

# MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 July 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Juliet Campbell (Chair), James Rathbone (Vice-Chair), Sophie Davis, Carl Handley, Jim Mallory, Stephen Penfold and James-J Walsh and Sakina Sheikh

APOLOGIES: Councillors Eva Stamirowski

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Jonathan Slater (Cabinet Member for Community Sector), John Bardens (Scrutiny Manager), Adam Bowles (Head of OD & HR), Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer), Philippe Granger (Rushey Green Timebank), James Lee (Service Manager, Inclusion and Prevention and Head of Cultural and Community Development), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Gary Cummins (Strategy and Policy Officer) and Gary Connors (Crime Reduction Service Manager)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2019

### 1.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised the sign them.

## 2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 Cllr Rathbone declared interests in item 9 as: a Council nominee to Voluntary Action Lewisham; a Council nominee to Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd; and a Trustee for Lee Green Lives, an organisation in receipt of main grant funding.
- 2.2 Cllr Walsh declared interests in item 9 as: a Council nominee to Voluntary Action Lewisham; a member of Unison's voluntary community branch; and being employed in the voluntary sector in London; and in items 6 and 8 as a founding member of Lewisham's LGBT forum.
- 2.3 Cllr Sheikh declared an interest in item 9 as a Trustee for Voluntary Action Lewisham.
- 2.4 Cllr Penfold declared an interest in item 9 as being employed by the Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, an organisation in receipt of main grant funding.

## 3. Response to Referrals from this Committee

### 3.1 RESOLVED:

That the response from Mayor & Cabinet be noted.

#### **4. Stop and Search and Prevent Strategy In-depth Review - Response to recommendations**

Gary Connors (Strategic Crime Reduction Service Manager) introduced a report setting out the Mayor and Cabinet response to the recommendations of the committee's review of stop and search and prevent and community relations. A discussion followed and the following key points were noted:

- 4.1 Regarding the response to recommendation 9 in the report, it was noted that it did not appear as though Mayor and Cabinet had accepted the recommendation to write to the Home Secretary about the lack of available local data. It was confirmed to the committee that the Mayor would be writing to the Home Secretary.
- 4.2 The committee asked when there would be more information available on the Council's plans for contributing to the independent national review of Prevent and how councillors might be involved.
- 4.3 It was noted that the Home Office has agreed to have Lewisham involved, but officers are not yet aware of the process of how this will happen. Officers hope to have more detail within the next month.
- 4.4 The committee's review has helped the council as it looks forward to what it funds.
- 4.5 The council will continue to work with the community and better communicate that Prevent is safeguarding based.
- 4.6 The council will also be working with an organisation that brings together different communities to look at how the Prevent process works by setting out different scenarios.
- 4.7 The committee held a vote on whether to make a referral to Mayor & Cabinet in order to draw attention to its response to referral 9.
- 4.8 The committee voted against making a referral in these terms.
- 4.9 The committee voted on resolving the item by thanking Mayor & Cabinet for their response to the committee review and stating that it looks forward to receiving a progress update in 6 months.
- 4.10 The committee voted in favour of this resolution.

#### **4.13 RESOLVED**

To receive, within a month, a copy of the letter that the Mayor will write to the Home Secretary regarding the lack of available local data on referrals to Prevent and Channel.

To receive, within a month, further information on the ways in which Lewisham Council can contribute to the national review of Prevent and how Members can be involved.

To be informed of the name of the external organisation the council is working with to run community-based sessions on Prevent and Channel.

That the committee thanks Mayor & Cabinet for its responses to their recommendations and that it looks forward to receiving a progress update in 6 months' time.

## **5. How Lewisham Council embeds Equalities across its service delivery - In-depth review**

The Scrutiny Manager set out the background and focus of the scoping` paper for the committee's in-depth review of equalities.

5.1 The committee noted that it was very impressed with the paper, particularly the information in the appendix setting out each directorate's own challenges.

5.2 The review will include looking at how organisations funded by the council are embedding equalities.

5.3 Officers noted that if the Council funds an external organisation, the equalities duties still rest with the council.

### **RESOLVED**

That the scope for the review be agreed.

## **6. Council's Employment Profile and Staff Survey Results**

Adam Bowles, Director of Organisational Development & Human Resources presented a report providing information on key trends in the Council's workforce. The following key points were noted:

- 6.1 There was a slight increase in redundancies. In terms of both gender and ethnicity, the numbers were broadly similar to the workforce profile.
- 6.2 42.9% of the Council's workforce is BAME. This broadly reflects the workforce across London Councils, although it is slightly below the borough profile based on the 2011 census.
- 6.3 Overall, the BAME workforce increased 1.2% from the previous year.
- 6.4 A BAME staff forum is expected to be set up in the coming months. There is already a LGBT+ forum and a Disabled forum.
- 6.5 There is a gender pay gap of 10.6% in favour of women. Some of this is due to the profile of the workforce: the council has a relatively large manual workforce, which tends to be male, and a large number of social workers, which tend to be female.
- 6.6 There is good representation of women at a senior level.
- 6.7 4.2% of the workforce declared that they consider themselves to have a disability. This broadly reflects the rate across London Councils.
- 6.8 More job applicants were from women (58.8%) and more women were appointed (68.7%).
- 6.9 In terms of ethnicity, there was a drop off between applicants (60%) and those interviewed (53.3%), but a similar proportion move from interview to appointment.
- 6.10 Work is being carried out to investigate the drop off between application and interview. This will include trialling anonymised applicant CVs in some areas.

- 6.11 Of the workforce promoted, 72% were women, which is higher than the female percentage workforce rate of 61.2%.
- 6.12 41.5% of promoted employees were BAME, this is slightly lower than the BAME workforce rate of 42.9%.
- 6.13 100% of those that applied for promotion and who declared that they had a disability were successful in being promoted.

The Chair invited questions from the committee. A discussion followed in which the following points were made:

- 6.14 Officers confirmed that the employment profile excludes school staff and agreed to look into providing further information on the profile of the school workforce.
- 6.15 There have been some compulsory redundancies. The council always tries to redeploy people and part-time working can be discussed when jobs are advertised.
- 6.16 The committee queried what other categories of non-voluntary leavers there are other than dismissal. Officers agreed to provide a breakdown.
- 6.17 Part-time working is encouraged. The council is signing up to be a Timewise employer and offers a range of flexible working options.
- 6.18 The committee asked if there are any figures on how many people take shared parental leave. Officers agreed to look this up.
- 6.19 The committee queried if the council monitors the rates of promotion and leavers when people come back from parental leave. Officers confirmed that they do not, but agreed to carry out some work to feed into next year's report.
- 6.20 The committee queried rates of promotion in relation to LGBT. Officers noted that the figures on this were too small to report without possibly identifying individuals.

Gary Cummins, Unite the Union representative, presented information on some of the key successes, challenges, and concerns that union members had working for the council. The following key points were noted:

- 6.21 The key challenge is how to continue providing a high level of service to residents given that the council has fewer people and less money.
- 6.22 There's also concern about the conformity of council policies to ACAS guidance; the consistent application of flexible working; the appropriateness of some referrals to occupational health and the consistency of the weighting between GP and Occupational Health reports. There was also concern about the use of annual leave during a phased return to work following a period of long-term absence.
- 6.23 It was welcome that a number of agency workers had been taken on full time, but there was concern that there are still some agency workers with long-term service.
- 6.24 It was also noted that there is concern among BAME members about progressing through the organisation.

The Chair invited questions from the committee. A discussion followed in which the following points were made:

- 6.25 The committee noted the concerns among BAME employees about career progression and asked if measures such as the appointment as Royston John as the council's adviser on BAME career progression are making a difference for BAME employees.
- 6.26 The committee heard that the union's equalities officer is in process of arranging to meet with members to begin a conversation on measures such as this.
- 6.27 It was noted that there is a formal structure for trade unions and senior staff to resolve disputes. There are quarterly directorate meetings and an organisational meeting chaired by Director of Resources.
- 6.28 If there are disputes that can't be settled through this process they can be escalated to the works council, which is cabinet member-led.
- 6.29 It was noted that some trade unions refuse to attend the works council as they feel that it should be chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.
- 6.30 Although all the Council's policies comply with legislation, some of the policies and timeframes within them do not completely follow ACAS guidance.
- 6.31 The committee asked about the training council managers receive on HR policies. Officers noted that managers are expected to read HR policies as part of their induction process.
- 6.32 Officers also noted that the council works well with the trade unions and that council employees are encouraged to speak to their trade unions. The Head of Organisational Development and Human Resources noted that the council's existing consultation and negotiation agreed machinery was the appropriate place for union negotiations to be carried out, where both parties had the opportunity to fully present, discuss and understand the issues. This meeting was not the appropriate venue for union negotiations but did present an opportunity for Members to scrutinise relevant policies.
- 6.33 The committee thanked officers and the union representative for their presentations.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That a report on employee relations be considered at a later meeting of the committee, providing information on the council's process for resolving employment disputes; the council's phased return to work policy; the updating of the council's HR policies, the relationship between ACAS guidance and legislation; the numbers of long-term agency staff; the employment profile of schools in Lewisham; the proportion of non-voluntary leavers that are dismissals and the different categories of dismissal; and the numbers of staff who take shared parental leave.
- (2) That representatives from all three staff unions be invited to attend the meeting for this item to contribute to the discussion.

**7. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The chair announced the reasons for the exclusion of press and public for the following item.

**8. PART 2 Exempt Council's Employment Profile and Staff Survey Results**

Adam Bowles, Director of Organisational Development & Human Resources, presented a report providing an overview of the staff survey results and a breakdown in relation to the committee's equalities review. The following key points were noted:

- 8.1 Participation in the staff survey has increased to 50% and overall employee engagement has increased by 5%.
- 8.2 Overall there are minimal differences in terms of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. There are some however, this includes female employees being more likely to experience bullying and harassment; and lesbian and gay employees having less confidence in senior leadership.
- 8.3 Disabled employees are significantly more dissatisfied across all question areas.

*At 9:30pm the committee agreed to suspend standing orders to complete the remaining agenda.*

- 8.4 A high proportion of employees who experience bullying experience it from managers, employees, and the public.
- 8.5 The committee noted the number of employees saying that they do not understand how their own goals and objectives fit in with the wider organisation and asked what is being done to improve this.
- 8.6 The council has circulated information on the corporate strategy so that employees understand what the council is doing. More information on the performance cycle is being made available in order to connect service plans with the corporate strategy, and the corporate strategy is being linked to appraisals. There will also be training with managers and better internal communications.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

### **9. Vision for the third Sector: Compact and Transformation**

Councillor Jonathan Slater, Cabinet Member for Community Sector, introduced the report. Philippe Grainger, Rushey Green Time Bank, also addressed the committee. A discussion followed and following key points were noted:

- 9.1 The Council continues to be committed to grant funding. It is re-commissioning the third sector grants programme and continues to fund around 40 organisations over three years.
- 9.2 It will be funding the Rushey Green Time Bank (RGTB), under the umbrella of Lewisham Local, to look at how we use and build our community assets; promote giving; and make council contracts and commercial opportunities work better.
- 9.3 It will also be considering a motion to join the Keep It Local campaign and support the community sector.
- 9.4 The level of monitoring of individual community and voluntary organisations is proportionate depending on the level of funding they receive.

- 9.5 The committee noted that an integral part of its recent referral on the main grants programme was the recommendation to review current governance arrangements, and asked for an update on this.
- 9.6 Officers are in constant conversations with Citizens Advice and the Advice Lewisham Partnership about governance.
- 9.7 There are also ongoing conversations between the different partners of Lewisham Local, primarily RGTB and Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL), about the future arrangements for the Lewisham Local and the organisations within it.
- 9.8 Some larger organisations are monitored daily and required to report on their activity to the council. There will also be more strategic monitoring of quarterly flows of data and ongoing discussion of any issues arising.
- 9.9 Some smaller organisations will be are required to report quarterly and will receive an annual visit by a council officer.
- 9.10 Lewisham Local will be delivered by RGTB. It is set up as a “collaborative” model in order to bring cross sector partners together.
- 9.11 RGTB recognises that it is going to take some work to prepare the third sector for an asset-based approach. Groups will be contacted and informed of the benefits of working together. Most groups have already been contacted to discuss what they don’t have and what they could offer.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**10. Select Committee work programme**

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the work programme report:

- 10.1 The committee noted that it would need to include an additional item on the work programme in order to receive the further information requested as part of item 6.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

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

There were no referrals.

The meeting ended at 9.36 pm

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_