

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC
PANEL - OLDER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

11.00am 24 APRIL 2009

VALLEY SOCIAL CENTRE

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Marsh (Chair) Councillors Watkins, Smart and Kennedy

Also Present: Co-optee: Mr John Eyles (Older People's Council)

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1.1 There were no substitutes – substitutes are not allowed on scrutiny panels.

1.2 Councillors Kennedy and Marsh said they had personal and non-prejudicial interests as they were volunteers for and supported the Neighbourhood Care Scheme. Councillor Smart said his wife was a recipient of NCS support.

1.3 There were no declarations of party whip.

1.4 Members of the press and public were not excluded from this meeting but the Panel noted that anyone could ask to give information to the Panel in private session.

2. TO NOTE THE REMIT OF SCRUTINY PANEL AND INITIAL FOCUS

2.1 The Panel noted the remit of the Panel and particular areas that they may wish to pursue as per agenda.

2.2 The remit of the Scrutiny Panel is to investigate

- To what extent are the views of older people known, regarding community safety?
- Do older people have specific concerns about safety in the community?
- How can older people be helped to feel safer in the community?

2.3 The Panel may wish to focus on particular areas including

- Fear of crime and perceptions

- Alcohol related crimes and incidents
- Domestic violence and elder abuse including financial and sexual abuse
- Burglary artifice (door step/ distraction burglary)
- Criminal damage
- Hate crime, those experienced by Black and minority ethnic communities and by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities.

3. INFORMATION GATHERING

Introduction

The Chair Councillor Mo Marsh welcomed the three members of the public attending the meeting in the Valley Social Centre. The Scrutiny Panel Members and speakers introduced themselves. The Chair explained that for the purposes of the Panel an older person was defined as anyone 50 years or over. The Community Safety Crime Reduction and Drugs Strategy 2008 – 2011 had been developed by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Information from Age Concern

3.1 Mr Baker Director of Age Concern Brighton Hove and Portslade, had first raised the issue of older people and community safety at a meeting of the Community Safety Forum. He welcomed the panel investigation.

3.2 Older people were far less likely to be victims than younger people yet older people's fear of crime was greater but disproportionate to the actuality. This message had to be spread.

3.3 Mr Baker stated that there needed to be stronger communication with older people; both to receive and give information. He thought business sponsorship or other funding sources could be attracted to produce an independent publication for older people in Brighton and Hove. Consultations with older people would be better received in a publication that was already being regularly read and could work out cheaper than at present for statutory consulters including health organisations.

3.4 Mr Baker envisaged this as a free quarterly newsletter that would include for instance good news regular features local events and emergency phone numbers aimed at older people. He felt the Older People's Council and other organisations could be involved with this. He did not criticise any current publication but said more collaboration was needed and the proposal would not affect any existing newsletter such as the Council's City News, the Leader or The Pensioner, published by the Pensioners' Forum.

3.5 Councillor Smart said that in his ward the Knoll Scroll and Hangleton Harbinger were now circulated to more than 6000 households. This had taken years of hard work to establish.

3.6 From his experience of supporting local clients Mr Baker said social inclusion of older people was an area to be developed, to help people feel safe. Older People could lose their sense of independence and yet often they themselves did not recognise this and did not see

themselves as vulnerable. Supporting social networks and developing these should be an area of priority in his view. One example was give; tenpin bowling.

3.7 Speaking about interaction with local groups he said a full list did not exist of local organisations working with older people. Putting together such a contact list and keeping it up to date would be a long process; however it would be a simple task and would help communicate key issues such as fear of crime.

3.8 More personal alarms for local vulnerable older people could be provided if unwanted mobile phones were collected for emergency use by older people in Brighton and Hove, rather than being sent for recycling elsewhere. Handsets could be programmed with a 'one-touch' key if necessary and linked with a Geographical Positioning System to help identify and locate an alert.

3.9 Regarding future grant funding rounds, Mr Baker said closer partnership working by the Council had the potential to demonstrate the various client groups thereby strengthening funding applications.

3.10 Mr Baker said that the Council should give more support to the Older People's Council, and commented that he felt more could be done 'Designing out Crime' as for example in award-winning West Yorkshire. The Head of Community Safety pointed out the long-term input into planning policies and into individual planning applications of the Environmental Initiatives Team and its direct practical environmental work.

3.11 Answering questions Mr Baker said that from 1 April 2009, Age Concern and Help the Aged had merged. These were national charities and therefore those who wished to make a donation or leave a legacy for local use needed to specify 'to be spent in Brighton and Hove.'

3.12 Age Concern held a number of contracts within the council, accounting for around $\frac{3}{4}$ of its services and around $\frac{1}{4}$ were funded by legacies and donations. Responsibilities for Older People's Services within the Council lay with Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Cabinet Member for Housing.

3.13 Regarding lines of communications Mr Baker said he had meetings at Cabinet Member level. It was a period of change for both Age Concern and council Members and officers and there was room for improvement in communications with partners. An example of a need for closer working was a 'Patient's Choice' health event targeted at older people.

3.14 The Head of Housing Management who was also the scrutiny link officer for the Panel, lead officer for the Older people's Council and manager of the 50+ Community Programme, said that the Panel had seen and liked the handbook 'Be Smart Be Safe' produced by the Safety Education Foundation and if wished, could recommend the funding of this, tailor-made to Brighton and Hove.

3.15 Individual's names could not be shared because of data protection legislation; however the list of clubs/activities and organisations formerly compiled and maintained by Adult Social Services was likely to be part of the remit of a council officer in the near future. This would be helpful to many, including the Access Point. Information on the 50+ Community Programme had been provided to the Panel and was available to view on request.

3.16 Mr Baker told the meeting Age Concern had a free counselling service. Client confidentiality was important. He said elder abuse typically started with financial abuse, perhaps by a family member or carer which could lead on to criminal, physical psychological or emotional abuse. An older person may tend to internalise emotions, feel guilty or responsible and timescales in arranging help - such as the support of a social worker - could be so long that unreparable damage may have been made to the client.

Neighbourhood Care Scheme

3.17 Mr de Podesta had run NCS, the Neighbourhood Care Scheme (different from Neighbourhood Watch) since 1998. He said many elderly people were isolated and 'invisible' and had inescapable difficulties which required support which could best be provided by NCS. A paper giving facts and figures and leaflet was circulated.

3.18 The Scheme was key to helping people stay active alert and involved and gives emotional and practical support to vulnerable people. It gives neighbours an opportunity to help which he said as responsible concerned people, they often wanted to do. People wishing to volunteer were first interviewed then checked with the Criminal Records Bureau, then had induction sessions and on-going support and training.

3.19 He gave examples of people needing help and volunteers who often formed lasting friendships. Answering a question about risks associated with introducing befrienders, Mr Podesta said that NCS do risk assessments for both client and volunteer. Though the scheme was risk-aware it was not risk-averse and just comparable to everyday life.

3.20 Despite major Neighbourhood renewal programmes that had been funded across the country, Mr de Podesta said that fostering a sense of community and good neighbourliness had not been promoted well.

3.21 No other scheme in the UK gave people the opportunity to help their neighbours and reduce social isolation. There was great potential for the scheme to grow, describing it as an un-mined seam of neighbourly good-will.

Older People's Mental Health Service

3.22 Staff from the Older People's Mental Health Team gave examples of safeguarding adult alerts involving those with dementia or mental health problems that concerned the meeting. These indicated gaps in procedures between agencies; operational protocols needed to be addressed directly, to enable a victim to be protected in their home from a perpetrator. Progress would be reported back to this Panel.

3.23 In discussion the OP MHT said that those supporting the elderly including NCS volunteers might benefit from further training on looking for signs of abuse. It was noted that people with dementia and mental health problems were not good witnesses and evidence was difficult to gather, except where financial transactions were on record.

3.24 Regular courses for staff were run at a nominal fee. Identification cards could be issued to those with serious dementia in case police or other services needed to intervene but the use of these had other implications.

3.25 The Panel had received a copy of the Safeguarding Adults Annual report and work programme, available to view on request, and a summary of the Older People's Mental Health Service structure was circulated.

Head of Community Safety

3.26 The Head of Community Safety said that a strategic assessment (crime analysis) had been provided to the Panel in a report available to view on request on the extent to which older people experience and perpetrate crime.

3.27 The report drew out the risk areas that were not normally discussed such as alcohol-related harm and incidents, domestic violence, doorstep crime, criminal damage and hate crime, for which the number of incidents reported by older people, although low, had risen in comparison with the rest of the population.

3.28 Members discussed:

- a) Extent of awareness of elder abuse and compared with child abuse
- b) Training for councillors, staff
- c) The attrition rate for perpetrators
- d) Role of the Older People's Council, particularly in contacting individual older people electorate

4. FUTURE MEETINGS

4.1 The Panel noted that a Select Committee on Dementia and a scrutiny panel on pavement obstructions such as A- boards would shortly start work.

4.2 Summarising the Chairman said the Panel would be asking for more information on alcohol and older people and hopefully more public interest would be generated as the Panel progressed. The Chairman would be discussing the next agendas with the scrutiny officers.

4.3 Possible/probable items for next meetings 22nd May and 3rd July

- Cabinet Member Cllr Dee Simson
- Primary Care Trust and older people risk from alcohol-related incidents/harm
- Community engagement and meeting the particular needs of older people
- 60+ Action Group
- Progress following 24th April
- others

The meeting concluded at 1.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of