

SELECT COMMITTEE ON GOOD HEALTH

Wednesday, 25th June, 2003, at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor Cody (in the Chair)
Councillor Hanson (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Ali, Mrs Ameson, Mrs Aston, Banks, Ms Craigie, Johnson, Mrs Turner and Mrs White, together with the Head of Personnel and Support Services (Lead Officer), Director of Social Services, Head of Public Protection (Directorate of the Urban Environment), and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property)

1 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th March, 2003, be approved as a correct record and signed.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following members for the reasons indicated:

Councillor Cody in relation to his employment by West Midlands Ambulance NHS Trust.

Councillor Ali in relation to his employment by a Primary Care Trust.

Councillor Ms Craigie in any matters relating to ophthalmic work and the National Health Service.

Councillor Hanson in relation to the National Health Service by reason of his wife's employment.

3 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF HEALTH

A joint presentation was given by the Lead Officer and the Director of Social Services on the background to the Overview and Scrutiny of Health which including consideration of the aims of Health scrutiny; the content of guidance from the Department of Health entitled "Overview and Scrutiny of Health – Guidance", issued in May 2003, which detailed

amongst other things aspects of planning and approaches to scrutiny; issues that could be scrutinised; the involvement of Patient's Forums; the need to produce annually a Scrutiny Plan and possible approaches to the carrying out of scrutiny. Relationships for joint working and duties of National Health Service Bodies were also detailed.

The "Overview and Scrutiny of Health – Guidance" produced by the Department of Health had previously been circulated to Members of the Committee together with a policy briefing from the Local Government Information Unit entitled "Overview and Scrutiny of Health – Department of Health Statutory Guidance".

The final aspect of the presentations given concerned the next steps to be taken in respect of Health scrutiny and in this connection consideration was given to a paper circulated at the meeting entitled "Scrutiny and the Good Health Select Committee" prepared by the Director of Social Services and the Lead Officer setting out proposals to be considered at the next meeting of the Executive on 9th July, 2003. The proposals included, in appendix 1 to the paper, draft terms of reference of the Committee to take on board the scrutiny role and proposals in respect of the budgetary allocation made to support the new responsibilities of the Committee relating to the overview and scrutiny of the Local Social and Health Care Economy.

Regarding the further steps to be taken the Lead Officer also mentioned that there had been a meeting of Birmingham and Black Country Regional Health Scrutiny Forum of Chairs and Policy Officers on 13th June, 2003 to discuss a response to the Guidance received and that the Chair of this Committee had convened a meeting of key Stakeholders in Dudley's Health and Social Care Community for 6th August, 2003, to discuss the future direction and next steps regarding Health scrutiny. He also indicated that following the meeting in August a list of topics for possible scrutiny would be drawn up for consideration at the next meeting of this Committee.

Arising from the presentations given the Chair commented on the challenges facing the Committee regarding its Health scrutiny role and as one of the further steps to be taken reported that a web page was being developed so that members of the public could raise any concerns that they might have with the Committee. This development together with others which Members may wish to pursue would be taken on board so that a number of avenues could be developed whereby people could raise concerns with the Committee.

Questions and comments were then made by Members of the Committee on the presentations made and content of the paper circulated at the meeting, relating in particular to the draft terms of reference proposed; the timing and possible alternative arrangements for the support to be given to the Committee and the various ways in which publicity could be given to the scrutiny role in relation to Health of the Committee.

In relation to the draft terms of reference it was noted that these would require the approval of the Council following the meeting of the Executive on 9th July, 2003, and that, in view of concerns expressed regarding the time that might be lost to the Committee in following the appointment process, an assurance was given that the post of Scrutiny and Research Officer (Good Health), plus administrative support, would be advertised at the earliest opportunity following approval and that a secondment or if necessary the engagement of external consultants to carry out the role on an interim basis would be considered. Similarly if there was a need to bring in particular expertise for a particular issue this would also receive consideration.

The Lead Officer also confirmed that, once prepared, the job description and person specification for the post of Scrutiny and Research Officer (Good Health) would be sent to Members for their comments.

Regarding the issue of publicity for the scrutiny role of the Committee in relation to Health, in addition to the web site previously mentioned the use of Patients Forums and Patient Advice and Liaison Services were also mentioned together with the possibility of advertising in the press so that local people could have a contact point to which letters and comments could be delivered. The suggestion was also made that there was a need to include local people in the work of the Committee and this was acknowledged as was the existence of existing user groups which would be an important avenue for consultation.

In respect of the web site the Lead Officer commented that it was proposed to have an interactive page for the Select Committee with links to the web sites of other partners so that publicity on a joint basis could be achieved.

Members were asked to let the Lead Officer have any further suggestions they may have for publicising the scrutiny of Health role of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information as presented on the Overview and Scrutiny of Health be noted together with that contained in the Overview and Scrutiny of Health – Guidance received from the Department of Health and the Policy Briefing prepared by the Local Government Information Unit on Overview and Scrutiny of Health – Department of Health and Statutory Guidance previously circulated.

- (2) That the information contained in the paper circulated at the meeting on Scrutiny and the Good Health Select Committee be noted and that the Executive be informed that this Committee endorses the draft terms of reference of the Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, to reflect the new statutory responsibilities of the Committee for submission to the Council for approval and the allocation of £50,000 to support the Committee in its new responsibilities relating to the overview and scrutiny of the Local Social and Health Care Economy by the appointment of a Scrutiny and Research Officer (Good Health) plus administrative support.
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WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

In introducing this item the Lead Officer again referred to the meeting to be held on 6th August, 2003, with key stakeholders in Dudley's Health and Social Care Economy to discuss future direction and next steps in relation to Health Scrutiny and reported that following that meeting and an away day for Members of the Committee, which it was proposed to hold prior to the next meeting of this Committee, consideration would be given, arising from those meetings, to a work programme for the Committee.

The Lead Officer then expanded on the issues that would be discussed at the away day involving consideration of what the health economy comprised; views about what scrutiny was about and the receipt of a presentation from a person from another authority that was already undertaking the Health scrutiny role. It was proposed that the meeting be held at a venue other than the Council House, possibly Priory Hall. Arising from the meeting, Members would have a structured approach to their work for the forthcoming year.

Arising from the comments made, the Chair indicated that further details would be submitted to the Committee arising from matters considered at the Joint Committee and that, following a request made, it was agreed that details of the work undertaken by the Committee in the 2002/03 municipal year be circulated to Members.

RESOLVED

That the above information be noted and that support be given for an away day for Members, leading to further consideration of their work programme for the forthcoming municipal year, prior to the next meeting of this Committee in September, 2003.

QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC OF WHICH
PRIOR NOTICE HAD BEEN GIVEN

It was reported that no questions had been raised by members of the public of which prior notice had been given to report at this meeting of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.

CHAIR