

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 January 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), Jim Mallory (Vice-Chair),
Olufunke Abidoye, Jackie Addison, Duwayne Brooks, Patsy Foreman and Michael Harris

APOLOGIES: None

ALSO PRESENT: Paul Aladenika (Head of Policy and Partnership), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Winston Castello (Local Assemblies Team Manager), Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2013

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2013 be agreed as a true record.

2. Declaration of interests

Councillor Mallory declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item five due to his involvement in Lee Fair Share.

Councillor Morrison declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item five due to her involvement in the Ackroyd Community Centre.

3. Response from Mayor and Cabinet on Transforming Rehabilitation

This item was considered after item six.

3.1 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney introduced the response from Mayor and Cabinet, noting the following key points:

- Both the Mayor and officers shared the concerns raised by the Committee in its referral.
- It was felt that the changes to the probation service were being rushed through, without proper consideration of the potential impact or the risks involved.
- Officers were using every opportunity to raise their concerns about: the new structure of the probation service; the proposed payment mechanisms: the lack of detail available about the management of offenders.
- Meetings had been held with the Ministry of Justice to try to ascertain how risks would be managed in the new structure.
- The probation service had been restructured – and probation colleagues had been assigned to their new roles based on their case loads, rather than through an interview process.
- More information should be available in six weeks, when Council officers would be attending an event about plans for the operation of the new service.

- The new service was due to become operational in October.
- The Ministry of Justice was based in London, which meant it was easier for London authorities to engage with decision makers and raise their concerns.
- Sara Robinson had been appointed as Deputy Director – London for the New National Probation service – which should be positive for Lewisham – because she was a former Assistant Chief Officer in Lewisham and understood Lewisham specific issues.
- The plans that had been made available to date did not clearly demonstrate what the responsibilities of local authorities would be.
- Officers were working to ascertain what role the Council would be required to take in the new structure.
- Officers would also be working to ensure that Lewisham service providers were positioned to sub-contract from the prime provider when this opportunity became available.

4. Promoting a sense of belonging: update

The Committee did not consider this item.

5. Main grants programme 2014-15

This item was considered after item 2.

5.1 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) introduced the report, noting the following key points:

- Mayor and Cabinet (Contracts) had agreed to extend the main grants programme for a further year (2014-15) at its meeting on 4 December.
- Mayor and Cabinet had approved the detail of the grant funding allocation, including the funding of rent grants for four organisations.
- A number of organisations had submitted bids to grow their services – which the Council was unable to fund from the resources available.
- Grants for 2013-14 had been adjusted to mirror the salary increase agreed for local government.
- Organisations were able to appeal the grant funding decision – no organisation had chosen to do so.

5.2 In response to questions from the Committee the following key points were noted:

- Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel had requested that officers provide analysis of the main grants programme setting out the geographical spread of provision and the types of provision on offer.
- This would include information about organisations that worked to build links between communities and enhance community cohesion.

Resolved: to note the report.

6. Local assemblies review

This item was considered after item two.

6.1 Winston Castello (Local Assemblies Team Manager) introduced the report and presentation, noting the following key points:

- This was the fifth full year of the assemblies programme.

- Information had been collected about the demographics of attendees as well as the priorities and achievements of the assemblies programme.
- Assemblies had similar priorities but different ways of operating.
- The programme demonstrated that small initiatives involving many people could have a positive impact.
- The Council was reviewing the delivery of its services in the context of reductions to its budget; therefore a number of questions were pertinent to the future direction of the assemblies programme:
 - How the Local Assemblies could best foster community action.
 - How Local Assemblies could jointly develop areas of work which were of mutual interest.
 - How Local Assemblies could continue to engage with communities outside of meetings and maintain a strong and pro-active profile in challenging fiscal times.

6.2 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) advised the Committee about recent developments; the following key points were noted:

- Figures in the annual report demonstrated a year on year rise in the number of people attending assemblies; however the most recent figures indicated there had been a drop in people attending meetings.
- Officers continued to work on identifying best practice, working out which things that could be passed between wards and those that worked solely on a ward by ward basis.
- Both she and the Executive Director for Community Services had been visiting assembly coordinating group meetings.
- So far they had visited nine out of the 18 coordinating groups.
- Key points noted by officers as a result of these meetings were:
 - Concerns from residents about the responsiveness of some Council services.
 - Uncertainty on the part of co-ordinating groups about the use of devolved budgets.
 - The need to engage with community development teams from registered social landlords.
 - The interaction between assemblies and Safer Neighbourhood Panels (it was recognised that some panels were working well and some were 'tired').
 - The importance of achieving a balance between assembly focus on physical infrastructure and services as opposed to well-being and health.

6.3 Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development) also provided an update about a new project created through the investment fund; the following key points were noted:

- Using the investment fund – the Council had set up the 'Community Connections' project – which would be working with community groups and individuals to enhance wellbeing.
- Four 'community development workers' would be working with organisations to identify gaps in service provision and develop ways organisations could refer to the project.
- Three 'community support facilitators' would be working with individuals to ensure the people remained connected with their communities.
- The project was split across four areas in Lewisham and linked to time banks in each area.

- Facilitators might help when people were discharged from hospital. They might also assist in setting up projects to create links between communities.
- The project would also engage with assemblies to ensure that local connections and information were fully utilised.

6.4 In response to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The Community Connections project should enhance other work happening in the borough by creating connections between services.
- In some local assemblies there was a divide between citizens interested in the regeneration of the borough and citizens interested in social and community projects.
- Officers could bring further information to the Committee about the Community Connections project.
- The project had been running for just over a month. There would be further work to do to ensure that the availability and the aims of the project were communicated to residents.
- The project could also work to create links with the assemblies programme – in order to make best use of the expertise and community involvement already available.
- There might be different things assemblies could do to increase the number of residents attending meetings.

6.5 The Committee also noted its concerns about the integration of the new project with existing activities in the community. Members expressed the expectation that support workers would have a broad remit that included all vulnerable people in need; beyond those that were referred by GPs or requiring care following hospital treatment.

Resolved: to note the report and to receive a further update on Community Connections.

7. **Select Committee work programme**

Members discussed the work programme report and-

Resolved: to add an additional item to the work programme on the Community Connections project - and to receive information about work to reduce violence against women and girls.

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

None

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

Chair:

Date:
