

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 27 JUNE 2011**

Councillors Councillors Bull (Chair), Alexander, Christophides, Diakides, Ejiofor, Weber, Jenks, Mallett and Newton

Apologies Councillors Browne and Engert

Also Present: **Co-optees:** Helena Kania (Local Involvement Network (LINK)) and Sarah Marsh (Parent Governor Representative)

Councillors: Cllr Dogus, Cllr Schmitz, Cllr Solomon, Cllr Winskill

Officers: Kevin Bartle (Lead Finance Officer), Mun Thong Phung (Director of Adult & Housing Services), Lisa Redfern (Deputy Director Adult & Community Services), Len Weir (Head of Provider Service (Older People/Mental Health), Charlotte Law (Head of Finance, Adult Culture & Community Services) Dorothy Simon (Council's Deputy Monitoring Officer), Rob Mack (Senior Policy Officer), Natalie Cole (Clerk)

Also attending: Mrs Conlon (Willoughby Road Drop-in Centre), Ms Katy Brimacombe (Abyssinia Court Centre), James Tilotson and Judy Bax (Jackson's Lane Drop-In Centre), Mr Raj Doshi (Woodside Drop-in Centre), Robert Edmonds (Age Concern), Maureen Carey (Haringey Forum for Older People), Naeem Sheikh (HAVECO) and approximately 50 members of the public and press

**MINUTE
NO.**

SUBJECT/DECISION

<p>OSCO07.</p>	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Browne and Engert and David Singh (Haringey Forum for Older People).</p> <p>NOTED that Cllr Mallett substituted for Cllr Browne, Cllr Newton substituted for Cllr Winskill and Cllr Jenks substituted for Cllr Engert.</p> <p>Cllr Weber acted as Vice Chair in the absence of Cllr Winskill from the Committee Membership.</p>
<p>OSCO08.</p>	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>It being a special meeting – under the Council's Constitution – Part 4, Section B, Paragraph 17 – no other business was permitted.</p>
<p>OSCO09.</p>	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillor Newton declared a personal interest in item OSCO11 as his elderly Mother-in-Law had lived with him in Haringey from Summer 2002 - Summer 2003 and had used Jackson' Lane Drop-In Centre for respite care.</p>
<p>OSCO10.</p>	<p>DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS</p> <p>A number of requests to speak had been agreed by the Chair; the details of</p>

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	which are recorded below.
OSCO11.	<p>CALL-IN - RECOMMENDED BUDGET SAVINGS DECISION - ADULT SERVICES PROPOSALS IN 2011 - OLDER PERSONS' DROP-IN CENTRES, JACKSONS LANE LUNCHEON CLUB AND CYPRIOT ELDERLY AND DISABILITY PROJECT</p> <p>RECEIVED the report of the Monitoring Officer (pages 1-5 of the agenda pack) validating the call-in request (pages 7-9) of the decision of the Cabinet of 7th June 2011 (in relation to budget savings – Older Person’s Drop-In Centres, Jacksons Lane Luncheon Club and Cypriot Elderly and Disability Project and the report of the Director of Adult and Housing Services (pages 1-26 of the to-follow papers).</p> <p>Committee Members also received various written representations from interested groups prior to the meeting including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A letter on behalf of the Haringey Federation of Residents’ Associations (Vulnerable Groups) opposing the decision for the closure of drop-in centres.• A briefing from Willoughby Drop-in Day Centre listing the benefits of drop-in centres.• Details of a petition against any closure of Woodside House Drop-In Centre.• A letter on behalf of Age UK highlighting the importance of luncheon clubs remaining in operation.• A letter from Haringey Association of Voluntary Community Organisations (HAVCO) to the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services expressing concerns relating to consultation on the closures of services. <p>a. <u>Monitoring Officer’s Report</u></p> <p>The Deputy Monitoring Officer Dorothy Simon presented the report as laid out.</p> <p>b. <u>Introduction to the Call-in of the Cabinet decision of 7th June 2011 relating to budget savings – Older Person’s Services by Councillor David Winskill</u></p> <p>NOTED the introduction to the call-in by Cllr Winskill, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Call-in had been signed by Cllrs Winskill, Erskine, Gorrie, Whyte and Solomon.• Reference to “drop-in centres” should be taken to include Jackson’s Lane Luncheon Club.• Recognition that the drop-in services were a preventative service.• Revenue savings could have been made elsewhere to avoid cutting such precious and valued frontline services.• At the very least the Council should suspend the process to close the drop-in centres to enable partnership arrangements to be made or training and capacity building and enablement to voluntary and third sector organisations to allow a seamless transition of the running of drop-in centres. During that time a review of the decision should take place and include a thorough risk-analysis of long-term cost implications of closures

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on Council services and the NHS as well as asking whether and how much users could contribute to the running of the centres.

- Service users should be invited to make a modest contribution of £2.50 per week which could generate £60k, over 40 weeks, towards keeping the centres open
- 635 older people regularly visited these services at a low cost of £285 each per year and the closures would result in increased social isolation and would have an adverse impact on carers. Evidence showed that socialised older people lived longer, were active and stayed healthier.
- Drop-in centre staff recognised signs of illness, harm, distress and abuse; preventing longer more expensive care. Closures of these services would increase costs to other Council services.
- The centres offered a sense of belonging, continuity of care and support and a feeling of companionship which prevented loneliness and depression.
- The Council should provide a commitment to keep the Older People's Drop-in centres and luncheon clubs open in the long-term or it should drive forward partnership agreements with other organisations, charities and social enterprises to allow the centres to remain open.

In response to questions from Committee Members the following was noted:

- Cllr Winskill suggested that £75k was required to keep drop-in services open for the remainder of this financial year. Council Officers explained that the annual cost of keeping the services open was £90k but the service was required to make a total saving of £181k as part of the Council's overall required saving of £43 million. A number of Committee Members agreed that £75k was not a substantial amount compared to the overall savings figure.
- In response to concerns raised about the impact of closures on vulnerable service users Cllr Winskill explained that the Council's Personalisation Agenda meant that users would be assessed and provided with a personalised budget to purchase care services. Cllr Winskill expressed that he did not believe that the Council had done enough to assess whether drop-in centre service users would qualify and whether this would result in adequate substitution for the closure of the centres.
- In response to Members' concerns that the savings had been front-loaded and more could have been done to foresee the level of cuts required the Lead Finance Officer reminded members that the Council had experienced an unprecedented level of cuts, much greater than anticipated, and that the Comprehensive Spending Review allocation of funding to local authorities had not been published until December 2010 yet budget savings had been required by February 2011.

c. Representations by Interested Groups

- i. NOTED the statement of Joan Conlon, representing Willoughby Day Centre, including that the Centre helped prevent isolation and its closure would be detrimental to the survival of elderly people.

In response to questions from the Committee the following was noted:

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- Residents from across the borough utilised Willoughby Road Centre, which had 120 members plus daily visitors and service users paid £3.50 per meal.
- Operators could continue to run Willoughby Road Centre if the Council continued to provide the premises and funded a part time worker. Cleaning could be conducted by the Centre's volunteers. Members expressed concern that the Willoughby Road premises could remain empty if the centre operating from it was closed.
- Currently the Council provided Willoughby Road with £43k of funding.
Action No 11.1: The Head of Finance, Adult Culture & Community Services would provide funding figures for the entire drop-in service at Willoughby Lane.

ii. NOTED the statement of Katy Brimacombe, Haringey Carer, Abyssinia Court Centre, including that the Centre was a lifeline for older people many of whom had mental health problems and disabilities and would be isolated if the centre closed.

In response to questions from the Committee the following was noted:

- Discussions about options for keeping the Centre open had been held with a nearby church group but nothing had been confirmed.
- There was no guarantee that Hornsey Housing Trust would continue to provide the premises for free once the Council closed the service and the organisation was currently not in a position to take over the service.

iii. NOTED the statements of James Tilotson and Judy Bax, Board Members of Jackson's Lane Luncheon Club, including that this was a rare service (and the only one of its kind in Haringey) and had been operating for 30 years and from 12-2pm each day with some provision for extended activities in the afternoons. The closures would greatly affect the well-being of elderly people who would return to isolation and loneliness which would be detrimental to their mental health and would result in knock-on costs for the Council and NHS. The Luncheon Club received £10,078 in annual funding from the Council, which paid for a staff member.

In response to questions from the Committee the following was noted:

- Alternative funding was being sought but many organisations were reluctant to commit to replacing funding that had been cut by other agencies.
- The building was owned by the Council and leased to Jackson's Lane. It was on the borough boundary and neighbouring boroughs had been approached but had declined to provide funding support.

iv. NOTED the statement of Raj Doshi in relation to Woodside Drop-In Centre, including that the service was particularly valuable to the Asian community and provided medical workshops as well as fitness support and that further dialogue was required with local communities to avoid the closures.

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The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services emphasised that there were no proposals to change the I Can Care initiative which operated at Woodside and the Council would continue to provide the Centre with £7420 funding.

- v. NOTED the statement of Robert Edmonds from Age Concern including:
- Age Concern was opposed to the closure of luncheon clubs and the timeliness of the related decisions taken by Haringey.
 - The services being cut operated to maintain independence for older people and this in turn saved the Council costs as this prevented later requirements for services.
 - The voluntary sector needed time to build the capacity to take over the services and create partnerships.
 - Consultation with Age Concern had not been adequate.

In response to questions from the Committee it was noted that the impact of the closures should be addressed and more discussions held particularly about hospital stays, discharges and social integration for older people.

- vi. NOTED the statement of Maureen Carey, Vice Chair of the Forum for Older People, including that older people needed the social network that the drop-in centres provided for survival; the process of closing the centres should be slowed down to allow more consideration for funding and the future care of those affected.

- vii. NOTED the statement of Naeem Sheikh, Haringey Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations (HAVCO) including:
- The closures would place more pressure on other services.
 - Many older people were willing to make small financial contributions towards drop-in services.
 - Much consultation had taken place but the decision to close services should be suspended until March 2012 to allow the Voluntary Sector time to propose alternative solutions for a sustainable service.

In response to questions from the Committee it was noted that HAVCO could facilitate a partnership with voluntary sector organisations to find better ways of providing services and was promoting local volunteering and had raised funding for the volunteers project for 5 years.

The Committee adjourned at 13:10hrs and reconvened at 13:20hrs.

- d. Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services

NOTED the statement of Cllr Dilek Dogus, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services, responding to the matters raised, including:

- The Cabinet Member shared the concerns raised by interested groups and reminded the Committee that the Council was required to make a total of £84 million worth of savings in addition to cuts in funding allocations from central government and the adult services department presented the largest deficit in the Council due to the nature of the

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services it provides.

- Changing the eligibility for care was not considered as a potential saving as it was acknowledged that this would adversely affect those most in need.
- Staffing structures had been reviewed and redundancies made but further cuts were still required.
- 3 months of extensive consultations had taken place including letters to and meetings with stakeholders and Equalities Impact Assessments had been conducted further to the issues raised.
- A recurring theme from interested groups was concern at the loss of foot-care services and in response the Council had decided to continue to provide free toenail cutting for older people.
- Any older person needing a meal, whether in a communal setting, or at home, would continue to receive them in much the same way.
- Discussions had been held with service providers but it was not possible to agree arrangements for future provision before any Cabinet decision had been made.
- Voluntary Groups had been first informed of the potential cuts in December 2010 and Age Concern had hosted a large consultation event.
- A number of preventative services were being provided in Haringey and the fall-out from the closures of the drop-in centres would be incorporated in to these.

The Deputy Director – Adult and Community Services echoed the Cabinet Member’s comments and reminded the Committee that adult social care was a statutory service and that the Care Quality Commission had judged the Council as “Good” and the services that the Council purchased as “Good” or “Excellent”. The Deputy Director acknowledged that the drop-in centres undoubtedly provided a vital part of prevention but other preventative services would continue. The Voluntary Sector in Haringey received £12 million for preventative services, in addition the Supporting People programme gave much of it’s £12 million budget to preventative services.

Committee Members were given the opportunity to ask further questions of the Cabinet Member and the following was noted:

- Alternative options had been considered and were outlined in Appendix 1 (page 9) of the report of the Director of Housing and Adult Services including the possibility of providing a carers hub at Wood Green library and reminiscence cafés at Bruce Castle and Abyssinia Court for people with dementia.
- There was a willingness on the part of voluntary organisations to take over services.
- The Committee highlighted the large overspend in the Children’s Service and expressed concern that this money could have gone towards keeping a drop in centre open. The Lead Finance Officer confirmed that there was a forecasted overspend in Children’s Services and it was being dealt with.
- Committee members expressed concerns that the proposals could result in a false economy due to the knock on effect of the closures on other services.
- The Cabinet member disagreed with comments that the proposals did not address issues around social exclusion and referred to Appendix 1 of the

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report of the Director of Housing and Adult Services. The Voluntary Sector Strategy was being reviewed and the aspect of dealing with social isolation would be included in the criteria during funding allocation.

- The Committee raised concerns about the timescales for setting up alternative provision and noted that few local authorities provided drop-in centre provision. **Action 11.2 – information on the number of local authorities that provided drop-in centres would be circulated.**
- The Committee commended the number of consultation meetings held with stakeholders but still expressed concerns that major groups such as HAVCO and Age Concern had expressed concern at a lack of adequate engagement from the Council. The Cabinet Member highlighted that the concerns raised by these groups were mainly objections to the proposals but reiterated that the Council was under pressure to make the savings. The Council would continue to work with HAVCO and Age Concern.

NOTED Cllr Winskill's disappointment that in accordance with Rule 2.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and his being the main signatory of the call-in) he was not permitted to ask questions at this point in the meeting.

Clerk's Note: The Cabinet Member and Councillor Winskill left the meeting.

The Chair MOVED a motion that the decision taken by the Cabinet in relation to Drop-In Centres on 7th June was inside the Council's policy and budget framework and that further action should be taken. This was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED

- 1a. That the decision taken by the Cabinet in relation to Drop-In Centres on 7th June was inside the Council's policy and budget Framework.

The Committee agreed unanimously to reject the option to not take any further action

Councillor Diakides MOVED a motion that the matter be referred back to the Cabinet with a recommendation that the Cabinet defer a final decision for a further 6 months in order to allow the completion of the detailed exploration of alternatives and of possible extra support and finance, that the department was currently already working on. This was seconded by Councillor Ejiofor.

A vote was taken (8 members voted for the motion and 1 member (Cllr Weber) voted against) and carried.

Cllr Weber asked for it to be noted that her reason for voting against the motion was that she would have preferred for the decision to be referred to full Council.

RESOLVED

- 2a. That the decision in relation to Drop-In Centres be referred back to the

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Cabinet to reconsider the decision before taking a final decision within 5 working days in light of the views expressed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

- 2b. The Cabinet be recommended to defer a final decision and continue to fund drop-in services for a further 6 months in order to allow the completion of the detailed exploration of alternatives and of possible extra support (including facilitating capacity building within the voluntary sector, to assist the voluntary sector in filling the void that the Council's withdrawal from Drop-in Centres will have created) and finance, that the department was currently already working on.

In making this recommendation the Committee took into account evidence that:

- There was a universal perception that drop-in services were generally well run and popular; also that their proposed withdrawal, in advance of putting adequate alternatives in place, would have an immediate real impact on the quality of life of a large number of vulnerable people in the borough who were currently using them. It would also undermine the current system of preventative measures in the borough which was likely to lead to further future costs to the authority as well as avoidable distress to numerous low income residents.
- The vast majority of those affected were low income people, with significant proportions from vulnerable groups; whilst almost any reductions in Adult Services was likely by definition to also have a disproportionate impact on low income and vulnerable groups of local people, there were concerns expressed that at the corporate level the outcomes of the recent consultation exercises and Equality Impact Assessments had not had the chance to influence the broad brush allocation of cuts between different services.
- There were promising possibilities for partly re-providing some of these services through different means, of securing alternative sources of funding or support for certain aspects, of reducing costs in some cases through the introduction of a small voluntary levy on users and of enabling in some cases the users and other support organisations to take them over and continue them at a minimal or no cost to the authority. It was evident that the department had been working hard on most of these possibilities, but also that little concrete agreement had as yet been secured, mainly due to the short timetables imposed and the need to proceed carefully at each stage.
- The savings involved, especially in the remaining of the current financial year were relatively small and a delay in finalising the decision to the end of the financial year could be contained within the current year's contingencies. Such a delay would have no impact on the long-term financial plans of the council, i.e. the base budget and therefore it would not derail the integrity of the current budget process.
- The proposals as they stand had started undermining the confidence of at

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	<p>least some of the users, potential users and their advocates in the future ability of the Council to provide an adequate service to low income and vulnerable elderly residents. Since maintaining the public's confidence on the service is essential component of delivering an efficient service in this field, it would appear that allowing a bit more time for officers to work with users and other organisations to concretise some of the alternatives and enable a smooth transition would demonstrate the authority's determination to listen to the concerns expressed and to minimise the impact of the proposed cuts on the ground.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 14:55 hrs</p>
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COUNCILLOR GIDEON BULL

Chair

SIGNED AT MEETING.....DAY

OF.....

CHAIR.....