

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE INDIVIDUALS  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday 19 July 2011 (7.30pm – 9:15pm)  
Havering Town Hall, Romford**

**Present:**

Councillors Wendy Brice-Thompson (Chairman), June Alexander, Jeff Brace, Frederick Thompson (substituting for Councillor Pam Light) Linda Van den Hende and Keith Wells.

Apologies were received from Councillor Pam Light and from Wendy Gough, Committee Officer.

Joe Coogan, Assistant Director – Commissioning – Adult Social Services (JC) David Cooper, Head of Adult Social Care (DC) Ann Rennie, Library Services Manager (AR) and Veronica Webb, Customer Care and Complaints Manager (VW) were also in attendance.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman announced the arrangements to be followed in the event of the building needing to be vacated as the result of an emergency.

**1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Individuals Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 12 April 2011 and of the special meeting held on 15 June 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**2 LIBRARY SERVICES DVD**

The Chairman welcomed AR who gave apologies that she was unable to attend the previous meeting. The Committee then viewed a DVD explaining services offered by Havering libraries for people with disabilities. Examples included the housebound library service and a monthly listening group at Rainham Library for people with visual impairments. Spoken word and large print loans were also available and people with visual impairments did not pay reservation or overdue fees.

There was a quick read collection of short books for people with lower level reading abilities while specialist publishers printed books on off-white paper with larger spaces between lines in order to help people with dyslexia. Hearing loops were installed in all libraries and all refurbished libraries were DDA-compliant with lifts and wheelchair access. Libraries also undertook work in special needs schools that also involved older people.

Specialist storytelling packs known as Bag Books were distributed by Havering library to children and adults with learning disabilities. Job opportunities were also made available by the library service to people with learning disabilities via the Rose Project. Between six and eight such clients were placed in libraries.

AR confirmed that there were 100,000 registered borrowers at Havering libraries with 45,000 classified as active borrowers. Separate figures were not kept of the number of library users with special needs but AR agreed to supply the numbers who did not pay library charges and hence were classified as having a visual impairment. It was difficult to identify the number of housebound residents using e-books but approximately 10,000 e-books and e-audiobooks had been issued in the last year.

Culture and Leisure had held a disability forum day in late 2010 and a libraries disability forum day was now being planned. Information was also available via the library service's pages on the Facebook and Twitter social networking sites.

As regards dyslexia, work was ongoing to establish a reading group for people with dyslexia and hence establish their needs. This would include the potential use of coloured plastic sheets to assist with reading. Staff training had also taken place in order to make libraries less intimidating for dyslexics. A video had also been made to be shown on library plasma screens to encourage people to come into libraries.

Councillor Van den Hende asked if there was a role for carers in the library initiatives. AR responded that libraries were working with the learning disability forum and Social Services in order to engage with carers. There was also a possible link with day opportunities and libraries.

The library service was also looking at the use of voice-activated IT equipment and was discussing with local groups what the best technology would be. MP3 players were cheaper at £20 compared to books on disk or tape at £70 each but MP3 players only held a single book and quickly wore out. There was also a concern that older people may not use audio or e-books even though they were the cheaper option. Desks with variable heights to assist wheelchair users were also available at some libraries. AR confirmed that the work for people with disabilities had been completed within budget and added that a lot of the work was undertaken with volunteers.

The refurbishment programme in libraries included the installation of a projector and screen at each site and AR added that there were approximately 2,000 events per month run in Havering libraries. Councillor Wells congratulated AR on the extra facilities now in libraries.

A quarterly brochure was produced aimed at hard to reach groups and was available from the libraries themselves, GP surgeries, the town hall and by e-mail. An outreach team also gave talks on libraries. The service was also advertised in each edition of Living magazine. A recent post on Twitter had complained that there was no baby changing facility at Romford library and this had now been installed at the site. AR was aware of the reading facility in the

latest computers but this was not being used in any libraries at present. All libraries did offer Wi-Fi however.

The committee **noted** the presentation and thanked AR for her input to the meeting.

### **3 ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT**

JC introduced the report and explained that the overall number of complaints received had gone down and complaints were also now being resolved more quickly. VW confirmed that there had been a decrease in complaints but it was important not to be complacent. There had been two Ombudsman cases, one of which had been discontinued by the Ombudsman and the other which had found there had been no maladministration by the Council. The cost of complaints investigations had lowered as the Council had made less use of external investigators in the past year.

The majority of complaints related to issues such as the late arrival of home carers and challenges to payment decisions. There were three staff focused mainly on complaints and officers accepted that such investigations could be time consuming. Councillor Brace suggested that complainants should be made aware of the cost of dealing with complaints. DC felt that the transaction cost of investigating complaints would be useful in establishing this.

There had been a 50% reduction in complaints relating to occupational therapy and this was principally due to better information now being provided on disabled parking eligibility. There had been a slight increase in complaints about external nursing and residential care. This was mainly due to changes in nursing home management and challenges to payments for respite care.

External home care complaints related mainly to the quality of home care. Quality monitoring visits etc. would be employed where appropriate. Complaints regarding external nursing care mainly related to the quality of care and levels of expectations regarding care. There had only been two joint health and adult social care complaints in the last year. Recent NHS restructures had meant it was sometimes difficult to identify who was dealing with complaints in the health sector.

The main reasons for complaints included explanations or information not being given and a poor quality of service. There remained a fairly high proportion of complaints relating to behaviour of staff. VW added that work was ongoing with residential and nursing homes in order to improve responses and reduce complaint numbers. It was confirmed that checks were now made on self-funded regulated services but there was little that could be done about e.g. care provided by a family member.

As regards complaint outcomes, many complaints simply needed an apology or explanation to resolve them. On only two occasions during the year had small amounts of compensation been offered. Response times to complaints were

often affected by the involvement of other agencies. DC added that officers were analysing where there were blockages to resolving complaints.

There had been an increase in complaints from younger people and a decrease of those made by older people. There were also now more complaints from people with disabilities. Complainants of the Catholic faith were shown separately as these were the categories used by the SWIFT database which was based on categories used at the Department of Health. There had also been a shift towards people making complaints by e-mail and telephone as opposed to by letter. E-mailed complaints were responded to by e-mail including supplying an electronic version of the complaints leaflet. The corporate complaints form was also available on-line.

The number of compliments received had increased from last year. Compliments received were passed on to the relevant member of staff and their manager. People giving compliments were thanked by either VW or the relevant manager.

Member and MP enquiries had been included in the report for the first time. A higher proportion of Councillor enquiries were now responded to within 10 days.

The Council now had a new CRM corporate complaints database although social care had not been included in this as yet. Improvements had also been made to the complaints web pages. It was noted that from next year a joint report would be produced for both children's and adult social care complaints. It was explained that the total of 141 complaints in fact represented a very small proportion of adult social care contacts as there were for example around 12,000 contact hours per week in Havering for home care alone. DC felt it was inevitable that changes to social care systems being introduced this year would lead to an increase in the number of issues and complaints raised. Campaigns around particular issues also led to more complaints.

DW felt that the department was very fortunate in its complaints officer and complimented VW on her work.

The Committee:

1. Noted the contents of the annual report for 2010-11 regarding Adult Social Care complaints and the continued efforts to resolve complaints at an early stage.
2. Noted the important role of complaints in identifying service improvements.

#### **4 IMPACT OF PERSONSALISATION ON THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

JC explained that the Council now provided very few direct services and had allowed the voluntary sector to widen their offer. The Council was supporting the voluntary sector to do this. JC emphasised that the voluntary sector would

continue to be funded overall as this was seen as an important part of the preventative agenda.

By putting resources towards prevention, the Council would save money at a later stage. For example the reablement service had led to a 27% reduction in the numbers of people placed in residential care. Approximately 40% of customers were self payers and 31% of customers had control of their budgets. JC wished to support and stimulate the care market and also see less regulation. A social enterprise (People 4 People) had been set up to match budget holders with registered, CRB-checked carers.

There were priorities such as to invest in reablement and also statutory duties that needed to be funded such as assessment and review. The meals on wheels service was no longer subsidised but more meals were in fact now provided as people no longer had to be referred to the service.

A “Dragons Den” event had been held to stimulate the day opportunities market. New opportunities were available through MENCAP, Shaw Trust and other suppliers. A user led organisation was being developed which would give opportunities in providing brokerage, befriending, transport etc. There would therefore be an overall shift from grants to personal budgets and self payers.

JC reported that in excess of £3 million of new money was being spent on joint health and social care projects. This was on areas such as telehealth and supporting GPs to prevent hospital admissions. Projects to receive this funding were discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was also hoped to secure money from the Havering Strategic Partnership to coordinate volunteers for prevention and low level support. JC clarified that transport services formerly provided by the Council such as transport to Painesbrook were now provided by Age Concern.

JC accepted that there were challenges from having less money available but also opportunities. More money would be spent with the voluntary sector and the voluntary organisations that were most adaptable and offered the best products would prosper. Councillor Brice-Thompson noted this but felt that it was important that the voluntary sector was not taken for granted.

Councillor Wells asked if checks were made on relatives who provided care. JC responded that most care provided by family members was free and this allowed a personal budget to go further. People were advised to use reputable care sources but could still use care from family members if they wished. DC added that the claiming of additional expenses for care was open to abuse and had to be monitored.

Councillor Van den Hende asked about the cost of the user led organisation, particularly once it became a full employing body. She also felt there was a danger of the user led organisation forming an unnecessary additional layer between the Council and the voluntary sector. JC responded that the user led organisation would not constitute any additional bureaucracy and would not

result in any additional costs. Councillor Wells was however unconvinced regarding the user led organisation.

There had been a very small number of cases of financial abuse under the new system but JC pointed out that such cases had also occurred under the former system. The new system had both risks and benefits overall.

JC emphasised that buying services from charities was the most efficient option as it meant the Council did not have to contribute to core costs. DC added that some charities did not wish to work with Councils although other charities were already suppliers to the Council.

The Committee **noted** the presentation.

## **5 SCOPE OF SCRUTINY REVIEW: DAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

The scope of the topic group review was **agreed** by the Committee unanimously.

## **6 COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee's work programme was **agreed** as per the schedule in the report presented to the Committee although the Committee decided that it may wish to revisit the work programme at its next meeting.

DC suggested that the Committee may wish to consider Government changes that were being introduced to social care as well as the overlap with the health sector. In addition, the Dilnott report on charges for social care, if adopted, could usefully be scrutinised by the Committee.

It was also **agreed** to no longer produce spare hard copies of meeting agendas.

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Chairman

27 September 2011