

### **Community Services Scrutiny Committee: Statement to Council - 29 April 2010**

Community Services Scrutiny Committee has taken forward a broad and interesting work programme in 2009/10. Members have taken the opportunity to learn more about the diverse services that the Community Services Directorate provide, and in doing so they have considered where services provided by the former District and Borough Councils and County Council have come together. Throughout their work Members have maintained a focus on the impact of services on the people who use them and receive support.

#### **Adult Social Care Services**

There has been a broad focus on Adult Social Care, recognising the value of the services to the people who use them and their carers, and the related budget commitments.

Since their first meeting the Committee has maintained a strategic view of issue affecting the Adult social Care, with perhaps the biggest change being brought about "Transforming Adult Social Care" and the "Personalisation Agenda". The Committee have developed their understanding of the reasons for change and the benefits that personalisation can bring to service users, enabling them to take greater control of their care and support by choosing the services they want to achieve the outcomes and goals they have. The Committee will continue to monitor progress in this important area.

In the autumn 2009 before the Adult Social Care Inspection the Committee has also looked at Safeguarding, receiving the Annual Report and following this up with a more detailed consideration of work to strengthen and embed Safeguarding across the Council through the council wide Task and Finish Group. The Annual Report is presented to the Committee each September, enabling progress to be monitored and any issues to be identified.

The Committee has also responded to the Consultation on Learning Disability Strategy; supporting the strategy. A key issue the Committee identified through this work was the importance of making documents accessible to a wide range of people. Members were impressed not only with the contents of the Strategy but also the easy read picture format which was available for people with learning disabilities or who could not read English. Members also considered the Autism Strategy, identifying the importance of investing in services for people with autistic spectrum disorders and requesting further updates on progress once actions and activities had been implemented.

The Committee have also considered the quality of care provided in Shropshire, ensuring that high standards are in place and maintained in all care homes and services that the Council commissions services from, as well as influencing other homes in Shropshire where ever possible. Members recommended that themed audits of care homes were undertaken to consider

nutrition in care home for younger adults (18-64), and that the following themes should be looked at in the 2010/11:

- Creating community;
- Sharing decision making; and
- Creating a positive culture.

A task and finish group of Members have also been looking at Prevention and Reablement Services to understand the value of the services and how Shropshire compares to other similar councils. This work has been incorporated into the Meals on Wheels and Prevention Task and Finish Group which should be reporting back to the committee in the summer.

### **Housing Services**

The committee have reviewed progress with the Supporting People Advice and Assistance Action Plan, and were pleased to be informed of overall good progress. Members were particularly interested in how people using Supporting People were involved in the development of services and influencing decisions. Following a member request, representatives the Supporting People Service User Panel who included and Peer Assessors gave a presentation on their role and the activities they had been involved in. Members were impressed with the range of activities and value that the service user panel member and peer assessors provided, and requested a future report in 12 months time on the activities undertaken by those who had been trained, and also on how working with voluntary sector had been developed to enable Supporting People funding stretch further.

A member task and finish Group has considered the Affordable Housing Allocation Policy including implementing Choice Based Lettings and reviewing housing allocations in the boarder context of the void management process and overarching housing management. A key focus of the work was to 'what is it like to be a customer of this service'. In carrying out the work Members consulted with stakeholder partners to ensure they had a full understanding of operational practice. Their wide ranging recommendations include:

- The Council should continue its efforts to ensure support for the Shropshire Affordable Housing Allocation Policy and Scheme from Registered Social Landlord partners operating within the County.
- Many single people and couples without children currently fall into the Bronze Band for re-housing. It is recommended an appropriate quota be agreed for Bronze Band applicants.
- To ensure communities understand how the Shropshire Affordable Housing Allocation Policy and Scheme operate, there should be an article for Shropshire Magazine and tenants' newsletters contain information and advice on a regular basis.

Housing Services and Adult Social Care both work together to provide adaptations to properties of people with a disability so that they can remain in their home. Members considered the issues relating to this important service and the developments that have been taking place to improve the time taken to complete them. Through their scrutiny Members heard from the Council's

Housing Team, Anchor Staying Put, Severnside Housing and Shropshire Housing Group, as well as customer feedback, and in doing so identified developments that have been taking place and the range of options and approaches taken. Members were particularly pleased to hear that waiting times had improved greatly: Pre-unitary it had been an 18 month wait for some adaptations; this had been reduced to six months, and work was continuing to achieve the target of four months, and Stairlifts were being installed within six weeks of receipt of request.

### **Culture, Leisure and Learning**

A Member Task and Finish group have been looking at Rights of Way and Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000, undertaking detailed consideration of the definitive map. The Group made the following recommendations with regard to the work undertaken to date:

- Existing public guidance notes would be improved following consultation with the Local Access Forum and with reference to best practice within other authorities.
- A revised way of working that took into account local consultation on improvement demand which would result not only in the map being improved, but would develop longer term plans to develop access generally.
- A prioritised list of parishes for map review in the north of the county, working systematically from west to east.

However, Members were concerned that there were other issues, outside of the terms of reference of the Task and Finish Group that needed to be considered in relation to capacity, maintenance priorities and resources. These further areas of work are being explored by a continuing Task and Finish Group.

The Clerk of Bishops Castle Town Council requested that a Scrutiny Committee review Teme Leisure's Management of SpArC Sports and Art Centre. Due to the nature of the issue the Community Services Scrutiny Committee had decided that it was better to conduct the scrutiny with a local team formed from members of the Scrutiny Committee and Local Joint Committee. A Local Scrutiny meeting took place on 29 March 2010 in which all issues were covered and a range of local stakeholders and Elected Members had an opportunity to air their views. The local meeting made the following recommendations for endorsement by Community Services Scrutiny Committee:

- That the local SpArC Scrutiny Panel members were satisfied with the responses contained within the report.
- To recommend that any future discussion on SpArC is carried out locally via the Local Advisory Committee for the facility.
- Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group be monitored on an annual basis.
- That Cabinet be asked to consider provision for a longer term Service Level Agreement to Teme Leisure.