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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE INDIVIDUALS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Town Hall, Main Road, Romford 10 July 2014 (7.30 - 10.05 pm)

Present:

Councillors June Alexander (Chairman), Philip Hyde (Vice-Chair), Darren Wise, Ray Best, Viddy Persaud, Keith Roberts and Roger Westwood

1 DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor June Alexander declared that she had previously been an active member of HealthWatch Havering, but was now a support member of HealthWatch Havering.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 March 2014 was agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee noted its membership.

4 INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Committee received a presentation giving an insight into how Overview and Scrutiny worked in Havering. It was important that the committee understood the difference between Executive decisions and those made by the Council. Members were informed that Council functions were explicitly the responsibility of the full Council and/or its Committees or staff on their behalf. Whereas Executive functions, were the responsibility of the Executive, meaning the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members, or staff on their behalf. The principal interest of an OSC was the Executive decision making function.

Overview and Scrutiny was the function by which Council decisions, or indeed any actions taken in connection with Council functions, can be reviewed and/or scrutinised. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are able to make reports and/ or recommendations to each of full Council, Cabinet or any policy committee. These reports can be in connection with the discharge of any functions.

The Committee noted that the former local government minister, Nick Raynsford MP, once stated *Scrutiny is a powerful tool to help identify weaknesses in existing policy and practice, as well as driving improvement*".

In Havering there were seven overview and scrutiny committees, five dealt with various aspects of Council services and were aligned with the overall goals of the Council. They were:

- Children and Learning
- Environment
- Individuals
- Towns and Communities
- Value

The other two – Crime & Disorder and Health were principally outward looking and scrutinised local crime and disorder-related issues and local health services respectively.

The Committee noted that only non-Cabinet members may sit on an overview and scrutiny committee, however there was nothing to prevent a Committee meeting with or questioning a relevant Cabinet member in order to aid aspects of scrutiny. Overview and Scrutiny meetings are open to the public and anyone, including Cabinet Members, may attend.

Each overview and scrutiny committee consisted of between six and nine members. Under the political breakdown rules, the political breakdown of the seats reflected, as far as was practicable, the make-up of the Council as a whole.

The Committee were informed that a major part of their work would be undertaking Topic Groups, either as part of an agreed work plan, or because a specific issue arises that needs investigation. The Committee itself would approve the terms of reference and the scope of its Topic Groups and can set parameters within which they will work. A recent change is that Council has agreed that Topic Group may include – or indeed be wholly comprised of – members who are not actually members of the parent OSC. Therefore if a member not on a particular OSC has expertise or an interest in an area being investigated by a Topic Group, he or she can take part if the committee agreed to their inclusion as a member of the Topic Group.

The factors for successful scrutiny Topic Groups were outlined to the Committee. The more tightly and realistically framed that the recommendation are, the more likely they are to be adopted/ implemented. Members are encouraged to look at various aspects of Council services, by meeting Council officers, holding discussions with the public and community groups and undertaking site visits both within Havering and to gain an understanding of the situations in other Councils.

The Committee was informed of the call-in process and how this would be dealt with by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The officer explained that often a special meeting of the OSC would have to be fixed at a date and time which may not be popular with all members of the committee.

The Councillor Call for Action (CCA) was a power that allowed any Member to bring a matter of concern to an OSC. The issue could not relate to planning, licensing, health and crime and disorder issues, as separate powers covered these areas. Members must have attempted to resolve the issue directly with the department concerned prior to bringing them to scrutiny in this way.

The Committee was informed that one change, enacted by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, was the requirement of each Council to nominate a Statutory Scrutiny Officer. This person was required to promote the role of Overview and scrutiny in the Authority as well as support all Members and officers in their work and dealings with Overview and Scrutiny. In Havering the Statutory Scrutiny Officer was Andrew Beesley, Committee Administration Manager.

5 OVERVIEW OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Adult Social Care setting out the services within Adult Social Care and Commissioning. A brief description of what each section was responsible for was explained.

A detailed presentation on the Care Act and Better Care Fund was also given, this included details of how the Care Act pulled together a number of legislation and law into one document. The Act brings together the duties and responsibilities or extends those already being used.

The Act aims to make care and support clearer and fairer by introducing a cap on the care costs that people will incur in their lifetime; provide a new universal deferred payment scheme so that people do not have to sell their homes; provide a single national threshold for eligibility to care and support; guarantee to ensure continuity of care when moving areas; include protections to ensure that no one goes without care if a provider fails and to ensure that young adults are not left without care and support during the transition to adult care and support.

The Committee found the presentation very interesting and lots of discussions were had as to how this would fit within its work programme.

It was agreed that the presentation on the Better Care Fund and Funding Reforms be deferred to the next meeting of the committee.

6 REVIEW OF SERVICES IN HAVERING FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA OR A LEARNING DISABILITY

The Committee received a presentation from a representative of HealthWatch Havering setting out the findings of a review they had conducted into the services available for people who have dementia or a learning disability.

The Committee was informed that there were a series of workshops carried out in February and March 2014 to find out from carers, volunteers and users what services were available in Havering for people who had dementia or a learning disability and what needed to be done to secure improvements. The framework for each meeting and for both topics included the following questions

“What is missing?”

“What would make a difference?” and

“What have you experienced that is good?”

Over 100 people attended the workshops and a number of conclusions were reached. From these conclusions HealthWatch Havering agreed on a number of recommendations that they passed onto the relevant agency. A number of the recommendations were taken forward quickly by certain agencies.

The Committee found this very interesting and lots of discussions were had about issues that could be scrutinised during the coming municipal year.

7 IMPACT OF SERVICES ON THE ELDERLY TOPIC GROUP REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Impact of Services on the Elderly Topic Group. This topic group had completed its scrutiny prior to the election, but it was necessary for the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree the report and refer it to Cabinet.

The Committee agreed the report and agreed to refer it to Cabinet.

8 COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Committee received a report setting out details of its work programme for the next municipal year. A number of items were put forward and it was agreed that there were a number of areas that members wished to scrutinise as part of the Topic Group.

Chairman

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