

# MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 5 November 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Jamie Milne (Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Chris Barnham, Ami Ibitson, Roy Kennedy, Helen Klier, Jim Mallory, John Muldoon and Crada Onuegbu and Alan Hall and Gareth Siddorn

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mark Ingleby

ALSO PRESENT: David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources), Councillor Chris Best (Cabinet Member Health-Well-Being-Older People), Councillor Kevin Bonavia (Cabinet Member Resources), Aileen Buckton (Executive Director for Community Services), Mayor Sir Steve Bullock (Mayor), Councillor Liam Curran (Chair Sustainable Development Select Committee), Alan Docksey (Head of Resources & Performance, CYP), Andrew Hagger (Scrutiny Manager), Councillor Carl Handley (Chair Housing Select Committee), Rob Holmans (Director of Regeneration and Asset Management), Councillor Stella Jeffrey, Councillor Paul Maslin (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Councillor David Michael, Councillor Rachel Onikosi (Cabinet Member Public Realm), Councillor John Paschoud (Chair Children & Young People Select Committee), Barry Quirk (Chief Executive), Justine Roberts (Change and Innovation Manager), Janet Senior (Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services), Ian Smith (Director Children's Social Care) (Directorate for Children & Young People, LBL), Shirley Spong (No Recourse to Public Funds Service Manager), Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People), Selwyn Thompson (Group Finance Manager - Budget Strategy), Councillor James-J Walsh and Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services)

**Reasons for lateness:** The minutes are late as the officer responsible for the minutes was on statutory paternity leave and so unable to complete the minutes prior to despatch. The minutes are urgent as they need to be approved at the 10 December meeting.

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2014

### Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2014 were approved.

## 2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were none.

## 3. Financial Forecasts 2014/15 (including Mid-year Treasury Management Review)

3.1 Selwyn Thompson (Head of Financial Services) introduced the reports, highlighting the following key points:

- The report sets out the financial forecasts for 2014/15 as at 30 September 2014.
- An overspend of £10.6m against the directorates' net General Fund revenue budget is forecast.

- The revised budget for the Capital Programme for the year is £147m and the current forecast expenditure at the year end is £135m. The estimated final outturn will be 92% of the revised budget, compared to 96% for the previous year.
- Council tax collection is 0.4% lower than this year's profiled collection rate and business rates collection is 2.8% lower than the same period last year. Collection will need to pick up to meet targets.
- The Children and Young People directorate has a projected overspend of £8.6m, mostly due to Looked After Children and Leaving Care budgets, as well as spending on No Recourse to Public Funds cases.
- Community Services currently has a £2.5m overspend related to Adult Social Care.
- Customer Services has a £1.9m overspend, the result of pressures on Bed & Breakfast provision. Work is being carried out to increase supply.
- Resources and Regeneration currently has a £0.5m underspend.
- Management action taken to address the overspend includes the creation of the Corporate Expenditure Panel, which sits above the Directorate Expenditure Panels to examine new spending and sends the message to managers that spending is being scrutinised.
- Treasury Management returns are in line with what was expected given the level of risk the Council takes.
- The new contract with Barclays for accounts will start in April 2015.

3.2 In response to questions from the Committee submitted in advance, Selwyn Thompson informed the Committee that while the overspend position has not improved, compensatory underspends to offset overspends have been identified. Historically it has been possible to manage down the overspend over the year, however pressures this year are greater than before and while all efforts will be made there is no guarantee the overspend can be eliminated.

3.3 In response to questions from the Committee, Selwyn Thompson provided the Committee with the following information:

- The current position is a major challenge and the organisation is facing significant pressures. Savings have to be made to balance the budget in the future and proposals will need to be realistic and managerially achievable.
- Some savings can be taken early, such as areas where there are vacant posts, and these are possibly impacting on the underspend already.
- To make the level of savings needed across the organisation then services that make up a significant portion of the overall spend, such as Adult Social care, will need to make radical changes.

#### **Resolved:**

The Committee asked for examples of spending that the Corporate Expenditure Panel had stopped to be provided as part of their next financial monitoring report.

## **4. Management report**

4.1 This item was considered as part of item 3.

## **5. Lewisham Future Programme: 2015/16 Revenue Budget Savings**

- 5.1 Cllr Alan Hall (Chair of Overview & Scrutiny) spoke to the Committee, highlighting the following key points:
- The scale of the savings presented is unprecedented and it is important for there to be thorough pre-decision scrutiny and consideration of the proposals.
  - A lot of effort has been put in by officers to produce these proposals and members thank them for their efforts.
  - There will be further in-depth scrutiny of the Public Health and Youth Service proposals carried out by dedicated working groups.
- 5.2 Sir Steve Bullock (Mayor of Lewisham) then addressed the Committee, highlighting the following key points:
- Four years ago the savings put forward were ones that could be easily achieved. This is not the case now and few of the proposals put forward here are as easily achievable.
  - Scrutiny's role in the process is important as it can help identify the impacts that proposals will have, such as a short term saving that could have a longer term knock on effect, possibly in a different area of activity.
  - The Mayor is looking for surety that decisions are not being taken that then have to be revised or are undeliverable.
- 5.3 Cllr Bonavia (Cabinet Member for Resources) addressed the Committee and highlighted that the proposals here do not reach the halfway point of the amount of savings that are required over the next few years. The approach taken has been to look at everything the Council does.
- 5.4 David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) introduced the report, highlighting the following key points:
- The Council faces an £85m budget gap over the three years to 2017/18 with an estimated £39m gap for 2015/16.
  - This report presents £39.9m of new proposals, of these proposals £28.7m are for 2015/16, with the balance of £11.2m contributing to future year targets.
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  - There have been revisions made to the A2 and A9 proposals with further details included as requested by the Healthier Communities Select Committee. Proposal A8 has also been corrected.

### Referral from Housing Select Committee

- 5.5 Cllr Carl Handley (Chair of Housing Select Committee) introduced the referral, highlighting that the cut proposed in B1 (Reduction and remodelling of Supporting People housing and floating support services) will have a major impact on the vulnerable and that a focus on prevention and early intervention would be beneficial.

### **Resolved:**

The Committee resolved to refer the comments of the Housing Select Committee to Mayor & Cabinet

### Referral from Children & Young People Select Committee

- 5.6 Cllr John Paschoud (Chair of Children & Young People Select Committee) introduced the referral, highlighting the following key points:
- The potential cumulative negative impact on service providers of proposal K2 (YOS reorganisation, changes in interventions & reduction in contracts) could mean that services may no longer be viable in the future.
  - The proposal in Q2 (Reduction in Youth Service provision) to create an employee led mutual for youth services is a challenge but is possible although it will require resources and support to make it happen and is highly dependent on the involvement of the voluntary and community sector.
- 5.7 In response to questions from the Committee, Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children & Young People) and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime and Supporting People) provided the following information:
- Officers have spoken to organisations involved in commissioned YOS provision and they have indicated that the impact of the reductions will not cause them to close.
  - Youth groups providing commissioned services have been informed about the amount of money they will receive and for how long they will receive it and information on this will be provided to Mayor & Cabinet.

#### **Resolved:**

The Committee resolved to refer the comments of the Children & Young People Select Committee to Mayor & Cabinet.

### Referral from Healthier Communities Select Committee

- 5.8 Cllr John Muldoon (Chair of Healthier Communities Select Committee) introduced the referral, highlighting the following key points:
- Public Health is a recent addition to local government responsibilities.
  - Healthier Communities Select Committee raised concerns over the amount of agency staff used.
  - Adult Social Care faces major changes and salami slicing of budgets will not address the pressures.
  - Healthier Communities Select Committee asked for revisions to the A2 and A9 proposals, which have been made.
- 5.9 In response to questions from the Committee, Aileen Buckton (Executive Director for Community Services) provided the following information on proposal A1 (Cost effective care packages):
- The reductions in budget reflect changes in social work services and are related to the Care Act. The Council has flexibility in the way it provides services and has the ability to meet the needs of users in different ways.
  - Officers are taking into consideration how other organisations and funding work for the user and will work through packages case- by-case to see how to meet needs in a cost effective way. There are alternatives and opportunities for different provision and there will be consultation with all service users over changes.

**Resolved:**

The Committee resolved to refer the comments of the Healthier Communities Select Committee to Mayor & Cabinet.

**Referral from Sustainable Development Select Committee**

- 5.10 Cllr Liam Curran (Chair of Sustainable Development Select Committee) introduced the referral, highlighting the following key points:
- The need for adequate ICT systems to implement and support proposed service changes
  - The potential benefits of increasing the use of school premises outside school hours in proposal E2 (Optimisation of operational estate), although it will be difficult to greatly increase the use of school premises for community use.
  - There was support for the proposal set out in H1 (Restructuring of enforcement and regulatory services) although concerns were raised that the proposals could end up being simply a reduction in staffing.
  - Concerns around the proposal N2 (Reduction in street cleansing frequencies and cleansing management costs) including the potential negative impacts it will have on the borough and the cumulative effect of cuts to cleansing services.

**Resolved:**

The Committee resolved to refer the comments of the Sustainable Development Select Committee to Mayor & Cabinet.

**Referral from Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee**

- 5.11 Cllr David Michael (Vice-Chair of Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee) introduced the savings and offered apologies on behalf of Cllr Pauline Morrison (Chair of Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee) who was unable to attend due to ward business. Cllr Michael highlighted comments from the Committee that services provided by the Council should have regard to the most vulnerable residents and communities, including those affected by poor mental health and disabilities.
- 5.12 There was then discussion around the impact of the changes to the probation service on the delivery of local services, including the allocation of probation service contracts.

**Resolved:**

The Committee resolved to refer the comments of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee to Mayor & Cabinet.

**Proposals E1 (Structural re-organisation of the Regeneration & Asset Management Division), E2 (Optimisation of operational estate), E3 (Creating income from asset portfolio) and E4 (Improving rent collection for commercial assets)**

- 5.13 Rob Holmans (Director of Regeneration and Asset Management) introduced the proposals E1 to E4 and highlighted the following key points:
- Savings will come from a re-organisation that will draw together the existing structures so they become more cohesive. This will enable the sharing of processes and systems and help breakdown silos. Inspection roles for highways, property and building control can be brought together in one area and Asset Management will similarly be looked at to bring functions together.
  - The new structure will comprise of 4 key elements: Asset Strategy and Technical Support, Commercial and Investment (including the Programme Management Office), Capital Delivery (Projects and Programmes) and Operational Delivery.
  - There is a proposed £600k saving from proposal E1
  - There has only been high level consultation with staff since the proposals have not yet been presented to Mayor & Cabinet, consultation will take place after approval and once the outstanding detail is finalised.
  - The overall aim is to ensure that staff are able to recognise and maximise opportunities in redevelopment and asset management, such as in areas like Deptford High Street.
  - There is potential to improve IT systems and a new asset management platform is currently being put in place.
- 5.14 In response to questions from the Committee about proposal E2, Rob Holmans and Frankie Sulke provided the following information:
- Officers are working on proposals to ensure PFI schools can be used. A toolbox is being built to help schools set costs for charges outside school hours.
  - A small group of headteachers has been brought together in a working group to address this. At the moment there are no incentives for schools to open up for community use, so work needs to be done to show the benefits for them and persuade them to pursue this. It will not be easy to do but it can be done.
- 5.15 The Committee then discussed possible engagement with Local Assemblies around this, as well as influencing school governors.

#### F1 (Centralisation of business support services)

- 5.16 Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) highlighted that savings can be achieved through economies of scale, basic technical and process redesign (such as improved use of technology and demand management) as well as some reduction in non-core business support functions. The structure is being developed and will create 5 hubs serving key areas.

#### G1 (Increasing income from schools SLA, Debt collection and Investment strategy (inc blue badges))

- 5.17 Alan Docksey (Head of Resources & Performance (C&YP)), Ralph Wilkinson and Selwyn Thompson introduced the proposal, highlighting the following key points:
- Schools Service Level Agreements will increase the range of charged for services and decreasing the number of “free” services, so that full cost recovery is achieved.

- Council Tax Collection assumes £500k increase, which will be achieved through improving collections and by developing approaches built upon the work of the Cabinet Office's Behavioural Insights Team.
- The Investment Strategy will focus on the level of return the Council receives on its current investments, which should be achieved to current market conditions.
- The Blue Badge Administration Fee would mean that customers would have to pay a £10 fee each time they renewed their badge. Prior to 2011 it was only possible to charge a small amount, which was not worth the cost of collecting. 24 other local authorities currently charge for blue badge administration and the charge would raise £24k.

5.18 In response to questions from the Committee about the Blue Badge Administration Fee, Ralph Wilkinson provided the following the following information:

- The pass is not means-tested; it is decided purely on mobility criteria.
- There is no scope to increase charge beyond the £10 limit.
- The blue badge is a national scheme, so there is no control locally on the number of badges and eligibility, although there is local flexibility on the number of parking spaces available.
- £24k is not a lot out of £85m savings required, but there is a case for introducing charges such as these.

5.19 The Mayor highlighted that while there is a reputational risk in introducing this charge, there is also a reputational risk if Lewisham is the only borough in London not charging this administration fee.

**Resolved:**

The Committee agreed to refer the following to Mayor & Cabinet:

- The Committee agreed with the concerns raised by the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee and also highlighted the reputational risk to the Council that could occur through the introduction of charges for issuing blue badges.

11 (Reduction in corporate management and professional support services)

5.20 Janet Senior (Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration) introduced the proposal, highlighting that the proposal offers proportionate savings across corporate services and reflects how corporate services are likely to operate in the future.

5.21 In response to questions from the Committee, Barry Quirk (Chief Executive) and Janet Senior provided the following the following information:

- Shared services are something to look at and consider in the future and scrutiny of this issue by the Public Accounts Select Committee would be welcomed. It can take a lot of work to make shared services work properly so it should not be entered into lightly or with the expectation that it can be easily done.
- A shared service, such as for enforcement, may be able to keep the specialisation within teams however there would be a loss of direct control of the service. A more grouped internal service, as proposed for enforcement in

Lewisham, may risk losing specialisation however control can be kept. It is not possible to do both and make the savings required.

- Officers are looking at the costs of supporting council corporately; it is not about taking out a certain percentage of the costs as there are certain irreducible costs that have to be met such as governance.
- When all the savings have been taken in three years' time Lewisham will spend what Bromley does now, however Bromley is 217<sup>th</sup> on the deprivation list and Lewisham is 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Many of the cuts proposed in this round of savings are frontline services, however there will be more back office proposals in the next round of savings.

5.22 The Committee then discussed whether more savings could be made from corporate communications.

**Resolved:**

The Committee requested that savings made in service areas from 2010 onwards be shown in future proposals so it is possible to see the cumulative impact of savings.

The Committee agreed to refer the following to Mayor & Cabinet:

- The Committee noted the lack of proposals including shared services and asked that shared services options are explored fully in the next round of savings.
- The Committee recommended that further savings in Corporate Communications should be explored.

O2 (Reduction in staffing for parking contract client team) and O3 (Set up an internal "enforcement agency" (bailiff) service to collect council tax and other debts)

5.23 Ralph Wilkinson introduced the proposals, highlighting the following key points:

- A strong client team was needed at the start of the parking contract, however now that the contract is underway this is no longer required.
- Changes in legislation that came into force in April 2014 brought major changes to the enforcement industry to make it simpler to understand and more transparent, including a new fixed fee regime.
- A review of the changes showed it would be possible to set up an internal 'enforcement agency' (bailiff) service which after taking into account running costs will generate a net surplus income.
- It is anticipated that this agency will collect as much, likely more, than current arrangements and do it in a more sensitive manner.
- Additional savings could be generated as the agency expands and builds in more collections.
- Bailiffs contracts will be retained for high-risk and out of borough collection as well as for backup.

**Resolved:**

The Committee agreed to refer the following to Mayor & Cabinet:

- The Committee endorsed the referrals made by Select Committees to the Committee and asked that the Mayor takes these referrals into account alongside officer reports when taking a decision on the Lewisham Future Programme – 2015/16 Revenue Budget Savings Report.
- The Committee noted the lack of proposals including shared services and asked that shared services options are explored fully in the next round of savings.

G1: Increasing income from schools SLA, debt collection, investment strategy and blue badges

- The Committee agreed with the concerns raised by the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee and also highlighted the reputational risk to the Council that could occur through the introduction of charges for issuing blue badges.

I1: Reduction in corporate management and professional support services

- The Committee recommended that further savings in Corporate Communications should be explored.

## **6. No Recourse to Public Funds Review - Evidence session**

6.1 Ian Smith (Director of Children's Social Care) introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- Whilst not eligible for public funds, individuals might still be eligible for local authority assistance under s17 of the Childcare Act 1989 or s21 of the National Assistance Act 1948.
- There are strict criteria around eligibility for NRPF, including territorial responsibility, genuine destitution, they are not asylum seekers and that they are seeking to regularise their stay in the UK.
- NRPF numbers have risen dramatically in the last few years and there has been an urgent need to manage the costs.
- There was a specialist team dealing with cases such as these in Lewisham and many other local authorities, but this was disbanded 7 to 8 years ago as the National Asylum Seeker Service was established and picked up the cases.
- Now NRPF cases are picked up within social care, which is not equipped to deal with it. There are a number of reasons for this, partly because assessment by social workers prioritises safeguarding (especially after the huge increase in Child Protection cases in 2012/13) and not NRPF eligibility criteria and partly because a number of NRPF claims are dubious or fraudulent.
- The Home Office can take a long time to assess cases, which means people stay illegally in the UK for a longer period of time.
- The Clue vs Birmingham case changed case law so that individuals only had to be intending to make an application to the Home Office, rather than having an application registered.

- The economic downturn has had an impact, as economic pressures mean that support networks people may have used such as a spare room or work in the grey economy have reduced.
- There are local factors in play, such as the hub for face to face contact for immigration applications in Croydon and the demographic of Lewisham, with large numbers of Jamaican and Nigerian families who are more likely to present as NRPF.

6.2 Justine Roberts (Change & Innovation Manager) then provided the Committee with the following information:

- NRPF cases usually relates to families, which explains why there are a high number of women presenting as NRPF.
- The vast majority of those presenting as NRPF are visa over stayers. Many have been in the UK for a number of years and some have been in the UK for so long that they are not clear on their own status and what they are entitled to. Many will also have children with British parents.
- Before developing the pilot officers looked across London to see how other authorities approached NRPF. They found that there is no comprehensive reporting on NRPF across London or nationally and that generally responsibility has fallen to social care workers, whose systems are not set up to deal with those presenting as NRPF.
- NRPF involves complex immigration law, which is not part of social work role and can make the decision making process difficult. The anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a high amount of fraud and misrepresentation with NRPF.
- The NRPF Network estimates that there are 1587 families across London that are eligible for NRPF, which officers in Lewisham believe is a huge underestimation. Data collected suggests that across Lewisham, Lambeth, Southwark, Greenwich and Croydon alone, the number of cases being supported is in excess of 1,000.
- Costs per case are also more likely to be in line with Lewisham's own unit cost of £22k per annum rather than the £16k suggested by the NRPF network report.
- Local authorities are only just beginning to recognise the issue and only a few local authorities have carried out work on this issue. Lewisham is ahead of the curve in this regard.
- Wandsworth had a team in place early to deal with NRPF, while Southwark is working to procure properties outside London to address the rising costs.
- Procuring housing and supporting people in housing can often be expensive and difficult.
- The focus of the pilot team is on eligibility for NRPF, with robust and fair processes developed to establish eligibility. Social care need is then assessed outside the pilot team once eligibility has been determined.
- There has been dedicated legal support on hand for the pilot team and there has been closer working with housing. There is also an officer seconded from the Home Office.
- There is a scripted assessment process that uses anti-fraud techniques including credit checking, accessing council and Home Office information.
- The impacts of the pilot are shown in detail in the report, with the number of cases accepted down from 9.7 per month to 1.3 per month.

- Those that are not accepted are signposted to ward relevant places where they can access help and support.
- The existing NRPF caseload also represents a pressure in terms of sustained expenditure. The data held has been cleansed and 42 cases have been identified to be re-examined. Projected on current performance, spend on NRPF will level off then decrease in the coming years.
- Changes to policy from central government could have a significant impact on NRPF, with changes to benefits for EEA nationals as well as EU case law potentially increasing numbers.

6.3 Shirley Spong (NRPF Service Manager) then provided the Committee with the following information:

- It has been important to develop a consistent, fair and defensible process for assessing NRPF cases. Decisions can be made and then stuck by.
- Support for NRPF can extend over a number of years, so it is vital to get the eligibility process right.
- There has been an unprecedented degree of challenge to the process. People have re-presented numerous times and other public services such as health have sometimes re-introduced people. The voluntary sector have steered people towards the local authority, while law centres and private practice lawyers have also done so.
- Despite this, no challenge has been successful which shows that the eligibility criteria used is correct and evidence based.
- Procuring private sector housing can be difficult due to the reluctance of local landlords and the costs. There has been a concerted approach by solicitors to say to clients that they have a right to a local property. However this is not good in the long-term as local accommodation is not necessarily practical and financially viable due to the cost.
- Using a small team for the pilot has been very effective. Previously there were a wide number of people all dealing with applicants, which meant applicants could reapply and be fairly confident they wouldn't see the same person. This is not the case and the team regularly shares information on those presenting as NRPF.
- There is a lot of interest across SE London in developing a shared service for NRPF that will enable the sharing of resources and knowledge. There is currently an application with the DCLG for funding to support this.
- The key is to the long term control of this is to have processes in place for bringing claims to an end, however there is certain amount of reliance on the Home Office for this.

6.4 Shirley Spong then ran through the case studies presented in the paper and highlighted the following key points:

- Cases have to be actively managed. Situations can change and eligibility is a part of it. Resources can be expended on people that meet the eligibility criteria, but subsequently the changing situation can mean they do not meet the criteria.
- If someone is not territorially connected to Lewisham they are not eligible.
- The process is not all about saying no. Sometimes the best solution is to seek to regularise someone's stay by changing their status to code 1 or 1A. This will allow access to mainstream benefits such as housing benefit.

- This can allow support to be provided that will create a sustainable solution for that individual and/or family and mean that dependency on that support is not created.

6.5 In response to questions from the Committee, Barry Quirk (Chief Executive), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services), Ian Smith, Justine Roberts, Shirley Spong and Georgina Nunney (Principal Lawyer) provided the following information:

- The increase in NRPF is the result of a lot of things all coming together; the economic downturn, private sector rent increases, the lack of robust systems before so a reputation as a soft touch, changing case law, lawyers pushing clients to present as NRPF and local conditions in SE London.
- Lewisham has improved a lot in regard to NRPF, while other neighbouring authorities, such as Lambeth, are just starting to realise the extent of the problem.
- It is still possible to get legal aid for a judicial review versus a local authority, which has meant that the number of judicial reviews being launched has increased as lawyers can make money challenging decisions. Solicitors can often give false hope to families about their ability to access local authority funds which means that the families could be missing out on better and more practical advice.
- The Council is not concerned about potential judicial reviews as they often lack merit and officers are confident that they have the evidence to back the decisions taken.
- London Councils is looking at NRPF closely as the cost across London represents a significant chunk of money.
- The assessment process used by the pilot team is about consistency; being fair, making the right judgement and being robust.
- Lewisham identified the problem early and have worked to fix the 'leaky roof' of increased NRPF cases. There is still work to be done to mop up what has come through the 'leaky roof'.
- Housing is by far the biggest subsidy that the local authority has to pay out, although other costs include subsistence and support. There needs to be increased sustainability in the housing provided and this means that accommodation is not necessarily in London due to the high costs.
- If it is possible to regularise the stay of people then they will be entitled to benefits. NRPF cases often represent a cost shunt to the local authority by central government, which will then be shunted back to the DWP once a stay has been regularised. The cost to the state has not necessarily changed, but the local taxpayer who is not best placed to deal with this is not picking up the cost.
- For a long time the immigration debate was about asylum. This meant the managed immigration approach was not being actively managed, controlled or looked at. In 2012 there were a couple of changes that had an impact. There were increased charges for someone coming to the UK as a child/spouse, which closed down an affordable route in for many people. This increased the number of people who then entered the UK as a visitor and then just never left. This route is a far less scrutinised and monitored route.
- The 7 year old child concession was also reinstated, which meant that if someone had been in the country with a child for 7 years it is against the child's rights to remove them if they have not had contact with their home country.

- There are a large number of backlogged immigration files with the Home Office which does not help with regularising the stay of people with NRPF. However it is hoped that the reduction in the number of stages of appeal as set out in the Immigration Act may help.
- In addition, assessment of the human rights claims used to have to be submitted and reviewed in one go, however now it can be spread out which delays the process.
- Over the years the Home Office has also not coherently stuck to policy, which has exacerbated matters.
- Lewisham is working through a number of routes to influence the situation. Work is being done with London Councils and the LGA, while officers use their professional networks. The Executive Director for Children & Young People has spoken to the Children’s Minister about the issue and the Chief Executive has lobbied on it.
- NRPF is an example of Whitehall working in silos and how the consequences of a policy can be felt widely across the public sector. It was a problem that they became aware of quite late and only recently the Home Office has started working with the DCLG on this.
- MPs can often become involved in NRPF cases and are not always aware of the situation and context surrounding NRPF. Officers in Lewisham have arranged meetings with MP caseworkers to raise awareness and increase their knowledge.
- The plan is to extend the pilot for 6 months and then look to regularise it and make it part of business as usual.

6.6 The Committee discussed how impressed they were by the delivery of the pilot.

**Resolved:**

The Committee accepted the information provided as evidence for its review

**7. Select Committee work programme**

7.1 The Committee discussed the work programme.

**Resolved:**

The Committee agreed the work programme

**8. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet**

**Resolved:**

The Committee referred the comments agreed under item 5.

The meeting ended at 10.35 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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