

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Monday, 3 November 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), David Michael (Vice-Chair), Andre Bourne, Colin Elliott, Alicia Kennedy, Luke Sorba, Eva Stamirowski, Paul Upex and James-J Walsh and

APOLOGIES: Councillors Pat Raven

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Alan Hall (Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Kevin Bonavia (Cabinet Member Resources), Councillor Janet Daby (Cabinet Member Community Safety), Councillor Joan Millbank (Cabinet Member Third Sector & Community), Councillor Jim Mallory, Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources), Aileen Buckton (Executive Director for Community Services), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Charlotte Dale (Scrutiny Manager), Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) and Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2014

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September be agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Morrison – non-prejudicial – Chair of the Ackroyd, an organisation in receipt of funding from the main grants programme.

Councillor Michael – non-prejudicial – patron of the Friends of Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust, Catford Wanderers Cricket Club.

Councillor Eliot – non-prejudicial – elected representative of the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

Councillor Walsh – non prejudicial - Lewisham LGBT community group.

Councillor Kennedy – non-prejudicial – Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust.

3. Lewisham Future Programme

3.1 Councillor Alan Hall (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) informed the Committee that a proposal would be put before Council to establish a process for further scrutiny of the youth service proposals.

3.2 David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) introduced the Lewisham Future Programme report; the following key points were noted:

- The Council faced a difficult set of financial circumstances, meaning it had to save £85m from its budget over the next three years.
- The report set out proposals for £40m of savings.
- The context for the savings was set out in section five of the report – and the specific proposals were set out in following sections.

- The proposals would be considered by Mayor and Cabinet on 12 November.
- A number of the proposal would be subject to consultation with staff and service users before they could be implemented.

3.3 Aileen Buckton (Executive Director of Community Services) provided an overview of the qualities impact of the savings proposals; the following key points were noted:

- A decision on whether or not to move ahead with the savings proposals was due to be taken by Mayor and Cabinet on the 12 November. Once this had happened, officers would work to begin the implementation of any savings proposals that were agreed.
- Consultations would take place with any staff or service users affected by the proposals.
- Once this had taken place, officers would return to the Committee with information about the overall equalities impact of the proposals.

3.4 Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) introduced savings proposal O1: End of the discretionary freedom pass scheme:

- There would be no impact on the statutory freedom pass scheme, which provided passes for disabled people.
- The proposals related to the discretionary scheme, which allocated freedom passes to people meeting mental health or mobility criteria set by the Council.
- 1051 passes were issued under the mental health criteria and 195 were issued under the mobility criteria.
- The scheme cost £200k per year.
- An initial review of discretionary freedom pass holders indicated that 68% would qualify for an alternative travel scheme: 63% would qualify for travel schemes run for job seekers and 5% would qualify for 60+ oyster cards.

3.5 Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- There were no plans to divert funds from other areas of the Council's budget to pay for discretionary passes.
- To meet the criteria for a discretionary pass, applicants had to be able to walk less than 300m unaided without discomfort or to have an enduring mental health condition, which required access to secondary services in the preceding 12 months.
- The criteria had been agreed by Mayor and Cabinet in 2009.
- 200 (over 10%) users had been sampled to determine the figures about eligibility for other transport schemes.
- Changing the eligibility criteria for the scheme would require re-assessment of all of the existing holders as well as detailed work to bring forward and consult on new eligibility criteria.
- The pass would not be the only element of most service users' care package. The process of reviewing the needs of more than a thousand people would be resource intensive.
- Applications for discretionary passes did not change a great deal from one year to the next.
- The option to freeze applications for passes had not been considered.

- Before this savings proposal could be implemented, further consultation would have to take place with users.

3.6 The Committee discussed the proposal and a number of different points of view were noted, including:

- The suggestion to abandon the proposal because of its potential impact on vulnerable and isolated residents. Members were concerned that the removal of this concession would increase isolation and intensify demand on other Council services.
- The possibility of alternative options for the savings proposal – including changing the eligibility criteria or refusing new applications and only supporting those with existing passes.

3.7 David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) introduced savings proposal G1: increasing income from schools SLA, debt collection and investment strategy (including blue badges) the following key points were noted:

- The savings proposal included four areas, including schools, council tax, investments and blue badges.
- Schools were not obligated to buy services from the Council.
- Consultation would take place with the schools forum about increasing charges. The proposed increase would represent a small rise in costs to schools as a proportion of their budgets.
- Investment decisions were taken as part of the treasury management strategy. The proposal was not to change investments but to manage the process more tightly.
- The Council was working with the government's behavioural insights team to increase collection of council tax.
- The Council had the ability to charge for the administrative costs of blue badges since 2011, but had not done so; 29 other London boroughs currently passed on costs. Most charged £10.

3.8 Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) and David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The cost of means testing the administrative charge for blue badges would be more than the charge being proposed.
- The Council only invested in organisations with a 'triple A plus' credit score, which was largely only achieved by banks.
- These organisations were monitored by the financial conduct authority, in order to assure their levels of credit worthiness and probity. Officers did not intend to duplicate this process.
- The target £500k for additional Council tax collection each year represented 0.5% of the overall Council tax budget.
- The targeted 0.5% increase in collection was considered to be a stretching target.
- The Council held debts until they were collected, and only wrote off costs in exceptional circumstances.
- The calculation of the council tax collection rates included debts back to 1993.
- Other councils allowed significant amounts of debt to be written off, which reduced the headline amount of debt they were owed.
- The £108m council tax debit included amounts that were in collection.

- Income from new developments was included in the medium terms financial strategy and was estimated at 1% growth per year (approximately £1m).

3.9 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced savings proposal B1: Reduction and remodelling of supporting people housing and floating support services, the following key points were noted:

- Supported people budget was used to provide services to people in their homes, hotels and as well as floating support.
- The proposed savings would be made over a two year period.
- Efforts would be made to ensure that the impact of the proposals would be minimised, but there would be an impact.
- Building based services had been prioritised in the savings proposals. It was recognised that once accommodation services were lost, they would be difficult to replace.
- It was recognised that for some clients, the changes would mean that they would present to the Council services at a more critical level of need.
- The proposals would reduce prevention work. Officers would consider the needs of different client groups – focusing on achieving successful outcomes. Nonetheless, some people would not receive preventative services.
- Work had been carried out with providers, which were mostly large community and voluntary sector organisations, over a number of years to make savings to services.
- There would be a cumulative effect for providers of this savings proposal alongside others, but in the most part provider organisations were large and held a number of contracts, which should diminish the impact.

3.10 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Community and voluntary sector service providers had to be self-sustaining, where the Council was not buying services from these providers, there was a possibility that they would be sold to other councils.
- Officers would work with teams across the Council to ensure that, where possible, services would remain with Lewisham.
- About 1500 people a year accessed floating support services.
- Services were being reconfigured, not closed down.
- The neighbourhood model of working, advice and prevention work through the main grants programme would become more important.
- Some ‘decanting’ of residents would be required to reconfigure services.
- The intention behind the proposals was to align services with needs; work would take place with existing service users to determine how else they might be able to access support, should it be required.
- There was a plausible possibility that people would present at other Council services in a higher state of need or that there would be an increase in street homelessness. This is why the risks had been identified and outlined in the report.
- The Council would still have a duty to provide support to people in high levels of need.
- This impact might be felt in other services in two or three years’ time.
- There wouldn’t be any reduction in services for domestic violence services.
- Funding from Mayor of London for Violence Against Women and Girls’ services was pooled with funding from the Council. However, the cost of

violence against women and girls services would reduce because provision was being re-tendered.

3.11 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced savings proposal H1: Restructuring of enforcement and regulatory services:

- The budget for this service would be reduced by a third (£800k).
- The intention was to create better alignment between officers responsible for tackling anti-social behaviour, trading standards, public health and nuisance, licensing, food safety, health and safety and environmental protection health and safety.
- Enforcement of building regulation, tackling rogue landlord and street cleansing were associated areas outside of the current review.
- The intention of the proposed changes was to ensure that activity and resources focused on the principal areas of risk.
- The revised service would utilise a risk based, intelligence led approach.
- Additional work would take place to develop a risk matrix, assigning different levels of risk into different categories to enable deployment of resources .
- The new model would draw on intelligence to identify associated problems in geographical areas and it would target prolific offenders/problems.
- This approach would also enable the Council to send a single officer to premises with a range of enforcement powers.
- There was some misperception about the level of current services i.e. The noise nuisance service did not currently operate for 24 hours a day, every day of the week.
- The new approach would move from attempting to deliver set hours of operation to management of risks, approaching nuisance in a proactive way.

3.12 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Under the proposals there wouldn't be any on duty noise team overnight. Rather, details of nuisance would be logged and notification would be sent to the complainant the following day that their case had been received. Officers would work to gather evidence of prolific offenders and work proactively to target and reduce nuisance.
- The current set up of noise nuisance service did not deliver a service that many people assume (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), the new provision was an attempt to refocus the service in an intelligence led way.
- The delivery of licensing services to the licensing committee would not be affected by the changes.
- There wouldn't be any reduction in licensing income.
- There would be no reduction in the work being carried out to tackle rogue landlords, because it was not part of the review.
- The Council would work with partners, including the Police, to ensure there was an appropriate response to noise nuisance. It was important to ensure that police resources were used appropriately.
- Officers were not allowed to enter premises alone, so at present there was only a limited amount that officers could do if they were called out.
- The collection of data for the service was not robust enough to demonstrate the volume of offences or the success of existing outcomes.

- There had been a number of cuts to the service over the years, which limited what could be delivered
- Residents should still be advised to make complaints, the process for recording and responding to complaints was still being devised.
- The Council would continue to work with businesses to make them compliant.
- Social landlords only provided limited out of hours services. Where feasible, officers would work to share services with partners.

3.13 The Committee further discussed the proposal; the following key points were noted:

- The noise nuisance service was one of the Council's most visible services, and as such, residents might keenly feel any deterioration in services.
- The possibility that the number of enforcement notices might decrease, as a result of officers not being in a position to witness problems as they occurred.
- The current paucity of available data and the concern that this lack did not allow officers to predict the impact of the changes being proposed.

3.14 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced savings proposal K1: retendering and targeted reduction in drug and alcohol services; the following key points were noted:

- Tier four services were provided for the most chaotic and complex substance users.
- The budget for these services was reduced two years ago; this savings proposal put forward a further reduction in the budget.
- It was recognised that there were significant issues of service users relapsing and further work was required to enhance tier four community approaches.
- Models of shared care were being developed, which would enable support to be provided in a range of settings.
- It was recognised that there was a risk in repeatedly cutting contracts and making them too small.
- Officers would ensure that the service user involvement activities – i.e. coffee morning/café service would be provided by the current main provider (CRI) and this would remain as part of the future contract.
- In order to access services, people had to have a local connection.
- It was recognised that there were longstanding issues with the accommodation at Milford Towers.
- Officers would follow up on questions raised by Members about the current management of the properties in Milford Towers by Notting Hill housing association.

3.15 The Committee also discussed the proposal; the following key points were noted:

- The potential problems that could be caused if other boroughs decided to place people with complex needs in Lewisham properties, which Members felt might put strain on community services and cause wider problems in host communities.

3.16 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced savings proposal K3: Reduction in funding for integrated offender management service; the following key points were noted:

- The Council had piloted a project to reduce demand on the criminal justice system for adults who had served less than 12 months in prison.
- In future, the probation service would deliver projects for people coming out of custody irrespective of the length of time they spend, removing duplication of contracts.

3.17 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- The changes to the probation service had been implemented in shadow form. Following the changes, officers in the new structure were the same as probation, which had eased the transition.
- There were still significant challenges facing the new probation service model.

3.18 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced savings proposal K2: youth offending service reorganisation, changes in interventions and reductions in contracts:

- Youth offending was funded approximately 50%:50% by local government central government.
- It was a statutory requirement to provide support to all young people who come into the criminal justice systems to a minimum set of standards.
- As part of the savings proposal, a minimum unit costing exercise was conducted of the service.
- The proposal would reduce funding for externally commissioned organisations by £200K and result in the deletion of a post.
- Numbers of young people entering the youth justice system was subject to change and in recent years there had been a reduction in number of young people entering the system.
- Local authorities were required to pick up the cost of secure remand through changes implemented by Government in Dec 2012, which meant 100% of the cost of these beds fell to local authorities. Remands to Young offenders Institutions were also now paid for by Local Authorities, with some funding coming from central government.

3.19 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Cost would be reduced by moving to paperless working, delivering projects internally, and reducing funding for external programmes including, MyTime, Kinetic Youth, Catch 22, PYE double edge, Surrey Docks Farm.
- Officers would assess whether there were areas of the Council that might benefit from reparation projects.

A proposal to suspend standing orders until the completion of business was agreed at 21:25.

3.20 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) introduced savings proposal L2: libraries staff reorganisation; the following key points were noted:

- The proposal would reduce the salaries budget by 6%. The previous reorganisation of staffing had been successful and the Council was now in a position to find further efficiencies at levels SO2 and above, in supervisory/management roles.

- Work would take place to ensure that tasks happened at the appropriate level.

3.21 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Not all staff would be affected by the restructure, which would focus mainly on managerial staff.
- Savings would be made across all libraries, but the proposals would not affect the number of libraries or their opening hours.
- Resources would remain in place to support community libraries.
- Plans for the future of the former Ladywell leisure centre site were still in development. Any provision of library service on the site would need to be delivered in an innovative way, using new technology.

3.22 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) introduced savings proposal L1: review of the main voluntary and community grants programme, the following key points were noted:

- The proposal would reduce the grants budget by £1.5m.
- As part of this proposal, there would be new criteria for giving grants, focused on four key areas:
 - Strong and cohesive communities
 - Communities that care
 - Access to advice services
 - Widening access to arts and sports
- Consultation on the new proposals had taken place in the last 3 months,
- There had been more than 200 attendees at consultation events, including written representations and feedback.
- There would be an additional three weeks consultation about the proposals to reduce the budget.
- It would be difficult to know exactly what support would be required from partnering organisations in the next three years, so it was important that local intelligence was used to develop new ways of working and enable flexibility.
- The Council was open to working in partnership in order to bring resources into the borough.
- Criteria were well received by community and voluntary sector organisations. Proposed partnership working was welcomed.
- The Children and Young People Directorate would still fund services in from Community and Voluntary Sector organisations for Children and Young People.
- Respondents to the consultation had asked about the use of the Council's physical assets.
- The Council was committed to ensuring that there were open and equitable services.
- There was broad agreement with the principal that fewer organisations should be fully funded, rather than all organisations sharing an equal cut.

3.23 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) and Aileen Buckton (Executive Director for Community Services) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- It was recognised that a 'one size fits all' approach to equalities was not a realistic proposition for any strategic equalities organisation.

- A single organisation could not provide representation for every equalities strand on every local group that required equalities input. There was, however, a role for a strategic equalities organisation to provide an overarching level of coordination on equalities issues.
- The Metro centre was keen to continue in its role supporting the Council to deliver on its priorities and welcomed the opportunity to both challenge and support the Council to improve services.
- The development of grass roots activity needed to be led by the community and could not come from the Council.
- Lewisham EqualiTeam was not designed to represent every equality strand; however, it did have a coordinating role to deliver support in areas where issues required guidance in single areas. For example in hate crime reporting.
- Equalities support organisations did not have to be based in the borough, but they did need to demonstrate how they would provide effective services to residents.
- Officers would include an objective in the main grants funding proposals being presented to Mayor and Cabinet to encourage support for the development of grassroots organisations, where appropriate.
- Organisations were monitored quarterly against their anticipated outcomes.
- In future, it was proposed that there be an increased focus on intelligence led monitoring, where monitoring requirements were reduced for well performing organisations and increased for those which were poorly performing.
- The Council had ceased to fund organisations in the past due to poor performance.
- Further information would be presented to Mayor and Cabinet about the use of assets. Further conversations were due to take place amongst council officers about the future approach.
- 'Second tier' coordinating organisations would be required to support smaller organisations to develop mobile working and innovative use of community buildings.
- Further work might also take place to set up community hubs.
- Grant recommendations would be presented to the Committee before Mayor and Cabinet.
- The voluntary sector database was used to inform organisation about the main grants programme consultation. The database contained the details of a broad range of community organisations in the borough, not just those in receipt of grants.
- Further information would be provided to the Committee about the equalities impacts of the savings proposals.

3.24 In response to questions from the Committee, Joan Millbank (Cabinet Member for the Third Sector) provided the following information:

- Further work would need to take place in future to determine how community organisations would work more closely with local assemblies.
- Organisations had to demonstrate they had a track record of delivery.
- Organisations new to the grants process would be able to establish a track record through small grants funding.

3.25 The Committee agreed to refer its views to the Public Accounts Select Committee as follows:

O1: End of the discretionary freedom pass scheme

The Committee recommended that further work be carried out to assess alternative options for the scheme. The Committee asked that, before a decision is taken to end the discretionary scheme, information be provided which sets out the financial and administrative implications of ceasing to issue new passes, whilst retaining the scheme for existing users. The Committee also recommended that options for changing the eligibility criteria for the scheme be further examined.

G1: Increasing income from schools SLA, debt collection and investment strategy (inc Blue Badges)

The Committee recommended that, before a decision is taken, information be made available about the provision of blue badges organisations, such as carer agencies and voluntary sector groups. The Committee believed that charging for these might generate a source of income to offset the costs for other users.

H1: Restructuring of enforcement and regulatory services

The Committee recommended that, before a decision is taken, further information be made available about the performance of the existing service, including: the number of calls received by the noise nuisance service and the service's peak periods of usage alongside an analysis of officer availability.

The Committee was concerned that the service would lose its resident focus and urged that further work be undertaken to ensure residents were aware of the action being taken in response to their complaints. The Committee wanted to ensure that the service would be able to collect the information required to issue enforcement notices. The Committee requested that information be made available about any anticipated change in the number of enforcement notices likely to occur as a result of the changes to out of hours staffing.

The Committee recommended that the Council should work with housing association partners to join up out of hours services.

L1: Review of the main voluntary and community sector grants programme

The Committee expressed concern about the lack of grass roots LGBT activity in Lewisham and requested that the grants programme criteria be amended to encourage better engagement with Lewisham residents by strategic equalities organisations.

K1: Retendering and targeted reduction in drug and alcohol services

The Committee was concerned that other organisations and local authorities might use services that had been vacated by the Council for people from outside the borough with complex needs, thereby increasing pressure on other Council services. The Committee recommended that the Council should work proactively with partners and other local authorities to share information on out of borough residents and on the support services being delivered in the borough.

K2: Youth offending service reorganisation

The Committee recommended that the Public Accounts Select Committee should review to the impact of the saving being proposed for commissioning of services from community and voluntary sector groups.

The Committee recommended that further work should be carried out to determine whether there were areas of the Council which could benefit from the use of reparation services.

The Committee recommended that the Council should highlight its concerns about the impact of the changes to the probation service on the delivery of local services.

Resolved: that the Committee's views be referred to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

4. Main grant programme funding

The content of this report was considered alongside savings proposal L1: review of the main voluntary and community sector grants programme.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

5. Select Committee work programme

5.1 Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report. The Committee discussed the report and agreed the work programme for the following meeting.

6. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views under item three to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Chair:

Date:
