

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday 18 August 2020 at 7pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown (Chair), Councillor Sophie Davis (Vice Chair), Councillors Peter Bernards, Juliet Campbell, Patrick Codd, Liam Curran, Joan Millbank, John Muldoon, Kim Powell and Luke Sorba.

Also present: Councillors Kevin Bonavia, Alan Hall Sue Hordijkeno and Jacq Paschoud.

1. Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the last meeting held on 21 July 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Joan Millbank declared a personal interest in Item 3 as a member of Lewisham Local Collaborative which was referred to in the report.

Councillor Sophie Davis declared a personal interest in Item 3 as an appointed member of Voluntary Services Lewisham.

3. Scrutiny of the Council's COVID-19 Response

This item was presented by the Chief Executive.

The Chair said that discussions had taken place between Business Panel and non-executive councillors. It had been agreed that although scrutiny arrangements would return to business-as-usual in September, some good practices that had been put in place following the covid pandemic should be retained. Members had found the explanatory notes on the key decision plan very useful and also the regular covid update report which brings together a wide range of information in one report with the facility to ask questions in advance of the meeting. The Chief Executive said that over the coming weeks officers would continue to provide the information required by members, bearing in mind that scrutiny meetings would recommence in September.

The Chair referred to the transition period in paragraph 5.2.1 of the report. He asked when the results of the assessments would be available as outlined in this paragraph. The Chief Executive said that in a previous meeting, officers provided information on the lessons learned so far and gave members high level feedback. Future reports would continue to report on lessons learned and the preparations being made for future waves of the virus.

Councillor Muldoon referred to the metrics in paragraph 5.28 of the report. He asked whether there was any evidence regarding data about blood groups He had been reliably informed that those having blood group O, whether rhesus positive or negative, had a 20% less chance of catching

covid 19. The Chief Executive agreed to contact relevant officers to discover whether this data exists.

Councillor Millbank referred to paragraph 6.7 in the report. She said that community hubs provide support to vulnerable residents affected by covid and asked for more information about 'existing resources' which will support these hubs after August 2020.

Councillor Millbank said there are two mental health providers for children and young people in the borough. She asked what the access time is for an interview for psychological help and the length of the waiting lists. The Chief Executive agreed to provide Councillor Millbank with a written response to both of her questions.

Councillor Sorba referred to paragraph 6.6.4 in the report, and asked three questions on behalf of his constituents.

- When are the Temporary Traffic Orders (TTO) likely to expire and when will public consultation start to consider whether they should be made permanent?
- What consultation had taken place with the three emergency services regarding increasing times for response vehicles?
- There were claims on social and business media that some of Lewisham's traffic measures, rather than improving traffic, is displacing the problem. One claim is that traffic, in one part of the borough was being diverted from more affluent areas to poorer areas. He also asked what processes were in place to measure the effect of traffic calming in the borough.

The Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and the Public Realm responded by saying that the intention is to assess these temporary measures, measure the impact in the local area and then consider whether any permanent changes should be made. Decisions would be evidence based.

The emergency services had been consulted and fully involved with regard to all the measures that had been put in place.

It was hoped that any initial displacement of traffic would eventually lead to a reduction when travellers become used to the changes. Volumes of traffic displacement and reduction would be measured. Any TTO measures made permanent should reduce traffic overall, improve safety when walking or cycling and improve air quality in the borough. The intention was to move traffic onto the main highways away from side roads.

The Head of Highways and Transport said that although it was not this Council's intention, TTOs can be in place for 18 months. Officers continue to monitor the situation and were considering timescales which were being discussed with the cabinet member.

A meeting had been held with the London Ambulance Service and the Police, and a separate meeting with the fire brigade, to ensure that emergency services were fully involved with the consideration of temporary and permanent traffic measures. Discussions had also been held London wide; an emergency service summit had been held with TfL and other London boroughs.

The Head of Highways and Transport said that traffic counts and air quality would be monitored. There is historic data and specific counts were undertaken in July this year and more counts will be undertaken in September 2020. There are some specific air quality monitoring stations around the Lewisham and Lee Green Area. Three are in a permanent position and the information that comes from these stations will be supplemented with additional monitoring stations from other areas in the borough and would form part of the monitoring strategy.

Councillor Curran asked about the numbers of staff who were out of action, affecting their ability to work. He said that he was concerned that planning appear to be understaffed. Ward councillors in Grove Park were concerned about the protection of trees in the Railway Children Urban National Park. The Chief Executive said that generally, across all departments, sickness was low and staff were being encouraged to take leave because there had been work pressures during the pandemic. It was expected that this pressure could rise again in the winter months. Members were also informed that some planning officers had volunteered for front line covid work so staffing levels were not back to normal.

Councillor Codd thanked officers for the response received to the questions he had submitted prior to the meeting. He drew members' attention to the email from the interim Head of Overview and Scrutiny Manager which outlined the seriousness of the shortfall in the budget following covid. A budget report will be considered in September. He referred to paragraph 6.6.4 in the report; there will be a review of the temporary traffic measures and he asked for more information about the purpose of the review. The Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and the Public Realm said that scrutiny committees will recommence in September. He expected that any evidence would be part of the Sustainable Development Select Committee's work programme and also any future policy. Any significant decisions would be submitted to the Mayor and Cabinet.

Councillor Bernards asked how the money raised from traffic violations would be spent; residents need to be assured that this Council were not attempting to make money from these charges. The Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and the Public Realm said that traffic monitors are used as a deterrent, not money making devices. The Head of Highways and Transport said that cameras had been positioned where officers could not put a physical barrier. Revenue is ring-fenced to be reinvested in transport.

Councillor Campbell referred to the displacement of traffic which could continue without a reduction in traffic congestion. She asked whether this

Council is doing anything else to encourage the public to reduce the number of car journeys. The Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and the Public Realm said that in order to encourage residents not to make short journeys, this Council operates bike loan schemes, bike support schemes, and safe walking schemes. Officers were also working with schools to consider alternative ways to bring children to school. The Head of Highways and Transport advised that recently, funding had been received for cycle training. She said that officers were aware that the public need more information about where there are safer routes to travel.

Councillor Campbell asked if air pollution was being monitored in areas where there had been displacement of traffic, which had resulted in rat runs and whether there were extra monitors. The Head of Highways and Transport said that due to cost constraints, air monitors could not be installed on every street. She was working with environmental health to understand the data available and would make decisions based on this information.

The Chair said that critical services had remained stable during this pandemic and he wished to place on record, members' thanks to officers for working so hard to maintain these services.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the update on the Council's response to COVID-19 be noted; and
- (ii) the good practices highlighted by the Chair with regard to explanatory notes on the key decision plan and regular covid updates that had been put in place following the covid pandemic should be retained.

Hybrid Meetings

A report on the possibility of holding Hybrid meetings in Lewisham had been circulated by the Head of Committee Services. The Chair said that it was possible for Hybrid meetings to be held. One of the central issues is health and safety for all those attending and he wanted a risk assessment to be arranged as soon as possible.

Councillor Millbank said that the LGA had undertaken research into hybrid meetings which she considered would be a useful source of information for Lewisham. She said that hybrid meetings offer the opportunity to a wider number of people to 'attend' a meeting.

Councillor Bonavia said that it is important that Lewisham hold hybrid meetings to allow accessibility and participation for the wider community. Officers were working on some logistical issues. Councillor Bonavia said that safety for those who want to attend a meeting physically is paramount but there were practical issues of accessing public buildings safely. He said that hybrid meetings should be ready as soon as possible following risk

assessment. Remote meetings had been held successfully in Lewisham and he would ensure that regular updates were submitted to the Business Panel and Mayor and Cabinet on this issue.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report be noted and
- (ii) members receive regular updates to ensure that hybrid meetings are ready for implementation at the earliest opportunity.

4. Key Decision Plan

The Chair drew members' attention to school meals provision. It is an important document which would be submitted to this Panel. Councillor Millbank said that members would be considering whether the provision would be coming in house; comments of the school leaders who do not support that model should be considered.

Councillor Hall said that he could not see the leisure contract on the key decision plan. He asked whether the correct procedures had been carried out when the report was considered in private by the Mayor and Cabinet. The Head of Committee Services confirmed that the report was not on the key decision plan so the urgency procedures were used. He explained the procedure that was followed.

Councillor Hall said that one of the provisions is that the signed notices should be available on the website and on display outside the town hall. He asked whether this had been done. He advised members that UNITE had written to the Mayor asking why the leisure contract report was being considered in private. The Head of Committee Services said that there were changes to procedures following the covid pandemic. He agreed to send Councillor Hall a link to the notices on the website. The provision to post physical notices had been suspended and were no longer a legal requirement until at least May 7 2021. The Chair agreed that members of the public must be able to see openness and transparency for all information and scrutiny within this Council.

Councillor Curran referred to the summary of the Grove Park nature reserve which should have been actioned five years ago. He was concerned that this Council were not putting in the protection required for the 30 acre park. He was concerned that a decision would not be made until September 2020; in the meantime, trees could be damaged. He asked whether a decision could be made any earlier. The Head of Committee Services said that in order to be safe from challenge, Councillor Curran's request could be referred to the Mayor and a lawyer who would consider the stringent test of urgency. It would then be considered by the Chair of this Panel.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

5. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972,

the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of

the Act, as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (Amendments) (England) Regulations 2006:-

6. Decision taken the Mayor and Cabinet on 12 August 2020 – permission to award a Leisure Management Contract.

7. Decision taken by Executive Director – Abandoned Vehicles Contract.

6. Decisions made by Mayor on 12 August 2020- closed session

There were no decisions identified for further discussion.

7. Decision taken by Executive Director- Abandoned Vehicles Contract

This decision was not identified for further discussion.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm.

Chair