

# MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Monday, 4 July 2016 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors David Michael (Chair), Brenda Dacres, Colin Elliott, Stella Jeffrey, Jim Mallory, Luke Sorba, Paul Upex and Alan Hall

APOLOGIES: Councillors James-J Walsh and John Paschoud

ALSO PRESENT: Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development), Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager), Kate Halpin (Borough Commander for Lewisham) (London Metropolitan Police Service), James Lee (Service Manager, Inclusion and Prevention and Head of Cultural and Community Development), Antonio Rizzo (Library and Information Services Manager) and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People)

## **1. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2016**

1.1 RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2016 be agreed as an accurate record.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

2.1 RESOLVED: that the following interests were declared:

Councillor Colin Elliot is the Council's representative at the Lewisham Disability Coalition

Councillor David Michael is a working patron of the Marsha Phoenix Trust

Councillor Jim Mallory is the Chair of Lee Green Lives (in relation to item 5)

## **3. Library savings programme update**

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

- The outcome of the consultation on the proposals for the libraries had been presented to this committee in autumn 2015. Mayor and Cabinet had then decided to ask officers to develop more detailed plans for Catford Library and to agree to extend the community library model to three libraries: Manor House, Forest Hill and Torridon Road.
- Twenty organisations had registered an interest in running a community library but many fewer had submitted a full proposal. The potential partners for the new community libraries had been assessed using the following criteria: proposed use of building including library service; organisational capacity; capital funding plan; ability to take financial responsibility; and plans to involve the community.

- Two organisations had submitted a bid for Forest Hill library. One organisation wanted ongoing revenue support which the Council was unable to provide so the proposals could not be progressed further. The proposal from V22 was let out spaces on the first and second floor as artists' studios. The ground floor would largely be kept the same. V22 hold the lease on Louise House.
- Only Greenwich Leisure Limited submitted a full proposal for Manor House library. The proposal had a strong focus on income generation by providing a nursery in the building. This would have required extensive alterations to the lower ground floor and a part of the grounds to be sectioned off to create a play area. The play area was a Ofsted requirement for a nursery. Manor House and its grounds are Grade II\* listed. It was felt to be unlikely that the required planning consent could be obtained for these plans. The Council was now without a partner organisation for Manor House library and would go out again to a partner.
- Some of the lessons learned were that for a particularly challenging building such as a Grade II\* listed one, the Council should be more explicit about where it can be flexible about the exact terms of the lease agreements. A partner organisation would not necessarily need to take a full lease on Manor House but could take on the role of a premises manager, similar to the structure of some of the community centres in the borough. Previously, the Council had not been explicit about what a less than full lease would look like.
- Greenwich Leisure Limited had also submitted a bid for Torrison Road library but had felt it was not feasible to take this on without also managing Manor House library. The Archibald Corbett Society and the Archibald Corbett Resident Association had been discussing a merger, and had now presented a late bid for the Torrison Road library. The bid provided enough content to warrant further investigation but needed to be developed further. Mayor and Cabinet would be asked to approve the Archibald Corbett Society and the Archibald Corbett Resident Association as the preferred partners for Torrison Road library and to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Community Services to negotiate a premises management arrangement.
- A draft plan for the ground floor of Laurence House including Catford Library was presented. The receptions would be integrated to provide one for all visitors. Two library assistants would be kept in this structure and they work alongside the other staff on the ground floor.

3.2 Liz Dart, Antonio Rizzo (Head of Library and Information Service) and Geeta Subramaniam answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- Greenwich Leisure Limited could submit a new bid for Manor House library. As the setting of Manor House was also listed, it would be difficult to provide a sectioning off of the grounds that would fulfil both conservation requirements and child safeguarding requirements. A glass partition for example would not meet child safeguarding standards.
- From mid-September, the library service would no longer be responsible for the management of Manor House as the savings programme had been

agreed and would be implemented. Council staff would maintain the building and keep the building secure, but it would not library staff performing these services.

- A new report was being prepared for September to provide an update on Manor House library and the search for a new partner organisation. A balance needed to be found between the number of staff, the number of hours they would be available and the budget.
- Conservation officers have advised that it would likely be easier to make changes to the lower ground floor. Income could still be provided to an organisation from the upper floors.
- The library self-service terminals would be maintained in the Forest Hill library. These terminals allowed people to request books, pay fines and renew library books. These would be maintained by the Council. Other services could be accessed on any web browsers. The general IT systems in all libraries including community libraries were being reviewed by the Council's IT department for upgrades.
- A bid that contained provision of IT support to library users would be considered favourably in a situation of competing bids. It might not be possible for an organisation to include such provision in their bid as they needed to consider many aspects include sufficient income. The provision of IT support was not considered to be a necessary element of a bid.
- The library service offers a training programme for all community libraries including equality legislation and health and safety requirements. Library staff employed by the Council were not required to undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on advice from the Council's Human Resources department. Partner organisations that would be approved to manage the community-led libraries would also not be required to perform DBS checks on their staff and volunteers. Organisations were not permitted to perform DBS checks on any employees unless DBS checks were required for a specific role. DBS checks were normally only required for staff that worked with children on an unsupervised, one to one basis.

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

- A discussion was needed on whether any plans for income generation in Manor House would limit opportunities for community use. This could be mentioned in the update report in September.
- The Committee should be updated via email about any key developments in the process to find partner organisations for the three libraries.
- The Committee questioned whether the advice that library did not to undergo DBS checks was accurate, as members of school governing bodies as well as staff and volunteers in community centres were required to undergo DBS checks.
- Some members of the Committee felt that the availability of IT services and support in public buildings such as libraries was necessary when the Council was working to provide more and more of its services online. Other members of the Committee felt it would be difficult to impose conditions on partner organisations to provide IT support by trained individuals, especially given the difficulty in ensuring this was available during all opening hours.

- The Committee had considered the emails sent to them by the Chairman of The Users & Friends of Manor House Library and the Chair of the Torridon road library users group.
- Councillor Hilton had been unable to attend. She welcomed the short-listed bids. She wanted to submit a plea that current IT equipment in libraries would be available to the partner organisations to avoid settling them with significant start-up costs, while appreciating the potential difficulties with use of the Council's servers and access to the Council's information.

3.4 RESOLVED: that the report be noted, that the different positions for each of the libraries with regards to the library savings programme be noted, that a further update on the library savings programme for Manor House library be presented at the next Committee meeting on 15 September, that the Committee be updated via email on any key developments over the summer, and that the following of the Committee's views be referred to Mayor and Cabinet alongside their consideration of the library savings programme update:

- A) The Committee felt that it was important that libraries could offer assistance to members of the public with the use of computers and IT, especially in light of the Council's aim to increasingly digitise its services.

The Committee therefore recommends that, as far as is practicable, agreements with the partners organisations for the community libraries include provisions to ensure that technical support by trained staff and/or trained volunteers is available to residents;

and that the following of the Committee views be referred to Mayor and Cabinet for a response:

- B) The Committee was advised that the Council's library staff were not required to undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, based on advice from the Council's Human Resources department. Partner organisations that would be approved to manage the community-led libraries would also not be required to perform DBS checks on their staff and volunteers.

The Committee was concerned about this viewpoint, as school governors and some staff responsible for managing community centres were required to undergo DBS checks. The Committee noted that library staff often worked with children and could at times find themselves alone with a child.

The Committee therefore requests that outside legal advice is sought on whether Council staff, staff paid by partner organisations and volunteers working in libraries would need to undergo DBS checks.

#### **4. Lewisham metropolitan police service update**

4.1 Chief Superintendent Kate Halpin (Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police Service, Lewisham) introduced herself and presented information to the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- There will be some changes to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) due to decisions in the Comprehensive Spending Review from autumn 2015 and due to the newly elected Mayor of London. Plans were still being developed.
- The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime had recently outlined her priorities for the MPS at a meeting at the Greater London Authority. These priorities were: serious youth violence and knife crime; hate crime; and organised criminal networks. These priorities align to a large extent with the priorities set out in the Safer Lewisham Plan.
- A new police and crime plan for the MPS was expected to be published in the autumn for consultation.
- Lewisham was one of the few boroughs that have reached the targets set by the previous Mayor of London, known as the 20:20:20 challenge. This challenge consisted of targets to: reduce key neighbourhood crimes by 20%; boost public confidence in the police by 20%; and cut costs by 20%. The key neighbourhood crimes were defined as: burglary; vandalism (criminal damage); theft from and theft of motor vehicles; violence with injury; robbery; and theft from the person. As Lewisham had met these targets, this had meant a reduction of about 5,000 and 6,000 victims of crime in the borough in 4 years. The detection rate for Lewisham had gone up by 1,5%.
- Lewisham Police service had been working with GPs, social workers and staff from Greenwich University to tackle domestic abuse. Some support was being offered by research staff from the office of Len Duvall OBE AM. The criminal justice system did not always offer the best solutions to instances of domestic abuse, which is why cooperation with different services was helpful.
- The MPS had been tasked with finding £500m of savings over the next 4 years in the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review. Some plans developed before the election of the Greater London Assembly and Mayor of London had been based on merging borough police services. This would mean there would no longer be one Borough Commander with responsibility for the police service in the borough. The suggestion for South East London had been that the services in Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley could be merged. The current London Deputy Mayor for Policing had indicated plans for an extensive consultation on proposals to remodel police services in London.
- One area where Lewisham police could improve was access to public for its services and the work being done. At the end of the calendar year there should be an improved website which should allow more functionality online for residents. MPS had helped to develop a mobile phone application for reporting hate crime. It had increased the numbers of recorded crime by making it easier to report crimes.
- Police Community Support Officers were the most diverse part of the MPS's workforce with a higher percentage of people from BAME backgrounds, a higher percentage of women and a higher percentage of older people. They did important work that complemented the work done by police officers and often serves as experts on the neighbourhoods they worked in.

- A number of serious violent incidents have happened in the borough in recent months. However, over the last 4 years, serious youth violence has decreased in the area. 219 incidents of serious youth violence were reported in 2015 – 2016, where in 2011 – 2012 this number was 329. A roundtable had been organised chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety to discuss these recent incidents in more depth. The MP for Lewisham and Deptford had set up a Youth Violence Commission to consider the root causes of youth violence across the country. The Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Board had organised a youth conference the Friday before the Committee meeting which had been attended by 70 to 80 young people.
- A spike in hate crime had been reported after the 23 June. 4 incidents had been reported in the borough which were seen to have a direct link to the EU referendum. Residents were encouraged to report any incidents. The police were also carefully monitoring whether there had been an increase in homophobic or islamophobic incidents following recent world events.
- Following the murder of Jo Cox MP, the police had been mindful of the security of local MPs. A review of their security arrangements had taken place a couple of months before the murder as part of the police's routine work.
- The London police commissioner's commitment to the role of police schools officers was welcomed.

#### 4.2 Kate Halpin and Geeta Subramaniam answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- Work was being done to try to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG). The police had engaged with the local mosque about this to encourage reporting as VAWG was a particular risk for Muslim women. Work had been done in local schools to educate young people about consent and to prevent online abuse. At a recent head teachers' forum, a number of head teachers of primary schools had requested that such workshops also be provided at their primary schools.
- The community payback scheme was now run by a privatised section of the probation service. Contact with the providers of this scheme could be improved. Learning needed to take place across the MPS on how to engage with victims of crimes. For example, victims could be asked for an impact statement when the crime was being reported instead of sometimes months after the event.
- Each borough's police service were now asked to provide daily statistics of reported hate crime to the central MPS office. The situation was being carefully monitored. Hate crime was deemed to be a very underreported crime for a borough as diverse as Lewisham. Residents were encouraged to report any incident, and could use a specially developed mobile phone application called Self Evident.
- The targets for police attendance after emergency calls were 15 minutes for immediate situations and 60 minutes for calls that were deemed 'soon'. In trying to meet these targets there always needed to be a consideration of the quality of the response provided alongside the need for a quick response.

- The deployment of SNT officers was centrally controlled by the MPS.
- There is no one crime of child sexual exploitation (CSE) that an individual can be charged with. What is defined as CSE was captured in statistics under other crimes, such as kidnapping or sexual assault. The numbers for cases that would be marked as CSE were small across the MPS and the numbers for Lewisham were in keeping with comparable London Boroughs. There are cases that consist of children being exploited by bullying or threats that would not be classified as CSE because there was no sexual element present, and would therefore not . The focus on CSE could obscure some of these cases.

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

- The Committee was pleased with the expressed support for the role of PCSOs by the borough commander.
- It would be good to get an idea of the staffing levels for Safer Neighbourhood Teams. When staffing levels become very low, the impact of illness including long term sick leave on staffing levels would be much greater.
- It could be difficult to classify what crimes had been committed as both the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts made their own independent judgements on each case.
- The Committee felt it made sense to have local police forces follow the same boundaries as London Borough for administrative and bureaucratic reasons.
- The Committee would welcome regular attendance by the borough commander to their meetings, and requested a written report for the next attendance by the borough commander with statistics for crime in the borough as well as a short outline of any key issues at that point.
- It could be difficult to arrange security for Councillors at their surgery due to a lack of resources in both the Council and the Lewisham police service. Security could be increased by organising SNTs surgeries at the same time and place as Councillor surgeries.
- The Committee was interested in the feedback received from young people who attended the SNB youth conference. Information on how to contact the police could be provided to young people by inserting a page in their secondary school logbooks.

4.4 RESOLVED: that the update from the metropolitan police borough commander be noted, that the borough commander be thanked for her attendance, that the borough commander's offer to attend the Committee meeting regularly be accepted, and that the following of the Committee's views be referred to Mayor and Cabinet:

The Committee was interested to hear about the plans expressed by London's new Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to run an extensive consultation on proposals to remodel police services in London. The Committee was concerned about proposals, developed before the 2016 London mayoral election, for a potential merger of the 32 Borough Command Units across

London. This would mean that there would not one borough commander responsible to policing in the borough of Lewisham.

The Committee expressed its concern at these plans, as cooperation between local authorities and the metropolitan police is strengthened by having the boundaries of local police forces in London correspond with borough boundaries.

The Committee welcomed the support for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) expressed by the Lewisham police borough commander. The Committee values the work done by PCSOs and would welcome an opportunity to increase their numbers.

The Committee requested that they were formally asked to comment on any consultation responses on behalf of the Council to plans by the Mayor of London or Greater London Assembly for changes to the discharge of crime and disorder function in the borough.

## **5. Main Grants Programme 2017-18 Outcome of consultation**

5.1 Standing orders were suspended at 21.15.

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

- Mayor and Cabinet had decided to reduce the Main Grants Programme by £1m from 1 April 2017. A consultation had been organised to identify the best approach to making this saving. The only option supported by the voluntary and community sector was for pro-rata cuts to the awarded grants.
- An open consultation meeting on 1 June had been attended by 60 people from 43 different organisations currently in receipt of grant funding. The suggested approach was broadly supported although there specific issues identified for individual groups.
- There had been requests made for a 6 month notice period for organisation that would lose funding but this would not be possible given when the saving needs to be implemented by. If Mayor and Cabinet agree the suggested approach, all organisations would receive a letter warning them that they may be faced with a 25% reduction in grant funding from 1 April 2017. The ultimate decision of the exact grant to be awarded to each organisation would not be decided till the end of the calendar year.
- A request was made for the Council to employ a specialist to support organisations with fundraising. The Council employs staff to provide this support but their time was spent in evaluating the grants programme and grant applications. The budget for the community section would be reviewed to see if this support could be provided in the short term.
- At least 2 officers have attended a meeting with each organisation in receipt of grant funding to discuss their initial proposals.

5.3 The Committee asked a number of questions. The following key points were noted:

- The performance of grant funded bodies was difficult to assess given the nature of organisations and the work they performed. If a group does not perform, the Council would move to remove their funding. A report had recently been taken to Mayor and Cabinet to remove grant funding from an organisation which was underperforming although through no fault of their own.
- Some targets for mergers have been identified by organisations, although this may not all have happened by 1 April. Officers were talking with organisations about what a 25% reduction in funding would mean for them and how they could adjust. Organisations were also being asked consider whether they could merge with organisation working in a completely different field but in the same area of the borough. Some organisation that did not receive grant funding in the last savings rounds had successfully merged and were doing well.
- The figure of £1m reduction had been agreed by Mayor and Cabinet in September 2015. Officers had been tasked with identifying large sums of money in their areas for savings as the Council had to save a large sum of money overall. The proposal may not be more palatable if the total saving would be £10,000 more or less.
- The equality impact assessments would be presented with the proposals to award of organisations with specific amounts of grant funding for 2017-18. At that stage, Mayor and Cabinet contracts could decide to agree with officer recommendations or award different amounts of funding. Organisations would also be informed about the possibility to go through an appeals process if they wanted to object to the officer recommendations.

5.4 RESOLVED: that the report be noted, and that the Committee receive a further update on the Main Grants Programme 2017-18 in the autumn before decisions are made on the funding allocations for the Main Grants Programme from April 2017 onwards.

**6. London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority - Decision to save £6.4m in 2016-17 & Sixth London Safety Plan (INFORMATION ITEM)**

6.1 RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

**7. Council employment profile 2015-2016 (INFORMATION ITEM)**

7.1 RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

**8. Select Committee work programme**

8.1 Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report. The Committee discussed the report and agreed:

- That an update report on the Manor House library be added to their work programme for September.

- That the rest of the work programme for the September meeting be agreed.

8.2 RESOLVED: that the report be noted, that an update report on the Library savings programme for Manor House library be added to the 15 September Committee meeting, and that the work programme for the 15 September Committee meeting be agreed.

**9. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

9.1 RESOLVED: that the Committee's views under items 3 and 4 be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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