

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 28 JUNE 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors K Norman (Chair); Buckley, Gilbey, Peltzer Dunn and Cobb

Co-opted Members: Mick Lister, LINK

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1A Declaration of Substitutes

1.1 Councillor Denise Cobb was attending in place of Councillor Andrew Wealls.

Apologies were received from Councillors Mike Jones and Craig Turton.

1B Declarations of Interest

1.2 There were none

1C Declarations of Party Whip

1.3 There were none.

1D Exclusion of Press and Public

1.4 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

1.5 **RESOLVED** – that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 These were agreed.

3. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chair welcomed all of the new members and the attending officers to the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.2 The Chair congratulated the Overview and Scrutiny Team for their success in the national Centre for Public Scrutiny awards, where they had won the Innovation award for their scrutiny panel work, and had been runners-up in the 'Team of the Year' award.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS, LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS AND NOTICES OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLORS

4.1 None were received.

5. PRESENTATIONS FROM THE LEAD COMMISSIONERS

5.1 The committee received presentations from the Lead Commissioners for Adult Social Care and for Housing, Denise D'Souza and Jugal Sharma, and Head of Service for Housing and Social Inclusion, Nick Hibberd.

5.2 Denise D'Souza, Lead Commissioner, Adult Social Care and Health, spoke about the local authority's statutory responsibilities and the prevention services that were undertaken in Adult Social Care. She also told the committee about safeguarding, homecare, and the commissioning priorities.

Ms D'Souza said that future development work included a need for more work on developing social capital and increasing the market in personal assistants to offer customers a real choice.

5.3 Ms D'Souza responded to questions from committee members.

Members asked how Brighton and Hove's safeguarding statistics compared with other cities. Ms D'Souza said that the increase in safeguarding reports was in line with what was anticipated, as the need for safeguarding became more known and more publicised. Ms D'Souza offered to include comparator statistics in the annual report.

Members asked who tended to make safeguarding reports; Ms D'Souza said that reports could be made by anyone with a concern but that they tended to be made by health professionals, both within and outside the local authority.

5.4 Jugal Sharma, Lead Commissioner for Housing, gave a presentation on the pressures on housing in the city, in particular those on social housing and in the private rented sector. There was an annual deficit of approximately 500 properties, particularly within larger family accommodation.

The committee heard that, in Brighton & Hove, one in five households had someone with a vulnerability; these figures were the highest in the Southeast. Mr Sharma also told the committee that there was a higher level of non-decent housing in the private rented sector than in social housing.

It was often the case that substandard accommodation was being used to house the most vulnerable people; it was one of the priorities for Housing to tackle the inequalities within the private rented sector.

5.5 Mr Sharma responded to questions from committee members:

Members asked how the council was planning to tackle the financial gap for housing. Mr Sharma said that affordability was a key issue, particularly for people who were returning to work and would therefore have reduced benefit income. The council had recently introduced a working household allocations policy in order to keep people in work and to give them priority for social housing.

Members asked about the joint working between the PCT and the council in terms of a shared approach and shared costs. Mr Sharma explained that there was a 'Repairs on Prescription' initiative which had already proved successful in enabling families to stay in their own homes once necessary repairs had been carried out. In terms of sharing costs, the council was talking to the PCT about this at present.

Members asked about the likely impact of the Housing Benefit caps that were being introduced. Mr Sharma said that people were already starting to move out of Brighton and Hove towards Southwick and Newhaven. Housing Benefit levels were the same in the area between Southwick and Newhaven although if you went further afield, Housing Benefit levels were set at a much lower rate.

5.6 Nick Hibberd, Head of Service for Housing and Social Inclusion, introduced the members to his service, explaining that it was the delivery unit for housing services.

Mr Hibberd said that the council was the largest landlord in Brighton & Hove, with over 12,000 properties; this was large in comparison to other social landlords.

Mr Hibberd spoke about the level of need within social housing; almost two thirds of households have multiple deprivation, including drug and alcohol problems; high levels of intergenerational worklessness; mental health problems; physical disabilities and so on. This means that there is a great deal of work to do within these households.

Mr Hibberd also spoke about the work being done to achieve Decent Homes standard within council properties. As of the end of June 2011, 75% of properties would have reached the standard. This represented a huge achievement and was the result of a large financial investment into the properties. The council would reach Decent Homes standard in all of its properties by the end of 2013.

The new longterm repairs contract with Mears meant that the council is projected to save over £47 million in capital value alone. It had also been possible to add additional items to the Mears contract including a number of apprenticeships, a commitment to more energy efficient properties etc.

Finally Mr Hibberd gave some information about the success of the new service centre, which co-locates a number of back-office Housing functions. The centre was working very well; it also had space for a number of other services including space to carry out kitchen assembly onsite; space to store spare parts for repairs etc, which all helped to save time and deliver a more efficient customer-focussed service.

5.7 Mr Hibberd answered members' questions:

Members asked about Government proposals to enable residents to carry out some repairs themselves and whether this was in line with health and safety regulations. Mr Hibberd said that there were certain roles that the council had to carry out itself including gas safety checks. The Government pilots are aimed at supporting residents to do things that they wish to do themselves, and are not intended to replace a council service.

Some residents had already received training in carrying out mystery shopping of Housing services, and had been trained to carry out estates inspections. This was part of the council's approach to involving tenants in a much more inclusive way, and had helped shape service delivery.

Members asked how Housing involved under-represented groups when working towards community empowerment. Mr Hibberd said that there was a database approximately 2000 residents who had already indicated that they wished to be involved or to be kept updated on what was happening.

Mr Hibberd felt that future plans for community empowerment would need to consider childcare issues and how to make events fun. He gave the example of a Financial Inclusion event that had been held in a soft-play centre, for young families to talk about financial matters in a fun setting. The work there had shown that over 70% of those attending did not have their own home insurance despite the council publicising its own low cost scheme. Information of this kind is invaluable and can help the council shape its services more effectively.

6. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS- END OF YEAR REPORTS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE & FOR HOUSING

6.1 Nick Hibberd, Head of Service for Housing and Social Inclusion, presented a report on Housing's performance for the last quarter and answered questions.

Mr Hibberd said that there were a number of areas of very high performance, for example in rent collection levels and in energy efficiency measures. Other authorities were looking to Brighton & Hove City Council to follow our good practice.

6.2 Members commended Mr Hibberd and the Housing teams for their excellent performance figures.

6.3 Philip Letchfield, Head of Performance and Contracting for Adult Social Care, presented a report on Adult Social Care's performance.

Mr Letchfield explained that there had been some major changes in national performance reporting, and there was a move towards more local reporting instead. However limited guidance has been issued to date on how this would work particularly in relation to Local Accounts.

In 2010, the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) role in performance monitoring for councils was ceased. This means that there will be no annual report from CQC on Brighton & Hove City Council's performance. The CQC also ceased the rating system for individual care services. The CQC will be introducing a voluntary 'excellence' scheme from 2012.

At the same time, the NHS Information Centre has decided to undertake a 'zero based review' of all the statutory data returns with the intention of identifying a more limited single national data set. Existing data returns are continuing to be submitted in the interim. This means that there will be no benchmarking figures available in relation to Councils performance and the quality of commissioned care.

The combination of the above two changes has left Adult Social Care in a state of limbo. There will be a new reporting framework, with much more of an emphasis on outcomes. An interim Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) has been agreed for 2011-12 and this was appended to the report. This year, Brighton & Hove City Council has carried out a user survey; it will be repeated next year, at which time it will also be issued to carers.

Mr Letchfield explained that the data included in appendix three of the report was intended to give some provisional examples of the data being collected but it had not been fully verified yet.

6.4 Members welcomed the report and thanked Mr Letchfield.

6.5 **RESOLVED:** Recommendation 2.1 was agreed.

There was an amendment to recommendation 2.2. It was amended to show that ASCHOSC would receive the ASC performance report on a six-monthly basis. The report should also include information on any performance reporting proposals that were due to be considered by Cabinet. This amendment was agreed.

7. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY MEALS

7.1 Debbie Greening, Contracts Manager for Adult Social Care, presented the report on Community Meals.

There had been a noticeable drop in the number of meals that were being purchased since 2007/08; this was a cause for concern although it was noted that it seemed to have levelled out.

Ms Greening said that the current contract had been extended for a further six months, but during this time, they would be consulting on the new contract with a view to re-tendering it.

7.2 Ms Greening responded to members' questions.

Members asked whether customers were asked why they were leaving the service, if this was applicable. Ms Greening said that she was not aware that this was currently carried out but that she would suggest this to the service providers.

Members asked about the timing of the consultation and of the retendering process. Ms Greening said that consultation would start in autumn 2011, although the planning was already underway. At present a range of major contracts were being recommissioned and consulted on, including homecare services.

Consultation took a significant amount of resource on each contract, and it was important not to overload either the team or the customers with requests for consultation responses and feedback.

7.3 Ms D'Souza asked whether ASCHOSC would like to be involved as part of the consultation. It was necessary to look at all aspects of the contract including whether the contract should be split between providers, whether customers preferred to make more personal arrangements for their meals etc. It was likely that any decisions that were made about the service would be controversial; Community Meals represented a significant cost for Adult Social Care.

The Chair of the committee welcomed the opportunity to become involved in the consultation and asked how ASCHOSC could best help the Contracts Team in their work. It was agreed that two or three ASCHOSC members would meet with officers from Adult Social Care to discuss the issue and decide whether it could be a suitable topic for a Review Panel.

7.4 **RESOLVED** – that ASCHOSC members would meet with officers from Adult Social Care to discuss the issue and decide whether it could be a suitable topic for a Review Panel.

8. SAFEGUARDING ACTION PLAN

8.1 Brian Doughty, Head of Services, Adult Assessment, presented the report on Safeguarding Adults at Risk.

8.2 There were no questions from committee members.

9. ASCHOSC ANNUAL WORK PLAN

9.1 Members discussed the proposed ASCHOSC work programme for the forthcoming year.

9.2 Comments included the view that Housing might not be a natural fit for the Committee along with Adult Social Care and Health; Ms D'Souza said that there were some very strong links between Housing and Social Care.

Members asked whether the Health and Wellbeing proposals would help to align Adult Social Care, Housing and Health. The Chair commented that it was important that any new arrangements did not cause any more work for members.

9.3 **RESOLVED** – Members noted and agreed the work plan as listed in the appendix to the report.

10. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CABINET OR THE RELEVANT CABINET MEMBER MEETING

10.1 There were none.

11. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO COUNCIL

11.1 There were none.

The meeting concluded at 6.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

