

Review Committee – 3 October 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **3 October 2017** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J C Burton
Vice-Chairman: Cllr R Milne

Cllr N L Cooper
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Cllr B T Hazlewood
Cllr N J Hookway
Cllr M Hoy

Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr J E Newport
Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr C M Stanley

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs D Hoy, Mrs C A Weston (Chairman of the Standards Committee)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R R Dray, Mrs J R Lumley and A L Williams.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr J D Griffin for Cllr R R Dray

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Bostock	-	Assistant Director, Democratic Services
L Moss	-	Assistant Director, Community & Housing Services
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Democratic Services Officer

199 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

200 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs L Shaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6 of the Agenda by virtue of her membership of the Sanctuary in Rochford Committee.

201 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Democratic Services, which updated the Committee on how subjects for Member training were chosen and how the content was decided upon.

During discussion, the following was observed:

- There was no standard approach to Member training across local authorities. The Rochford approach had been developed via a combination of decisions by the Standards Committee in its role in determining Member training and requirements associated with achieving the Charter for Elected Member Development.
- It would be appropriate that, when determining Member training, the Standards Committee received greater input from other Members on what they wanted to be included in the programme. Improved input from Members into the training programme could be achieved by involvement of Group Leaders.
- That improvements to the quality of training offered to Members could be considered and that low attendance at training sessions may be due to the subject matter not always being relevant to the Member role, which could be improved with increased Member involvement in the choice of topics offered.
- The Standards Committee should be asked to consider whether the current arrangement relating to mandatory training was working and whether the process could be amended to accommodate the different requirements of newer/experienced Members.
- Members could perhaps be more involved in determining the non-mandatory aspect of the training programme, with officer input as necessary around changes in legislation, practice etc. The use of an online annual assessment form may increase the return rate.
- The Member training budget of £6,500 for 2017/18 had reduced in recent years and was separate from the Review Committee training budget. Any income from Parish/Town Council attendance at District training sessions was in addition to this amount. Post-course feedback forms were not submitted to the Standards Committee.

It was concluded that, following further consideration of the training programme, it would be appropriate for the Standards Committee to report its conclusions through the Review Committee for onward recommendation into Full Council. Although it was recognised that the Standards Committee had authority to determine Member training, it was felt that the training programme affected all Councillors and any wide reaching amendments, such as those proposed, should be considered by Full Council.

It was recognised that a special Standards Committee meeting would need to be convened prior to the scheduled meeting in March 2018 to examine the aspects of the Member training programme raised by the Review Committee in order that decisions could be made on Member training that would inform the process for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

Resolved

That the Standards Committee be asked to consider adjustments to the Member training programme in the context of the above observations and to report its conclusions through the Review Committee for onward recommendation to Full Council in order that decisions can be made that will inform the Member training process for the 2018/19 Municipal Year. (AD-DS)

202 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Community & Housing Services, which provided an update on the delivery of the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme and journey for residents.

In response to questions, the following was observed:

- Housing Associations are required to consider requests for adaptations from their tenants and set aside funds to meet their tenants' needs. A Member advised that a resident had received a leaflet from Sanctuary Housing Association (SHA) advising that any adaptation works would only be carried out to a certain limit and encouraging them to apply for a DFG. The Assistant Director, Community & Housing Services had been made aware of the wording in the leaflet and had already raised the issue with SHA with a request that the leaflet be amended. There were currently eight 'Housing Association' DFG/tenant applications on the Council's DFG waiting list, from four different Housing Associations. It was confirmed, that Rochford District Council (RDC) would not be providing DFG funding in these cases until the relevant Association adaptation policy was made available. It was noted that last year's waiting list has been cleared.
- There was concern that tenants who need adaptations are falling between RDC and SHA. There could be a benefit in acquainting the Sanctuary in Rochford Committee Members of the issue as they may have influence in ensuring that SHA spends its funding of £150,000 set aside for DFGs appropriately. It was noted that this is being raised at the ongoing quarterly officer RDC/SHA partnership meetings.
- Performance around the DFG journey for residents continues to improve and, as the process becomes quicker, the more DFG funding is spent and it is anticipated that priority waiting lists will be in place by the end of October 2017. A further RDC contribution from the capital grants budget is being applied for 2018/19 to help meet demand.
- If a Housing Association refused to carry out works, the Council would take a case by case approach, based on priority of need, but in all circumstances, request a copy of the Association's Adaptions Policy, to assess if the Association had made sufficient provision to meet their tenants' needs.

- Where applicants cannot be helped by a DFG because of the Government means test criterion, the Council would signpost to support agencies, including an update to the Occupational Therapist (OT) who may be able to provide further equipment on a short term basis to meet the client's ongoing needs.
- The current average time from the beginning of the process (referral by the OT) to completion of the works was noted as 21 weeks. The current DFG journey was now a more 'self serve' process and the 21 weeks was predominantly dependent on the client who had control of managing the process. The time aspect of the RDC part of the process, that is, contact to client, surveyor visits, was not been measured specifically.
- A client not capable of completing the application process for a DFG had the option of accessing the assistance of a Council DFG case worker.
- It was recognised that the customer satisfaction survey measures needed to be improved and to be expanded to include more detailed monitoring of customer outcomes, as well as the DFG application journey itself.
- Income from the DFG service provided by Rochford District Council to Basildon Borough Council was in the region of £5,000 over a six month period. Regarding budget allocation in general, there would be a request for a £150,000 'top-up' for 2018/19 from the Council's capital budget, irrespective of any increase in the Better Care Fund/DFG allocation to the Council.
- As soon as the OT report was received by the Council, the DFG commenced. Currently, the OT assessment service provided by ECC is reported to have no waiting list.

Resolved

That the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) service delivery changes and ongoing work to demand manage the DFG journey for eligible residents be noted. (AD-C&HS)

203 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Community & Housing Services, which provided an update on the use of RIPA over the past year and allowed for the review of the Council's RIPA policy.

In response to a question, Members were advised that Rochford District Council does not undertake investigations that would necessitate the use of young or vulnerable people: these investigations would be undertaken by Essex County Council. Members nevertheless requested that the Policy be amended to state specifically that young and vulnerable people are not used by the Council in covert surveillance.

Resolved

That the Council's annual usage of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) be noted. (AD-LS)

Recommended to Council

That the amendments to the Council's RIPA policy set out in 4.3 of the officer report be approved, subject to the inclusion of a statement that the Council will not use young or vulnerable people as Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) in its investigations.

204 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The four Planning policy documents previously shown on the Key Decisions Document had been removed as they were to be reviewed by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee for referral into Full Council.

205 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered and approved its Work Plan. It was noted that the Planning Policy Key Decisions item, scheduled for the meeting on 7 November, would be deleted from the Plan as these Decisions were now to be considered by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman

Date

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