



**AD HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SUPPORTING PEOPLE INITIATIVE)
WEDNESDAY, 1ST OCTOBER 2003 AT 6.00PM
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, SOUTHFIELDS, LOUGHBOROUGH**

To: Councillors Akroyd, R. Kershaw, Muldoon, Pacey, Slater and Yardley
(for attention)

All other members of the Council
(for information)

AGENDA

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR
2. APOLOGIES
3. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTERESTS
4. DECLARATIONS – THE PARTY WHIP

PART 2 (DELEGATED)

5. SUPPORTING PEOPLE INITIATIVE

Initial scrutiny of the Supporting People Initiative was undertaken by a joint committee comprising members of the Health and Public Protection and Housing Scrutiny Committees on 2nd October 2002. It was decided at that meeting to hold a further meeting after May/June 2003 to consider how Supporting People was operating and provide initial input into the longer-term (five year) strategy. The Cabinet, on 17th October 2002 considered how best to monitor use of the “single pot” money allocated for the initiative and how to scrutinise best use of that funding. The Health and Public Protection and Housing Scrutiny Committees both expressed the view, with which the Cabinet agreed, that all further scrutiny of the matter would be best undertaken by an ad hoc scrutiny committee comprising three members of each Committee with Cabinet Lead Members being invited to contribute in the discussions of that ad hoc scrutiny committee as it considered appropriate.

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 2nd October 2002 are attached at page 3 to provide background information on the item.

S. Folwell, Principal Housing Officer (Strategy) will give a presentation on the progress made with the initiative since the meeting of the Joint Committee.

Ms D. Esmond and Ms G. Newton, managers of the Supporting People Team at County Hall, Mr J. Franks Warden Services Manager at Lifeline and Councillors Forrest, Newton and Vincent, the Cabinet Lead Members, have been invited to attend the meeting to assist with the consideration of the item.

Scrutiny Check-list

- What is the current approach, policy, practice, etc.?
- What are the strengths?
- What are the weaknesses?
- What improvements could be achieved by changing it?
- What examples of good practice exist elsewhere?
- Should the views of other interested parties be sought?
- What are the financial and other resource implications?
- Overall, would there be an advantage in changing the approach?
- How would such a change sit with other policies, practices, etc.?
- What proposals should be made to the Cabinet, if any?

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**JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(SUPPORTING PEOPLE)
2ND OCTOBER 2002**

PRESENT: Councillors Akroyd, Allen, Dodd, Foster, Muldoon,
Shepherd, E. M. Stott, Vincent and Yardley

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Mrs J. Green (Association of Charnwood Tenants)

APOLOGIES: Councillors L. J. Hawkes, Hurst and Pacey
Mrs S. Hubbard (Association of Charnwood Tenants)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Foster be appointed Chair for the meeting.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No disclosures of personal interest were made.

3. DECLARATIONS – THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

PART 2 (DELEGATED)

4. DRAFT LEICESTERSHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE SHADOW
STRATEGY 2003/04

The Supporting People Programme had been considered at previous meetings of both the Health and Public Protection and the Housing Scrutiny Committees, the matter being within the scrutiny remit of both committees. It had been considered that further scrutiny would be required as the initiative progressed, via a joint meeting of the two committees, to be held once the above Strategy was available. Therefore, the Strategy was submitted, together with a report of the Head of Housing Services to assist the Committee with its consideration of the matter. The Principal Housing Officer (Strategy) outlined the background to Supporting People and the content of the Strategy, as set out in the report, as follows:

- The Supporting People Programme was aimed at enabling the planning, commissioning and provision of quality housing related support services to assist vulnerable people to live independently in the community.
- There were two key elements to the programme, a new approach to the planning and commissioning of the services (although existing providers would remain unchanged) and a new “one pot” funding arrangement, to be administered on a county basis.

- In Leicestershire, the programme would be operated as a partnership of the County Council, district/borough councils, the Probation Service and health agencies with effect from April 2003.
- To guide the programme, the partnership had been required to produce the submitted Strategy. It was termed a draft shadow strategy as it guided and set the priorities for 2003/04 only. A longer term (five year) strategy would follow. All partners would need to formally approve the Strategy before its submission to the Government by 31st October 2002.
- It was the Strategy which the Council had been required to help formulate which was being considered at this meeting, rather than the impact of the programme on the Council as a provider of services.

The Principal Housing Officer (Strategy) outlined the content of the Strategy which had, to a large extent, been prescribed by the Government.

With the consent of the Committee, Councillor Newton (a Cabinet Lead Member for Housing) took part in the discussion on the matter.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee and Councillor Newton:

- (i) The supply profiles provided by the Government and included in Part B of the Strategy were very broad-based and, as such, were of little use in setting meaningful priorities. However, the information outlined the service areas which the Council should be considering.
- (ii) It was important that tenants in accommodation where support services were provided were not required to pay for that service if they did not wish to use it. It was also important to identify tenants who might require support before allocating a tenancy.
- (iii) Charnwood Borough Council would no longer be able to decide, independently, what support services were provided/funded in the Borough. If it wished to provide a new service in the future, it would have to bid for it.
- (iv) It was of utmost importance that there was no interruption of the services provided for vulnerable people as a result of the programme.
- (v) It was of concern that there were no arrangements for the scrutiny of services under the programme, and of the programme itself, by councillors, although there would be no reason why the Council's scrutiny function could not continue in that respect. Accountability was important and an appropriate relationship between officer management of the programme and democratic accountability through local, elected councillors had not been achieved. In particular, it seemed that the Commissioning Body was not accountable to anyone,

although it was recognised that that had been set up in accordance with Government advice.

- (vi) Services would be reviewed, although it was not yet known by whom. A major concern was that services would be cash limited which would result in rationing of services and the partners being in competition with each other for those funds.
- (vii) The supply mapping information summarised in the Strategy indicated that there was an under-provision of services for most groups, with the exception of older people. That under-provision was currently being tackled in Charnwood for some groups, but there was still no provision of support services for single, homeless people. The programme would be of benefit in that respect if the Council was able to access schemes provided by others.
- (viii) Funding should be allocated according to the size of a district/borough as the level of services needed would be proportionate to that. It was of concern that the funds which Charnwood received might not be adequate for its needs under the programme. There was no appeals process for Charnwood if it was unhappy with a decision not to fund a scheme.
- (ix) The reason for the Government's suggestion that authorities should concentrate on supply rather than needs mapping to support the Strategy was unclear. Needs information was essential to assessing the services required.
- (x) While there was an over supply of sheltered accommodation for older people in Charnwood, there was no dedicated accommodation for other groups who required support. Remodelling accommodation to address that imbalance should be considered. It was recognised, however, that redesignation of accommodation in the past had caused problems.
- (xi) It might be necessary for officers to consider Charnwood's needs as paramount if required additional services were to be secured against bids by other districts or the County Council. It was likely that the existence of competition in that respect would mean that the objectivity and consensus suggested throughout the Strategy could not be achieved. Charnwood Borough Councillors were elected to assist those living in Charnwood and should do so.
- (xii) It was of concern that the programme would create a considerable amount of bureaucracy, possibly with no added value in terms of service provision. However, it was also recognised that the overall intentions of the initiative were good and that it would assist the Council in providing services to vulnerable groups which had not been provided for in the past. It had also assisted in focusing on the matter of support services and what was/was not needed. However, the

mechanisms of the programme were of concern. It was important that those concerns were expressed to the Cabinet so that they were taken into account when it considered the Strategy and, hopefully, incorporated in its decision.

- (xiii) The initiative was an example of the Government's move towards regional government. It would have the effect of increasing the control which district councils had in relation to the provision of support services as compared to the County Council. That was in accordance with the removal of the county tier of local government which would be required by the implementation of regional government.
- (xiv) Such an initiative should have been undertaken on a pilot basis and expanded if successful having learnt from the experience of that pilot, particularly as failure would have a significant impact on vulnerable people's lives. Consideration of how Supporting People would work in practice had been inadequate.
- (xv) Officers responsible for the Council's private sector housing functions should be aware of the Supporting People programme and its implications.
- (xvi) It was clear from the Strategy that "floating" support schemes were often crucial to vulnerable people successfully living in the community. That support had to be available 24 hours a day.
- (xvii) It would be of concern if people who had the least continued to be in that position once the programme had been introduced. The Council needed to do all it could to ensure improved services were the outcome.

In response to issues raised, comments made and questions, officers stated:

- (a) In response to the comment in (i) above, the priorities in the Strategy had been based on more local needs information than that provided by the Government profiles.
- (b) The Strategy included services providing differing levels of support, including minimal support services such as alarm facilities.
- (c) "Floating" support services were linked to people rather than particular properties. Therefore, support could be available to certain groups without any accommodation being dedicated to that group.
- (d) In response to the comment in (ii) above, it was not currently possible to say whether tenants would be charged for all services, although if the services were included in the tenancy agreement it was likely that the tenant would have to pay for them, whether he or she used them or not.

- (e) The requirement that services were reviewed would apply to all services funded through Supporting People. The reviews were not a threat to services, but were intended to challenge them such that quality would be improved. Sheltered accommodation services (older people with support needs) would not be subject to review until 2005/06.
- (f) Housing Services officers were working to implement expanded/further support schemes before the end of December 2002 as all schemes existing at that time would be guaranteed funding under the programme. However, only a few months were available in which to achieve that.
- (g) The accommodation based, short-term support scheme listed on page 54 of the Strategy was one put forward by another provider.
- (h) The Core Strategy Development Group and Commissioning Body, which had been set up to progress the programme in Leicestershire, had been funded through the pooling of the Government implementation grants made to the partners and not from the funds available for services.
- (i) In response to the comment in (iv) above, there would be obvious changes for tenants receiving support services, for example warden services would no longer be included in rents but would be invoiced separately by the County Council.
- (j) It was likely that the funding allocated for support services in Charnwood would be equal to cost. Therefore, it was unlikely that there would be any underspending, either to be carried forward for Charnwood or spent elsewhere in Leicestershire. The Council would have a contract with the Supporting People Team to provide agreed services at an agreed cost. If those services were delivered, the funding would be provided.
- (k) In response to the comment in (v) above, chief executives of the district/county councils had been asked to consider how councillors could be involved in the process. It was important that, alongside officers, councillors/the Council requested that involvement if it was to be secured. From a scrutiny viewpoint, it should be possible for councillors to be involved.
- (l) The Government had recommended that Administering Authorities should be county councils, given their existing systems for support service provision. However, although the County Council (Social Services) would be the Administering Authority for Leicestershire, Supporting People was not a County Council function, but would be delivered as a partnership. All the partners concerned supported that approach.
- (m) In response to the comment in (vii) above, there was no intention to provide communal services for use by a number of councils. In respect of any additional funding made available for Leicestershire, it would be important for Charnwood to have well prepared schemes to put forward. There was a potential area for conflict within the partnership in that respect as the partners as a whole would decide the schemes to be funded, through the Core Strategy Development Group

and Commissioning Body. An objective way of making those decisions was being considered. Currently, there were no arrangements for involving councillors in that process.

- (n) In response to the comment in (viii) above, funds would be allocated on a scheme by scheme basis (in accordance with the Strategy's priorities) and not according to the size of the district/borough.
- (o) In response to the comment in (ix) above, it was anticipated that the emphasis would be on needs.
- (p) It was unlikely that the increasing proportion of older people in society, as indicated by the 2001 Census, would impact on the content of the Strategy. Although the elderly population was increasing, demand for sheltered accommodation was falling. The Council was looking at changing the accommodation it provided to meet the aspirations of that group.
- (q) There were distinctions between certain groups, for example refugees and asylum seekers. Some groups would not fall under the Supporting People Programme and service provision for those would remain as at present. Currently, such groups did not represent a significant level of need in Charnwood.
- (r) New support schemes would only be provided if supported and funded under the programme. It was unlikely that the Council would be able to fund schemes itself which had not secured funding under the programme.
- (s) The Council had already agreed the partnership approach to Supporting People. It was required to participate in the programme by the Government, regardless of any concerns which it might have.
- (t) Counties would not be bidding against each other for Government funds. The "sizing the pot" exercise which was currently being undertaken would determine the allocation for Leicestershire. Funding would, therefore, be based on existing services, at least until the first review.
- (u) There had not been any suggestion from the Government that the availability of additional funding in future years would depend on performance in the first year. However, it was possible that the longer-term strategy which would need to be produced would differ significantly from the 2003/04 Strategy, given that the level of input, for example from councillors, would probably increase. To some extent, the 2003/04 Strategy was an interim strategy. There was no formal mechanism for feedback on it by the Council, which was one of the reasons it had been decided to set up this Committee.
- (v) It would be possible to provide members of the Committee with examples of strategies produced for other areas. Those might contain more specific/formal arrangements for councillor involvement.

- (w) Models/criteria for determining priorities were currently being considered. The suggestion that population ratings be used could be taken to that discussion.
- (x) It would be possible to provide members of the Committee with details of the schemes which were being put forward as bids for the additional funding which might be available, followed by details of the outcomes. It was likely that they would be put forward on a sporadic basis.

In respect of (f) above, the Committee considered it important that further/expanded support schemes be implemented before the end of December 2002 if at all possible, given the need to maximise the funding available for support services in Charnwood under the programme from April 2003. It also considered it important that Supporting People remained under scrutiny and that its input continued to be given and how that could be best achieved needed to be considered.

RESOLVED

1. that, when the Cabinet considers a report on the matter, it be informed:
 - (i) that the Committee agrees with Supporting People's overall aim of improving the standard of housing related support services;
 - (ii) that the Committee considers the suggestions in the Strategy in respect of decision making by local authority councillors to be unsatisfactory and disingenuous, with no adequate link between the officer management arrangements outlined in the Strategy and decision making by a local authority's executive;
 - (iii) that the Committee is concerned about the lack of arrangements in the Strategy for councillor involvement both in terms of scrutiny and in setting priorities, together with the absence of an appeals procedure if a council is unhappy with a funding decision;
2. that a further meeting of the Committee be held in May/June 2003 for the purpose of both considering how Supporting People is operating and providing initial input into the longer-term (five year) strategy, and possibly to involve members of the Supporting People Team, but with a meeting being held before that date if a Chair or Vice-chair of either Committee constituting this Joint Committee considers it necessary;
3. that the Principal Housing Officer (Strategy) be asked to inform members of the Committee and Cabinet Lead Members for Housing of any improvements/progress in terms of resolution 1. (ii) above.