

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 12 July 2018 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), James Rathbone (Vice-Chair), Tauseef Anwar, Sophie Davis, Colin Elliott, Feis-Bryce and Sakina Sheikh

APOLOGIES: Councillors Sue Hordijkeno

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor James-J Walsh, Emma Aye-Kumi, Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Adam Bowles (Head of OD & HR), Andrew Jacobs (Organisational Learning and Talent Manager), Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) and Antonio Rizzo (Library and Information Services Manager)

1. Confirmation of Chair and Vice-Chair

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Pauline Morrison be confirmed as Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.

That Cllr James Rathbone be confirmed as Vice-Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2018

As there were only two members of the committee that had been present at the previous meeting, consideration of the minutes was deferred until the next meeting.

3. Declarations of interest

Councillor James Rathbone declared a registerable interest in respect of Item 7. He is a member of the management team of Manor House Library.

Councillor Rathbone declared a registerable interest in respect of Item 9. He is a trustee and officer of a trust in receipt of a main grant.

Councillor Morrison declared a registerable interest in respect of Item 9. She is a trustee and officer of a trust in receipt of a main grant.

Councillor Davis declared a registerable interest in respect of Item 6, having previously worked in Behavioural Insights for a company that had been involved with Lewisham council.

4. Response to Referrals from this Committee - LGBT + Provision in Lewisham

Barrie Neal, Head of Corporate Policy and Governance, introduced the report.

Councillor James-J Walsh, who had been the Vice-Chair of the committee at the time that the review of LGBT+ provision was conducted, welcomed the response and made the following comments:

Response to Recommendation 1 – the committee had recommended an action plan, which he felt was not the same as a strategy, and that the response precluded the creation of a LGBT+ action plan as a way forward.

Response to Recommendation 5 - he felt the response focused on counting people, whereas the intention of the recommendation was to go beyond a headcount and to critically look at policies.

Response to Recommendation 8 – while he was pleased that there would be an Equalities Champion, he stressed the need for a stakeholder and reference group to support the Champion. He felt that one overarching Champion was insufficient.

Response to recommendation 21 – the committee heard that the Trans community had changed since the 2011 report. Cllr Walsh recommended a piece of work around social, legal and medical policies to help fill some of the current knowledge gaps.

A discussion followed in which the following points were noted:

- Gender Identity Research & Education Society, Stonewall and the local trans community would be good starting points were the committee to carry out the trans community work that Cllr Walsh suggested
- There was some support for adding an item on trans rights to the work programme. It could feed into health and look at how HR support staff who are mid-transition
- Equalities, including LGBT+ issues, should be an intrinsic part of decision making
- Further discussions outside of committee would take place to discuss how to take this forward.

It was RESOLVED that the Mayor & Cabinet's response to the referral be noted.

5. Select Committee work programme

The Chair invited Councillor Rathbone to address the committee. The committee heard that, ahead of the meeting, he had received the following suggestions of topics for consideration under the work programme:

- Antisocial behaviour/ youth crime/ violence
- Voluntary Sector Capacity – getting value for money from the grants programme
- Romany traveller provision of council services
- Modern Day Slavery
- Equalities and Human Rights Act
- Access to public toilets

Members made these additional suggestions at the meeting:

- Bike snatching from delivery drivers. One councillor reported that drivers are arming themselves to protect their bikes, and fitting tracking devices on their bikes to enable them to retrieve their stolen bike by force.
- The equalities impact of changes to Universal Credit. It was felt that this could be considered towards the end of the municipal year once the impact of changes were clearer.
- Police and BAME community relations, focusing on the impact of stop and search and Prevent.

The following was noted in discussion:

- There was support for an in-depth review of police and BAME community relations, giving equal weight to Stop and Search and Prevent
- The review would need a narrow focus to be effective
- Members wanted to see full information on the Stop and Search programme, for example how many stop and searches result in conviction
- The changing structure of the Met was likely to be out of scope as it was yet to be implemented
- Members felt the work programme looked full and did not want to overload the committee
- Members agreed to add serious youth violence/ knife crime and modern day slavery to the work programme.
- The committee would revisit the work programme in September.

It was RESOLVED that

- The work programme be agreed as presented, including serious youth violence/ knife crime and modern day slavery
- The committee undertake an in-depth review of police and BAME community relations, focusing equally on the impact of stop and search and Prevent.

6. Council's Employee Profile

Andrew Jacobs, Organisational Learning & Talent Management Manager, summarised the report.

The committee heard that:

- Next year's staff profile would have more detailed data once the migration to the Oracle platform was completed
- Environmental Services and Social Care were the biggest users of agency staff
- Recruitment of Social Workers was a pan-London problem and Lewisham's use of agency staff was comparable with the rest of London
- Some of the agency workers in environmental services were due to the need for a flexible workforce as demand varied. Work was ongoing to bring long tenure agency workers in house
- Work was ongoing to look at whether a BME pay gap exists in Lewisham
- The most commonly cited reason for leaving in staff exit interviews was career development and progression
- Whereas a lower percentage of job applicants were white, a higher percentage were hired. The reverse was true of BME candidates. The

reasons for this variance were unknown and work was being done to try to understand the reason for this. The committee heard that often jobs attract a high number of applicants without the necessary qualifications or experience, who apply in order to keep receiving job seeker's allowance, and that this could be a factor.

- Members were extremely concerned that the hiring process was flawed, suggesting unconscious bias.
- The committee heard that the workforce profile was representative of the borough as a whole.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. Library and Information Service Annual Report

Antonio Rizzo, Service Manager - Library Service, and Liz Dart, Head of Cultural and Community Development, presented the report.

The committee heard that a delegate from South Korea had been visiting Lewisham to learn from the community library model. The arrangement had originally been made through the British Council, but Lewisham had become South Korea's 'go to' for library advice and best practice.

In response to questions from the committee, the following was noted:

- Antisocial behaviour (ASB) was a feature in all libraries. Catford, Downham and Deptford all have security staff in addition to library staff. Consideration was being given to adding security in Lewisham library following a recent violent incident. Other security improvements had been made.
- Cuts to other services and higher thresholds, particularly in mental health services, impacted on the libraries, being free, accessible, universal welcoming spaces.
- The majority of the ASB was by adults, with a few incidents between teenagers studying for exams. Younger children being left unsupervised in the library was not a major problem.
- An increasing number of Citizen's Advice Bureau-type enquiries were being directed to library staff. Quality of advice and service varied between libraries as they were reliant on volunteers.
- Members of the committee were positive about the libraries and felt they were being run well.
- Library staff could provide training and support for library users that were not familiar with using digital resources, youtube, social media etc.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8. Main Grants Programme Consultation

Liz Dart, Head of Cultural and Community Development, summarised the report, and explained that historically Lewisham had funded more arts than sports programmes. The committee were advised that the consultation process was starting now in anticipation of a reduction when the budget is set. The voluntary

and community sector was being asked for views on making cuts across the board or funding fewer programmes.

Councillor Rathbone declared an registrable interest as a trustee and officer of a trust in receipt of a main grant. He absented himself from the discussion and left the room.

Councillor Morrison declared a similar interest. She remained in the room.

Members requested that a list of recipient organisations be circulated to the committee following the meeting.

Members heard that some organisations were struggling to adapt to the current funding regime. Where that impacted on performance, the organisation was defunded.

It was RESOLVED that:

- 1) The report be noted
- 2) A list of funded organisation be sent to the committee following the meeting.

9. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

The committee discussed whether to make another referral to Mayor & Cabinet regarding the creation of a LGBT+ Champion, on the basis that the committee felt the Mayor and Cabinet had misinterpreted the recommendation.

Further discussions outside of committee would take place to discuss how to take this matter forward.

The committee agreed that a referral should be made to the Mayor & Cabinet asking why the chances of a BME job applicant being recruited appear to decrease as s/he moves through the recruitment process, whereas the reverse is true for white candidates.

The committee RESOLVED:

- 1) to make a referral to the Mayor and Cabinet regarding Item 5 – Council's Employment Profile. To ask the Mayor & Cabinet to explain the apparent imbalance whereby the chances of a white job applicant increase as s/he moves through the recruitment process, whereas the chances for BME applicants decrease.
- 2) That further discussions outside of committee would take place to discuss how best to move forward with the Committee's recommendation for a LGBT+ Champion, that had been rejected by the Mayor & Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

Chair:

Date:
