

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 26 October 2015 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Hall (Chair), Gareth Siddorn (Vice-Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Paul Bell, Peter Bernards, Andre Bourne, John Coughlin, Liam Curran, Brenda Dacres, Amanda De Ryk, Colin Elliott, Carl Handley, Maja Hilton, Simon Hooks, Stella Jeffrey, Roy Kennedy, Jim Mallory, Jamie Milne, John Muldoon, Olurotimi Ogunbadewa, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Pat Raven, Joan Reid, Jonathan Slater, Eva Stamirowski and James-J Walsh

APOLOGIES: Councillors Obajimi Adefiranye, Chris Barnham, Bill Brown, Ami Ibitson, Mark Ingleby, Alicia Kennedy, Helen Klier, David Michael, Hilary Moore, Alan Till, Paul Upex and Susan Wise

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Principal Policy Officer), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Charlotte Dale (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Georgina Nunney (Principal Lawyer), Barry Quirk (Chief Executive) and Alan Docksey (Head of Resources & Performance, CYP)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2015

1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2015 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting of the Public Spending in Lewisham Working Group held on 22 September 2015

2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 22 September 2015 be received and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 The following declarations of interest were declared:

Councillor John Muldoon - Lead Governor of South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Councillor Alan Hall - A governor at the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

4. Mayoral response: London Fire Brigade

4.1 The Committee discussed and noted the response.

4.2 Members noted that should a saving be taken that would involve the permanent removal of some or all of the 13 appliances currently being held back from deployment, modelling would be carried out to determine which

appliances should be permanently decommissioned, based on the impact their removal would have. They also noted that any permanent removal would have to go through formal consultation and then be agreed by London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority Members / Mayoral Direction.

4.3 **RESOLVED:** That a referral be made to Mayor and Cabinet, advising that the Committee had resolved the following:

1. That Lewisham Council should carefully consider any proposals to permanently, or further, reduce fire cover within the London Borough of Lewisham.
2. That Lewisham Council should make representations for full public consultation on any such proposals.
3. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and agrees the following recommendations made by the Public Spending in Lewisham Working Group:

In 2014/15 and in 2015/16 (to date) the six minute target for getting a first appliance to an incident has not been met in the Bellingham, Downham and Grove Park wards of Lewisham. The LFB should focus its attention on understanding and addressing the reasons behind this failure. This should include considering any impact caused by the removal of Forest Hill's second appliance and the closure of Downham Fire Station; and considering what mitigating action might be taken to improve attendance times in these areas. The findings should be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5. Devolution

1.1 Barry Quirk, Chief Executive, gave a presentation to the Committee. Key points to note included:

- The context for devolution including the squeeze on public spending.
- The unique circumstances in London including the economy (London has much larger GVA figures than the rest of the country (Gross Value Added - the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area); and the increase in private sector jobs to replace lost public sector jobs – that had not been replicated in most other areas of the country.
- Devolution was not happening according to a fixed set of rules and guidelines with clear routes of appeal but was happening as a series of unique deals, different in each area: “bricolage”.
- The aim of devolution was to enable growth but also to stimulate public service reform.
- It was difficult to pinpoint exactly what resources were being attached to devolution.
- It was clear that areas such as Lewisham needed to connect to the wider economy and the ‘bigger players’ for devolution to work.

- In terms of the current borough groupings, it was the Chief Executive's opinion that Lewisham needed to make sure it linked to the central London economies where a large percentage of Lewisham's working population were employed.
- When considering groupings, councils needed to consider who to group with (Neighbours? Authorities with similar problems? Authorities with complementary strengths?).
- London boroughs needed to work closely with their neighbours as residents did not recognise borough boundaries in the same way as councils (e.g. 25 per cent of schoolchildren went to school in a different borough to the one they lived in).

1.2 In response to questions from members of the Committee the following points were noted:

- It would be important to engage the public in the devolution debate.
- The Treasury was looking at housing, welfare reform and health & adult social care in terms of devolution, all of which would impact on London.
- Devolution was an attempt to get areas to act together to deal with Government cuts in a sensible way.
- In many areas, approaching common issues in 32 different ways was not efficient and it would make more sense for boroughs to work together or for a pan-London approach to be adopted.
- However, the boroughs were broadly successful and their populations were growing, lessening the justification for a reduction in their number. The costs of any change would also need to be taken into consideration.
- Although London boroughs were not permitted to establish combined authorities, Section 101 agreements were permissible and could achieve much the same thing in a variety of areas.
- Lewisham was not a full member of Central London forward yet but was able to influence its agenda. It was hoped that the Council's "associate" membership would be converted to "full" membership soon.
- Any borough groupings would need to withstand changes in administrations and councils would need to place less emphasis on political sovereignty if efficiencies were to be maximised via standardisation.
- There was a concern that Lewisham was entering into a number of different shared arrangements with a number of different authorities and that these varied and complex arrangements were difficult to manage and scrutinise.
- In the London Proposition, the proposed congress would need the agreement of 80% of the membership plus the Mayor of London to make a decision, effectively giving the Mayor of London a veto. This was not set in stone and would no doubt be considered further as proposals moved forwards.
- There was a concern that devolution could result in another layer of bureaucracy with no clear lines of accountability.

1.3 **RESOLVED:** That the report and presentation be noted and a referral be made to Mayor and Cabinet, advising that:

1. In February 2015 the Council agreed a motion expressing its support for the Core Cities' Modern Charter for Local Freedom; and agreed to campaign for further devolution and greater localism and a fairer distribution of resources based on the restoration of needs-based central funding. However, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to be reassured that this is not used as a mechanism to implement more HM Treasury top sliced cuts. It would also like to endorse the recommendation of the Public Spending Working Group that:

If proposals for devolution in London are accepted by the Government, the Mayor and Executive Members should share their proposals with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible to facilitate constructive scrutiny and the most effective constitutional arrangements

...to ensure we have transparency and accountability in any arrangements.

2. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also endorses the recommendation of the Public Spending Working Group that:

The formal partnership arrangements between the Mayor, Executive Members and Officers should be reviewed to ensure that they are robust enough to recognise the potential conflicts and solutions required to address the scale of the challenges this review [the Public Spending in Lewisham Review] has identified.

6. Recommendation from the Public Spending in Lewisham Working Group

6.1 RESOLVED: That

(1) The following recommendation of the Public Spending in Lewisham Working Group be agreed: *The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should convene an inquiry into post-16 education.*

(2) Agreeing the arrangements for the inquiry be delegated to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

7.1 Referrals were made in relation to items 4 and 6 on the agenda.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

Chair:

Date:
