

MINUTES
of a meeting of the Governance Committee
14 July 2020
(11:00-12:25)

Meeting held by video conference call

Present:

Anne-Marie Dean, Chairman
Ian Buckmaster, Company Secretary
Bev Markham, Community Support Officer
Carole Howard, Office Administrator

Carol Dennis, Jenny Gregory, Dawn Ladbrook, Di Old and Val Perry, Members

1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all participants to the video conference.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations

3 Minutes of meeting held 9 June 2020

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record and the Chairman was authorised to sign them in due course.

4 Finance report

The report for June was received.

There were no financial matters to which attention needed to be drawn.
The Committee noted that negative figures related to provisions brought forward from last year that had not yet been fully expended.

There was a new line to the report, at the end of the fourth page, showing average expenditure per month. For the current year it appeared as total expenditure to date divided by the number of months - for the month in question, that was three; for all past years, it was total annual expenditure divided by twelve. It would be useful to be able to compare spending year by year as well as within the year

This (financial) year's average to date had been on the low side because little had been spent on travel and subsistence so far, and many major charges would not be incurred until April or May next (calendar) year.

5 Safeguarding training

Earlier in the year, some members had undertaken Safeguarding training in conjunction with St John Ambulance. St John had recently provided Briefing Sheets on important areas of Safeguarding responsibilities in an easy to read format, covering issues such as Radicalisation and Modern Slavery. All of these were important issues for members to be aware of and to be sensitive too, as the impacts and effects of Covid-19 on local communities were not yet understood and over the coming months members would need to be conscious of all the wider social issues that may affect residents.

Following discussion between the Council and the Council's Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), agreement had been reached with St John for their Briefing Sheets to be shared with the SAB members.

The Committee noted that it was intended to add the Briefing Sheets to the training materials used for training our members in safeguarding, and arrangements were in hand to identify and prioritise the specific issues for training to concentrate on.

It was also agreed that, with the agreement of St John, the information in the sheets should be circulated through the Healthwatch Havering Friends Network over the coming months.

6 Improving the reach of Healthwatch Havering

The specialist IT company that maintained the technical side of the website is maintained had drawn attention to various shortcomings in it and had suggested actions for improvement.

Although the available evidence suggested that people were being reached through the website, there was always the scope to reach more.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the company should be asked to advise further on these matters.

The Committee also authorised the expenditure of £1k or thereabouts on dealing with these issues.

7 Returning to normal business

The Committee was invited to consider when normal working should be resumed now that lockdown has been eased significantly.

It was clear that, for the foreseeable future, it would be impractical to resume Enter & View visits. Homes and GP surgeries were still having to exercise great care over admissions to their premises and those members who undertook visits were generally in the more vulnerable groups.

However, a return of staff to the office was clearly feasible. The owners of Queens Court had arranged a risk assessment, the report of which was awaited. Within the Healthwatch office, it was expected to be possible for social distancing to be maintained. A formal risk assessment had yet to be carried out but there would be sufficient room to space desks at appropriate distances, with some rearrangement of furniture. Care would be needed over the use of the telephones and the printer/copier but neither would be difficult to achieve. The room would need to be cleaned appropriately after use but, again, that would not be difficult. In general, there would never be more than four people in the room, and usually only one or two, so maintaining social distancing would be easy.

At present, the intention was to return to the office on 1 September (with the office “opening” to the public on 2 September, so that the first day could be devoted to a catch-up session for staff). These dates were, however, flexible, and opening could be delayed if need be.

Meetings such as this Committee would, however, continue to be held via Zoom for the time being as the room was not big enough to maintain social distancing for attendees. It is not yet known when the Town Hall would re-open for meetings.

8 “Befriending the befrienders” scheme - update

At the last meeting, the Committee had agreed to continue the scheme and review it after further sessions.

Two more sessions had been arranged, using Zoom conference with telephone calls, but no HVC volunteer rang in. It had been decided therefore to discontinue weekly sessions but to offer a session on request by an HVC volunteer. HVC had been advised of this change of procedure.

A revised Project Plan was submitted and approved.

9 Proposed relocation of Long Term Conditions Centre (LTCC) to Billericay

In February, NELFT had published proposals for moving the Regional LTCC from its location adjoining Harold Wood Polyclinic. In response, Healthwatch Havering had queried the transport arrangements for patients who needed to travel to the new Centre in Billericay.

A letter had now been received from Carol White at NELFT explaining the proposed transport arrangements. It appeared that the Harold Wood centre had now closed but the Mayflower Centre has yet to become operational.

Once the new centre had become operational, it would hopefully be possible for a visit to be arranged for members.

10 Survey of care home residents, relatives and friends

It was noted that the planned survey of residents of care homes and their friends and relatives was now ready. A Zoom conference was to be held on Tuesday 28 July, to which invitations would shortly be circulated.

11 Healthwatch England campaign: “Because we all care”

The Committee noted that “Because we all care” had been launched. An HHFN email would shortly be sent to subscribers, inviting them to join in the HWE survey.

12 GP practice Upminster

The Chairman reported on the circumstances of a GP practice in Upminster from which certain GPs had been suspended following intervention by the CCG, CQC and GMC. Arrangements were in hand to ensure continuity of care for the patients registered at the practice, involving the GP hub, Havering Health, and the possibility of transferring patients to another practice was under consideration.

It was agreed that the CCG should be urged to improve their oversight of practices to ensure that circumstances such as those now reported were identified much earlier and appropriate action taken to ensure that patients were not disadvantaged by possible malpractice and that Primary Care Networks and Havering Health should be urged proactively to support colleagues at risk of developing poor practice.

13 Use of video conferencing for medical consultations

It had become apparent in discussion with the CCG that they had not fully appreciated the need to ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures were in place to protect patients undergoing medical consultations by video conference, especially where discussion of, and perhaps videoing of, intimate areas was likely. This was being looked into and would be pursued.

A member mentioned that video conference consultations were not possible for everyone; leaving aside whether a patient had the appropriate IT equipment, some patients were physically unable to participate, for example those who were deaf or blind.

The Chairman advised that she would shortly have a meeting with the relevant official of the CCG and would raise the issue with her.

14 Next meeting

The next scheduled meeting was due on Tuesday, 8 September 2020, for which arrangements would be confirmed nearer the time. It was agreed that an additional meeting be held on Tuesday 11 August, by video conference.

Chairman