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Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Legal & Democratic Services

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01 September 2021

Dear Councillor

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2021

Please find enclosed, for consideration at the next meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee taking place on Wednesday, 1st September, 2021, the following report(s) that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

3. **Questions from Members of the Public (Pages 1 - 2)**

Stephen Tautz
Principal Democratic Services Officer

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 SEPTEMBER 2021

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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(1) Question from Majzoub Ali to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration

The Healthwatch Southend Advisory Board has not met since October 2020. Phone calls to Healthwatch Southend are often unanswered, some emails got no positive reply and there is no postal address within the Borough for Southend for Healthwatch Southend.

The newly appointed Advisory Board Chairman, Cllr Dr David Bowry, does not wish to benefit from the experience of his predecessor, Mr Freddie Dawkins, who benefited from Mr Chris Gasper, the Chairman the previous year. There is no appetite for continuity.

The entire Healthwatch Southend Advisory Board Group resigned en masse in January 2021. Two members (Cllr Ms Tricia Cowdrey and Mr Chris Gasper) gave exit interviews. Mrs Wendy Dodds decided not to abandon Healthwatch Southend completely, resigned as an Advisory Board member but, for some undeclared reason, to stay as a Healthwatch Enter and View Representative. Mr Freddie Dawkins, the Chairman of the Advisory Board that resigned, refused to confirm or deny that he had also given an exit interview. All these six identified people should individually or collectively tell us clearly why the current Healthwatch model has failed the people of Southend.

Healthwatch Southend's statutory powers are to ensure the voice of Southend people is strengthened and heard by those who design, commission, deliver and regulate health and social care services in Southend. Cllr Dr David Bowry has previously written that the Healthwatch Southend Advisory Board are keen to build a strong, diverse and inclusive team to best represent the views of the residents of Southend in their dealings with our health and social care services.

The occasion has arisen now with the resignation of the entire Healthwatch Southend Advisory Board and the total disconnection between the public and the essential functions of the board and the cessation of any form of transparency to question the performance of the Healthwatch Southend model.

Was the mass resignation to highlight the failure of the model?

Do you agree Healthwatch Southend is a failure?

Thank you for your question Mr Ali. The Advisory Group will aim to meet at a minimum of quarterly. The Advisory Group are currently not aiming to meet in public until at least six members have been recruited, as supported by Healthwatch England. They can however meet with and work with Family Action as part of their roles.

Healthwatch Southend are not aware of any telephone calls, or emails that have not been positively responded to, but would be happy to investigate any emails where evidence can be forwarded for a further response.

Healthwatch Southend have a postal address which is listed on their website as Healthwatch Southend, C/o Family Action (Host Company) 34 Wharf Road, London, N1 7GR, whilst not physically within the Borough of Southend, this should have no bearing on ability to positively respond.

The Council cannot comment on the personal reasons for previous Healthwatch volunteers resigning.

During the COVID-19 pandemic our population and our services went through challenging circumstances and rapid change. We think that Healthwatch Southend has done a good job in challenging circumstances throughout the pandemic.