

MINUTES of the meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held at 10am on Monday 4 July 2011 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These minutes will be confirmed by the Standards Committee at its next meeting.

Members:

- +* Mr Simon Edge (Chairman)
- +* Mrs Marion Roberts (Vice-Chairman)
- + Ms Karen Heenan
- * Eber Kington
- + Mrs Sally De la Bedoyere
- * Mr Geoff Marlow
- * Mr David Munro
- * Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin
- Mrs Lavinia Sealy
- * Mr Colin Taylor

- + = Independent Representatives
- * = Present
- x = Present for part of the meeting

Officers present:

Ann Charlton (Monitoring Officer)

PART 1
IN PUBLIC

20/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were given for Mrs Sally De La Bedoyere and Mrs Lavinia Sealy. Mrs Margaret Hicks was a substitute.

21/11 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 9 MAY 2011 [Item 2]

A point of clarification was raised regarding the ongoing appeal to the Upper Tribunal. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would circulate the submission to the Upper Tribunal to Committee Members.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

The Monitoring Officer to circulate the submission to the Upper Tribunal.

Resolved:

The minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

22/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

23/11 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

None were received.

24/11 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
[Item 5]

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- It was reported that the Monitoring Officer would present the redrafted Member/Officer Protocol to the Quality Board in late July 2011. She would provide an update to the Committee at their next meeting.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

An update to be provided on the Member-Officer Protocol at the Standards Committee meeting on 2 September 2011.

Resolved:

The recommendations tracker and forward work programme be noted.

25/11 APPOINTMENT OF STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEES [Item 6]

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- Agreed that Simon Edge continue as Chairman of Sub-Committee A.
- Agreed that Marion Roberts be appointed as Chairman of Sub-Committee B.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

None.

Resolved:

That Standards Sub-Committees A and B be constituted as follows:

Sub-Committee A

Mr Simon Edge (Chairman), Mrs Sally De La Bedoyere, Mr David Munro, Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin, Mr Colin Taylor

Sub-Committee B

Marion Roberts (Chairman), Ms Karen Heenan, Mr Eber Kingston, Mr Geoff Marlow, Mrs Lavinia Sealy.

25/11 ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT [Item 7]

Officers present for this item:

- Dennis Cruikshank, Resource Manager
- Jessica Brooke, Customer Relations Officer (present for Item 8, but assisted the Resource Manager in responding to the Committees queries).

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The Acting Customer Relations Manager introduced the report and explained that during 2010/11 a key change had been the transfer of complaints handling from the Families Customer Relations Team to

the Adult Social Care Directorate. There had been a total number of 247 complaints during the year with an average of 72% of complaints dealt with within the agreed timetable; however, the last quarter of 2010/11 had seen a significant rise in performance to 94%. 14 complaints had been escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) during 2010/11. The number of compliments received during 2010/11 remained static at 446.

- Members were concerned that no complaints had been withdrawn during 2010/11, despite the fact that 39% had been resolved with an explanation. [The FCRT Customer Relations Officer explained that when a complaint is logged it would stay on the system until the point of resolution. The only time where it would be recorded as 'withdrawn', was where the problem was rectified before resolution stage].
- The Committee were concerned that 42% of complaint resolutions were recorded as 'unknown'. [The Acting Customer Relations Manager advised that the subject of their concern was a service priority for 2011/12].
- Members were pleased that compliments regarding staff behaviour had increased during 2010/11, however, were concerned that complaints about staff behaviour had also increased. The Committee queried whether the increase in complaints about staff attitude was under investigation. [The Acting Customer Relations Manager advised that this was being tackled through staff training on Customer Services. There was a range of training tools available both through the STARS programme and externally through the LGO].
- The Committee agreed that the relevant select committee should be aware of the information raised in the report. It was considered that the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who had overall responsibility for performance across services, should monitor complaints performance.
- It was noted that the majority of cases related to older people and those with learning difficulties. The Committee queried whether there was an increase in the number of complaints received from young adults transitioning from young person's care to adult social care. [The Acting Customer Relations Manager advised that the number of young people transitioning to adult social care had increased significantly. The FCRT Customer Services Officer advised that traditionally complaints from transitioning young people had been very low and were usually about communication, as opposed to service provision].
- It was noted that some teams had been found to miss timescales or leave responses to the last minute; the Committee asked what was being done address this problem. [The Acting Customer Relations Manager explained that a follow up reminder system was in place, alongside frequent dialogue with senior managers. If problems persisted it would be escalated through the management structure. In addition, training would be provided to staff to help improve service performance].

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

None.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

RECOMMENDED:

That the complaints handling performance in the Adult Social Care Directorate be referred to the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee for monitoring.

26/11 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS REPORT – CHILDREN’S, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES DIRECTORATE [Item 8]

Officers present for this item:

- Jessica Brooke, Customer Relations Officer

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The Customer Relations Officer introduced report and advised that there had been an increase in complaints from young people during 2010/11, however, there had been a decrease in the number of cases investigated by the LGO.
- It was noted that officers had interpreted the increase in complaints as a positive indication that young people were feeling more empowered. Members were mindful that another interpretation could be that the young people felt aggrieved to complain. [The Customer Relations Officer advised that complaints from children and young people had previously been managed through a contract where first stage complaints were not recorded ('stage zero complaints'). Now that complaints were managed by the service all complaints were recorded; contributing to the increase in complaint numbers].
- During the discussion one Member raised concern about the language used in the report, for example: 'positive increase in complaints'. [The Customer Relations Officer noted this point and explained that learning from complaints was positive for the service].
- The Committee were concerned about complaints that were recorded as needing 'no corrective action' and thought that a further report was required on this matter to the relevant select committee. [The Customer Relations Officer confirmed that these cases were currently reviewed by the Directorate Leadership Team as part of a monthly performance summary report. It was agreed that a further report should be referred to the relevant select committee].

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

None.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

RECOMMENDED:

That the complaints recorded as needing 'no corrective action' be referred to the relevant select committee (either Overview & Scrutiny or Children & Families Select Committee) for scrutiny.

27/11 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11 [Item 9]

- The Chairman introduced the report and invited the Committee to make comments. The balance of the report demonstrated that the greater part of the Committee's focus had been on providing training and assistance to Members, as well as undertaking the necessary regulatory elements that it was charged with.
- Member's of the Committee queried the meaning of the heading '*Surrey's track record on complaints remains good*'. [The Chairman advised that statistics for 2008/09 had shown that Surrey had generally fewer complaints the comparative bodies. It was reported that the Standards Board for England no longer published this information, but that in 2010/11 there had been a similarly small number of complaints that had been handled properly].

The following changes were agreed:

- Page 3 of the report: the last paragraph be amended to include the name of the Vice Chairman, **Karen Heenan**.
- Page 6 of the report: Further information to be included about the Audit & Governance Committee Task Group that the Chairman sat on.
- Page 9 of the report: a repeated word was noted for amendment.
- Page 15 of the report: it would be noted against Member attendance that Mr Geoff Marlow was the Chairman and Mrs Lavinia Sealy was the Vice Chairman of the Council during the period 2010/11.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

The report would be up-dated in the light of the Committee's comments before submission to the Council on 19 July 2011.

Resolved:

- (a) Subject to the Committee's comments being included, the Annual Report be approved and submitted to Council on 19 July 2011.

28/11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:

2 September 2011:

Apologies were given by Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin, Mr Colin Taylor and Mrs Marion Roberts.

Mrs Margaret Hicks confirmed that she would act as a substitute for Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin.

Meeting closed: 11.15am

Chairman

