

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC PANEL - OLDER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

11.00am 22 MAY 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Marsh (Chair) Smart and Watkins and Mr John Eyles OPC cooptee

PART ONE

5. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

5.1 The Panel Chair welcomed all to the meeting including all the speakers and Councillor Dee Simson the Cabinet Member for Community Affairs, Inclusion and Internal Relations and Chair of the Community Safety Forum. The Chair was pleased to see more members of the public in attendance than previously and reminded everyone of the Panel's remit.

6. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 APRIL

6.1 Subject to a minor amendment by Sean de Podesta the minutes of the 24 April meeting were agreed and signed by the Chair.

6.2 With the agreement of the Chair, Ms Joan Moorhouse Chair of the Brighton & Hove Pensioners' Forum; which published 'The Pensioner' magazine made comments on the minutes. She said that 'The Pensioner' was written by older people for older people and thought it would indeed be adversely affected by an additional publication in this area. Ms Moorhouse handed out copies of the latest edition and said there was no need for any similar publication.

6.3 Two Members of the Older People's Council (OPC) served on the Editorial Board and the OPC contributed articles to the magazine. 'The Pensioner' was supported by statutory providers including the Council and health organisations and was distributed across Brighton & Hove. However circulation numbers had recently been reduced from 6,000 to 4,000 and it was difficult to attract more business and statutory sponsorship. The Pensioners' Forum had 600 individual and group members and was actively trying to recruit more affiliated organisations.

6.4 Mr Eyles, OPC co-optee to the scrutiny panel, said 'The Pensioner' was a useful way to publicise older people's issues. Other Panel members praised the quality of the magazine and it was suggested that Council funding of OPC could be used to buy advertising space in the magazine. The Panel heard of production and distribution costs and advertising fees. The

Head of Housing Management said that Adult Social Care had contributed to the newsletter's production costs and paid for OPC members' expenses not programmes.

6.5 Ms Moorhouse told the Panel that the Brighton & Hove Pensioner's Forum organised a joint 'Older People's Day.' The event typically attracted more than 1,000 delegates and this year was being held in Hove Town Hall on Thursday 19 November.

6.6 The Chair asked if the following Panel meeting could appear in the next edition of the magazine and thanked Ms Moorhouse for her comment.

7. DISCUSSION WITH CABINET MEMBER AND CHAIR OF COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

7.1 Councillor Simson, Cabinet Member for Community Affairs, Inclusion and Internal Relations, referred also to her relatively new role of Chair of the Community Safety Forum. She said older people had a greater fear of crime and were particularly fearful of groups of young people. It was important to help reduce these fears by encouraging schemes that brought the age groups together.

7.2 Noting that the Panel may wish to focus on domestic violence and violence in the home Councillor Simson said as Cabinet member she was working to build inclusive communities to increase individuals' resilience and reduce vulnerability; for example via discretionary funding for third sector organisations which was currently under way. Helping older and younger people to work more closely and reaching out to older people especially for instance when they are isolated or confined indoors were important.

7.3 Councillor Simson noted that partners including the Primary Care Trust and Sussex Police were also contributing to the scrutiny panel, and referred to the work of the City Inclusion Partnership. Housing policies could be key in helping to keep families and communities together she said.

7.4 The Panel's remit was potentially wide and the information being gathered would help increase the visibility of older people and help shape future community safety services.

8. INFORMATION-GATHERING AND FUTURE MEETINGS

Head of Trading Standards, John Peerless

8.1 The Head of Trading Standards outlined the history of the Service from 'weights and measures' to fair trading, product safety, food standards and Consumer Advice to taking steps to address some of the wider agendas such as Health and Community Safety.

8.2 He said older people were more affected by doorstep criminals than younger people and that doorstep crime was linked with distraction burglary. A national survey of people aged over 55 by the Institute of Trading Standards showed that 96% disliked cold calling such as energy sales and property repairs. The survey revealed that 60% were worried about being conned in

their own home and 70% thought the development of an 'approved' trader scheme would be helpful.

8.3 Scams and rogue trading tended to be cross border issues. Whilst steps were taken locally to help support residents it was recognised there was a need to work regionally and nationally with enforcement colleagues.

8.4 Trading Standards South East (TSSE) a group of Trading Standards Authorities co terminus with the GOSE region have collaborated to develop a regional response. The group was funded by BERR (Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) to produce a Community Safety Toolkit which brought together best practice. A Community Safety project was also financed including the musical 'trickster' which was organised a number of times by Trading Standards during 2006 and 2007.

8.5 More recently TSSE had implemented a Regional Intelligence Unit to collate and disseminate intelligence across the region and with colleagues across the country. The Unit liaised with 'Operation Liberal' a Derbyshire Police-based national reporting database for incidents of doorstep crime.

8.6 The Head of Trading Standards said that there were a number of different commercial trader schemes that could help the public identify suitable traders; but it was recognised that a Trading Standards Approved Scheme would help provide even better protection. Therefore in 2006 Brighton & Hove implemented the 'Buy with Confidence' scheme which had been started 2 years before by Hampshire Trading Standards.

8.7 'Buy With Confidence' had been adopted across the region and there were now 80 local members. Potential members have to undergo a very stringent process including the vetting of their terms and conditions and obtaining references. The scheme is publicised in 'The Pensioner' and 'The Argus' works with East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove to produce a quarterly advertorial.

8.8 Consumer Direct South East (CDSE) was the regional arm of a national consumer advice line that receives all first contacts for Trading Standards in the region. CDSE identifies and refers potential 'doorstep crime' incidents by telephone immediately. A Rapid Action Team (RAT) aims to respond to these calls within 40 minutes and since 2006 RAT has responded to more than 50 calls.

8.9 The CDSE number is 08454 040506. Doorstep crime can also be logged with Sussex Police by calling 08457 606999.

8.10 Brighton and Hove Trading Standards was one of the few Services to employ an Education Officer. The officer works with a wide range of organisations involved with older and vulnerable people and uses links with schools to give information to children to pass on to older relatives and friends.

8.11 Jointly with the Community Safety Partnership Team alternative prevention measures are used including the fitting of locks, door chains and the provision of posters designed to deter door step callers.

8.12 Answering a question, the Head of Trading Standards said the service could investigate providing 'no cold calling' stickers for individual households and would also support the implementation of 'no cold calling' zones in relevant communities or areas identified from intelligence.

8.13 Asked about rogue management agents the Head of Trading Standards indicated that he was not aware of reports of this particular problem.

8.14 However all consumers were encouraged to report suspicions of rogue trading or scams via CDSE, Trading Standards or the Police to help build the case for targetting resources.

8.15 Some Panel members said they had not been not aware of all the various initiatives and contact details.

8.16 The Chair thanked the Head of Trading Standards who was about to begin a secondment to manage a Regional Fraud Unit funded by BERR. The Scambusters Team has a remit to work with 61 local authorities in the South East and East of England and London to tackle cross border crime including doorstep crime.

RISE Refuge, Information, Support and Education (Formerly Women's Refuge Centre)

8.17 Gail Gray spoke to the scrutiny panel as the Chief Executive Officer of RISE, Refuge Information Support and Education, formerly the Women's Refuge Project. She explained that domestic violence included emotional, physical, psychological sexual and financial abuse that takes place within an intimate or family type relationship and forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. Although professional carers may not come into this category they may have a close and intimate relationship with the person being cared for that may become abusive.

8.18 A briefing note was handed to the Panel and case study was given.

8.19 Anyone could experience domestic abuse but most were women. It was difficult to disclose abuse and there was some evidence of considerable under-reporting. An Australian study had shown that 1/3 of all older women had experienced domestic violence at some time but as much as 60% of these had not reported it.

8.20 An older person could suffer the physical and psychological consequences of domestic violence that had happened during their lifetime or later in life when retirement, deprivation, disability or sexual changes could exacerbate abuse. Under-reporting by older people could be due to a sense of shame, embarrassment, guilt or, particularly amongst BME communities, honour; that may not exist to the same extent amongst younger people. Older people who were physically and socially isolated would find it more difficult to report domestic violence for lack of someone to talk to.

8.21 In some cases there may be a fear of the consequences of reporting, such as the response of the professionals or, for families with a concern for an older family member, fear of having a dependent relative.

8.22 Perpetrators could be adult children perhaps financially dependent on a vulnerable mother. An older woman may be the carer for the perpetrator or may depend on the

perpetrator for care. In many cases the criminal justice system was not appropriate and specialist resources to help and support the sometimes more complex physical and medical needs of those involved were limited.

8.23 Domestic abuse often breaks up families. However there is some success in bringing families together via local support services for perpetrators and Rise services working separately with grandmother, mother and children before re-integrating the father into the family.

8.24 Neither nationally nor locally was there firm information; reporting was the responsibility of different individuals and agencies for example GPs – for whom more training was needed - and hospital Accident and Emergency (A+E) departments. RISE had recently appointed an independent adviser partly based in A+E to do this.

8.25 Domestic violence is often subsumed under ‘elder abuse.’ It seemed that there was a low level of knowledge and awareness of domestic abuse even amongst professionals. Signs of domestic violence were not being well recognised

8.26 Local research and data collection was necessary and there needed to be agreement as to what level of support was needed in the City as a whole and what were the appropriate resources for older people and domestic violence.

8.27 Ms Gray said RISE was the only specialist domestic violence provider in the City and formed part of a coordinated crisis response. RISE had disabled-friendly refuge but this accommodated families often with younger children and complex needs and so was not usually the best option for older people other than in an emergency.

8.28 It had a dedicated helpline and also outreach services in areas of Whitehawk and Moulsecomb which is now a citywide resource though with limited capacity due to funding ending. Community outreach was the best way to work with older people and this had also been done successfully in partnership in Tarnar and Eastern Road areas. RISE provided preventative education in schools on healthy relationships and young people’s groups. A recent development has been a group for young people who are aggressive in their relationships and a Carers’ group that runs alongside this.

8.29 Rise worked together with the Safeguarding Adults Team and the Domestic Violence coordinator of the Community Safety team and was helping develop policies and protocols on domestic violence and vulnerable adults including a checklist and flowchart for professionals.

8.30 Ms Gray said there needed to be a level of risk assessment including for carers’ schemes. Raising awareness was key and RISE was providing training and talks to local groups targeting older people. Feedback from these group said that leaflets should be printed in accessible and suitable formats and a Compact Disk (CD) for easy use would be useful. However more could be done.

8.31 Ms Gray stated that most domestic abuse victims have to leave home while the perpetrator remains. She said there was a need for housing for older people who had experienced domestic violence. She said in her opinion domestic abuse should be included in a cross-cutting older people’s strategy and older people’s safety included prominently within the older people’s housing strategy.

Rise Helpline is 622822. Rise website is www.riseuk.org.uk

8.32 On behalf of the Panel the Chair thanked all the speakers for their helpful information.

9. Discussion/questions from members of the public

9.1 A member of the public asked what could be done for older people who had neighbours who made them feel unsafe? The meeting heard that there was active working on anti-social behaviour between tenants associations, neighbourhood policing and Police Community Support Officers. A direct call line was available to give a rapid response.

9.2 Answering another question, the officers would investigate producing 'No cold calling' door stickers.

10. Future Panel meetings, Brighton Town Hall

10.1 It was agreed to start the final two meetings earlier; start times would now be:

10.30am 3 July and
1.30pm 10 July

10.2 Future probable/possible information

- a) Alcohol-related Incidents and Crime
- b) Feedback on Older People's Mental Health Team following evidence on 24 April
- c) Community Engagement and older people
- d) Feedback from 60+ Action Group
- e) 50+ Programme Annual report
- f) Older people from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and Community safety
- g) Policing re Older People in the Community

The meeting concluded at 1.30pm

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SAFETY**

22 MAY 2009

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

