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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
Committee Room 2 - Town Hall
24 November 2016 (7.00 - 7.35 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Garry Pain (Chairman), Roger Westwood (Vice-Chair) and Meg Davis
Residents' Group	John Mylod (Vice-Chair)
East Havering Residents' Group	Alex Donald and Linda Van den Hende
UKIP Group	David Johnson

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Michael White and Julie Wilkes.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

23 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 August 2016 were accepted and signed by the Chairman.

24 ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT

The Committee received the Adult Social Care Annual Complaints Report 2015/16 which outlined the complaints, enquiries, compliments and Members correspondence received during the period April 2015 – March 2016.

Adult Social Care Annual Complaints fell within the remit of 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations with a requirement to publish the Annual Report.

Adult Social Care had experienced increased demand with 3707 clients coming in to the service in 2015/16. This had been reflected in the number of formal complaints which had increased by 17%. Informal complaints, mainly involving external provider agencies i.e. home care and residential/nursing homes, had decreased by 18%.

The committee sought clarification as to the number of clients last year and what the percentage increase was this year.

For other areas of complaint i.e. 'level of service' and 'dispute decision' officers had supplied an explanation. The challenge for the service was to ensure that expectations were managed properly.

The Committee:

1. **Noted** the content of the report and the continued work in resolving and learning from complaints and the future challenges faced by the service;
2. **Noted** the actions identified to improve the service and the continued monitoring to ensure actions were implemented to evidence service improvements; and
3. **Noted** the positive feedback to services by way of compliments received.

25 **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES COMPLAINT AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT**

The Children & Young People's Services Complaints Annual Report 2015/16 provided information about the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Children & Young People's Service during the year, as well as Member's correspondence. It was a requirement under the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 that the Annual Report be published.

There had been a slight increase in the number of complaints of 6% in 2015/16 (74) compared to 70 in 2014/15, with Ombudsman enquiries in 2015/16 (5) compared to 3 in 2014/15. The majority of complaints were made by parents with just 14% (10) being made by children directly or via advocate. There had been a continuing trend with Stage 1 complaints increasing; however Stage 2 complaints were reducing with the positive outcomes achieved through meeting with complainants.

The Committee had concerns at the increase of 25% in complaints regarding 'attitude/behaviour of staff' which were mainly in relation to decisions made, although there were also issues around 'lack of communication'. The Director of Children's Services acknowledged these concerns and advised the Committee that one of the key issues facing the service was the stability of staff; there had been an high turnover of staff during the year. Things were improving now there was a permanent leadership team in place and work was progressing on appointing a permanent middle management team. This would help with stability and help with the communication issues.

Many of the interactions between the service and clients were at times of greatest stress for the client and they did not always agree with the services

decisions. The way to reduce these tensions was to improve communication.

The Director of Children's Services also informed the Committee that because of the increase in the volume of clients the service had tended to rely on process to mitigate/manage risk. Staff were being encouraged to work closer with families to reduce the level of risk.

The Committee highlighted concerns that the highest increase in complaints had been among children that were 'Mixed White and Black British in 2016/17 (88%) with a reduction in those that came from 'White British' background. Officers explained that whilst these percentages seemed high it was only a small number of complaints. The Committee asked for a breakdown in figures rather than percentages.

The Committee had looked at complaints concerning Looked After Children, of which there had been 33. The most common complaints were about communication with staff members (42%) and decisions made about their case (39%).

The Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that the recent Ofsted inspection had confirmed the need to improve service and provide a higher level of service. Statutorily the Council were required to provide service to care leavers up to 21, and to 25 for those with Learning Difficulties. The Pathway would now provide a service to all care leavers up to 25 yrs of age. The team providing this service had been strengthened and now included trained social workers as well as specialists in drug and alcohol awareness. In response to a question from the Committee the Director of Children's Services confirmed that at present the Mind of My Own (MOMO) was only available to children whilst they were in care. The intention was to extend its availability to all participants up to the age of 25 yrs. Additionally the service was looking to strengthen its approach to advocates and Independent visitors.

The Committee:

1. **Noted** the contents of the Annual Report and the continued efforts made by the service to learn from complaints despite the increasing demand on the service; and
2. **Noted** that the recommendations identified from complaints and continued monitoring of these to ensure that actions were implemented to evidence service improvements.

26 **LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT COMPLAINT AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT**

This report provided information on complaints received during 2015/16. The Committee noted that Maintained Schools and Academies had their own complaints procedures which were dealt with through their Governing Bodies and therefore were not included in this report. Additionally Schools

admissions and appeals were dealt with through a statutory appeals process and were also not included in this report.

Officers advised that the number of Ombudsman enquiries decreased slightly in 2015/16 with two of those being premature/informal enquiries and one where no investigation was warranted. The number of complaints overall had more than doubled with the majority of those resulting from school expansions and the introduction of the new Children & Families Act.

The Committee questioned why the number of compliments had decreased by 58% in 2015/16. Officers advised that last year had been unusual with the Music School attracting many compliments.

The Committee **noted** the report.

27 **UPDATE ON CORPORATE COMPLAINTS**

The Committee received a report on complaint handling performance across all Council services.

The Corporate Complaint Policy and Procedure had been introduced on 1 April 2015. As part of the new policy, it had been agreed that turnaround times should be increased from 10 days to 15 days. It had been further agreed that the percentage of cases responded to within the time be increased from 90% to 95%.

During the period July to September 2016 the Council had received 519 Stage 1 complaints, 99% of which were responded to within 15 days. The council also received 82 requests for escalation to Stage 2 of the process, 96% of them being dealt within 20 days.

The Committee:

1. **Noted** the Corporate Complaints performance Statistics for Quarter 2 (July – September 2016);
2. **Noted** the updated results following the Quarter 2 Audit of complaints: and
3. **Noted** the decisions taken by both the Local Government and Housing Ombudsman throughout the quarter.

28 **MEMBERS / MP ENQUIRIES QUARTER 2 REPORT - (JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2016)**

The Committee received a breakdown of Members/MP enquiries received in quarter 2. 882 enquiries were logged of which 98% (869 cases) were closed on time.

The Committee noted that the areas which received the greatest number of enquiries were related to Housing Retained Services, Roads and

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Pavements, Street Cleansing and Traffic and Parking Control. The Committee were concerned at these levels and asked for further information on the type of enquiry and whether this was repeated.

The Committee **noted** the report.

Chairman

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