

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
31ST MAY 2012

7.15pm-8.10pm

PRESENT: Councillors; Suzanne Evans (Chair) , Peter McCabe (Vice – Chair, Margaret Brierly, Brenda Fraser, Maurice Groves, Logie Lohendran, Dennis Pearce, Greg Udeh

Co-optees: Myrtle Agutter, Barbara Price, Sheila Knight, Laura Johnson and Saleem Sheikh,

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Linda Kirby Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Dr Val Day, Interim Director for Public Health, Simon Williams, Director of Community and Housing.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence

3 TRANSITION OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO THE LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

The Chair asked if there had been any progress in determining the extent of the financial shortfall when the council takes over responsibility for delivering public health. Simon Williams, Director of Community and Housing, reported that the money will be based on PCT historic spend and that he is confident the PCT has accurately reported the actual level of spend to the Department of Health. This means the Council will have enough money for its current commitments for staff and public health programmes. The Director further reported that we are below the London average on population spend per head. If this was weighted to take deprivation into account, we wouldn't get much more as we are a relatively prosperous London borough.

However he raised concerns the allocation may not be enough to fulfil new statutory duties therefore the Director suggested that a letter be written to the Department for Health expressing concern about the level of funding and is co-signed by the Chair of this Panel, Councillor Suzanne Evans and the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care and Housing, Councillor Linda Kirby. The Panel supported this proposal.

Dr Val Day reported that that the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA) are looking at spend on public health nationally. ACRA will publish their findings in late June and councils will be asked to respond. Actual spend varies across the country, it is higher in London. There will be more guidance at the end of this year around pace of change and at what speed Councils will be expected to move from current to the new position. The Secretary of State has assured councils that they will not receive less money than the PCT did to deliver this service. The

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Department of Health has published estimated baseline spends so local authorities know the minimum amount of money that they will have.

A panel member pointed out that it is important that we have additional funds for extra activities otherwise there will not be any progress.

The Chairman asked that this letter be sent to the Secretary of State as soon as possible.

The Director for Community and Housing pointed out that we always wish to do more the key thing is if we are required to do more. We need to be aware if activities become mandatory and if they are prescriptive and set minimum standards.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Community and Housing, draft a letter to the Department of Health on behalf of the Chair of the scrutiny Panel and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health expressing concern about the level of funding for public health duties in Merton

The Chair asked how the Panel's concerns that mental health issues are sidelined in the transition plan are being addressed.

The Director for Community and Housing pointed out that this is about Public Health transition. The Health and Well being Strategy, which is in development will address mental health issues. The Strategy should be ready to come to the Panel in early autumn.

A panel member reported that a couple of reports had stated that Merton has the lowest spending on mental health in London.

The Director for Community and Housing said that we have the lowest spend in adult social care in London. There are budgetary pressures on a number of services including environmental and children's services. We are a low spend borough.

A panel member pointed out that there needs to be acknowledgement that more needs to be done to address mental health issues and there is already some concern that some GP's do not identify mental health issues.

RESOLVED

That the Panel scrutinise the mental health section of the health and wellbeing strategy when it is produced.

The Chair highlighted that the Panel also had concerns about the lack of Councillor representation on the transition board

The Director for Community and Housing reported that the name Board could be misleading as it has a detailed implementation role. Members set policy and officers implement policy. The Board focuses on national policy there is detailed guidance

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coming from national government every week. Sometimes an issue will come up that is a matter for members and this will then go to Cabinet, for example the appointment of the Director of Public Health. Panel members will have the opportunity to oversee policy shaping and influence the health and wellbeing strategy. The Panel were asked to endorse the proposal for Merton having it's own Director of Public Health, to which Panel members agreed.

The Director for Community and Housing SAID that officers are not trying to exclude members. The transition board works according to nationally prescribed criteria, which cannot be influenced. The Director suggested that minutes from the Board could be a standing item on the agenda and officers could come back and answer questions if required.

A panel member asked if staff will be prepared for the transition process as the council works very differently from the PCT. The Interim Director for public health reported that there would be a development programme for the new team including shadowing and understanding Council structure.

RESOLVED

That this Panel receive a copy of the Transition Board minutes as a standing agenda item

That the Panel support the proposal that Merton should have its own Director for Public Health.