

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 21 October 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), Andre Bourne, Brenda Dacres, Colin Elliott, David Michael, Luke Sorba and James-J Walsh and Alan Hall

APOLOGIES: Councillors Pat Raven, Alicia Kennedy and Paul Upex

ALSO PRESENT: Aileen Buckton (Executive Director for Community Services), Paul Aladenika (Service Group Manager, Policy Development and Analytical Insight), Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development), Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer), Timothy Andrew (Principal Policy Officer), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Evette McDonald (Development Manager), Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager) and Councillor Joan Millbank (Cabinet Member Third Sector & Community)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2015

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September be agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 The following non-prejudicial interests were declared:

- Councillor Alan Hall: Council appointee on the board of Phoenix Community Housing Association.
- Councillor Colin Elliot: Council appointee on the board of the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

2.2 Councillor James-J Walsh declared a non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 as the refounder of the Lewisham LGBT forum.

3. Voluntary Sector Accommodation Consultation Update

3.1 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- In April 2015 Mayor and Cabinet considered a new framework for the Council's use of buildings to support the community sector following a three-month consultation with the voluntary and community sector. Four categories of buildings were identified. One of the categories was Community Centres.
- An implementation plan was developed and taken to Mayor and Cabinet in July 2015. The implantation plan contained proposals to close or redevelop some of the community centres. A further consultation has taken place on these proposals. The

responses to that consultation and the outcomes of the consultation are in this report. The

- The Councils has to balance the need for community space with its requirement to provide sufficient school places and the need for a response to the current housing crisis. The average house price in Lewisham is 12 times the median income, and there are currently about 550 families in temporary accommodation. The Council also has to ensure it provides value for money.
- The consultation response from the Brandram Road Community Centre is not included in full in the report because it included financial information that the Council wouldn't normally release in the public domain. Officers are taking legal advice on how best to include the consultation response in the report going to Mayor and Cabinet in November.
- The feedback received during the consultation has resulted in some proposals being changed. The timescales for some developments have been altered, for example for the Honor Oak Community Centre. For some community centres it has been identified that there is insufficient alternative accommodation in the vicinity.

3.2 A representative of the Honor Oak Community Centre addressed the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The Community Centre was opened in 1981 with the aim to minimise disadvantage in the local communities.
- The centre is used by 15 community groups, and is used throughout the day and evening. There is a separate youth centre next door that provides activities for young people.
- Research conducted by the community centre indicated that the local community wants to be able to use a community space for birthdays, weddings and christenings.
- More consideration could be given to the equality implications and the issue of quality of life.
- There was a public meeting held to discuss the community's concerns around crime. Concerns were raised that bringing more people into the community would make things harder.

3.3 Liz Dart raised the following points:

- Detailed design on any proposals to build new housing has not been done yet. There is a currently only a sketch outline that indicates this housing could be affordable and feasible to consider. Any issues about the actual design would be addressed and raised at the next stage of the proposals developing.
- Detailed proposals will be deferred until a comprehensive view can be taken of how to incorporate new housing, community facilities and space for youth facilities. The new date suggested for the redevelopment to take place is April 2018. Any proposals regarding the Honor Oak Community Centre, the redevelopment of the estate and dates would be taken at Mayor and Cabinet.

3.4 A representative for the Brandram Road Community Centre addressed the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The report notes that there is space for community activities available nearby: Lockerby Hall, St Margaret's Hall and Manor House Library. These are almost all at full capacity. Some user groups could move to these facilities, but other would struggle to obtain space at peak times.
- The costs of some of these alternatives is prohibitive, especially in the library.

- It would good to recognise that even though many residents in Blackheath are well off, there are also pockets of deprivation. The community centre serves a diverse neighbourhood.
- 3.5 Liz Dart reaffirmed that the consultation response for the Brandram Road Community Centre would be included in the report going to Mayor and Cabinet, either as a part 1 or a part 2 report.
- 3.6 A representative of the Venner Road Management Association, which manages both the Venner Road Hall and Silverdale Hall, addressed the Committee. The following key points were noted:
- The centres both provide services to a diverse group of users in the local area. The Venner Road Hall was being considered for closure or as space for a commercial nursery, but it was felt that Sydenham already has many nurseries.
 - The Venner Road Management Association has proposed to pay rent on the buildings, or take on the lease of the buildings.
 - The users of the buildings would need to know as soon as possible whether the centres would be closed.
- 3.7 Liz Dart addressed the Committee. The following points were noted:
- Silverdale Hall is being considered for closure. One of its user groups is considering using space in the Sydenham Centre instead.
 - The Venner Road Hall is being considered for a lease where there would be provision of childcare and space for community use. This is part of an on-going negotiation.
 - The target date for these changes to be implemented remains April 2016.
 - Any community centre, where the decision is to close the centre, would be given a notice period of at least three months.
- 3.8 A representative of the Somerville Estate Tenant Resident Association addressed the Committee about the Barnes Wallis Community Centre. The following key points were noted:
- 15 years ago the community centre wasn't well used. Today it is well used and well run. It is used by tenants for their meetings and as a hub for the local community.
 - Plans for the redevelopment of the estate seemed to include a proposal to remove shops from the estate. The plans also mention using green space to build new housing, although there isn't a lot of green space in the neighbourhood for kids to play on as it is. There should also be consideration of the lack of parking on the estate already.
 - Local people want more community space – not to lose the existing space.
- 3.9 Liz Dart answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:
- The proposal is to redevelop the Somerville Estate to include more housing. Community space would be re-provided as part of this redevelopment.
 - Detailed plans for the building works are at an early stage. The needs for community space and the need for a playground would need to be taken into account in developing detailed plans for new housing. A financial assessment would also need to be made on what would be feasible to provide in light of the cost of providing new homes.
 - The impact of redevelopment on play areas is not clear yet. There are currently no plans to demolish shops on the estate.

- The preferred option is to build the new community centre in the first stage of building works to minimise the impact on user groups.
- 3.10 Councillor Joan Millbank, Cabinet Member for Third Sector and Community, commented. The following key points were noted:
- The development of new homes would all be done by Lewisham Homes, subject to agreement by Mayor and Cabinet. These were not proposals for new homes to be done by private developers in search for a profit.
 - These proposals for community centres are difficult for some community groups as some centres would be closed.
 - The proposals also offer opportunities to provide community space in smarter, more efficient ways. Currently some community groups struggle financially and don't necessarily have the means to maintain the buildings they use. These proposals aim to provide some brand-new centres which would be easier to maintain and cheaper to run.
- 3.11 A representative from the Evelyn Community Centre addressed the Committee. The following key points were noted:
- It takes time to make a community centre thrive, to build connections between people and develop user groups. Making changes to community centres, even temporarily removing or relocating them, could have a major impact on the social fabric of a community.
- 3.12 Liz Dart responded to questions. The following key points were noted:
- There were plans to develop housing on the Evelyn Estate and provide a new community centre, but there are now concerns on whether this is financially viable.
 - The Council would like to provide a better community centre on the Evelyn Estate. In the future, proposals could come to Mayor and Cabinet to redevelop the site with a new community centre but not at the moment.
- 3.13 Liz Dart and Aileen Buckton (Executive Director of Community Services) made comments on the Sedgehill Community Centre to the Committee. The following key points were noted:
- The site of the Sedgehill Community Centre was being considered for school expansion for Watergate school. Plans included some provision for community space, possibly by community groups using the school buildings. The need for nursery spaces provided in the community centre would also need to be considered.
 - Further information is needed to assess the financial viability of these plans and no decision about the centre would be made in absence of that information.
- 3.14 A representative of the Sedgehill Community Centre addressed the Committee. The following key points were noted:
- The centre has been running for the past 21 years, it is open from 7am to 9pm and offers services for children between 2 and 12 years old. The centre is well used and there are no other community centres in the area.
 - Many of the staff employed in the nursery come from the local area and would risk losing their jobs. Staff have their own children and grandchildren attend the centre. It provides valuable child care for parents in working parents.
 - The centre also provides work experience and paid apprenticeships for local students.

- 3.15 A representative from the Woodpecker Community Centre addressed the Committee. The following key points were noted:
- The community centre was established in 1991 with funding from the City Challenge to handle the impacts of housing density on the estate. The current plans would only increase the number of residents.
 - It was felt the centre was highly used.
- 3.16 Liz Dart addressed the committee. The following key points were noted:
- The plans are for housing to be added to the Milton Court Estate. A separate consultation will be run on proposals for the type of housing that may be provided in the estate.
 - The main user of the Woodpecker Community Centre is a private school which provides tutoring for about 20 pupils in the centre. It is difficult for other user groups to use the centre due to the hours taken up by the tutoring scheme. As a result, the Woodpecker Community Centre is underused.
 - There are a number of venues near the estate which user groups could use instead including St Michael's Community Centre, the Samaritans for Lewisham Greenwich and Southwark, Deptford Green School and the Moonshot Centre.
- 3.17 Liz Dart and Aileen Buckton answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:
- The proposal was to close the Saville Centre and have its user groups relocated to the Irish Centre. There are 4 or 5 different centres mentioned in the report that groups could consider relocating as well as the Saville Centre.
 - The management of a community centre is an agreement between the Council and the management committee. Not one particular group should be completely in charge of the way a building is used. In the centres that are retained, there will have to be an agreement drawn up between the different groups that will share a centre. The aim is for the available space to be used to full capacity, and that user groups are flexible and accommodation to each other's requirements.
 - The process of reconfiguring the accommodation provided to the voluntary sector was started with an audit of the use of all the relevant buildings. Many community centres are not used to full capacity and many require development and extensive maintenance.
 - The current proposals present an opportunity to invest in community centres so the centres and groups using them can be sustained. As the population of London grows, community space needs to be provided for the community. Current plans for housing developments offer an opportunity to provide the best possible centres.
 - Officers are working with schools to ensure that space is available for hire by community groups at affordable levels.
- 3.18 Councillor David Michael wanted to put on record an email from the Chair of the Lewisham Pensioners Forum regarding the proposals around the Saville Centre, so that this message could be taken into account when the proposals were considered at Mayor and Cabinet.
- 3.19 The Committee commented that:
- The Committee were aware of recent tragic events around the Honor Oak Estate, and felt the community should be given ample time for consultation and input into decisions about the Honor Oak Community Centre.

- The equalities impact of these proposals should be carefully considered as some groups with a protected characteristic would likely feel more of an impact than others.
- The Committee was aware of the need for social housing in the borough as well as the resulting likely decrease in green spaces and the increased need for community space. The Committee was concerned by the difficult balance that has to be struck between these differing needs.
- When planning applications for mixed-use developments are considered, the Committee feels the provision of community space in housing developments should be considered alongside consideration of the provision of commercial space.

3.20 The Committee resolved to advise Mayor and Cabinet of the following:

The Committee is aware of the recent tragic events that happened on the Honor Oak Estate. In light of this, the Committee feels the community should have ample time to participate in any consultation around the future of the Honor Oak Community Centre, and special care should be given to ensure the community feels fully engaged in any future decisions about the community centre.

The Committee is aware of the increasing need for social housing in Lewisham, but also recognises that future developments will likely be built on land that currently contain green spaces and buildings designated for community use. The Committee is concerned about the dilemma created by these sometimes competing demands, and recognises a careful balance needs to be struck.

The Committee supports the use of school facilities by community groups, and feels that schools should set rates for hire at levels that are affordable to community groups.

The Committee recommends that planning policies on mixed-use developments are reviewed to ensure possibilities for the provision of community space are considered in planning applications for mixed-use developments.

3.21 **RESOLVED:** to refer the Committee's views on the Voluntary Sector Accommodation Consultation Update to Mayor and Cabinet.

4. Poverty review - evidence session

4.1 Paul Aladenika (Service Group Manager, Policy Development and Analytical Insight) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- On 30 September 2015 the Department for Communities and Local Government released the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for England. The indices measures relative deprivation at lower layer super output area (LSOA) level, across nearly 33,000 local authority areas (169 LSOAs for Lewisham).
- The Indices comprises seven weighted domains for which data has been drawn from 37 indicators. The data supporting the indicators has been drawn primarily from 2012.
- The results reveal that in 2015 Lewisham ranks 48th (1st being most deprived) out of 326 local authorities for relative deprivation. This is up from 31st in 2010 and 39th in 2007. Compared to other London boroughs, in 2015 Lewisham ranks tenth. This is unchanged from 2010 in terms of relative position in London.
- By way of headline analysis, New Cross and Downham are amongst the most deprived wards in the country with 90% of their LSOAs in the 20% most deprived nationally. Bellingham, Rushey Green, Whitefoot and Evelyn are the only other wards with 50% or more of their LSOAs in the 20% most deprived nationally
- In terms of relative change, New Cross with 90% of its LSOAs in the 20% most deprived nationally compared to 50% in 2010, shows the most significant

deterioration. Evelyn has shown the greatest improvement in relative terms with 50% of its LSOAs in the 20% most deprived nationally in 2015, compared to 90% in 2010.

4.2 Paul Aladenika and Aileen responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- This data could be very useful for the voluntary sector when applying for grants and funding. The analysis of the data would be presented at the Stronger Communities Partnership Board. The data would also be used in workshops to assist smaller communities groups in putting bids together.
- Much of the data was surprising. The data in the IMD is from 2012, so one has to be really mindful of the socio-economic issues at that time when interpreting the data. For example, the unemployment rate in 2012 was 10% compared to 6.3% in 2015. Average house prices in Lewisham have gone up from £278k to over £400k in that period.
- There is a concentration of deprivation in the north and south of the borough, with less deprivation in the east of the borough.
- There are indications that the changes in New Cross are mainly in the areas of health and unemployment, but this needs to be further analysed.

4.3 The Committee expressed an interest in further information on data from the IMD on award level, how the data from the IMD related to groups with protected characteristics, the education levels of residents and information specific to people starting families.

4.4 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee note the report.

4.5 Standing orders were suspended at 20.55 to enable the completion of Committee business.

5. Development of the comprehensive equalities scheme

5.1 Timothy Andrew (Principal Policy Officer) introduced the report to the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The 2010 Equality Act amalgamated different legislation around equalities. The Act introduced more protected characteristics. It introduced the obligation for public bodies to have due regard in their work for the impact on groups with protected characteristics.
- The Council developed five enduring characteristics in response to the introduction of the Equality Act, listed in paragraph 4.4 of the report.
- The Council's current Comprehensive Equalities Scheme (CES) finished in March 2016. The data presented to the Committee demonstrates the work in developing the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme for 2016-2020.
- One important thing to note was that the monitoring of data on ethnicity is generally done in big chunks, so there is a richness of diversity within communities as well that isn't necessarily captured.
- People's lived experiences are diverse and not bound to the categories of protected characteristics. People's lived experiences can vary to a significant degree depending on which parts of the borough they live in, whether or not they are disabled, their socio-economic status, their faith or belief, their gender identity and their sexual orientation.
- When services that support people who are discriminated against are provided, this can lead to a concentration of people with certain characteristics.
- The priorities for improving health outcomes in the borough are set out in the Health and Wellbeing Board priorities. The Children and Young People Plan sets out the priorities for children and young people in the borough, and the plan for 2015-18 was

going through scrutiny and to Mayor and Cabinet. The Work and Skills strategy outlines the Council approach to increasing education levels and employment rates in the borough. The key objectives for the Council in this area are laid out in the Housing Strategy 2015-2020.

- In the area of housing there had been significant changes in demand. When instances of hate crime and domestic violence increase, there is the question of whether this happens because people feel more comfortable reporting these crimes or whether more of the crimes have happened.

5.2 Timothy Andrew, Paul Aladenika and Aileen Buckton answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- There was a suggestion in the last parliament to include socio-economic class as a protected characteristic but this was rejected by the last government.
- Data on deprivation, socio-economic class and employment wasn't included in the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme for 2010-2016.
- The CES links to other strategies of the Council that are used as the delivery models to improve equalities across Lewisham. All areas of the Council have access to the detailed data underpinning the development of the CES.
- Deprivation, socio-economic class and employment data were not included in the CES in 2010.

5.3 The Committee commented that:

- It seemed that the borough was becoming more split in terms of equality. Some areas seem to do well while others are doing less well. One question was how to counteract or avoid that.
- Socio-economic class can have a big influence on for instance educational outcomes. When the educational performance of different ethnic groups is split out by socio-economic background it becomes possible to identify that certain parts of ethnic group actually underperform, although the data for the ethnic group as whole would indicate children from that group doing well on average.
- Other select committees as well as partnership boards would benefit from this information. It would be helpful to highlight areas where the Council has to ability to influence outcomes directly and areas where it has little to no impact.

5.4 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee note the report.

6. Select Committee work programme

6.1 Simone van Elk introduced the report

6.2 The Committee discussed the work programme, and decided that:

- the item on Local Assemblies scheduled for 30 November would be removed from the agenda and information would be received via email instead
- the item on Library Consultation 2015 Update should be added to the agenda for 30 November
- the item on Library and Information Service scheduled for 19 January would be removed from the agenda and information would be received via email instead

- The item on Supporting the voluntary sector in acquiring external funding scheduled for 19 January would be removed from the agenda and information would be received via email instead
- The item on Leisure Centre Contracts would be added to the agenda on 9 March
- The item on VAWG service update would be removed from the agenda on 9 March, and it would be suggested to next year's Committee that this item would be taken at the first meeting of the next municipal year.

6.3 The Committee also discussed the item on Main Grants Programme 2015-18 Equalities Update. Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer) and Aileen Buckton advised the Committee on which aspects of this item they could consider under the Committee's terms of reference.

6.4 RESOLVED: to agree the changes to the Committee's work programme as listed in 6.2, and that the Executive Director of Community Services and Principal Lawyer would advise the Committee on the content of the item on Main Grants Programme 2015-18 Equalities Update.

7. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

Chair:

Date:
