



## **MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** **Wednesday, 8 December 2010 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Colwill (Vice-Chair, in the chair) and Councillors Beckman, Chohan, Lorber, McLennan, Sheth and Van Kalwala

Apologies were received from: Councillor Castle

### **1. Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 October 2010 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **2. Matters arising**

None.

### **3. Direct Services Transformation Project**

The Committee had before them the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care which set out the results of the consultation on the draft Day Opportunities Strategy which was a precursor to the transformation of buildings-based, directly provided adult social care with options and a recommended course of action. Alison Elliott (Assistant Director, Community Care) introduced the report and outlined the consultation process that had commenced following the decision of the Executive in July 2010. The aim was to provide services appropriate to the personalisation and choice agenda. Buildings could be closed in some areas with services re-provided in others.

Alison Elliott summarised views expressed by service users and carers who, while in favour of a more personalised service had concerns about the possibility of closure of any existing premises. They wanted to stay with their friends and there were feelings of vulnerability. The Assistant Director advised that option 4 was being recommended to the Executive, which involved and the increase of levels of independence by 30% and the sale of the day centres at Stonebridge and Strathcona with the new John Billam Resource centre providing for users from Albert Road Day Centre and ASPPECT, a provider of day services for adults with autistic spectrum disabilities, currently located on the Strathcona site. The new John Billam would be the buildings base for those assessed as in need. There would be significant savings given the need for less building space, staff and care staff.

The Assistant Director outlined the terms and implications of the other options that would be put to the Executive. Option one, involving no change from the present,

requiring £150,000 investment to carry out repair works to the Stonebridge Day Centre which was currently underutilised. While this option was preferred by users and carers, it did not meet the personalisation agenda nor the draft day care strategy. Option two, to invest a further £850,000 approximately in Stonebridge to ensure it was fit for purpose, with the current service model in the same buildings. Current Stonebridge users would have to be relocated but there would be no increase in capacity. This option was supported by service users and carers. Option three was to retain the Strathcona Centre and to close Stonebridge. The Assistant Director advised that options one, two and three were supported by users and carers. Options one and two were not considered by officers to be aligned to the draft Day Opportunities Strategy and would have little or no impact on the levels of independence. A further option had been put forward by users and carers namely to use Millennium Day Centre for people with learning disabilities.

The Assistant Director emphasised that option four was dependent on thorough, independent and transparent assessments during which users could have present supporters of their choice. She acknowledged the lack of trust felt by carers and service users. In any event, there would be a regular review of service to give people the best level of care. Alison Elliott acknowledged that service users and carers wanted the service to improve however there was a difference of opinion as to how this could be achieved. She then referred members to the equality impact assessment that was appended to the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care and assured the meeting that people's independent needs could be met, respecting individual choice and control. Staff would need to be consulted separately should the Executive agree option 4.

Members sought clarification of the number of places that would be available under each option and were advised that both Strathcona and Stonebridge Day centres have capacity for 130 each and currently have 69 and 39 users attending daily respectively. There was presently no additional demand and staffing levels had not been adjusted to the minimum required.

Ms Manek and Ms Rina Hirani addressed the meeting to set out how carers and service users perceived the consultation process. Ms Hirani stated that they had spoken to many carers and the widely held view was that the concerns they had expressed had only been noted and not taken into account. They sought information on the closure timetable and a full picture of what would replace it and how it would be delivered and they felt that the case studies presented as part of the consultation were irrelevant. At the first consultation meeting, the closure options had been greeted with shock, anger and suspicion. Service users and carers were concerned about the future of Strathcona Day Centre. They questioned the statistics presented and felt they should be taken in the context of the total number of potential users.

Ms Manek, also speaking on behalf of service users and carers put that the council was making an artificial link between the building base and the service. It should not be necessary to move carers to another building in order to achieve the service delivery objectives and value for money. It should be possible to make the Stonebridge Day Centre fit for purpose for less than the anticipated sum, or to only use part of the site and to do likewise at Strathcona. In this way users could have a base in both the north and south of the borough. Ms Manek stated that the financial business case made assumptions about the potential number of service users but it

was the same people under consideration in all the options. Another factor raised by Ms Manek was the impact of the proposals on the health of carers who were becoming stressed at the thought of not being able to cope with the revised arrangements and some were considering putting their family members into care homes. This would result in additional costs to the tax payer. Finally Ms Manek expressed concern at the possibility of fair access criteria being revised and of current service users being significantly downgraded as a result of their reassessment.

In discussion, members asked questions concerning what would happen if following re-assessment it was not possible to increase the level of independence to 30%, the transparency of the assessment process and to comment on the perception that view service users and carers' views had not been taken into account. The Director of Housing and Community Care, Martin Cheeseman, confirmed that should the level of independence not be achieved, he would be reporting back to members. The council had up until then to transform the service to be provided. Alison Elliott added that the council intended to involve carers in what would be transparent assessments and to support them. There was no wish to act quickly. Regarding views expressed the Assistant Director referred to the three waves of consultation and felt that the shock and emotions expressed during wave one had been reflected honestly in the report. The report had also made clear carers preferred options. The department had tried to present pen pictures of direct service provision and to have available people who received service in this way. She also confirmed that there was no intention to revise the eligibility criteria; those eligible would continue to have a service. Once complete, the indicative budget would be calculated and a support plan developed. At this stage, voluntary sector agencies could be involved. Service users would be given opportunities to try different types of service provision and respice care would continue to be available.

Members also questioned how long it would take to carry out all the assessments and the number of current users compared to the provision that would be available at the new John Billam site. The Assistant Director confirmed that one case manager was expected to carry out assessments for two persons in a day, on average, and that the process was expected to be completed by May 2011. Taking into account current users at the Albert Road Day Centre and ASPPECTS there were potentially 160 service users involved and places for only 60 at John Billam. The Assistant Director accepted that judgements of independence and support required would be crucial. Martin Cheeseman confirmed that once the new premises at John Billam were available, should it be found that more people required building based support, the Strathcona Centre could still be available and he would report back to the Executive. The committee noted that the buildings to be closed, Stonebridge and Albert Road day centres, were both in the south of the borough and the question was raised regarding the environmental impact of services users being transported to the north of borough. The Director pointed out that the introduction of themed day centres some years ago had increased transportation time but he agreed that the environmental impact could also be considered.

Consideration was then given to alternative options of using parts the existing sites at Stonebridge and Strathcona, the Bridge Park centre or libraries. The Director advised that any premises used would need to be adapted and it would be difficult to sell part of a site.

From the feedback received the importance of being able to maintain friendship groups was accepted and the Director added that consideration could be given to developing support to allow them to meet in different ways and to also using the Millennium Centre as a base. He acknowledged that new users were likely to be able to be better placed to accept the use of new facilities and it was noted that the report to the Executive did indicate that option four was dependent on the outcome of assessments and having time for people to adjust.

Ms Manek then summarised the carers and service users' comments on the consultation. She felt that while their concerns were captured in the report, they were not reflected in the recommendations. Ms Manek felt that places should be kept in case of emergency and reminded the meeting that the different needs of young and older people should be taken into account. She urged members to visit the families so they could more fully appreciate how they felt about the proposals.

#### RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that officers report back in the event of any problems in implementing the recommended option 4;
- (ii) that the Strathcona Centre be kept open as a safety net in the event of the projected number of service users being higher than anticipated as a result of the 30% projected percentage level of independence not being achieved following individual assessment.

#### 4. **One Council Programme Update**

The committee received a report on the One Council Programme designed to target reductions in the operating costs of the council to help deliver efficiency savings while minimising the impact on front line services to the public. Members heard that there were currently 24 projects at different stages of development, some of which would have major impacts on the council's infrastructure or be transformational. Others reflected changes currently taking place such as carbon management and the development of the civic centre. The Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement advised that approximately £22m was due to be saved in the coming year and benefits would be tracked to ensure delivery. He drew members' attention to the summary of progress to date.

Members enquired whether the programme was on track and heard that it was currently, for this year and next. The Director set out the supporting roles of the Programme Board and Project Management Office and advised that the majority of programme support came from within the council. On the staffing and structure review project, he advised that this had emerged from an external review which had identified that the council had a high ratio of staff in supporting roles in comparison to those with operational/front line responsibilities. It was intended that the number of managerial posts would be reduced providing a more rational structure. Agency staff were being considered first however many were working in social care which was a difficult area. To date, 350 posts had been deleted and it was recognised that the next wave of the review would be more challenging as now there were less opportunities for voluntary redundancy or early retirement. On the question of

consultants, the Director advised that these would be engaged competitively for a fixed price, to quickly deliver on specific tasks.

The committee noted the report.

## **5. Complaints Annual Report**

The report from the Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement introduced by the Corporate Complaints Manager, provided members with an executive summary of the key issues contained in the complaints annual report 2009/10. Members heard that the number of complaints had increased by 5% in comparison to the previous year. In the case of revenues and benefits, the increase was in part due to the significant increase in the number of new or change in circumstance claims dealt with, however, the service has witnessed major improvements over the past year which has contributed to a projected 70% decrease in complaint numbers in 2010/11. The Corporate Complaints Manager advised that the council had not met the target of responding to 85% of all complaints within the relevant timescale however he was pleased to report that the Ombudsman had only investigated 77 complaints (2%) of the total received and there had been no findings of maladministration, the best result for a London borough. The committee heard that new regulations which introduced a simplified one stage process for all social care complaints and been a major change for staff who had performed well and risen to the challenge. The committee were advised that as part of the wider council reorganisation, departmental complaints teams reported Corporate Complaints Manager within the Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement Department with effect from October 2010 and systems would be in place to promote consistent joined up complaints management across the council. It was noted that with effect from October 2010, the areas that the Ombudsman could investigate were extended to include complaints about self-funded care provision in respect of adult social care complaints. For the future, the focus would be on reducing the levels of investigation and a robust approach to follow up and resolving issues.

Members questioned the amount spent on compensation payments and heard that this had increased as the council was following best practice, avoiding escalation and saving money in the longer term. The Corporate Complaints Manager agreed to provide information on the number of cases involved. Staff would continue to be encouraged to deal with complaints at the first point of contact. The committee noted that reductions in service resulting from savings from the council's savings and efficiency programme could lead to an increase in complaints and staff would be encouraged to provide customers with detailed explanations for any changes to service provision. Members discussed possible reasons why it was difficult provide information for equalities monitoring and heard that complainants were often reluctant to complete the required forms (which were readily available) in case it impacted on how their case was dealt with. Notwithstanding this, members still felt that a breakdown of the available data would be useful.

The committee noted the report.

## **6. Carbon Management Programme**

The committee received a report on the Carbon Management Programme which aimed to reduce the council's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions across all council operations; reduce

costs and take advantage of opportunities of generating income from the 'Feed in Tariff' a central government initiative to promote the take up of small scale renewable and low carbon electricity generation technologies. Carbon management was in the One Council efficiency programme and a business case was being prepared on how to implement individual projects to reduce CO2 emissions and to identify the additional resources that would be required in order to minimise the Council's obligations under the CRC levy, to reach the 25% CO2 reduction target by 2014 and to maximise the income from the Feed in Tariff.

In discussion, members noted that the Transportation Unit would be considering transportation and travel, focussing on business travel.

The committee noted the report.

## **7. Any Other Urgent Business**

### *Work Programme*

It was noted that the following projects were due for discussion at the next meeting:

- Customer Contact project
- Customer Journey project
- car repair and spray painting garages task group
- Civic Centre
- review of Employee Benefits Project

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

R COLWILL  
Vice Chair, in the chair