

Budget Review Group

Findings on the Neighbourhood Services Directorate and proposed Directorate actions

Terms of Reference

1. To review changes in staffing levels and grades in the period 2005/06 to 2006/7
2. To examine changes in service delivery over the same period and anticipate changes in the next four years
3. To examine how the MTP process can be used to address Council weaknesses identified in the CPA report
4. To consider the relationship between the MTP process and the Council Plan

Objectives

1. To identify shortfalls in service resources
2. To identify service areas where there is waste
3. To identify possible efficiencies
4. To identify possibilities for savings in areas where there have been significant under-spends

1. To identify shortfalls in service resources

Budget Review Group comments

- The Learning Disabled Service was under pressure
- There was a problem with recruitment, but a possible solution in the pool of staff and the link with L&D Directorate for long term preventative work
- SC&H PDC should be invited to examine staffing levels for home care, as difficulties were being experienced with these
- There was concern at possible long-term effects of the 'demographic time-bomb', particularly in learning disabilities and to a lesser extent mental health services and/or older people's support. Future costs needed to be considered, although as specialist services were needed, there may be little that could be done to lessen these
- The cost-effectiveness of new extra care provisions should be monitored. Also, transitional costs should be taken out of the budget afterwards.
- Members were confident that council budgets had been protected despite cuts in joint budget pools by the PCT
- The drugs service was well funded but the alcohol service was not and this was an area of concern. Shortfall in service provisions could lead to costs later on and there was a particular problem concerning alcohol in MK
- There was a shortage of residential places but this was a shortage of practical facilities rather than a budgetary shortage (at this point in time)
- It was difficult to manage the market. Co-ordination and re-structuring of social

Current or proposed Directorate Actions

- MKC continued to recruit staff to a pool that could cover for permanent staff, and Kate Page was lobbying to reduce the CRB delay through ADSS national executive
- There might be savings due to there being less need for home care in the community and less reliance on the Community Alarm Service system; the assumption was that the development would be cost effective medium to long term, but the main agenda was preventative and focused on well-being
- Lynn Scott advised the Group that nationally, alcohol-related care was poor, and she suggested that this was a short-sighted approach

services and the PCT also caused pressure

- It was difficult to assess resources in Mental Health, since some costs were included in with Older People's Services. These should be separated out
- There was currently an under-spend in MKC's Mental Health Services because the Primary Care Trust had made cuts. There was nothing that MKC could do about that. Some budgets were not pooled, but the situation did make service management difficult

2. To identify service areas where there is waste

Budget Review Group comments

- Using agency staff instead of pool staff; recruiting to the pool is currently held up by delays with Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. If agency staff were CRB cleared, then we should be making them permanent
- Saving through joint provision of services with the PCT had not been demonstrated
- Extra care places need to be monitored, although there should be enough flexibility to avoid waste
- The real-time recording system would provide a better idea of where time was spent and lost

3. To identify possible efficiencies

Budget Review Group comments

- Optimising staff working patterns could deliver efficiencies, but it was important to consult with staff on this
- Savings from the Extra Care village had not been demonstrated; this required quantification and policy proposals. SC&H PDC was to be invited to examine

Current or proposed Directorate Actions

- See first bullet point under *shortfall in service resources* above

Current or proposed Directorate Actions

- Details of who would be going into the village and whether they were currently

this issue. Service requirements would be difficult to predict, but it should at least be possible to say what sort of care package would be suitable for the Village

connected to the Council's alarm service were not yet known

- There was some embedding of solutions to staffing costs, but what savings had been achieved, and what had been taken into the MTP process?
- The level of efficiencies that are to be achieved across the whole Council could not be gained here; severe reductions were not possible, as these services were dealing with vulnerable people
- Autism residential care could possibly be provided locally and not outside the area. However, a cluster of cases was rare and needs were varied, so potential savings were limited
- In terms of efficiency, early intervention was cheaper, and this is an area of investment for the PCT

4. To identify possibilities for savings in areas where there have been significant under-spends

Budget Review Group comments

Current or proposed Directorate Actions

Mental Health was the only area to show an under-spend

Specific recommendations for Social Care and Housing Policy Development Committee work

- The Committee should be invited to examine staffing levels for home care, as difficulties were being experienced with these
- Savings from the Extra Care village had not been demonstrated; this required quantification and policy proposals. The Committee was to be invited to examine this issue