this Committee is concerned at the potential impact on front line services resulting from the proposals in the Social Care and Health department budget,
- 3) the Committee is concerned that the three year Budget Strategy does not take into account the re-configuration of two new departments with effect from 1 April 2006,
- 4) the Committee is concerned that the reductions identified from the resources section are to be included within the Business Improvement Programme, and therefore not part of this Budget Strategy,
- 5) the Committee is concerned that the two new departments may contain services that will not be fully funded,
- 6) the Committee noted the concerns expressed by the Trade Union,
- 7) the Committee is concerned that further savings might be required outside of the Budget Strategy presented, and also outside of the Scrutiny process,
- 8) the Committee expressed a view that the proposed increases to the hourly charge from £6 to £8, and the maximum weekly charge from £175 to £200, for Home Care services (Table 14 refers) is excessive.
- 9) the Committee requests that the proposals relating to the Mayfield family Centre are removed from the budget Strategy, until the further consultations and work necessary relating to the proposals have been carried out,
- 10) that a further report be brought back to this Committee on the 2007/08 efficiency/restructuring savings relating to Lunch Clubs and Day Services (SCRA7), prior to the proposals being implemented.
- 11) that budget proposals in respect of (SCRA1) – Discontinuance of Laundry Service and (SCRA9/10) – Increased Income from Home Care Service, be reviewed.

