



## **MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** **Tuesday 16 October 2012 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Ashraf (Chair), Councillor Colwill (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Brown (substituting for Councillor Lorber), Chohan, McLennan, Mitchell Murray, Pavey and Brown

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor Lorber

### **1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

Councillor Colwill informed the committee that he was a member of the BHP partnership.

Councillor Pavey declared an interest in item 6 as he was the Chair of the Wembley Locality Advisory Board

### **2. Deputations (if any)**

None

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 July 2012**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2012 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

### **4. Matters arising**

None

### **5. Complaints annual report**

Phillip Mears, Corporate Complaints Manager informed the Committee that there were three separate complaints policies, a corporate policy which dealt with 90% of complaints and two social care policies for adult social care and children and families as governed by statute. It was clarified that the complaints covered in the reports were from residents, businesses and services users.

Phillip Mears explained that nine out of 10 complaints had been successfully resolved at the first stage of the complaints process with a complaints escalated to stages two and three reducing by 39% 26% respectively. It was reported that the Council had the best result in London in terms of the number of adverse Ombudsman decisions as a percentage of all decisions made. The Brent figure was 12% (nine complaints) having a finding of fault compared to the London average of 27% and a national average of 21%. There was an overall reduction of complaints received by 9% with a significant reduction in revenues and benefits and Brent housing partnership.

Phillip Mears reported that children and families received 181 complaints with 7% being escalated to stage two and adult social care receiving 115 complaints and only two escalating to stage two. The priorities for the next year included the implementation of the two stage process, one corporate complaints database and the addition of housing management complaints including the housing management ombudsman and tenant panels.

During queries from the members, it was clarified that service improvements were not necessarily always implemented following a complaint but managers were encouraged to capture lessons learnt as a result of negative feedback and where complaints were upheld, action was taken. It was highlighted that the response time for children and family and adult social care complaints was poor and it was noted that this had been recognised and an action plan had been developed in consultation with Director of Adult Social Care to build capacity and improve performance within the department. Additionally the new corporate database was being implemented that would help track outstanding responses and flag up overdue cases. Phillip Mears agreed to investigate why the on time response rate had dropped from 72% to 39% and report back to members.

It was queried what the compensation payments were for complaints settled at stage one. It was noted that individual case figures had not been provided within table four but Phillip Mears agreed to provide the information to members.

It was queried whether the list included complaints from Councillors. It was clarified that the list did not include complaints from Councillors and members expressed concern that potentially large number of resident complaints made through Councillors which were not included within the statics provided. It was noted that the new complaints database could potentially provide the information regarding Councillor complaints and Phillip Mears would take that back and investigate further.

It was noted that the amount of compensation regarding adult and social care complaints had increased despite the number of escalated complaints dropping. It was felt that this had occurred due to a few skewed cases however it was agreed that further information would be provided.

Members queried the similar priorities for adult social care and children and families and whether they should be service specific. It was clarified that the priorities were overarching for complaints in the department as a whole and three separate reports were required by law.

It was queried what impact the introduction of the two stage process was having and how the public were responding to not being able to take complaints to a third stage. Phillip Mears explained that in preparation for the implementation of the two stage procedure a series of workshops were carried out across the council to explore how the system would work. A corporate investigation standard was established which introduced the concept of investigation plans and made the service head responsible for the investigation and decision. The two stage process also encouraged staff to try and resolve complaints at the first point of contact. So far this year 10% of the 800 complaints received since April being resolved at first point of contact. Complainants would only be advised to approach the ombudsman

if they were still dissatisfied after their complaint going through the two stages if the Corporate Complaints manager was satisfied that the investigation had been carried out thoroughly and that no further action could be undertaken.

It was noted that the housing management complaints would come under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman from April 2013... Complainants would be required to contact a member, MP or tenant panel for investigation prior to contact the ombudsman if they were still dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation by the Council. It was thought that little resource would be available to members however, it was hoped that the evidence of how the complaint was handled would satisfy the member that the investigation was carried out thoroughly and that a member investigation would not be necessary.

Members queried how a more rounded view of public opinion could be explored. It was explained that residential surveys by Ipsos MORI were used however for beneficial feedback to be obtained, face to face feedback was best. It was noted that this was a costly exercise and would not be carried out unless considered a priority by members.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted

## 6. **Working with families initiative**

Robert Hardy, Project Manager, gave a presentation which highlighted the vision of the working with family's initiative as well as an update on the project so far. He felt that resilience was key in families and a family would not deliberately be in their position but would be there as the result of an incident to one or more family members tipping the family into a precarious position. The initiative would look at the underlying cause to a families problems rather than treating just the symptoms and recognise that although early intervention was key, some issues were entrenched across generations.

The project was a Brent project consisting of numerous partners and work had been carried out into exploring current excellent practice and building upon that as a base as well as the earlier troubled family's initiative. It was explained that Government had identified 810 families in Brent under the previous troubled families initiative which would be used as the target figure for the working with families initiative, with 300 families worked with in year one, 405 year two and 105 in year three. The families had been identified using a set of four criteria including a set of Brent specific criterion and the families for the first year had been identified and work was being undertaken into identifying the families for year two.

It was clarified that there was potential for the council to inherit the funding from another local authority if a troubled family moved into the borough or for the family to continue to use the services they need. It was hoped that the scheme would help more than the government target of 810 however 810 families were to be targeted to receive the upfront funding and funding if outcomes were achieved from central government, a total of £2m. A three pronged approach was being undertaken; creation of a multiagency hub, a family support service and the

development of a wider services aligned strategy. It was felt that a swifter, joined up approach of initial contacts was required as 11000 contacts are made, 5000 of which referred by the police but only 2000 overall resulted in an initial assessment.

Members queried what the budget for the project was and whether funding from other departments would be used to fund the project. It was explained that £2m over three years would be paid by central government and services would be reassembled. It was noted that 26 posts had been identified for the project and a savings target of £1.3m had been identified.

Members expressed concern over families seeing the scheme as an incentive and purposefully presenting themselves as a troubled family. It was explained that the scheme was challenging and families would not necessarily want to face the challenges of the scheme which they hoped would prevent the scheme from acting as an incentive.

Members queried the level of partnership working as previous schemes had failed and expressed particular concerns as the Police did not have a relationship with persons. It was clarified that all partners were fully engaged and due to the pressures all agencies were facing, they were committed to seeing the project succeed. Regular discussions took place with partners who were involved on the partnership board and various other mechanisms to ensure the success of the project.

During discussion the reporting mechanisms of the project were queried. It was clarified that 6 monthly reports go to CLG however greater mechanisms are measuring the outcomes of the project were being developed.

Councillor Pavey queried the exploration of a family nurse partnership scheme as this had been proved to be the most successful method of early intervention. It was reported that a scheme had previously been looked at but rejected by the PCT due to costs, it was agreed that further information would be provided to members.

RESOLVED:-

that the presentation be noted

## **7. Performance and finance review Q1**

Phil Newby, Director of Strategy, Partnership and Place, explained that a greater amount of benchmarking information was available and indicators had refined to have greater meaning. An overview of each service area was given, highlighting any concerns and pressures in future, particularly for high demand services such as waste and social care. A full update on the One Council programme will be given at the next meeting however, two projects were currently red and the budget was currently facing pressures of a potential £2m overspend.

During queries from members, it was clarified that only the procurement project was now red, with work being undertaken to address concerns. Concern was expressed over the continued overspend in children and families and whether the budget may not have been correct. With the SEN project going from red to amber, it was queried how many statements had been issued and how many had been

refused. Phil Newby agreed forward this information to members. Members queried the number of foster carers being 110 with a target of 127 and why that was considered red. It was explained that Brent previously did not have enough in house foster carers but following a project the trend had now reversed however carers able to look after children with specialised needs were still required in house. It was highlighted that there were no indicators surrounding adoptions. Phil Newby agreed to discuss the creation of indicators with the children and families director and to update the committee at the next meeting. Members queried the lack of benchmarking for all indicators and it was clarified that the figures were from a wider London Benchmarking club and were only available for indicators that other Councils wished to benchmark against also.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted

**8. One Council Overview and Scrutiny work programme**

The Chair requested that members inform himself or Priya Mistry of any items they wished to see on the agenda at future meetings. During discussions it was agreed than an update would be given on all red projects on the one council programme and if a project was consistently red, a detailed report would come to the committee. Councillor Colwill requested that SEN and school places be placed on the agenda.

RESOLVED:-

it was agreed that the One Council Programme will be a standing item on the agenda and the Phil Newby will be briefed on all red projects prior to the meeting to provide a verbal update to the committee

**9. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee will take place on 5 December 2012.

**10. Any other urgent business**

None

The meeting closed at 9.42 pm

J Ashraf  
Chair