

Minutes

SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

26 September 2018

Meeting held at Committee Room 4
Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Jane Palmer (Chairman), Duncan Flynn (Vice-Chairman), Judith Cooper, Alan Deville, Ian Edwards, Tony Eginton, Janet Gardner, Becky Haggar and Paula Rodrigues</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Mark Billings – Housing Manager, Rod Smith – Service Manager - Tenancy Services, Debby Weller – Policy and Strategy Manager (Housing), Tony Zaman - Corporate Director - Adults, Children and Young People and Anisha Teji – Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Witnesses: Inderpal Mudhar – Partnership Manager from the Department of Work and Pensions Steven Ashley – Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board</p>
23.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
24.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Becky Haggar declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 as it distantly related to matters involving Central North West London NHS Foundation Trust. She remained for the discussion of all items.</p>
25.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes from the meeting on 30 July 2018 be confirmed as an accurate record.</p>
26.	<p>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 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that there were no Part II items and that all business would therefore be conducted in public.</p>
27.	<p>REVIEW - UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND OTHER WELFARE BENEFIT CHANGES (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report and provided an overview. The report provided brief statistical information regarding households likely to be affected by the roll out of</p>

Universal Credit (UC) in the London Borough of Hillingdon and considered how UC works in practice and its likely impact. Key points raised included the fact that the main full service roll out of UC for new claimants in Hillingdon was scheduled for 24 October 2018, universal credit had been introduced in some parts of the Borough. The overall caseload would increase next year through the introduction of managed migration to transfer residents to universal credit.

Inderpal Mudhar, Partnership Manager, from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the process. He explained that there were two different claimant groups namely mainstream and vulnerable.

Mainstream claimant groups

Mainstream claimant groups had access to IT, they had access to email, bank accounts and phones for texting services. Once the claimant was set up they would call the service and arrange an appointment with their nearest Job Centre. Workers at the Job Centre would sit and check IDs. Workers discussed options such as what claimants were going to do, how claimants would look for jobs and relevant training needed and, following this, the claimant's account would become active. If the claimant fell under the social housing category, the rent amount asked and the tenancy was verified with the Local Authority. There was also landlord portal which the DWP can access for information.

Vulnerable claimant groups

Mr Mudhar explained that vulnerable claimant groups usually had no access to IT and no knowledge of the digital process. Funds from the DWP had been commissioned to the Local Authority to support claimants. There were training providers that supported vulnerable claimant groups through the process and a training course usually took up to six weeks. If there were any arrears, personal budget services were discussed. Several job fairs were held, claimants had 1:1s, CV enhancement workshops and there were academies that provided work experience and training.

Mr Mudhar informed the Committee that one of the reasons that arrears occurred was due to the claimant already having arrears before UC was rolled out. The DWP wanted to support claimants with arrears and if there was evidence of hardship, advances were offered. The DWP worked closely with food banks. Overall, there were many options available to support claimants if the LA and DWP worked together.

Members thanked officers and Mr Mudhar for his attendance. Members welcomed the close working between the DWP and food banks to support vulnerable claimants.

In response to Member questions, Mr Mudhar confirmed that the DWP had a complex needs plan to manage vulnerable claimant groups. For example where there were alcohol/drug abuse concerns, the DWP worked with specialist organisations to support claimants. Specialist advisors worked with claimants with disabilities and employees were trained so that they could offer the appropriate support and options. When asked how people were categorised as being vulnerable, Mr Mudhar explained that people at the front of the desk had specialist knowledge and had specific training. Other factors that could make claimants feel vulnerable included language barriers. Officers supported this and further explained that the Council was making individual contact with Hillingdon claimants, undertaking assessment, and doing this in advance of the verification process. Further information on this would be provided in session three.

Members questioned whether training could be tailored to meet different community needs. Mr Mudhar confirmed that different training providers were used such as GOSAC working with a majority of Somali communities.

During the discussion, it was noted that the main reason for UC was to encourage people back into work. Members questioned how many people were back in employment since 30 July 2018 and whether there were any trends and patterns in ages with people applying for UC. Officers and Mr Mudhar did not have this information to hand and Members asked whether it could be provided as it would be helpful to the review.

It was also noted that the landlord portal was only available for social housing and large housing associations claimants. It was not available for private housing claimants, although Mr Mudhar explained that claimants usually had to bring documentation to confirm their rent and tenancy type.

The Local Authority and DWP were all working in partnership to try and migrate to the new system. It was noted that there was a YouTube video that explained the process in detail, however the video only had 60k views. Members asked the DWP to consider whether this was the most effective tool being used and whether other avenues could be explored to educate and promote UC. Members questioned what the best way of registration would be if people did not have mobiles and Mr Mudhar explained that there was also the option to use emails and journals.

Members asked for further information on how other councils had managed the transition process. Members commented that facts and figures would be useful.

Although Members heard a great deal of positive information and a simplified explanation of the process, they still had concerns about how this process would be embedded in practice. This was particularly relevant to people who had specific conditions such as issues with overspending money and people not wanting to leave their house for whatever reason. People with alcohol or drug abuse were unlikely to be able to manage personal budgets. Members considered that this would lead on to other issues down the line. Members took the view that there was still the worry for these vulnerable people and the process did not take into account these specific needs. Although the Committee heard that there were visiting officers that visited homes to help these people, there was a general consensus that prevention need to be worked on and vulnerable claimants needed to be targeted. More work needed to be done and evidence of supported needed to be explained.

After Member questions, Mr Mudhar confirmed that there was an appeals process in place which were dealt with by Job Centre Managers with a turnaround of seven days. This was an improvement from the previous process which could take up to eight months.

Members all reached the conclusion that seeing the service in practice and on the front line, meeting with Job Centre workers and home visitors would enhance their understanding of the process. It would be insightful and allow Members to ask further questions and make informed recommendations. It was important for Members to undertake a decent and honest review and wanted to explore aspects of the transitions process.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- 1. Thanked the witness and officers for their evidence and attendance**
- 2. Noted the evidence presented; and**
- 3. That Democratic Services liaise with officers and Inderpal Mudhar to arrange a site visit to a Job Centre.**

28. HILLINGDON LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT, SAFEGUARDING ADULT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

Steve Ashley, Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and Hillingdon's Adult Safeguarding Board introduced the reports and provided an overview of the key points raised.

LSCB

It was highlighted that there would be significant changes to the local safeguarding childrens boards over the next year and new safeguarding structures and arrangements needed to be developed. A new entity would be in place next year and work was already underway. Mr Ashley drew the Committee's attention to the results of the OFSTED inspection which took place in April 2018, in which it was confirmed that Hillingdon was graded good with outstanding features in terms of leadership.

Members commented that this was an excellent report and children were being served well. There were clear improvements. Further information was requested in terms of the attendance of Members at various boards. It was confirmed that despite the structural changes, reports would still be provided to the POC although it was unknown how the report would look and what it would include.

Members questioned what called for the changes in the structural changes. Mr Ashley explained that following the incidents in Rotherham, it became clear throughout the investigations that there was a poor relationship between children and partnership working. Serious issues came to light which called for reviews into the LSCB's function, and the Government found that it was no longer fit to purpose. However, the structural changes provided a good and big opportunity for child safeguarding to be developed at a strategic level involving two major agencies namely the police and health services.

Officers highlighted the importance of improvements and being critical to ensure a high level of performance. Officers also congratulated everyone and acknowledged the work put in by the authority as a whole.

Following Member questions regarding the new police structure, Mr Ashley raised some concerns about the policing situation in the Borough. He explained that there was difficulties in securing attendance at meeting. There was only a limited amount of officers that looked after missing children and resources were spread across three different boroughs which made it difficult.

SAB

Mr Ashley explained that this a year a joint LSCB and SAB conference was held in partnership with the CCG to highlight the importance of early recognition of the signs of Sepsis. The SAB had a proactive action plan for the coming year. The priorities included modern slavery, domestic abuse, adult grooming/financial abuse and audit of current training. Progress on the action plan would be reported at each board meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the annual reports; and**
- 2) Delegated to the Chairman and Labour Lead to agree comments to be included within the two safeguarding reports for when they are presented to the Cabinet.**

29. ANNUAL COMPLAINT REPORT FOR HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR 1 APRIL 2017 TO 31 MARCH 2018 (Agenda Item 7)

This item was deferred prior to the meeting. This item will be heard at the meeting on 17 October 2018.

30. MATTERS REQUESTED TO BE RAISED BY A MEMBER UNDER COMMITTEE STANDING ORDER NO 18 (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Eginton raised two matters in compliance with Committee Standing Order 18 in the Council's Constitution. He proposed for two matters namely Corporate Parenting and Major Housing Works to be included in the Committee's work programme for 2018/19.

In summary, he explained that with the changes implemented by Council in May 2018, the corporate parenting panel was abolished and as a result there was a reduced level of oversight and accountability for the function. Councillors had a responsibility to look after the 300 children in care and there would not be a corporate parenting item on the work programme until next year where there would be a presentation from children in care. He asked Members to take advantage of the creating a sub group or panel. The second matter had been raised as a result landlords issuing section 20 notices and not providing enough notice to tenants. Councillor Eginton questioned how many Members were aware of the pledges that the Council had provided to children.

The Chairman explained that since the first meeting, she had been working closely with officers to ensure that any panel/sub groups would be established properly. This included having the right people on the groups defining the terms of reference and looking at ways to get the children more involved. Officers and Members were still protecting children.

Members commented that the new structure needed to be embedded and that previous sub group had been unduly onerous on officers. Members commented that this was motion was too early.

The Chairman stated that it was incorrect to say that there was no oversight of children in care, as work was being done to ensure that work was being done properly. The Chairman suggested that children may be involved even more in engaged in the process then before. This was supported by Members who highlighted that evidence before the Committee showed that there had been improvements made during the last six years.

When put to a vote, the majority voted against adding the two proposed items to the work programme at this time, with Councillor Eginton and Councillor Gardner voting in favour.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the two matters raised and decided

	not to include them in the Committee's work programme at this early stage.
31.	FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>) RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.
32.	MULTI YEAR WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>) It was noted that Members were asked to bear in mind the terms of reference of the major review to focus on how the changes could be embedded by the Council and support its residents. The purpose of the review was not to scrutinise policies already agreed by Government. Members also noted the comments made by Steve Ashley, Independent Chairman for the Hillingdon Local Safeguarding Children Board (HLSCB) AND the Safeguarding Adult Board in relation to the new police structure in the Borough. Members asked for the comments to be fed back to relevant officers. RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.35 pm.

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.