

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 October 2019 at 7.00 pm

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Liam Curran

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Jonathan Slater (Cabinet Member for Community Sector), Dr Catherine Mbema (Interim Director of Public Health) (London Borough of Lewisham) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019

1.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes be agreed.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Councillor James Rathbone declared a personal interest in item 4 as he held a voluntary position on the management team of a community library in Lewisham.

2.2 Councillor James-J Walsh declared a personal interest in item 6 as he was a member of the Co-operative party and involved in lobbying on food poverty.

3. Response to Referrals from this Committee

3.1 RESOLVED:

There were no responses to referrals considered at this meeting.

4. Lewisham Libraries - Future and Transformation

4.1 Antonio Rizzo, Service Manager, Library Services, and James Lee, Director of Culture and Community Development, introduced the report to the Committee and tabled a letter received by the service, a copy of which will be included in the agenda documentation. During the discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Councillor Jonathan Slater, Executive Member for the Community Sector commented that he would like to work closely with the Safer

Stronger Communities Select Committee on the vision for the service for 2030 and that this was an opportunity to start that discussion.

- There would be an opportunity for members to be involved in the discussion as well as community members.
- User numbers in Lewisham libraries had gone up. Some community libraries had had falls in numbers due to changes being implemented such as the work at Catford Library.
- There was a concern raised by a member of the Committee that while user numbers had risen in hub libraries, they had fallen in some community libraries. The Committee heard that there had been a 2.5% reduction in visits in Deptford and 5% reduction in Grove Park and there were no particular concerns that this was anything significant. Other community libraries were the same or higher numbers than previously.
- There were concerns around possible costs of improvements at Lewisham library. Further work was taking pace with the Capital Programme Team to see what was possible.
- Investment in community libraries was on a case by case basis and there was on-going discussion with planning colleagues around NCIL monies. Libraries had been prioritised in some wards.
- The Council had supported community libraries with staff development and delivered training. There were, however, constraints on the resources available. Recruitment and turnover of volunteers was a continual challenge although the numbers who volunteered in Lewisham libraries was very high.
- The £501,000 expenditure listed as “other” in the Committee report mostly related to the book fund and to the library management system.
- In Evelyn ward, officers were in discussion with Hyde Housing regarding the Pepys Centre. An expression of interest had gone out to community groups who may be able to take on the building. Hyde Housing had been clear about their commitment to support a library presence.
- The possibility of donations to the book fund could be explored. Although it was acknowledged that as this was a statutory function of the Council this may not be possible.
- A member of the Committee commented that security at Catford Library had been quite confrontational at times and requested that that be fed back to the team.

4.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

(a) Equalities In-depth Review - Evidence Session

- 5.1 Naomi Goldberg, Director of Strategy, Metro Charity introduced herself to the Committee and outlined the role Metro is playing in coordinating equalities work in the borough and the organisation’s initial comments to the review which are included in the agenda documentation pack.

5.2 Paul Aladenika, presented his report to the Committee. The following key points were highlighted:

- The Council believes its approach to Equalities should be inclusive, it should be a whole-systems approach and it should focus on discharge of functions, management actions, and leadership.
- The Equalities Act itself was constrained in some ways and Lewisham's policy approach was to have a wider definition including for example: refugees and asylum-seekers; households impacted by poverty; the impact of climate change; and the impacts of loneliness and isolation.
- The challenges could be described in two ways: in relation to people and in relation to information. The people challenges include the people who don't know and don't routinely think to ask and the people who do know and want to know more. If people were not curious and routinely asking questions it was challenging to get into the level of detail needed and harvest the levels of information, The council needed to empower decision-making and scrutiny to do their work.
- Information challenges included: data gathering; understanding the data; and how easy to access it was. Residents did not always have to complete equalities monitoring forms so data was not always available.
- The Council could do more to demonstrate how it used the data effectively to make decisions and build trust so it was easier for service users to share the information.
- The Comprehensive Equalities Scheme (CES) was a framework and not a strategy. It has five objectives which can then be used and considered to develop policy or strategy or to scrutinise policy or strategy. Questions could be asked based on the objectives such as: What data do we have? What are the risks? Is it disproportionality affecting particular groups? The aim was that the CES would provide the tools to ask the right questions and focus on the extent to which equalities considerations had been made. The challenge of the CES was that it needed to be used. If it was not considered at the policy or strategy development stage then there may not be the right focus on equalities.
- Regarding how equalities was embedded across the Council - an important area was strategy development. Instead of having a discreet equalities strategy, the Committee heard that equalities were built in within other strategies such as: the Housing Strategy; the Children and Young People Plan etc.
- There were areas where improvements were needed such as the information that goes into reports and ensuring the equalities implications were complete.
- The Committee heard that although socio-economic inequality and income deprivation were not protected under the Equalities Act, it did affect the experiences of people with protected characteristics and those without. Where it was relevant socio-economic implications should be considered and reflected. It may not always be appropriate to consider socio-economic implications but the default should be to consider and work back from there.
- Regarding equalities implications in reports – these should be highlighted in the reports. That information should include supporting data where possible and if not, should still be able to demonstrate the likely implications.

- Regarding the question posed about when Equality Analysis Assessments needed to be produced; the Committee heard that whenever there was a plan to change or remove a service or a function or in respect of budget savings proposals they should be carried out.
 - Equality Impact Assessment and Equality Analysis Assessment were terms that were often used interchangeably. Within the Council Equality Analysis Assessment was the term used.
- 5.3 Katharine Nidd, Strategic Procurement and Commercial Services Manager, presented to the Committee regarding the question posed on the embedding of equalities in the commissioning process. Katharine highlighted the following key points:
- There were two key strands to how Equalities considerations were embedded. Firstly, the legalistic – through the commissioning process, the constitution, the procurement handbook and through consideration of legal and equalities implications.
 - Secondly when services were commissioned and scoped the service involved considered equalities throughout the design/re-design and specification process.
- 5.4 During the discussion that followed, the following key points were raised:
- A member of the Committee asked for a specific example. The Committee heard the example of the remodelling of Laurence House. Right at the beginning the service involved would be considering users, those with protected characteristics etc. Once this goes to procurement and as part of the tender there would be a requirement for specific statements on equalities in addition to how they are addressed through the specifications. There would also be a standard requirement for a range of policy documents and commitments from the contractors. The report to Committee for approval would also need to have an equalities implications section and also the legal implications. Once the tenders have been returned the commitments outlined are then captured in the terms and conditions of the contract and contractors are required to sign up to the Council's Sustainable Code of Procurement which also has additional requirements.
 - A member of the Committee asked to understand more about how equalities are considered specifically at the beginning stage of the service redesign etc.
 - James Lee, Head of Culture and Community Development, gave an example to the Committee from a service perspective and gave the example of re-commissioning the drugs service. The relevant team would look at the way the current service was operating, the cohort of users, asking questions about service and access requirements questioning whether there were any barriers to access. This would then be in the service specifications that organisations would have to show how they would engage with all communities and then at the tender process they would be required to say how they meet the specifications and also specific examples in the equalities methodology section as to how they would reach out to communities. The tenders would then be rated and assessed.
 - A member of the Committee was concerned regarding the way the early stage of equalities considerations in service redesign was carried out in Lewisham and was concerned about the specific consideration of people

with often hidden needs. There would need to be trust that the people designing the service had a really deep understanding of the different needs. For example, during this Committee's in-depth review into LGBT+ Provision the Committee had discovered that there were no Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) on any of the protected characteristics and the needs were not fully known and understood. The Committee member questioned whether there was confidence that all service designers had a good enough level of understanding about the 9 protected characteristics and were confident enough to articulate these need and challenge anyone tendering for the service. The appropriate research needed to be in place and accessible and shared with relevant people and updated.

- A member of the Committee stressed that it was important to have a thorough understanding of how the protected characteristics interact and intersectional challenges where discrimination is added on discrimination. It was very challenging but needed to be understood and taken into account or those most in need would not be supported.
- A member of the Committee felt the report had answered the committee's questions very well but it was still unclear as to the difference between the theory and the practice. The reality was not always the same. The review was not about how the Council is "meant" to be doing this it was about how the Council is "actually" doing this work. The Committee agreed they now understood the theory but needed to look at case studies of where this has been applied well and where not so well to gain a better understanding of the reality.
- There was one member of staff in the Equality and Diversity team. Embedding equalities across the Council was felt to be important but Committee members felt that the Council was not yet at that stage.
- It would be possible for the Council to have a tenth characteristic of Socio-economic disadvantage even though it is not a statutory requirement.
- More information on the consistency of datasets would be useful.
- Paul Aladenika was working on and **Equalities Data digest across the nine protected characteristics and this could be brought back to Committee including data on employment and other data. This should be updated on a regular basis.**
- **Looking at a specific example including how the Council monitors performance in a systemic way including the quality and the depth and the thinking behind decisions was important for the review.**
- Ensuring there was commitment at a senior level was important.
- The Committee's referral to Business Panel on Equalities from their April meeting was then added to by Business Panel and referred to Mayor and Cabinet. A response was due to Business Panel at their November meeting. Following the meeting it was reported that the response would now be considered at Business Panel's December meeting.
- A member of the committee commented that the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee would not have used the term "class" and would have used "socio-economic deprivation".

5.5 **RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted

2. That the Equalities Data Digest be brought to the Committee.
3. That the Committee have the opportunity to look at specific examples of tendering processes to better understand the quality and depth of the early stages through to the final contract monitoring.

6. Equalities in-depth review - Evidence from Metro

See previous minute.

7. Food Poverty

7.1 Catherine Mbema, Director of Public Health and Gwenda Scott, Public Health Strategist, presented the report to the Committee. During the discussion that followed, the following key points were made:

- The Trussell Trust have shared their data on food banks with the Council. The system provides individuals with up to 2 vouchers.
- Lewisham was part of the Sustainable Food Cities Network and aiming to have a food strategy with a stream on Food Poverty. Robust information from all the food banks had been challenging and so the aim was to develop a Food Poverty Action Plan in the borough.
- Food Banks should be used as emergency aid and people should ideally be supported so they don't need to access food banks. There were also other models such as the Social Supermarket set up in Evelyn ward which had been very successful.
- There had been a decline nationally in the Healthy Start Scheme which could be detrimentally affecting some young families. The Lewisham uptake was just 50% which represented around £300,000 not being allocated to vulnerable families. The process could be simplified to make this easier but it was nationally not locally.
- There was an increase of 20% in food bank usage in Lewisham for the period of August 2018-19. A member of the Committee asked whether this was related to the introduction of universal credit. It could be looked into to see if there was a correlation. There were no national measures on measuring food poverty in place. The DWP would be doing an annual survey which will be monitored.
- **Lewisham had a Food Poverty Action Plan called Good Food Lewisham which would be circulated to members of the Committee.**
- Members of the Committee felt a statement that they endorse the Council looking at developing a Food Poverty Action Plan should be referred to the Mayor and Cabinet.
- Partner organisations worked together to try to support individuals accessing food banks. The crisis meaning people had to access food banks usually occurred around low-income, benefit changes and those with no recourse to public funds.
- The Beyond the Food Bank 2018 survey showed Lewisham was in the top five boroughs.
- A specific cabinet post for food justice could be beneficial.
- A borough-wide food summit with Public Health, Goldsmiths and VAL took place in 2016.

7.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the following statement be referred to Mayor and Cabinet:

The Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee endorses the Council looking at developing a Food Poverty Action Plan and considering how it can be supported.

8. Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction

8.1 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Director of Crime Reduction and Supporting People and Gary Connors, Head of Crime Reduction introduced the report. In the discussion that followed, the following key points were raised:

- A member of the Committee asked whether the Council could have a closer relationship with universities to improve evidence. The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) would be collating a lot of this information and this would be part of the remit. The aim would be to bring Policing, public health and local authority data together. Councils could share their exclusion data if anonymised.
- Goldsmiths and Southbank University would be evaluating Lewisham Council's trauma-informed approach and the results should be available in January. **The Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People would be happy to share the information on the review's methodology with the Committee.**

8.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

9. Select Committee work programme

9.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the Committee.

9.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

10. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

9.1 **RESOLVED:**

That a referral be made under the item on Food Poverty, as listed above.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Chair:

Date:
