

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19 January 2016 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), Pat Raven (Vice-Chair), Andre Bourne, Brenda Dacres, Colin Elliott, Alicia Kennedy, David Michael, Paul Upex and James-J Walsh

APOLOGIES: Councillors Luke Sorba

ALSO PRESENT: James Lee (Service Manager, Inclusion and Prevention and Head of Cultural and Community Development), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Barry Quirk (Chief Executive), Keeley Smith (Borough Commander for Lewisham) (London Fire Brigade), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People), Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager) and Rachel Leeser (Senior Research and Statistical Analyst Social Exclusion) (Greater London Authority)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2015

- 1.1 That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2015 be agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 The following non-prejudicial interests were declared:

Councillor Colin Elliot: Council's representative for the Lewisham Disability Coalition (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17).

Councillor David Michael: member of the Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Board, Council representative for Lewisham Citizen's Advice Bureau Management Committee (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17) and working patron of the Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17).

Councillor Pauline Morrison: volunteer at Crofton Park Library (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17), Chair of the Ackroyd Community Association (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17) and a member of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (in relation to agenda item 3: Police and fire brigade update).

Councillor Pat Raven: Council's representative for the Lewisham Disability Coalition (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17).

Councillor Paul Upex: Member of the Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17).

Councillor Alicia Kennedy: Member of the Executive Committee of the Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust (in relation to agenda item 5: Main Grants Programme 2016-17).

3. Police and fire brigade update

3.1 Apologies were offered as the police borough commander was not able to attend the meeting.

3.2 Keeley Smith (Borough Commander for Lewisham, London fire brigade) introduced a report to the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The Fire Brigades Union's announced in December 2015 that it had suspended their strike action over a dispute with the Government on pensions (until Summer 2017) therefore allowing the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) to stand down the contingency arrangement for strike action thus saving £1.7m in 2016/17.
- There is still a budget gap for LFEPA of £6.4m for 2016/2017. There is a public consultation ongoing on two different options to achieve the required savings. The consultation closes on 1 February 2016.
- Option A recommends putting the 13 fire engines back into service but making savings by establishing alternate crewing at stations with some special appliances. Alternate crewing means that in stations where there is a fire engine and a special appliance, such as an aerial ladder platform, there would be one crew for both appliances. Option B recommends the permanent removal of the 13 fire engines and reinvesting some of the savings into increasing the number of staff available to crew Fire Rescue Units (FRUs).
- London fire brigade has a commitment to attendance times for the first appliance of an average of 6 minutes, and 8 minutes for the second appliance. The fire brigade is achieving these attendance times across the borough of Lewisham. In 2012/13, Downham fire station was still open and the pumping appliance hadn't been removed from Forest Hill fire station yet, so 2012/13 is used as the base year to compare attendance times against.
- If the 13 appliances including the pump from Forest Hill fire station were retained, it is believed that this would improve average London wide attendance times by around four seconds for the first engine and by around 18 seconds for the second fire engine.
- Attendance times are published per ward, but the commitment for attendance times from the London fire brigade pertains to the average time per borough and not per ward. If these times were to be achieved for every ward in London, £90m would need to be spent and at least a 100 extra fire appliances would need to be hired.
- The fire brigade offers free home fire safety checks and will install fire alarms if none are present. Partner organisations can refer people to this service, but the referral rate in Lewisham is low.
- From November 2015 a new mobilising system VISION has been used to respond to emergency calls, which is expected to improve attendance times. The new system uses GPS to identify and despatch the fire appliance that is closest to the location of the fire. The old system would identify which station ground or geographical zone the location of the fire was in, and despatch a fire appliance from that station.

3.2 Keeley Smith answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The consultation on options for the budget was conducted by the communications team of the London fire brigade, including promoting the consultation and consultation events. There was a consultation event hosted in Southwark for residents of South East London. It was well attended compared to consultation events hosted in other parts of London but overall the turn-out was still quite low given the number of residents impacted and the significance of the decisions. Part of the consultation period also included Christmas and New Year's, which may have had an impact on turn-out and responses.

- The closure of Downham fire station was unlikely to have had a significant impact on the attendance times for Forest Hill ward given the distance between Downham and Forest Hill.
- A 6th London Safety Plan is due to be adopted, but this has been deferred until a new Mayor of London has been elected. A new Chair of the LFEPA will be appointed after the London Mayoral election as well as a new Commissioner. Once these three positions have been filled, a new London Safety Plan will be developed.
- The decision on Option A or Option B for the savings to the LFEPA budget will be taken before the 6th London Safety Plan is in place. The consultation ends on 1 February, so the decision is expected to be taken sometime in February or March and implemented in April.
- Attendance times are measured as the time between a call for the fire brigade being made and the time the appliance arrives at the scene. The time it then takes before firefighters can safely enter the building with the fire is not taken into account. Firefighters have to spend some time to put systems of safety in place before they can enter a building. It's also the case that entering a house can be done more quickly than a flat, especially if the flat in questions is high above the ground floor. When a fire in a flat is reported, the fire brigade already requires 4 appliances to attend to the scene.
- London has always suffered from sporadic flooding. The fire brigade has national resilience appliances stationed throughout London to deal with incidents of flooding. Each emergency service has a different approach to dealing with major incidents, and a different threshold for when something is declared a major incident. An event that could be declared a major incident by the police or ambulance service wouldn't necessarily be declared a major incident by the fire brigade because the services are organised in different ways.

3.3 The Committee made the following comments:

- The consultation could be better advertised to residents but also to all Members of the Council.
- If consultation events don't have a high attendance, the fire brigade could consider attending events organised by local groups to gather their views in that way.
- The Committee requested that they be informed of the decision between Option A or Option B for savings in the LFEPA 2016/17 budget.

3.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee note the report, and that the Committee be informed of the decision following the consultation on Option A or Option B.

4. Poverty review evidence session

4.1 Barry Quirk (Chief Executive) gave a presentation to the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The causes for poverty are difficult to identify. Problems can be divided into simple, complicated, complex and chaotic situations. A complicated problem is one where there likely is a clear relationship between cause and effect, but it requires expertise to work out the right solution to a problem. In a complex situation, many factors are interrelated so there is no one action to take that will certainly result in a desired consequence. This requires experimental practice to work out a solution. The problem of poverty is probably somewhere in between being a complicated and being a complex problem.
- Poverty in Lewisham is mostly concentrated in the north and the south of the borough. That geographical distribution has been persistent for the last 30 years. In the north, the surrounding areas are also not that well off so residents are likely to experience less deprivation relative to their neighbours. In the south of the borough, neighbouring

areas tend to be well off, which means residents in poverty there are likely to experience more relative poverty compared to the people living near them.

- Lewisham doesn't have a lot of river front. River front properties tend to attract high income households as can be seen in neighbouring boroughs such as Lambeth and Southwark. Lewisham has never really had high value land compared to other areas in London.
- Lewisham has a relatively large population from African and African-Caribbean background, a group which suffers from discrimination on the labour market. This has an impact on average earnings in the borough.
- There are significant variations in median household income.
- The geographical distribution of poverty used to replicate where social housing was provided. Currently, the distribution of poverty replicates where people live in the private rented sector. 28% of the population of Lewisham live in the private rented sector. Three quarters of the house moves in Lewisham each year happen in the private rented sector.
- Averages can make a proper understanding of the issue of poverty more difficult, as there significant variations in median household income in London which can mask the situations people live in. It is difficult to ensure that policies that aim to tackle poverty or alleviate its outcomes, target the right people.
- Residents living in poverty can't be identified simply by their locality. For example, every ward in the borough will have children living in child poverty and children that don't live in child poverty. When looking at smaller geographical areas to focus on, one could focus on lower super output areas (LSOAs), which are the areas of measurement for the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- Lewisham has 169 LSOAs: 7 of them are in the 10% most deprived LSOAs in the country. However, 7 out every 10 children in child poverty in Lewisham do not live in those specific LSOAs. So policies targeting certain areas facing deprivation would miss out large groups of the children the policy should be aimed at.
- Whether people are living in poverty also can't simply be determined by looking at their housing tenure. Lone Parent Families with Dependent Children (LPFwDC). A large percentage of LPFwDC live on social housing estate but not everyone living on a social housing estate falls into that category. In addition many LPFwDC don't live on social housing estates. 'Estate' based action against poverty won't be very effective in targeting the groups suffering poverty or deprivation.
- London's labour market is substantially different from other areas of the country, and even big cities in other countries. 53% of all jobs in London are graduate level jobs. In Paris and New York this is about 40%, while in Berlin it's 37%. The percentage of jobs at graduate level in inner London is 65%. The labour market in London at graduate level attracts people from all over the world, so children in London who are currently in education will end up having to compete globally for those graduate level jobs.
- An interesting sociological concept is that of the 'precariat'. This term is used to describe a group of people that are detached from the labour market and wider economy. People in this group tend to rarely work and when they do, they tend to move from job to job without much security. 15% of the UK economy consists of people living and working in those conditions. Lewisham as well as Lambeth and Southwark tend to have a high proportion of people that can be described as part of the precariat.
- The Council can have some impact on poverty by how it pays its employees. In addition the Council can have some impact on the pay policies of its contractors but only in a limited way.
- The London economy is very successful, especially in the sectors of IT, finance and construction. The question for the long term is how Lewisham residents can benefit from that success. To tackle poverty and alleviate its consequences, welfare reform is probably the short term answer.

4.2 Barry Quirk responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- Lewisham each year has 4,700 births and 1,600 deaths which creates a net natural increase of the population of 3,100. There is a net international migration of 1,900 and net domestic migration out of Lewisham of 2,400. These figures mean it is difficult to determine when comparing figures for child poverty between different years, to know whether those same children are still living in the borough. Children could have stayed, moved or just entered the borough.
- The best strategy to tackle poverty in the long term is for people to get good jobs that are reasonably well paid. The Council has to set a benchmark for its suppliers in terms of providing good employment conditions. The majority of non-professional jobs tend to be filled by women and it can be very hard for young men with low qualifications to find employment.
- Construction is a growth sector in London. The joint work on skills by Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark is focused on opportunities in the construction industry.
- Higher education in London is very much connected to central London boroughs. The universities in London are not necessarily connected to London as a whole.
- Everyone is responsible for the aspirations of children and young people. People are naturally drawn to 'winner takes all' career paths. The conversation about which career to pursue should focus much more on 'which destination would be best to get to?' as opposed to asking young people the question 'where do you want to go?' One approach is to find inspirational people to motivate people into certain career paths. Oldham Council for example ran an event with Brian Cox because he came from Oldham to inspire local residents and young people to go into science.
- The Council can't impose conditions on building contractors working in the borough to provide apprenticeships and jobs for Lewisham residents if the Council is not itself contracting the work. The Council tried to ensure there was provision of apprenticeships in its Building Schools for the Future programme and this was at best moderately successful. The approach can't be too local. It has to be viewed across the South East London economy.
- The numbers of people moving out of Lewisham are so small that whether their incomes were high or low, would have a negligible effect on the average or median income in the borough.
- Lewisham has residents who are experiencing similar living standards as some residents from for instance Sunderland. The difference is that people in Sunderland do not have the same growth and opportunities so near them, so they're likely to experience their living standards differently. The City is only 2 miles from Evelyn ward for example.
- Families with troubles aren't necessarily families that cause troubles. The Council helps people because they're in difficulty, not because they cause problems. CYP directorate aims to offer wrap around services to families that are in transition.
- The Council's HeadStart programme was designed to support young people in building resilience. It has led to peer-to-peer support systems being developed in schools.
- 70,000 residents leave Lewisham every day to go to work outside the borough. This leads to Lewisham having a small daytime population and it means the ratio of adults to children and teenagers during the day is very low compared to the rest of London. As a result, it isn't easy to encourage businesses to set up in the borough as there is a lack of footfall of people with disposable income. The borough tends to function as a transport node which people move through. When it comes to encouraging businesses, the question is how to create a place where money sticks.
- The Council collects about £53m in business rates annually, but gets £86m back from central government. So even though Lewisham doesn't have a lot of businesses, it does benefit from the current business rates retention scheme.

- A strategic question for the Council is: to what extent can the Council protect the poorest in its communities from the raging inequality in London?

4.3 The Committee made the following comments:

- The new Indices of Multiple Deprivation can indicate that certain geographical areas suffer from poverty, but it can be difficult to be aware of deprived streets that are surrounded by better off streets as the average deprivation of that area can be deceptive.
- Lewisham has seen a decline in child poverty. Was that a percentage or total number? It could be that a decline as a percentage was caused by rich families moving into Lewisham, as opposed to children being lifted out of poverty.

4.4 Rachel Leeser (Senior Research and Statistical Analyst Social Exclusion, Intelligence Unit, GLA) gave a presentation to the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- There are different definitions of poverty. One is focused on a lack of resources to meet need. Money is a significant element of that, but other things also contribute. Poverty tends to be looked at per household. The way 'a lack of resources to meet need' is operationalised as 'can you afford to live in society and meet the norms of that society'. To measure material deprivation, the question is whether an individual can meet those societal norms. This would include expenses and activities such as for a child; being able to have a friend round for tea and being able to afford to celebrate occasions such as birthdays for a friend. For pensioners; being able to heat their adequately, being able to go out once a month.
- The concept of deprivation is much wider than the concept of poverty. Deprivation is measured at a very local scale as opposed to poverty for which data are only published regularly at a regional level.
- Equivalised income is a measure of all income in a household before any taxes and it includes any payments in kind. The measure of equivalised income then takes the number of people living in a household into account. So three people living in one household with an income of £20,000 in total would have a lower equivalised income than 2 people living in a household with that same income. One example of a payment in kind is free school milk. For the purposes of measuring equivalised income across London, Lewisham is counted as being part of the group of inner London boroughs.
- Relative income applies to an individual when they are part of a household with less than 60% of contemporary median equivalised household income. The percentage of people living in relative poverty in London increases significantly after housing costs are taken into account. One argument for government to take account of relative poverty statistics after housing costs as opposed to before is that people in London do not get better quality housing for the amount of money they spend. Relative income after housing costs have been taken into account has always had a significant impact on the number of people in relative poverty in London as costs of housing have always been more expensive in London.
- 'Absolute' poverty is measured by looked at a fixed set of living standards. This allows for comparisons over time of the percentage of people living in poverty. The measure of 'absolute' poverty has been rising in London and nearly every region of England.
- If median income falls this tends to mean that more people are living in poverty in terms of 'absolute' poverty. However, if median income falls, less income is needed for people to live above the line of relative poverty, which is 60% of that contemporary median equivalised household income.
- It has been established that there is significant impact on the outcomes for children that live in persistent poverty. Persistent poverty is measured as living in relative poverty for three of the last four years. The number of children living in relative poverty in London has dropped by 100,000 in x years, but it matters for outcomes whether those children

had been living in relative poverty for a long time. It is very difficult to identify whether those children are the same children that were living in relative poverty the previous years.

- There is a national survey being conducted that follows a relatively small number of people over the course of many years to study how they move in and out of poverty over time. This is used to produce national statistics on persistent poverty, but not regional statistics.
- People in persistent poverty may not have any reserves left, where people who just entered a state of relative poverty may have some financial reserves to rely on.
- Pensioners in London who are owner occupier tend to be ok in terms of in London. Although other services tend to also be more expensive in London.
- Mean income is a distorted measurement in London as there are people with extremely high incomes. Maps of London allow some comparison between areas. The poverty estimates of the Lower Super Output Areas from the Office for National Statistics were due to be released soon.
- Good qualifications do not necessarily guarantee that someone will have a good job. Having a job doesn't necessarily guarantee you are able to work sufficient hours to have a decent income. Two thirds of the households in poverty in London are in work. Currently, the number of self-employed people is going down as they move into salaried jobs.
- It makes a significant difference to income whether someone over state retirement age has a private pension or just relies on a state pension.
- A large number of people living in social rent properties tend to live in poverty. That tends to be the reason they live in social rent accommodation.
- Sometimes the number of people on welfare payments is used a measure for the number of people living in poverty. As the eligibility criteria for welfare payments have become stricter, such a measure would indicate that more people are no longer living in poverty though their material circumstances may have become worse.

4.5 Rachel Leeser and Barry Quirk answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- Poor households do not necessarily have more children on average. This is not the driving factor for poverty. However, households with three children are more likely to experience poverty than households with only one or two children. This is because household income doesn't necessarily increase with the addition of child but expenses naturally do.
- The national wealth and asset survey is the only research that asks people about their reserves. Not aware that anyone has reviewed this situation specifically.
- Some indicators that local authorities may hold that could be used to locally measure which children are living in persistent poverty are recipients of free school meals, recipients of Council tax rebates. There are also secondary indicators that could be gathered by Public Health or social housing teams. The measurement has to be consistent over time and enable data to be traced to individual residents.

4.6 The Committee made a number of comments. The following key points were noted:

- Would it possible for the Council to measure which children in the borough suffer from persistent poverty by using locally collected data such a recipients of free school meals or recipients of Council tax rebates?
- Do the low national interest rates have an impact on pensioners' incomes? It seems likely this would have an effect on their investments.

4.7 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee note the presentation, that the Committee be provided with more information on the Council's HeadStart programme and that the Committee be

provided with the poverty estimates of the Lower Super Output Areas from the Office for National Statistics once they become available.

5. Main Grants Programme 2016-17

5.1 James Lee (Head of Culture and Community Development) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- The Main Grants Programme 2015-18 had started in July last year. This report related to the second year of the Main Grants Programme.
- The Grants were reduced in the last round of savings. Five organisations received transitional funding to cope with the reduction in grant or the removal of grant funding.

5.2 James Lee responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- There is no particular definition of a 'failing' organisation in receipt of grant funding. The development officers are there to challenge and support the organisations that receive grants from the Council. These assessments are often judgement calls by the development officer involved with a particular organisation. If there is a lapse in judgement by an officer, that would become a management issue.
- Officers are awaiting monitoring reports for the second quarter of the 2015-16 grant programme. One criterion for concern is if the monitoring reports indicate for two quarters in a row that an organisation may not be able to meet their agreed outcomes.
- The Rocket Science self-assessment tool (section 7 and appendix 3 of the report) is used to support organisations in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and taking appropriate action to remedy any problems.
- A grant is not automatically taken away by the Council when it's not spent by an organisation as organisations for instance have experienced delays in recruiting staff and so have spent less than expected. However, if this recruitment does not happen, the grant funding will eventually be removed.
- The faith grants do not fund religious activities, but are explicitly only used to fund community activities conducted by faith based organisations.
- The outcomes that are measured as part of the grant monitoring regime are the agreed outcomes when the Main Grants Programme 2015-18 was decided on in April 2015.

5.3 The Committee made a number of comments. The following key points were noted:

- The Committee questioned why the faith grants and small grants were run through the same programme.
- The Committee requested that paragraph 7.4 of the report contain more detail on what the consequences would be for an organisation that does not meet their agreed outcomes, and what process would be followed.
- The Committee noted that there was a lack of clarity of which organisation received rent grants and to what extent.

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

The Committee noted that 'the Council provides support to organisations in a number of different ways, including providing repairs & maintenance, rent grants, main grant funding, peppercorn lease arrangements and so on'¹.

¹ Paragraph 9.19, report Main Grants Programme 2016-17 at Safer Stronger Select Committee on Tuesday 19 January 2016

The Committee is concerned that there is a lack of transparency about which voluntary sector organisations receive the support listed in paragraph 3.2 above. This can create difficulties for voluntary organisations who may not be aware of the financial value of the support they are receiving and the risk to their organisations if this support would fall away.

The Committee feels detailed information about this support provided to voluntary sector organisations should be made available to Councillors, voluntary sector organisations and the wider public. The Committee feels that Mayor and Cabinet should encourage the creation of an asset register for this purpose.

5.5 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee's views be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

6. Select Committee work programme

6.1 Simone van Elk (scrutiny manager) introduced the report. The Committee discussed its work programme and decided that:

- The following items would be on the agenda for the March meeting:
 - Lewisham Disability Coalition's review into Hate Crime
 - Provision for the LGBT community
 - Comprehensive Equalities Scheme
 - Safer Lewisham Plan
- The following items should be considered in the next municipal year:
 - Lewisham police service update
 - Leisure centre contract update
 - Poverty review – final report and recommendations
 - Violence against women and girls service update
- The Committee meeting scheduled for 9 March should start at 18.30 instead of 19.00.
- The item on the Review of the Enforcement service should be considered in the next municipal year instead of at the March meeting if possible.

7. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

Chair:

Date:
