

## Minutes

### SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

16 January 2019

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge

	<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b> Councillors Jane Palmer (Chairman), Duncan Flynn (Vice-Chairman), Judith Cooper, Alan Deville, Ian Edwards, Tony Eginton, Janet Gardner, Becky Haggart and Paula Rodrigues</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Debby Weller – Policy and Strategy Manager (Housing), Gulshan Sangha - Welfare Reform &amp; Tenancy Support Manager, Tony Zaman - Corporate Director - Adults, Children and Young People, Peter Malewicz – Finance, Education &amp; Children's Services Finance Manager, Iain Watters - Financial Planning Manager, Andy Goodwin – Financial Planning Accountant Gary Collier – Health and Social Integration Manager, Nina Durnford - Head of Business Delivery and Support and Anisha Teji – Democratic Services Officer</p> <p><b>Others Present:</b> Caroline Morrison - Managing Director from Hillingdon CCG Imran Devji - Director of Operational Performance and Vanessa Saunders - Deputy Director of Nursing- Safeguarding, workforce and Clinical Standards both from Hillingdon Hospital</p> <p><b>Witnesses Present:</b> Heather Brown – Director and Barbara Maccauley – Policy Manager from Citizens Advice Hillingdon Nigel Gee – Senior Mental Health Worker from MIND Giles Strachan – Uxbridge College Partnership Manager from Uxbridge College</p>
53.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
54.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
55.	<p><b>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes from the meeting on 28 November 2018 be approved as an accurate record, subject to including that Members noted that there was a material mistake on the Universal Credit flyer, which formed appendix 9 of agenda item 5.</p>

56. **TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE** (*Agenda Item 4*)

It was confirmed that there were no Part II items and that all business would therefore be conducted in public.

**PRESENTATION FROM CHILDREN IN CARE**

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Children in Care Council delivered a private presentation to Members of the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee. Members welcomed the presentation and found it insightful to see what recent activities children and staff had been undertaking. Members noted that there had been varied opportunities for young people to engage with Council processes and activities such as taking part in recruitment interviews. Members were pleased with the presentation and were keen to hear more from the Children in Care Council in the near future. The Chairman updated Members on development of the Corporate Parenting Panel, which would come before the Committee in due course to consider, noting the wish to also engage young people in how the Panel is chaired.

57. **MAJOR REVIEW WITNESS SESSION 4** (*Agenda Item 5*)

For the major review, the Committee heard from the following witnesses:

**Heather Brown – Director and Barbara Maccauley – Policy Manager from the Citizens Advice Hillingdon**

Ms Brown took Members through a presentation and provided a number of additional information documents.

Members noted the key points as detailed below.

During 2017 – 18, 35 % of the advice and information given to clients at the Citizens Advice (CA) was in relation to benefits and tax credits, 23% in relation to debt and 9 % was in relation to housing matters. From a CA perspective, the main aim of their service is to provide advice to people and improve policies and practice that affect people's lives. A lot of work had been undertaken by the CA to 'fix universal credit' which included the removal of the seven waiting days at the start of a claim, making the UC helpline free of charge and trying to make UC claims less complicated.

According to the CA, some of the unintended consequences highlighted from UC include UC pushing people into debt, only 30 % of people getting through the identification verification process first time, budgeting difficulties and digital issues especially for middle aged with learning difficulties.

When people are referred, staff at the CA make gateway assessments of client needs and provide telephone advice, arrange appointments with financial advisors and appointments with form fillers. 109 initial claims were recorded in the last six months from July to December 2018. The gateway assessments could also be undertaken over the telephone via a telephone call back.

Following Member questions, it was confirmed that the CA used Somali speaking volunteers to communicate with people who were unable to properly speak English. When the volunteers were unavailable, translators were then arranged and used. People with mental health concerns were targeted and staff had had specific training

on how to make adjustments and be flexible, such as arranging appointments in the evening if people were on meds in the morning. It was also felt that staff had had relevant training as this was not a new topic, this had been a targeted project for some time and a number of adjustments have been made with updated training. The telephone call back highlighted by the CA were also free to mobiles.

It was explained that claimants were frightened about UC as they did not know what to expect. A recent letter sent out by the Council caused panic. The Chairman informed Members that those Members who had undertaken the site visit had already been made enquiries about this letter and it would be referenced in the review.

There was an issue with clients applying too early and as a result, losing transitional rights.

Other CA services would not be compromised as a result of numbers projected as advice sessions were linked and benefit advice sometimes interlinked with debt advice. Capacity may be an issue if there are a lot of people with complex problems after they are in payment for UC. Government funding covers the period up to the claim and then stops. The main aim was to help people claim and assist them through the process as sometimes people were told to claim UC but did not have the established support to help them do this. Although staff were on fixed term contracts, managed migration was not expected in Hillingdon and plans were made in advance for recruitment.

Ms Brown advised clients to not panic and to not claim UC until proper advice was sought.

### **Nigel Gee – Senior Mental Health Worker from MIND**

Mr Gee informed the Committee that his role was to help people spiralling into mental health (MH) issues. He covered benefit and debt advice, appeal, attended tribunals and also assisted with form filling.

In summary, Mr Gee explained that some of the key issues affecting clients included not having access to home computers, not having the confidence to use library computers due to a lack of social skills and concerns regarding a lack of security and privacy.

A large number of people did not have bank accounts which often made budgeting more difficult. When completing online applications, claimants were unable to save information and come back to it at a later date. This caused additional stress for claimants making claims as they would not need repeat the process a number of times to make claims.

It was difficult to upload passport pictures during the verification process. Remembering a password and username was hard, and clients usually forgot their username or password. Maintaining a UC work journal was difficult as there was a need to continuously remind clients to complete their journals. On average, Mr Gee confirmed that he issued four to five food bank vouchers weekly. There was also no capacity for an appointee to act on a claimant's behalf and Mr Gee was concerned that the job centre was not able to help clients with form filling and referred them to MIND.

Members were concerned with the points raised and asked Mr Gee if it would be possible to prepare a report which could be referred to as part of the major review. Some of the information provided contradicting information provided at the site visit to the Job Centre Plus on 5 December 2018.

## **Giles Stratchan – Uxbridge College Partnership Manager from Uxbridge College**

In summary, Mr Stratchan clarified that Uxbridge college staff (not students) assisted claimants with form filling. Free IT courses were offered to clients to help improve IT skills and this was an open ended commitment. Language barrier was a key observation in making claims.

### **Agreed actions**

The Committee wished to invite Inderpal Mudhar – Partnership Manager from the Department of Work and Pensions and Nigel Gee to another witness session to discuss the concerns raised and how real and practical recommendations could be considered. The Committee decided that it would be unable to move on to considering recommendations until hearing from both witnesses again. Democratic Services agreed to facilitate this.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Committee thanked all the witnesses for their evidence and time.**
- 2) That Democratic Services arrange another witness session to take place with the DWP and MIND.**

## 58. **SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE - 2016/17 HOSPITAL DISCHARGE REVIEW UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Gary Collier - Health and Social Care Integration Manager and Nina Durnford - Head of Business Delivery and Support presented the 2016/17 Hospital Discharge Review Update report.

Caroline Morrison - Managing Director from Hillingdon CCG, Imran Devji - Director of Operational Performance and Vanessa Saunders - Deputy Director of Nursing, Safeguarding, workforce and Clinical Standards both from Hillingdon Hospital were also in attendance.

The report provided an update on progress with delivering the recommendations following the review of the hospital discharge process that was taken by the previous POC in 2016/17. The review examined the discharge process for people aged 65 and over who were admitted to Hillingdon Hospital. Eight recommendations were made, which were approved by Cabinet and the report provided an update on the current position for each of them.

Some of the key points noted during Members questions are detailed below in summary.

Members questioned how staff knew a patient was ready to be discharged as there were concerns that some patients may just say it without really being ready. It was confirmed by external partners that when care was provided a relationship was developed between the patient and carer, and ultimately a patient had a right to exercise choice in being discharged. Another key consideration was the capacity of a person and their ability to make this choice.

Members commented that the report was helpful and demonstrated the good progress that had been made. Regarding delayed transfers of care (DTOCs), the Committee was advised that it was unlikely that this could ever be reduced to zero as there were

often complexities arising from family dynamics. It was noted, however, that the implementation of the discharge to assess model meant that people were being discharged much earlier and therefore reduced the number of DTOCs arising.

It was confirmed that a CQC re-inspection would take place later this year. It is likely that this will be unannounced. In relation to recommendation 7, Members asked when this would take place. It was confirmed that Mr Collier will discuss this with Healthwatch Hillingdon and update the Committee.

Members thanked attendees for speaking to the report. Members encouraged officers to not lose sight of the recommendations and commended them for the positive progress made thus far.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee noted the progress made following the 2016/17 review.  
That the Committee thanked officers and partners for their attendance and progress.**

59. **2019/20 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**  
*(Agenda Item 7)*

Iain Watters - Financial Planning Manager, Peter Malewicz - Finance Manager and Andy Goodwin - Financial Planning Accountant were in attendance at the meeting to introduce the 2019 / 2020 budget proposals for services with the remit of the Committee. Members heard that the budget was presented in the context of the next four years, and during this period £48.155m total savings were required.

The Committee noted that Cabinet would consider the budget proposals on 14 February 2019 and the report would include comments from POCs.

The Committee was informed that the underlying savings requirement for 2019/20 has fallen to under £20m due to a reduction in the financial gap within social care and a Council Tax increase, although Council Tax for the over 65s remained frozen. Mr Watters noted that there was still no reduction in service levels, and any savings were made by efficiencies. Mr Watters detailed the contingency items relating to services with the remit of the POC, providing £3,756k additional funding to meet the costs of service delivery in 2019/20 over and above operating budgets.

It was confirmed that savings proposals were focused on increased efficiency and effectiveness, rather than reducing services. It was highlighted that a number of savings totalling £749k had been identified and built into the proposed budget, which included savings from the outsourcing of the Telecare service.

Members heard that any fees and charges for services were benchmarked against neighbouring local authorities, or competitive if the fees were commercial.

The concerns about the pressures on social care exceeding budget proposals and the challenge of recruiting and retaining professional social work staff was noted.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Committee noted the 2019/2020 budget proposals for services within the remit of the Social Services, Housing and Public Health Policy**

	<p><b>Overview Committee.</b></p> <p><b>2) That authority be delegated to the Democratic Services Officer to finalise the Committee's comments with approval of the Chairman and the Labour Lead.</b></p>
60.	<p><b>FORWARD PLAN</b> (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the forward plan be noted.</b></p>
61.	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME</b> (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.</b></p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.45 pm, closed at 9.38 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Anisha Teji on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.