MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 22 January 2013 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), Jackie Addison, Jim Mallory, Stephen Padmore, Philip Peake and Dan Whittle and

APOLOGIES: Councillors Joseph Folorunso, Paul Bell and Duwayne Brooks

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Liz Dart (Head of Community and Neighbourhood Development), Conrad Hall (Head of Business Management and Service Support), Mervyn Kaye (Youth Services Manager), Robert Mellors (Finance Manager, Community Services and Adult Social Care), Salena Mulhere (Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Tony Nickson (Voluntary Action Lewisham), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) and Warwick Tomsett (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, CYP)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27 November were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Morrison declared an non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 3 due to her association with social enterprise in the borough.

Councillor Mallory declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 4 due to his involvement in a charitable organisation, which was in receipt of rate relief.

3. Social enterprise in Lewisham

The Chair welcomed Tony Nickson (Director, Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL)) and invited him to speak to the Committee about VAL’s work with social enterprise in the borough. The key points to note were:

- VAL provided training and support for organisations in the community and voluntary sector to help them to explore new models of working.
- Organisations needed to consider how they might share resources and increase levels of collaboration.
- VAL also encouraged organisations to think about diversifying their income through trading, where appropriate.
- Work was being carried out to help organisations think in an enterprising and entrepreneurial way – this included practical support with business planning and development.
In response to questions from the Committee, Tony Nickson advised:

- VAL has 400 member organisations, many of which were registered charities and there were approximately 1000 organisations on the VAL database.
- Around 100 organisations had accessed training and support, however, engaging in social enterprise and attempting to scale up operations was not appropriate for every organisation.
- Not all organisations had something to sell and not all should become businesses. However, those that had an idea should be supported to build their capability and capacity.
- VAL engaged with a range of organisations and was building partnerships, which included creating links with businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.
- VAL’s role was changing to meet the demands of the sector. Supporting enterprise was a core part of its work, nonetheless, it maintained support for a range of initiatives.
- Communicating the level of change in the sector and enabling organisations to think about different ways of meeting their aims and objectives was an important part of VAL’s work.

In response a question from the Committee, Liz Dart (Head of Community and Neighbourhood Development) advised:

- The social enterprise strategy was developed by the Council’s community sector unit and economic development team in partnership with Voluntary Action Lewisham. Once the proposed re-organisation of the community sector unit, in Community Services, had taken place, officers would reassess the available capacity of partners to pool resources and re-visit the social enterprise strategy. This was unlikely to result in the development of a new strategy.

4. Revenue budget savings

Conrad Hall (Head of Business Management and Service Support) introduced the item. The key points to note were:

- The first round of budget scrutiny was undertaken in advance of the government’s finance settlement.
- The settlement resulted in the worst case end of previous projections. Meaning that £53.5m savings would need to be made for 2013/15.
- The bulk of the savings being put forward would fall in 2014/15.
- A number of difficult decisions would need to be made about difficult proposals.
- The scale of the task remained extremely challenging.

The Chair invited officers to introduce follow-up reports from the first round of budget savings. These were provided in response to the Committee’s requests for further information about the following first round savings proposals:
Liz Dart (Head of Community and Neighbourhood Development) introduced a report about funding for the community and voluntary sector, the key points to note were:

- Nationally, there had been a dramatic rise in funding for the community voluntary sector in the previous ten years.
- Funding was expected to fall. Some examples of deep cuts to funding for the community and voluntary sector were already being made public. For example, Newcastle had recently announced that it would cut 100 percent of its arts sector funding.
- This was the first time that all of the Council’s information about contracts and funding for community and voluntary sector organisations had been gathered together.
- The Council was committed to helping organisations to work together.
- There were areas of potential growth for the sector and there was a potential for increase in demand for community and voluntary sector services.
- The Council intended to ensure that a strategic approach was taken to grant funding for the sector, with a clear aversion to ‘salami slicing’ budgets.
- The indicative timetable for the review of grant funding may need to be amended, depending on the decision made by the Mayor on the 13 Feb.
- Current grants may need to be extended to allow time for full consultation with the sector.

In response to questions from the Committee, Liz Dart advised:

- The Council was mindful of the need to innovate and to help prepare organisations for changes in the sector.
- The changes to rate relief are complicated. Any proposals being put forward needed to be modelled in order to assess the potential impact on the sector.
- There may need to be a consultation on the potential options for the administration of relief. At present the timetable for the change is not clear – but a years notice would need to be given before any change could be made.
- Further information about options for rate relief policy would come before the committee for scrutiny.
- In social care, support planning and the provision of personal assistants were two areas in which the community and voluntary sector might become more heavily involved in order to increase their influence and capacity.

Members requested that the following information be made available at their joint meeting with members of the Children and Young People Select Committee:

- A full audit of youth provision in the borough, which provided a geographical breakdown of the availability of services.
- Details of the consultation undertaken with the community and voluntary sector about the changes proposed to the youth service.
COM09 (Drug and alcohol rehabilitation, training and communications) and COM10 (Neighbourhood Community Safety)

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney introduced two reports. The first provided further information about residential rehabilitation for alcohol and substance misuse and the second provided details of the reorganisation of the neighbourhood community safety service. In response to questions from the Committee, she advised:

- The new police model would commence in April. It was focused on city wide policing priorities but there was some flexibility at a local level.
- The focus of policing was on prosecution and prevention. The Council had a statutory multi-agency role, which included tackling anti-social behaviour, coordinating responses to domestic violence and ensuring public protection.
- The police were not able to tackle every issue and there were many areas that the Council and its partners could add value.
- Recent interventions in Honor Oak and Brockley had demonstrated the effectiveness of the Council working in partnership with the police.

RNR47 (Reduction in Policy and Partnerships consultation & engagement and performance management budgets)

The Chair invited Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance) to introduce saving proposal RNR47 from the second round savings proposal report. The key points to note were:

- The proposed saving was divided across three years.
- The Policy and Partnerships Unit would be taking on more specialist consultation work themselves.
- An internal performance management system was being developed to reduce the dependency on externally provided systems.
- An external supplier subscription for data is also proposed to be deleted.

In response to questions from the Committee, Barrie Neal advised:

- The Place Survey was previously a requirement from central government, which had replaced Lewisham’s own local residents survey. However, the Place Survey had been abolished by the Coalition Government and Lewisham had returned to carrying out its own residents survey.

COM33 (Reduction in strategy, commissioning and performance budget)

Liz Dart (Head of Community and Neighbourhood Development) introduced the savings proposal. The key points to note were:

- The saving was made up of a new £52k income stream from Public Health and an £8k reduction in the budget used for management of complaints.
- Costs for dealing with complaints would be passed back to the relevant service.
COM34 (Broadway theatre)

Liz Dart introduced the savings proposal. The key point to note was:

- The proposal would reduce the number of events held at the theatre and the level of staffing required to support the reduced programme.
- The change was designed to ensure that the theatre would remain open.

COM36 (Community centre asset rationalisation saving)

Liz Dart introduced the savings proposal. The key point to note was:

- This saving related to the overall asset rationalisation programme. Savings would be made in revenue budgets, which included costs for premises officers and repairs and maintenance budgets.

In response to questions from the Committee, Liz Dart advised:

- The timetable for the delivery of the asset management programme was yet to be confirmed.
- Delivery of the community services saving was dependent on the overall delivery of the asset rationalisation programme. The programme was being overseen by the interim Director of Regeneration and Asset Management, Rob Holmans.
- Rob Holmans also had experience of running the Building Schools for the Future programme and was looking at the potential for community use of school buildings.
- Officers were mindful that changes should not happen in isolation.

In response to advice from Conrad Hall (Head of Business Management and Service Support) regarding further scrutiny of the asset management programme, the Committee agreed that:

- Conrad Hall would provide an update, through the Chair, on the appropriate attendance at the joint meeting of Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee and Children and Young People Select Committee scheduled for 13 February 2013- in order provide additional information about the asset management programme, in relation to the community sector and schools.

COM38 (Home Security Service)

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced the proposal. They key points to note were:

- Tenants of registered social landlords (RSLs) and community providers were the main users of the home security service. Funding from RSLs and community providers would be sought to continue the service.
In response to questions from the Committee Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney advised:

- If RSLs and community providers agreed to fund the service, it would no longer provide practical support for private tenants. It would however, continue to provide information and advice to tenants of all tenures.
- Further work could be carried out to determine how much it would cost to continue the service for private tenants, taking into account potential funding from RSLs and community housing providers.

COM39 (Discontinuation of joint funding for additional police officers)

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney introduced the savings proposal, the key points to note were:

- The Council had supplied a number of officers under a match funding programme. The officers had been deployed to assist with integrated offender management as well as to tackle anti-social behaviour, guns & gangs and serious youth violence.
- It was unclear whether there would be an offer to provide match funding for officers under the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime’s new policing model.

In response to questions from the Committee, Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney advised that:

- The police officers were assigned to priority areas set by the Safer Lewisham Partnership.

Resolved- to refer the following views to the Public Accounts Select Committee:

COM07 (Community Sector Grants)

The Committee restates its recommendation that a figure, for the reduction in funding for the grants programme, should be made available before the end of the 2012/13 financial year. The Committee reiterates its view that the early disclosure of a potential figure would provide clarity and focus in discussions with the community and voluntary sector.

The Committee believes that changes to the grants programme should be considered strategically as part of an overarching approach to the resourcing of the sector.

COM36 (Community Centres)

The Committee requests that a timetable for changes to the resourcing of community centres be made available in order to allow time for consultation and a full consideration of options.
COM38 (Home Security Service)

The Committee acknowledges that the service is used mainly by residents of registered social landlords and Lewisham Homes. The Committee agrees that the service should remain in place with funding provided by these organisations.

If funding is made available from partner organisations to retain the service, the Committee requests that options be put forward for the funding to be supplemented in order to retain services for private tenants.

Resolved:

Members request that the following information be made available at their joint meeting with members of the Children and Young People Select Committee:

- A full audit of youth provision in the borough, which provides a geographical breakdown of the availability of services.
- Details of the consultation undertaken with the community and voluntary sector about the changes proposed to the youth service.

5. Select Committee work programme

The Chair called a 5 minute adjournment at 20:55 before the consideration of item 5.

In response to questions from the Committee about the item scheduled on Local Assemblies, Liz Dart advised:

- The item on the assemblies would provide an update on the effectiveness of the programme. Officers would also seek the views of Members on their priorities for the assembly programme in the future.

Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney advised members that in her absence, Gary Connors would attend the meeting to provide an update on progress towards development of the Safer Lewisham Strategy.

Resolved: to agree the work programme.

6. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

Resolved: In accordance with the agreed process for the scrutiny of the budget proposals the Committee agreed to refer its views to the Public Accounts Select Committee meeting scheduled for 7 February 2013.

The meeting ended at 9.07 pm

Chair:

Date: