

Minutes

SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

21 February 2017



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p>MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Teji Barnes Peter Davis Becky Haggar Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana Beulah East Tony Eginton Peter Money Mary O'Connor Judith Cooper</p>
	<p>OFFICERS PRESENT: Neil Fraser, Mike Talbot, Sunita Ghudial, Rod Smith and Andrea Nixon</p>
45.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Palmer, with Councillor Cooper in attendance as her substitute.</p> <p>Apologies were also received from Dr Hajioff.</p>
46.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Haggar declared a non pecuniary interest in respect of item 6, regarding CNWL.</p>
47.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2017 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2017 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
48.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED IN PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be considered in public.</p>

49. **EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON** (*Agenda Item 6*)

The Chairman varied the order of business, so that item 6 was taken first.

Mike Talbot, HR & OD Service Manager, introduced a report highlighting how LB Hillingdon was employing people with disabilities. Key points of the report included:

The definition of disability relevant to employment legislation under the Equality Act 2010 was very broad, and applied to any mental or physical condition that was long term (likely to last over 12 months) and significantly impaired the individual to complete normal 'day-to-day' activities.

The London Borough of Hillingdon had been awarded Disability Confident Employer (level 2) status under the Government's Disability Confident scheme, which recently replaced the 'Two Ticks' Positive about Disabled People scheme. This award indicated that the Council had an inclusive and accessible recruitment process and was proactive in making reasonable workplace adjustments to support employees with a disability.

The Council operated a guaranteed interview scheme ensuring that anyone with a disability who met the minimum requirements of the role was automatically short-listed for interview. While the Council always looked to select on merit, the guaranteed interview scheme ensured that people with a disability are fairly represented within the selection process.

All managers were trained in disability awareness and the duty to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace for people with disabilities, using a dedicated e-learning module. Reasonable adjustments could be a reduction in work hours, or flexible working.

LB Hillingdon subscribed to an absence management service called FirstCare which monitored all absence and provided employees with point of contact medical advice from trained nurses. Managers have the support of an occupational health service and are able to refer employees with a disability or potential disability so specialist advice on managing the health condition in the workplace can be provided.

Two of the highest causes of absences were mental health conditions and musculoskeletal injuries, both of which can develop into disabilities if the condition is likely to persist for over a year. Hillingdon had introduced initiatives to support employees, including a regular physiotherapy clinic. As a preventative measure around mental health, a management course in workplace stress awareness and a course in building personal resilience for employees had been implemented. Staff had recently undertaken mental health first aid training.

Hillingdon partnered with Access to Work to provide assistance to disabled employees. For example, last year Hillingdon employed a blind social worker after securing funding to support a personal assistant who was able to support the employee when travelling on social work visits.

The Council had an Equality & Diversity policy as well as a specific Equalities in Employment policy and annually published equalities data to

the Council's website.

The most recent data indicated that 2.1% of the Council's employees had declared a disability. This was lower than the 2.7% declared disabilities reported in the previous year, and was also lower than the 14% of Borough residents who had declared a disability. However, it was recognised that employee data was often unreliable as some employees chose not to declare a disability.

Work had been undertaken to assess service areas that would be suited to employing people with disabilities. For example, Democratic Services and the Elections teams were seen as having higher suitability than other service areas, particularly in the employment of people with learning disabilities for civic functions.

The data indicated the positive impact of the guaranteed interview, with 5.1% of applicants declaring a disability in 2015/16 resulting in 5.2% of offers being made to people with a disability.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

50. **HILLINGDON ADULT SAFEGUARDING BOARD - CHAIRMAN Q&A SESSION** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Steve Ashley, Chairman of the Hillingdon Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board, addressed the Committee regarding the Board's 2015/16 Report. Mr Ashley was accompanied by Andrea Nixon, LSCB & SAB Business Manager.

Mr Ashley confirmed that the report had been brought to the Committee meeting held on 6 September 2016, though was unable to attend. At the Committee's request, Mr Ashley was in attendance to answer any follow up question. It was highlighted that the report in question was now significantly older, and that the new report for the period 2016/17 was currently being drafted for presentation to the Committee in the near future. The Board was aiming for report publication in June 2017.

Members asked a number of questions, and it was confirmed that:

The development and implementation of strategies to address the mental health and wellbeing of older, isolated, residents needed to be quicker. Detailed, thorough work had been undertaken to draft such strategies, which had included the formation of a performance matrix to specifically address these matters. The issue of self-neglect was still a concern, due to difficulties in obtaining relevant data, though this had improved in comparison to previous years.

Domestic abuse towards males was a topic that was being considered by a number of partnership boards, and it was recognised that this was an issue that was underreported and therefore difficult to address. It was highlighted that there were no refuges for male victims anywhere in London, with the nearest refuge being within Slough. Further detail would be provided within the new annual report.

A lack of feedback when highlighting safeguarding concerns had been

raised by the London Fire Brigade, though this had changed dramatically since the publication of the report. A new triage system incorporating four social workers who would provide immediate feedback had been implemented to address this issue.

The CQC inspection of Hillingdon services provided by the CNWL had showed that Mental Health services were inadequate. Systems were now in place to address these concerns, though these required testing to assess their effectiveness. Further information would be provided at a future date.

Financial information had not been included in the report, as the vast majority of the financial contributions to Hillingdon Safeguarding were being made by Hillingdon Council. Other partners were not under any obligation to contribute. Financial information would be included in future reports. Finances were now in place to recruit Best Interest Assessors, though such recruitment was difficult due to a national shortage of qualified assessors.

Performance data was difficult to include in the report, as it could not be included until ratified, which took place circa October each year. Similarly, data could often be unreliable due to underreporting, particularly with regarding to domestic violence within certain communities.

Members provided the Chairman with feedback, highlighting their difficulty in finding the Board's website via internet searching. In addition, it was requested that future reports include the six safeguarding principles as set out by Government, ratified performance data, as well as confirmation of the organisations that made up the Board's membership. Members also highlighted the importance of seeing the strategic plans in place for the year ahead, and suggested that particular focus be given to potential preventative measures at schools, to avoid escalation into adulthood. The Chairman agreed to look into these issues, and suggested that if Members had further feedback for the Board that they provide forward this to the Chairman via the clerk.

Members thanked the Chairman and Ms Nixon for their attendance, and confirmed that they looked forward to seeing the 2016/17 report, once available.

51. **SCOPING REPORT AND WITNESS SESSION FOR SECOND MAJOR REVIEW - THE IMPACT OF CHANGES TO HOUSING BENEFITS ON RESIDENTS AND THE COUNCIL** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Sunita Ghudial, Benefit and Governance Manager, introduce the scoping report for the Committee's review into the impact of changes to housing benefits on residents and the Council. Mrs Ghudial was in attendance alongside Zulfiqar Mulak - Interim Housing Specialist Manager, and Rod Smith - Service Manager, Tenancy Services.

Following the information presented at the previous meeting, the officer briefly summarised the welfare reforms set out in the report, which included Universal Credit, Benefit Caps, Under-Occupation, Local Housing Allowance Restrictions, Discretionary Housing Payments Funding, and Social Rent Restrictions. It was highlighted that a summary had been provided as Appendix A to the report, which confirmed each welfare reform, who it affected, its impact, what measures had been taken by the Council, and who

was responsible for those measures.

Members asked a number of questions, with the officer confirming:

Residents affected by the welfare reforms are contacted in advance of any implementation. If a claimant moves address, benefits are frozen until details of the new address are submitted. An appointment system allows for meetings with officers, and benefits can be reinstated on the same day as the address details are received.

The average uplift in rent arrears for Hillingdon Council tenants who are in receipt of Universal Credit is 4 weeks rent, which compares favourably to neighbouring authorities, where arrears average 6/7 weeks. Alternative payment arrangements can be made by the DWP where arrears reach 8 weeks rent.

There are currently not enough homes to enable all under-occupancies to be resolved. However, the Council helps people move to alternative accommodation where available, such as sheltered accommodation or bungalows. Central Government provides additional funding to support families and prevent evictions, and the Council incentivises downsizing, with incentives such as payments against outstanding Council tax linked to the number of bedrooms released. Some under-occupancies will be penalised, though each case is reviewed individually.

Members thanked the officers for a concise and clear report, and agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the scoping report be approved

52.	CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>) Noted.
53.	WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>) Noted.
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.18 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Neil Fraser - Democratic Services Officer on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.