

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS COMMITTEE

12 DECEMBER 2006

Present: County Councillor Stephens (Chairperson);
County Councillors Berman, Derbyshire, Jones,
Salway, Sheppard, Walker and Walsh

18 : ADULT SERVICES – BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Committee received a progress report on the situation regarding Adult Services following its meeting held on 16 October 2006.

The Corporate Director, Opportunities Cardiff, reported that a Task & Finish Group comprising representatives from Adult Services, Finance, Human Resources, Legal Services and Trade Unions had met on five occasions and the minutes of those meetings were submitted.

Updated information had been provided to the Trade Unions and further arrangements had been made to ensure that there was proper consultation and discussion with Trade Unions on matters affecting their members.

The Corporate Director provided Members with an up to date position on:-

- Reconfiguration of Day Services.
- Increased charges for Domiciliary Services.
- Plans for Iorwerth Jones Home.
- Re-negotiation of the agreement with Hafod Homes.

The primary focus of the Task & Finish Group had been on the reconfiguration of Home Care Services which had been the subject of significant debate. At the meeting held on 24 November 2006 the Group had considered a detailed presentation from Adult Services which highlighted a number of key issues associated with the future provision of the Service. It has been agreed that there should be further work by the Service area to develop a business case which would be managed through

a Project Plan with a completion date of February 2007.

The Task & Finish Group had also been asked to consider further proposals which impacted on Adult Services financial difficulties. In relation to sickness absence the Task & Finish Group had received a presentation on proposals which had previously been outlined to this Committee on the York Occupational Health Scheme, Tesco Scheme and the Carmarthenshire Scheme.

The Chief Human Resources Officer reported that this Committee had previously received a progress report on the establishment of the In-house Occupational Health Service, which included an update on the York Scheme. He confirmed that details of the three Schemes would be issued to Members. The Chairperson also suggested that an objective analysis of the York Scheme should be undertaken.

Members commented on the requirement of the York Scheme whereby staff, who were sick, were required to telephone the Occupational Health Officer on the first day of sickness. The Corporate Director stated that the budgetary impact of sickness, and the additional costs of cover within the Service area were a significant contributory factor to the overspend.

The Committee received Mark Turner of UNISON who stated that the Council, with the support of Trade Unions, had already introduced a new Sickness Policy whereby staff were required to telephone their Service area on the first day of sickness. He stressed that it was not new to have high levels of sickness in Social Care and that there were still underlying issues to be addressed. He stated that there was a need to look at all the reasons for a high level of sickness.

The Task & Finish Group had also been provided with a presentation on some of the recruitment and retention issues in Adult Services which highlighted some areas where there were recruitment difficulties. The presentation had also focused on the work undertaken by Wrexham Council on Work Life Balance Initiatives and the improvements in attendance levels and productivity that had been made as a result of a number of combined initiatives.

The Committee was advised that the Trade Unions had indicated their opposition to any of the proposals identified in the presentation, as they believed that the new Sickness Management Policy needed to "bed in"

3.

over a longer period of time before its effectiveness was reviewed. They believed that a full and proper evaluation of the York Scheme should be undertaken prior to considering any application of the Scheme in Cardiff. There was total opposition to the Tesco Scheme at the Task & Finish Group on 9 November 2006.

The Trade Unions had welcomed the suggestion that Working Groups be formed alongside the Task & Finish Group to review terms and conditions of service, which would incorporate modernising working arrangements, to analyse what Work Life Balance and Recruitment and Retention Initiatives could be piloted in Adult Services.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the arrangements for consultation with Trade Unions as set out in paragraph 5 of the report be noted;
- (ii) the Task and Finish Group continue to focus on workforce issues including Terms and Conditions arising out of the Home Care reconfiguration;
- (iii) work on sickness absence, work-life balance and other associated matters being progressed within the usual Council mechanisms for consultation and discussion with the Trade Unions be noted;
- (iv) an additional meeting of this Committee be held in February 2007 to further consider this issue;
- (v) further information be provided on the various sickness absence schemes discussed at the Task and Finish Group and papers on the York Occupational Health Scheme be re-issued.