

EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE, on MONDAY, 24TH JULY, 2000.

PRESENT: Mr KC Wren (Chairman), Mrs NS Bryant, Mr GJM Downes, Mr WA Spiers and Mr IC West.

22. **Apologies** Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Mrs M Boulton and Mr RT Rogers.

23. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved: To confirm and sign the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting held on 29th June, 2000.

24. **Best Value Review Direct Payments** Consideration was given to a report prepared jointly by the Director of Social Services and users.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that the Sub-Committee was being asked to critically examine the proposed scope of the Review as required at Stage 2 of the agreed Best Value Review process. The Current Service Profile as set out in the Stage 1 summary report had been circulated to the Sub-Committee for information.

The Director of Social Services introduced the report and explained the history of the Direct Payments system for disabled persons aged 18 to 65. He thereupon introduced Louise Brown, from the University of Bath, who was one of two Project Managers for the scheme, who explained the Stage 2 process and findings, including the proposed scope of the Review.

Members of the Sub-Committee then asked detailed questions about the scope of the Review after which it was

Resolved:

- 1) *To approve Stage 2 of the Best Value Review process in respect of Direct Payments and to authorise the officers to proceed with stages 3 to 6 of the process, subject to:-*

- a) *clear definitions being established for the roles of the two Project Managers.*

- b) *the inclusion of Internal Challenge in the process, in the form of officers able to offer views independent of either the Social Services Department or the user groups.*
 - c) *the use of further relevant benchmarking information specific to Direct Payments to support independent living.*
 - 2) *To request the Director of Social Services to report back to the Sub-Committee in June, 2001 on Stages 4 and 6 of the project.*
25. **Home Loans Service** The Sub-Committee received a report by the Director of Social Services setting out progress made on the review of the Homeloans Service in Wiltshire.

Resolved:

- 1) *To note the award of the contract to Sunrise Medequip.*
 - 2) *To note that the process of reviewing the service had been completed.*
26. **Best Value Review – Growing Up in Warminster and Corsham** Consideration was given to a report prepared by the Chief Executive.

He explained that the report set out Stage 1 of a Best Value Review of the needs and requirements of children and young people aged from birth to 19 years in the Warminster and Corsham community areas. This would be the first thematic review carried out under Best Value Review principles and it would be evaluated accordingly. It was noted that other partners in this Review would include schools, District Councils, Health Services, Police, Probation, the Careers Service and ConneXions, together with voluntary organisations and churches.

During the ensuing discussion, members of the Sub-Committee expressed their interest and support for this Review and suggested that useful information might be readily available from Parish and Town Council Chairmen. It was also noted that the views of local County Councillors would be sought on the scope of the Review.

Resolved: *To request the Chief Executive to prepare a report for a future meeting of the Sub-Committee based on Stages 1 and 2 of the Best Value Review process.*

27. **Recruitment of Head Teachers** (Sub Min 18/00) The Chief Education Officer presented a report in tabular form setting out information on an area/school by school basis showing vacancy levels for Head Teachers since March, 2000 and reasons for them where possible.

He considered it premature to come to any reasoned conclusions as to whether or not there were any underlying reasons and problems associated with head teacher recruitment and retention and suggested that the situation be monitored.

Resolved: To review the situation in 12 months' time but to ask the Chief Education Officer to monitor the situation and to report back to this Sub-Committee sooner if he receives evidence of continuing problems.

28. **Practice on Scrutiny in other Local Authorities** (Sub Min 21/00) Consideration was given to a report by the Director of Corporate Services setting out details of scrutiny arrangements which had been operating in Bedfordshire County Council since January, 1999. It was noted that Bedfordshire's approach was quite expensive, having set up four Select Committees with dedicated support staff.

Resolved: To request the Director of Corporate Services to continue to obtain details of scrutiny arrangements in other local authorities.

29. **Work Plan** A copy of the second draft of a six-month rolling work plan was circulated.

Following discussion by members and contributions by the officers present,

Resolved: To update the plan on the basis of the discussion and circulate it with the agenda for the next meeting.

(Duration of Meeting : 2.00pm – 3.45pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of the Committee Services Unit, Corporate Services Department, direct line (01225) 713035. Press enquiries to the Communications Unit, direct line (01225) 713114/713115.