



LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON

**HOUSING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

2004/5

Final Report

SUPPORTING PEOPLE REVIEW
Members of the Committee

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee is required following recommendations from the Audit Commission to perform a minimum of two review topics per municipal year.

Based upon this recommendation the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee chose the Management of Supporting People in Hillingdon and the Development of the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy as one of its major review topics for the year 2004/5.

The Supporting People Strategy attracts funding of £6.2 million for 2004/5, although this is to be reduced by 5% in the 2005/6 municipal year. The Supporting People Strategy and its impact on the vulnerable of Hillingdon is delivered through a partnership of 3 statutory bodies: the Council, Health (Primary Care Trust) and the Probation Services.

The Committee as part of this review decided to focus on six topics based upon their strategic significance and the need for improvement; the six topics are listed within the body of the main report.

Following the evidence presented to the Committee a number of recommendations were made and are highlighted within this report which we hope will be endorsed to enable the vulnerable people of Hillingdon to receive the support that this strategy aims to provide.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee for their input and also on behalf of the committee I would like to thank the officers for providing the evidence and reports necessary to enable us to complete this project on time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified Supporting People as one of its overview topics for the municipal year 2004/5. In making this decision the Committee were mindful that, for the following reasons, this is a critical time for Supporting People:

- the new financial framework for Supporting People had been in operation for 18 months
- there is a significant amount of funding flowing into the borough, £6.2million for 2004/5
- this funding supports services for some of the most vulnerable members of local communities
- Supporting People is delivered through a partnership of three statutory authorities: the Council; Health (Primary Care Trust); Probation Services
- National funding for Supporting People services will reduce for 2005/6 and future years
- The Council, as the Administering Authority, has to develop a five year Supporting People Strategy by 31 March 2005.

Supporting People is a complex agenda and the Committee decided to focus on six topics, based on their strategic significance and the need for improvement:

- Governance framework for Supporting People
- Consultation and stakeholder involvement in planning
- Service reviews and accreditation
- Cross borough working
- Mapping needs and the allocation of funding – included in the Supporting People Strategy below
- The Supporting People Strategy.

See the next section, 'Introduction', for a summary of the issues underlying each topic.

In determining the review timetable the Committee had regard to the fact that the draft Supporting People Strategy needs to be agreed by Cabinet no later than the 31 March 2005. Consequently the Committee's review took place between October 2004 and January 2005.

The Committee considered evidence regarding current practice in Hillingdon, comparisons with practice within the West London sub-region and best practice arising from Audit Commission Inspections. The Committee also considered the outcome of consultation with stakeholders as reflected in the draft Hillingdon and West London Supporting People strategies.

The Committee acknowledged the potential benefits to be gained by integrating the previously diverse sources of funding to meet the housing

support needs of vulnerable people. The Committee also acknowledged the significant amount of change that both Supporting People teams and providers have successfully managed over the last three years.

However the Committee expressed its concerns about the potentially negative impact of the continued reduction in Government funding for Supporting People services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee's recommendations, set out below, are designed to support the Council and its partners in the shared objective of delivering cost effective, sustainable Supporting People services that meet the needs of vulnerable people. The recommendations have been set out in tabular form with an update on action as at February 2005. Recommendations 16 and 17 are specifically referred to 31st March 2005 Cabinet. All the other recommendations are to be noted.

No.	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION AS AT FEBRUARY 2005
	GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS – 26 October 2004	
1.	That a draft Supporting People Strategy be reported to the Committee on 14 th December 2004.	Completed.
2.	That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a quarterly progress report on the Action Plan from the Commissioning Body.	See 4 iii) below.
3.	That the Director of Social Services and Housing assume the Chair of the Commissioning Body.	The Director assumed the chair of the Commissioning Body in November 2004.
4.	That following the appointment of the above Chair: i) Probation and Health are asked to review their representation to ensure that attendees have the required delegated decision making powers. ii) That the terms of reference	The London Probation Service and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) have reviewed their membership and nominated officers with sufficient seniority in the respective organisations. The Commissioning Body will

	<p>for the Commissioning Body and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Commissioning Body are reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>iii) That the Commissioning Body receive quarterly progress reports on the Annual Plan to be referred to the Health and Social Care Executive, Cabinet Member for Housing and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information</p> <p>iv) That the Commissioning Body be supported by the Supporting People Manager and Senior Finance Officer</p>	<p>consider final drafts for revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding at its meeting in March 2005.</p> <p>The annual plan will be finalised as part of the five year strategy to be approved by the Cabinet in March 2005. Thereafter quarterly performance reports will be produced for the stakeholders set out the in the Committee's recommendation.</p> <p>The Supporting People Manager and a Principal Accountant are both advisory members of the Commissioning Body.</p>
	<p>CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT – 26 October 2004</p>	
<p>5.</p> <p>6.</p> <p>7.</p> <p>8.</p>	<p>That the proposal to commission a consultant to undertake some comparative analysis and make recommendations on best practise is noted.</p> <p>That the consultation client group list include Romany Travellers and Gypsies.</p> <p>That a Frequently Asked Questions page be incorporated into the Supporting People website to act as a 'next stage guide' for client group support workers.</p> <p>That the consultation and stakeholder involvement phase of the strategy aspired to be as inclusive as possible.</p>	<p>During the development of the Supporting People Strategy it became apparent that there was sufficient evidence arising from current consultation processes. Consequently commission did not proceed.</p> <p>This has been done and a representative is being sought for the Core Strategy Group.</p> <p>This will be incorporated in the annual plan and work programme for the Supporting People Team.</p> <p>The consultation for the draft strategy has involved a wide range of provider and service user representatives and the use of a range of methodologies.</p>

9.	That an Annual Supporting People Plan be drawn up after the completion of the strategy and that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive feedback on this.	See recommendation 4iii) above.
	DRAFT OUTLINE 5 YEAR SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY – 14 DECEMBER 2004	
10.	<p>The Committee noted that:</p> <p>The Supporting People government grant has been reduced by 5% from £6.2 million to £5.9 million.</p> <p>The Supporting People Strategy is being written in the context of other strategies such as the Community Plan and West London Strategy.</p> <p>The results from the Needs Day will be integrated into the strategy.</p> <p>That Hugh Dunnachie, the Director of Social Services and Housing has assumed the Chair of the Commissioning Body.</p> <p>That Probation's representation has recently changed and Health are being asked to review their representation to ensure that attendees have the required decision making powers.</p> <p>That the Committee will have another opportunity to comment on the strategy on 20th January 2005.</p> <p>That the report is noted.</p>	
	SERVICE REVIEWS AND ACCREDITATION – 25 January 2005	
11.	That this Committee recommends that the London Borough of Hillingdon continues to undertake	As part of the annual plan the procedures will be set out as a 'process map' and placed on the

	the service reviews as are already being carried out and continues to follow all relevant guidelines and procedures to ensure continued accurate and reliable views are produced.	Council's website.
	CROSS-BOROUGH WORKING (including the West London Strategy) - 25 January 2005	
12.	That the London Borough of Hillingdon continues its membership of the West London Alliance and supports the West London Alliance cross authority strategy.	The Housing Strategy Manager will assume the Chair of the West London Group with effect from the 1 March 2005. The views of the Committee will be fed into the development of the 2005/6 work-plan.
13.	That the Committee recommends that HIV / AIDS client groups should be listed as part of the cross authority needs group as included in the West London Alliance strategy.	The comments of the Committee have been provided to the West London lead officers and will be discussed at their meeting in February before the draft strategy is finalised.
14.	That this Committee recommends, Probation Services and Housing Services need to work more closely to ensure offenders are correctly assessed in line with the Homelessness Act in the Borough, as per the West London Alliance Strategy.	The recommendation will be forwarded to the respective lead managers through the Core Strategy Group.
15.	That this Committee recommends that officers inform the West London Alliance with regards to mental health issues and the views of the Committee, in that such services are not referred to as being just useful but important and essential and should be highlighted as such.	The comments of the Committee have been provided to the West London lead officers and will be discussed at their meeting in February before the draft strategy is finalised

	<p>THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY (INCLUDING MAPPING NEEDS AND THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING) – 25 January 2005</p>	
<p>16.</p>	<p>That this Committee fully endorses the Supporting People Strategy and recommends that Cabinet also agrees its full support.</p>	<p><i>The Committee's recommendation will be included in the Supporting People Strategy report to Cabinet in March 2005.</i></p>
<p>17.</p>	<p>The Committee recommends that if additional funding is identified, that the Supporting People Strategy is given priority to enable it to engage extra resources to meet the inspection requirements.</p>	<p><i>Cabinet will be advised of the Committee's recommendation.</i></p>
<p>18.</p>	<p>That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the supporting people annual plan for discussion and provide input as required.</p>	<p>The Committee will be consulted as a stakeholder as part of the annual review of the Annual Plan.</p>
<p>19.</p>	<p>That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are provided with a quarterly report with progress made with the Supporting People Strategy, especially as this programme is only in its infancy but nevertheless is vital to the London Borough of Hillingdon and the users of such services.</p>	<p>See recommendation 4iii).</p>

17. INTRODUCTION

The terms of reference for the review, see below, summarised the significance and importance of this review topic and the specific key issues that were to be addressed. The recommendations set out in the Executive Summary achieve meet the desired outputs incorporated within the terms of reference.

1.1 TOPIC AND KEY ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Supporting People is a regime to finance housing support services to promote independent living for vulnerable local people. The ODPM provides the grant funding, £6.2million for 2004/5. There are three statutory bodies that form the partnership charged with developing the local Supporting People Strategy, commissioning services and ensuring that the grant is spent effectively.

Those bodies are:

- The Council
- Health (the Primary Care Trust)
- Probation.

Representatives from the partnership form the Commissioning Body which is the main decision making group for Supporting People.

The Council is also the administering authority for Supporting People. In this role the Council is:

- accountable for the grant funding
- provides the administration for Supporting People (also grant funded)
- ensures that the Supporting People strategy is drafted to comply with ODPM guidance
- enters into contracts with providers.

The Council is required to ensure that an updated strategy is produced by March 2005 and the service will be inspected by the Audit Commission in July 2005. Also the Government has undertaken a wide ranging review of funding at a national level. It is probable that grants to local authorities will be reduced in coming years with a potential adverse impact upon services. For all of those reasons it is essential that the development of the strategy is supported at Member level.

The topics for the review were agreed by Housing Overview and Scrutiny on the basis of both the strategic significance and the need for improvement in the following areas:

- Governance framework for Supporting People
- Consultation and stakeholder involvement in planning
- Service reviews and accreditation

- Cross borough working
- Mapping needs and the allocation of funding
- The Supporting People Strategy.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Hillingdon's Shadow Supporting People Strategy published in November 2002 and the ODPM assessment
- Other local Supporting People Strategies and assessment
- ODPM Guidance published in August 2005.
- ODPM guidance on the future funding for Supporting People
- Comparative information from the boroughs in the West London Alliance
- Comparative information from Audit Commission Inspection of authorities rated 'good' or 'excellent'.

1.3 WHO IS IT FOR?

- Service users, who require support services that meet their needs and, where possible, provide choice.
- Service providers, who need to know the strategic priorities for Supporting People in order to develop appropriate services.
- Commissioners of support, care and health services to ensure that we maximise opportunities to co-ordinate resources to achieve effective outcomes.
- All stakeholders to ensure that the decision making process for the reconfiguration of service priorities and grant allocation meet local priorities and are transparent.

1.4 DESIRED OUTCOME: WHAT WILL HAPPEN AS A RESULT?

- Hillingdon will have a Supporting People Strategy that has wide stakeholder support and achieves at least a 'good' assessment from the ODPM.
- Enables the Council to get at least a 'good' rating from the Audit Commission Inspection in July 2005.

1.5 REPORT OUTPUTS TO INCLUDE:

- Recommendations to the Supporting People Commissioning Body for the development of best practice in respect of the topic areas summarised in section one. Those recommendations to be incorporated in the strategic development of Supporting People in Hillingdon.
- The recommendations will be reflected in the draft strategy that will be put to Cabinet in March 2005 for ratification.

1. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH

The methodology adopted for the review reflected:

- the fact that the new financial framework for Supporting People is still in its early stages, consequently many of the processes and procedures are still in development
- research and consultation activity was in hand as part of the development of the Supporting People Strategy, consequently the Committee could draw on that work
- Hillingdon is part of the West London Supporting People group that provides easily accessible benchmarking information
- The Audit Commission's timetable for reviews of Supporting People services is well underway, again this provided authoritative benchmarking information.

Having regard to the above the Committee received reports and presentations from officers on each of the key issues that incorporated this comparative information. This enabled the Committee to determine where to recommend changes to current practice or amendments to the developing Hillingdon and West London Supporting People Strategies.

The exception to this approach was in respect to the key issue 'Mapping needs and allocation of funding'. This is a critical issue for the Supporting People Strategy and was incorporated in those reports to the Committee.

2. FINDINGS

This section of the report takes each of the key issues identified in the terms of reference for the review and summarises:

- An explanation and analysis of the issue
- Reaction and recommendations of the Committee
- How the recommendations are designed to address the issue
- Where relevant the legal, financial, equal opportunity and other implications of the recommendations.

3.1 GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE

Responsibility for planning and commissioning Supporting People services requires a partnership between three statutory bodies: the Council, Health (PCT) and Probation Services. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) provides guidance regarding some of the mechanics of this partnership, for example the need for:

- A Commissioning Body
- A Core Strategy Group
- An Inclusive Forum
- The need for the elected Members (or equivalent) in each of the statutory bodies to have an awareness of and involvement in the Supporting People strategy that underpins the delivery of services.

Local authorities must update their current shadow Supporting People strategies and produce a full strategy by March 2005. It is essential that the governance framework ensures that it is a real, deliverable document, owned at the local level by the organisations who will be involved in implementing it.

The governance structure that existed in October 2004 had served Supporting People well during implementation. The Committee considered the comparison of the local arrangements with the ODPM guidance and best practice and concluded that there was scope for improvement. This will be a crucial issue in respect of the ownership of the Supporting People strategy and future inspections of the service. It was apparent that there was a need to further embed Supporting People within the wider decision making frameworks of the respective statutory agencies and this needs to be address.

The Committee's recommendations reflected a need to ensure that the membership of the Commissioning Body included **senior** officers from the statutory agencies, empowered to take decisions within the parameters of the agreed Supporting People Strategy. Also there was a need to strengthen the monitoring role for elected Members of the Council and the partnership as a whole.

Conclusion

Having considered the evidence the Committee concluded that the governance arrangements could be improved by the following changes:

- the Director of Social Services and Housing assumes the role of chair of the Commissioning Body
- the PCT and Probation Service review and upgrade their representation
- the Memorandum of Understanding between the partners is reviewed
- the quarterly monitoring regime be extended to the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders effectively address the issues identified.

3.2 CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING

Effective service user and service provider consultation and involvement are performance criteria for Supporting People. The services funded by the Supporting People grant should meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of the local community. For services to be effective:

- The needs of service users have to be understood
- Services have to be designed to meet those needs
- Service delivery has to be monitored to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved
- Where service change is necessary, disruption to the lives of service users needs minimised.

Achieving the above requires input from service users (and their representatives), carers, related statutory agencies (e.g. health, police, social services etc) and providers.

This aspect of the Shadow Strategy, submitted in November 2002, was assessed as fair by the ODPM. At that time an 'Inclusive Forum' was in place as a forum for information exchange, the development of good practice and for representing views to the Commissioning Body. The aim was that the Forum should include both service users and providers.

In the event the Forum has not provided an effective vehicle for service users, indeed the name has changed to 'Provider Forum' in recognition of the membership. Consequently, there is a need to review how service users are involved in the development of priorities and services.

In reaching its conclusions the Committee recognised that Supporting People is one of a range of inter-linked strategic planning and service development responsibilities for the council and other statutory agencies. Consequently it is essential that those links are made as part of a consultation and involvement framework. Examples of linked strategies are:

- Housing Strategy

- Joint commissioning intentions for older people, mental health, people with learning disabilities etc.
- Homelessness Strategy
- Private Sector Housing Strategy
- Housing Strategy for Older People
- Housing Diversity Strategy
- Community Safety Strategy.

Each of those strategies has its consultation processes from which Supporting People can draw and which it would be inappropriate to duplicate.

The Committee considered information on a range of consultation methodologies and how they have been used to date. The Committee also considered information regarding the consultation mechanisms available for each of the service user groups eligible for Supporting People funding. This included some groups where no mechanism currently exists.

Conclusion

Having considered the evidence, the Committee agreed that the following principles should be reflected in the emerging Supporting People Strategy:

- Service users should have access to a range of mechanisms through which they can express their views
- An annual consultation and involvement plan, updated monthly, should be published, through providers and on-line
- The plan should include contact and access details
- Providers should be expected to support service users to access the consultation and involvement mechanisms
- Consultation outcomes should be published as part of the regular update of the plan.

These are reflected in the Committee's recommendations in respect of:

- the consultation for the Supporting People Strategy
- the provision of 'Frequently Asked Questions' on the website for service users and providers
- the inclusion of a consultation plan in the Supporting People Annual Plan to be reported as part of the quarterly report to stakeholders are designed to address the issues identified in the terms of reference.

Equalities

Supporting People services are provided to some of the most vulnerable members of the community. For consultation purposes many vulnerable service users are among the traditionally 'hard to reach' groups. To meet the performance criteria of effective service user consultation, requires mechanisms that bridge that gap.

3.3 SERVICE REVIEWS AND ACCREDITATION

Together with the Supporting People Strategy, service reviews will determine whether a specific service continues either in its current or amended form. The administering authority (the council) is responsible for ensuring that reviews are carried out. The Government requires that all Supporting People services are reviewed by 31 March 2006.

When the Supporting People regime was launched in April 2003 every provider was given an interim contract to be replaced in time by a steady state contract. Two processes have to be successfully completed before a steady state contract can be given:

- Service review
- Accreditation

Subsequent reviews will be triggered either by:

- the contract renewal date or
- there are reasons to have concerns about the provider's ability to meet their contractual commitments or
- there are reasons to believe that the service is no longer required.

Service Reviews

The Government guidance covered the purpose but not the practice for service reviews. Consequently most Supporting People Teams have developed their own local practice. Hillingdon has the benefit of the West London Supporting People Review Officers' Forum where officers share sub-regional best practice. The ODPM published guidance on best practice in March 2004 and this has informed the current processes.

The programme of service reviews covering all of the 112 Supporting People schemes will determine whether they are providing what is required. They will also inform assessments about the competency of the services providers and the value for money offered. The Committee was informed that the programme had slipped because of problems recruiting to vacant posts. Additional resources have been applied to bring the programme back on line for completion by March 2005.

The Committee were provided with information to enable them to review the following aspects of Service reviews.

Service review process

The Committee noted that the Supporting People Team does not undertake the review process in a vacuum. There is a specific requirement to involve key stakeholders including service users, providers, carers, referral agencies and providers of other related services. The process:

- involves discussion with providers, service users and other stakeholders
- has regard to both quality and cost information

- benchmarks against other local and regional information.

Service Review timetable

The Committee noted that, in drafting the review timetable officers had regard to the factors in the ODPM guidance on setting priorities. That is local authorities should concentrate on services where there was reason to believe:

- There is high risk to service users
- They lacked strategic relevance
- Were unlikely to comply with grant conditions
- Had recent changes or additions
- Were high cost.

The Committee were advised that, because of recruitment problems, the review programme had slipped, in common with many other authorities. However additional resources had been commissioned to ensure that the timetable is completed by March 2006. Indeed the ODPM invited bids from local authorities for additional funding. As a consequence Hillingdon has been provided with £35,000 for 2005/6, although the base administration grant has been cut.

The Committee considered the current programme and did not recommend any changes.

Decision making

Supporting People is a partnership between the Council, Health and Probation. Therefore all three agencies have an equal role in determining which services are provided to whom. This role is discharged through the Commissioning Body. Consequently it is the Commissioning Body that is responsible for the decisions arising from reviews.

The Committee noted that, to minimise the bureaucracy, the Commissioning Body has delegated some decisions to the Supporting People Manager. That is where the outcome of a review indicates no, or simply, technical changes to the contractual relationship with the provider. In those cases the outcome of the review is reported to the Commissioning Body for information.

The Commissioning Body has retained decision making in cases where there is a recommendation for a:

- a change to the service
- a change to the contract, for example a reduction in the contract price an extension to the interim contract to with a recommended improvement plan.

Service Review outcomes

A summary of the nine reviews completed to date was provided from which the Committee could see that:

- In some cases the recommendation has been to continue the service, in those services a steady state contract will be given once the accreditation process is completed.
- In others there are concerns leading to an improvement plan and a recommendation for an extension to the steady state contract.
- Finally there is one service where there is a concern about cost and a tendering exercise is underway.

Accreditation

For the reasons set out below, information on the accreditation process were included in the report on the West London Strategy.

The Committee was advised that unlike service reviews, accreditation is not about the quality of the service provided. Accreditation tests the financial and management viability of the provider organisation. The guidance given by the ODPM addressed the outcomes for accreditation not the process or the criteria that should be applied. Consequently administering authorities were left to develop their own process and criteria and apply that to a wide range of providers with differing level of capacity and skills.

A number of service providers work in more than one of the West London boroughs. The ODPM guidance allows for an administering authority to accept the accreditation awarded by a local authority. The development of a single accreditation system to cover West London was agreed because of the:

- complexity of the task
- probable cost in developing and implementing an accreditation system
- aspiration to minimise the burden for providers working across the boroughs.

A single accreditation system also facilitates for a wider provider market across the sub-region when tendering for new or improved services.

The boroughs jointly commissioned a consultant to both develop and implement the system, Harrow has exercised responsibility as the lead borough. The accreditation process is well underway.

The Committee was advised that there are concerns arising from the accreditation exercise. It is apparent that a number of providers are experiencing some difficulty in complying with the requirements and there is a strong possibility that some will not be accredited. Should such cases arise in Hillingdon it would not be possible to offer the provider a steady state contract. In that event the Commissioning Body will need to decide a commissioning strategy to reprovide those services.

Conclusion

Having considered the evidence, the Committee concluded that the ability of the Supporting People Team and Commissioning Body to manage change will be crucial for the implementation of the Supporting People Strategy and that the implementation of the Service Review process in Hillingdon:

- Meets the Government requirements
- Is consistent with ODPM and other good practice
- Is an open, transparent and inclusive process for all stakeholders
- Demonstrates that the Supporting People partnership has the capacity to challenge current service providers to deliver the services that local people need to the required quality and cost, taking the decisions to initiate change where required.

Equality

Nevertheless as an outcome of the discussion the Committee were advised that, as part of the Supporting People Annual Plan the procedures will be set out as a 'process map' and placed on the Council's website. This will increase the transparency of the procedures for both service users and providers.

3.4 CROSS-BOROUGH WORKING

Cross-borough working was the area of weakness identified in the ODPM assessment of the Shadow Supporting People Strategy submitted in November 2002. Since then significant progress has been made by the West London Supporting People managers group. However the focus has been on the administration of Supporting People services rather than on developing cross-borough services. The Committee was advised that there is a need to review the opportunities for such initiatives that can be supported within local priorities.

Information was provided to the Committee on the work of the West London Supporting People Managers' group including projects to:

- share learning and support in the development of new systems for both the Supporting People Teams and providers
- to develop best practice
- to share the costs of the development of new systems and a work programme for 2004/5 that includes:
 - A training plan for Supporting People Teams and providers. The focus has been on the development of service review procedures.
 - A cross borough Supporting People newsletter, the first edition is scheduled for March 2005
 - Accreditation of service providers
 - The development of a West London Supporting People Strategy.

Looking to the future the aim is to maximise the synergies in the West London Alliance to improve and develop cross-borough services where they are required. This has led to the development of a draft joint West London Strategy which was provided to the Committee for comment.

The Committee were advised that the needs identified in the draft strategy were drawn from the information held by the West London Boroughs. The draft strategy had been subject to extensive consultation with both providers

and service users. The seven West London Authorities are now considering the draft strategy for approval.

The strategy does not give commitments on the part of individual borough with respect to the development of specific services or the allocation of resources. Rather it sets out priorities for future consideration. Any proposals for joint service development and the allocation of resources would be subject to the Council's required processes and procedures.

The information provided to the Committee highlighted:

- The reasons for the strategy
- Current cross-borough services and needs
- Summary of the strategic priorities.

The strategic priorities in the draft strategy include:

- Maximise the use of existing accommodation resources
- Improve move-on accommodation
- Commission new cross authority services
- Ensure service quality and value for money
- Develop joint work on Supporting People administration.

Conclusion

Having considered the evidence the Committee recommended that the London Borough of Hillingdon continues its membership of the West London Alliance and supports the West London Alliance cross authority strategy. The Committee also recommended that the following specific amendments are proposed for the strategy:

- HIV / AIDS client groups should be listed as part of the cross authority needs group as included in the West London Alliance strategy.
- Officers inform the West London Alliance with regards to mental health issues and the views of the Committee, in that such services are not referred to as being just 'useful', as in the current draft, but 'important and essential' and should be highlighted as such.

3.5 SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY, including mapping needs and allocating funding

The Committee was advised that the ODPM requirement is that local Supporting People Strategies are updated and submitted by 31 March 2005. The current 'shadow' strategy was published in November 2002. Some of the detail and the work programme are out of date. More significantly the background to some of the service requirements have changed and the impact need to be reflected in the strategy. As part of the Strategy there is a need to improve the alignment between needs and funding, this was one of the drivers behind the national policy for Supporting People.

As the Administration Authority for Supporting People, the Council is responsible for drafting the strategy. When completed, the strategy will be subject to approval by the Commissioning Body and recommended to the

Cabinet and the equivalent bodies in the partnership agencies for formal ratification before it is submitted to the ODPM.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet will be asked to approve the strategy in February and March respectively.

The Committee considered the draft strategy at its meetings in December 2004 and January 2005. At the former meeting the Committee expressed its concern regarding the gaps in the document at that time. However the Committee recognised that significant progress had been made by its meeting in January and that the critical gaps have been filled. In particular the needs analysis that has informed the recommendations for strategic priorities for future service provision.

Content

The Committee considered the content of the draft strategy that includes:

- How the strategy is developed: the national, regional (London), sub-regional (west London) and local strategic context and how Supporting People in Hillingdon fits in with agendas at each of these levels; how it is governed; how service users, providers and other stakeholders are involved; how service reviews work and value for money is ascertained; the local charging policy and financial management of the fund.
- The demographic picture: a summary of population trends, housing need survey information and allocations data.
- Service provision and need: a summary of Supporting People services for each of the main client groups, and the identified gaps; data on referrals into and out of the borough; and an assessment of the move-on situation.
- The overall picture: comparison of provision, expenditure and unit costs across all client groups and summary of service gaps.
- Priorities for the five-year strategy: identifying the client groups that will be Hillingdon's main priorities.
- Annual plan 2005/06.

Strategic Priorities

Supporting people services cover a wide range of actual and potential service users. As always there are financial constraints on what can be provided and priorities have to be set. The Supporting People Strategy has to be developed having regard to the specific strategic plans for specific user groups, where they exist. Those plans will have been developed in consultation with service users and others and express the priorities of the key statutory agencies. In effect Supporting People supports those strategic objectives. For example the modernisation agenda for People with Learning Disabilities, the Older Persons Strategy, the Best Value Review of services for children, the Community Safety Strategy and the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy,

The Committee were advised that, having regard to those strategic plans and the current and project needs and supply analysis, the draft strategy concluded that over the next five years Supporting People in Hillingdon will particularly concentrate on the following:

- Older people, including prioritising shifting the balance from care homes to more independent sheltered housing and aim to meet need for floating support.
- Young people, and in particular the more vulnerable young people with complex needs, such as mental health problems, learning difficulties or convictions.
- People with learning disabilities, to move from care homes to independent living, and back to the borough from care homes elsewhere.

These plans flow both from the analysis of current need and provision and from the council's objectives of improved provision for youth and the elderly, addressing hospital bed-blocking and high hospital emergency admission rates of older people, modernising services for people with learning disabilities, preventing homelessness and community safety.

However the Committee also recognised that this does not mean that activity will not take place to improve support for other service users. For example:

- The need for services for people with drug problems will be tested through a pilot scheme, and it is proposed to work with other boroughs on cross authority services.
- A time-limited pilot floating support services for offenders and for teenage parents from spring 2005 will test the level of need.
- There are proposals for a cross-borough initiative to assess the need for services for travellers and for a dry house for people with alcohol problems.

Implementing the Strategy

The strategy is not just about what we do but how it will be done.

The Committee were advised that there is a recognition that the current profile of spend does not match the need, for example there is a shortage of support services for People with Learning Disabilities. Also the Government have cut the level of grant funding for Hillingdon and officers anticipate another reduction next year. Therefore meeting the strategic objectives will require changes in the way resources are allocated.

Change can happen in a variety of ways, for example:

- Benchmarking of costs may indicate options for improved efficiency releasing funds for other services.
- Through service reviews it will become apparent that some services are not strategically relevant (that is does not meet a local need) with the consequence that providers may need to change what they do or services may need to be decommissioned.
- Working with other local authorities there may be opportunities to share resources and jointly develop services at a reduced unit cost.

The main, but not only, tool at to assist in coming to those decisions is the Service Review process. Through this process the Supporting People Team and Commissioning Body will work with providers, service users and other stakeholders to come to a view about services and how, if at all, they need to change.

Conclusion

Having considered the evidence the Committee endorsed the draft strategy. The recommendations made by the Committee are designed to ensure that Supporting People Strategy is 'fit for purpose', that is:

- If additional funding is identified, that the Supporting People Strategy is given priority to enable it to engage extra resources to meet the inspection requirements
- The Committee is included in the consultation for the annual review of the Supporting People Annual Plan
- The Committee is provided with quarterly performance reports on progress of the Annual Plan.

The Committee also recommended that, having regard to the relevant comments in the draft West London Strategy, Probation Services and Housing Services in Hillingdon need to work more closely to ensure offenders are correctly assessed in line with the Homelessness Act in the Borough, as per the West London Alliance Strategy.

4. CLOSING WORD

The Committee's intention was to produce a final report satisfying the following desired outcomes:

- Hillingdon will have a Supporting People Strategy that has wide stakeholder support and achieves at least a 'good' assessment from the ODPM.
- Enables the Council to get at least a 'good' rating from the Audit Commission Inspection in July 2005.

The recommendations included in this report are the outcome of the Committee's consideration of the evidence provided on each of the key issues that are critical to those outcomes. The recommendations are designed to secure continuous and sustainable improvement in respect of:

- The governance arrangements for the Supporting People partnership
- Consultation and stakeholder involvement
- Service reviews and accreditation
- Cross-borough working
- Strategic planning, including needs mapping and resource allocation.

From the information in the Executive Summary it is clear that many of the recommendations have already been implemented.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For their kind participation in the work programme, the Committee thanks:

- Dorothy West, Assistant Director Housing Services
- Barry Newitt, Supporting People Manager
- David Fowler, Supporting People Strategy Officer
- West London Supporting People Managers.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Guidance for Supporting People, various

Hillingdon Shadow Supporting People Strategy, November 2002

Audit Commission Supporting People Inspection Reports for:

- London Borough of Richmond on Thames
- Manchester City Council
- Nottinghamshire City Council

Information on Governance arrangements and other comparative data provided by the following West London Boroughs:

- Brent
- Ealing
- Harrow
- Hammersmith & Fulham
- Hounslow
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Draft West London Supporting People Strategy

Draft Hillingdon Supporting People Strategy.