

# MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 25 February 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), Jim Mallory (Vice-Chair), Olufunke Abidoye, Jackie Addison, Paul Bell, Duwayne Brooks and Patsy Foreman and

APOLOGIES: Councillor Anne Affiku

ALSO PRESENT: Paul Aladenika (Policy and Partnership Manager), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Winston Castello (Community Enterprise Manager), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Supt Neil Evans (Superintendent) (Lewisham Police (MPS)), Lucy Morton (Principal Policy Officer), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance) and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2014

Resolved: to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January as an accurate record.

## 2. Minutes of the joint meeting held on 3 February 2014

Resolved: to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February as an accurate record.

## 3. Declaration of interests

Councillor Mallory declared an interest under item 7 as a member of Lee Green time bank.

## 4. Comprehensive equalities scheme monitoring and update

Lucy Morton (Principal Policy Officer) and Paul Aladenika (Policy and Partnership Manager) introduced the report and a presentation, noting the following key points:

- The Council's ambition through the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme 2012-16 (CES) was to ensure that consideration of equalities was embedded across the organisation.
- Five objectives had been agreed for the CES (these had previously been considered by the Committee):
  - tackling discrimination, victimisation and harassment
  - improving access to services
  - closing the gap in outcomes
  - increasing mutual understanding and respect
  - increasing citizen participation and engagement
- The Council was working collectively to achieve these objectives through the delivery of its services.
- Initiatives were in place in housing, procurement and parking – to reduce inequality and improve outcomes for citizens.
- New, and enhanced, areas of work included:
  - Financial equality

- Work and skills
- Enterprise growth
- Social value
- A sense of belonging
- Fairness
- The aim of the CES was to bring together Council policy and strategic decision making.
- The work of select committees had contributed to the agenda. This included the work of the Sustainable Development Select Committee and the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on financial exclusion and belonging.
- The CES was due to end in 2016 – when it would be reviewed, along with the strategic objectives.

In response to questions from the Committee the following key points were noted:

- Questions about parking policy could be referred to Rob Holmans (Director of Regeneration and Asset Management) or Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services). Parking policy fell under the remit of the Sustainable Development Select Committee – which considered regular updates on the policy implementation action plan.
- Lewisham had a large number of very small businesses. It was recognised that these were not job creating businesses (further figures could be provided to Members following the meeting)

The Committee also made the following key points:

- Officers should confirm that the implementation of any new parking technology took into account the needs of all sections of the Community, including older and disabled people.

Resolved: to note the report. To ask the Children and Young People Select Committee to consider monitoring the impact of plans for Health and Social Care integration on young people.

## **5. Violence against women and girls plan**

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced the report; the following key points were noted:

- Reducing domestic violence, sexual violence and child exploitation had been long-standing priorities for the Safer Lewisham Partnership (SLP).
- The Home office and the Mayor of London had developed Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) plans – which focused on seven strands:
  - Domestic violence
  - Rape and sexual violence
  - Prostitution and trafficking
  - Sexual exploitation
  - Female genital mutilation (FGM)
  - Forced marriage
  - Honor based violence
  - Stalking and harassment

- Lewisham was consulting on a draft VAWG plan. All Councillors had been invited to respond to the consultation.
- Overall, there had been 79 responses to the consultation. The next step would be to carry out targeted focus groups in order to gather more detailed information and to help the SLP target its priorities.
- The volume of incidents of domestic violence meant that there was information available about the prevalence of this crime. Less information was available about forced marriage and FGM, which were lower volume crimes and as such assessing their prevalence and impact was more difficult.
- The funding available was limited so resources had to be prioritised on the highest areas of risk.
- The SLP intended to launch the plan in June.
- There had been substantial reductions in domestic violence in Lewisham in the past few years – however – there had been an increase of 10% over the past year – which might be for a number of reasons, including:
  - evidence that, as reports of domestic violence increased people's confidence in reporting also increased;
  - the inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds in the figures for the first time;
  - a straightforward increase in the number of crimes.
- Specialist work had been carried out to deal with domestic violence, including the pursuit of 'victimless prosecutions', where perpetrators were prosecuted without the victim having to be involved.
- The work of the Lewisham multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) had been assessed and was found to be good. The work of the Youth MARAC had also been commended by Ofstead.
- Lessons were being learned from the investigations into child exploitation in the north of England.
- Lewisham had piloted a multi-agency approach to dealing with child exploitation, the findings of which were being disseminated across London.

In response to questions from the Committee the following key points were noted:

- Officers would work closely with key groups to ensure that there was a good spread of information available from a range of representative sources.
- Imkaan (a women's rights group) had been asked by officers in crime reduction to work with the Borough to support the consultation.
- It would be important to involve a range of women but it would also be important not to disregard the voices of men.
- The draft plan would draw on detailed public health mapping. This work incorporated research across a range of ethnic groups in the borough – the Council would draw on these contacts in order to widen the scope of the consultation.
- Information from the different sources of consultation would be compared and contrasted to determine where the future focus should be.
- The rest of the consultation would help the SLP to focus its priorities.
- Domestic violence would continue to be a priority for the Council.
- The SLP had supported work to help promote healthy relationships amongst young people.

- There was growing recognition of the long term impacts of domestic violence. Early exposure to situations of domestic violence could have a lasting impact on children – particularly during their formative years.
- Evidence indicated that there was a spike in cases of domestic violence during major football matches, which meant that there would likely be more cases of violence during the upcoming world cup.

Detective Superintendent Neil Evans addressed the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- Officers were drawn from the public and therefore prevalent norms in the population also applied to officers. Reminding and re-educating police officers about the impacts of domestic violence was an important part of on-going training and supervision.
- The Police found that the first time they came in to contact with some victims of trafficking was when they were arrested. Officers required proper training and the requisite skills to ensure that these situations would be dealt with appropriately.
- The Police had improved the detection rate for domestic violence. Detection was now at 52%.
- When dealing with potential cases of domestic violence, officers were being encouraged to identify and record the wider impacts of violent behaviour – such as the destruction of property.
- Regular improvements and changes in practice would result in a reduction in domestic violence over time.
- Police body worn cameras would be a significant and positive step forward for policing. Used properly, they would protect members of the public from poor policing and they would protect officers from unfounded allegations.

The Committee discussed the issues raised and also made the following point:

- That the SLP's focus should remain on domestic violence because of its impact and prevalence.

Resolved: to note the report.

## **6. Safer Lewisham plan monitoring and update**

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney introduced the report, noting the following key points:

- The Safer Lewisham Partnership (SLP) plan identified areas of achievement by the partnership over the past year – including commendation for the borough's domestic violence multi agency risk assessment conference and gold award for dealing with 'skitching' (the practice of holding on to the back of a bus whilst wearing roller-skates)
- The yearly action plan set out how the SLP would deliver on its priorities.
- The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime had set out its 20:20:20 plan – which challenged the MPS to deliver a 20% reduction in seven neighbourhood crimes, whilst improving confidence by 20% and reducing costs by 20%.

- The SLP plan had to take the MOPAC targets into account – but the borough had its own target areas.
- The plan would also set out the cost of all known interventions – illustrating the optimum working model for the delivery of the plan.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The labelling of Lewisham as the least peaceful local authority in England was unfair. The data used to compile the table spanned a period of ten years – over which Lewisham had seen a significant fall in crime.
- Officers had met with the authors of the report to explain their concerns.
- It was understood that a significant problem was the perception of crime – which was often disproportionate to the actual crime figures.

Resolved: to note the report.

## **7. Main grants update**

Winston Castello (Community Enterprise Manager) introduced the report; the following key points were noted:

- This was an interim report and a full report would be delivered following the end of the current financial year.
- The main grants programme had been extended by a year, until March 2015.
- 71 organisations were currently funded.
- The Council worked with these organisations to develop their range of service provision, management abilities and financial management.
- The report provided information about groups being served by the grants programme, as well as their geographical areas of operation in the borough.
- Officers had worked with organisations to improve the quality of delivery of the grants programme over the past three years – and intended to continue this work in the future.
- Grant funded organisations would need to access alternative sources of funding in order to improve their financial robustness.
- The grants programme would also be reviewed in conjunction with other departments and the Community and Voluntary Sector, to ensure that the Council had a joined up approach to funding and monitoring.
- The grants programme would be required to adapt to meet the challenges of the changing local government landscape.
- Organisations had improved their delivery of services over the lifetime of the grants programme but it was not clear if they had improved quickly enough.
- Solid proposals for the future of the grant programme would be available within three or four months, and would be presented to the Committee before Mayor and Cabinet.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Most grant funded organisations provided services across the borough. Some focused on delivery in specific areas, but their services would be open to people from anywhere in Lewisham.

- Organisations were monitored to ensure that they were delivering what was expected of them.
- Few faith based organisations were funded through the grants programme, but there was a separate scheme for funding faith groups.
- All organisations were required to sign up to, and to adhere to the Council's equality criteria, which were designed to ensure that all services were available to everybody.
- The Metro Centre, which worked specifically with the LGB&T community was funded through the grants programme. Part of its role was to 'build capacity' in other organisations to assist in the delivery of their services.
- The grants programme had grown over a period of years and it was recognised that its focus needed to be changed to meet future demand.
- More analysis could be provided further demonstrating the impact of the grants programme and the distribution of services across the borough.

The following points were also noted:

- The Committee expressed its concerns about the perceived lack of grant funded services in some parts of the borough, particularly some deprived areas of the borough, and those which it was felt, were often overlooked by other public services.
- Members also challenged the quality of the information provided in the report as they believed it did not give them the opportunity to analyse performance in detail.
- The Committee believed that further information about the distribution and delivery of services should be provided to Members in the future.

Resolved: to note the report – and to recommend that further, more detailed, information be provided under to the Committee as part of its 2014-15 work programme.

## **8. Select Committee work programme**

Resolved: to note the report.

## **9. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

None

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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