

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16 September 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), Pat Raven (Vice-Chair), Brenda Dacres, Colin Elliott, Alicia Kennedy, David Michael, Luke Sorba, Paul Upex and James-J Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: Paul Aladenika, David Austin, Councillor Chris Best, Aileen Buckton, Councillor Janet Daby, James Lee, Petra Der Man, Barrie Neal, Antonio Rizzo, Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Ralph Wilkinson and Simone van Elk

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andre Bourne

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2015

- 1.1 There was an amendment to the declarations of interest: Councillor Upex requested that his interest as a Member of Green Cooperative Development be changed to a Member of the Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency.
- 1.2 **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2015 be agreed subject to this amendment.

2. Declarations of interest

The following declarations of interest were declared:

Councillor Elliott – non-prejudicial – Council Appointee to the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

Councillor Upex – non-prejudicial – Member of Voluntary Services Lewisham and Member of the Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency

Councillor Raven – non-prejudicial – Trustee of the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

Councillor Morrison – non-prejudicial – Director and Chair of the Ackroyd Community Association and Chair of the Crofton Park Community Library Management Board.

3. Mayoral Response – VAWG awareness raising and prevention review

- 3.1 Geeta Subramaniam (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:
 - That the additional resources allocated to proactive enforcement against gangs nominal from September 2015 onwards, are funded from central metropolitan police funds which the partnership has bid for, so there are no direct financial implications to the Council.
 - The rolling audit mentioned in the report is part of the work done by the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, which also provides training in this area.

- The Council provides up-to-date circulars for the child protection leads in each school, as well as being in contact with the Head Teachers.

3.2 **RESOLVED:** to note the Mayoral response.

4. **Lewisham Future Programme: 2016/17 DRAFT Revenue Budget Savings Proposals for Scrutiny**

4.1 David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) introduced the main savings report; the following key points were noted:

- This report should be seen in the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy that was presented at Mayor and Cabinet meeting in July, which presents the Council's financial strategy up 2019/20. The Council is working towards the savings targets set for the Lewisham Future Programme, as public austerity is expected to continue.
- The Comprehensive Spending Review will be announced on 25 November, with the Local Government Financial Settlement (LGFS) expected to be announced in early December. It isn't until the LGFS that Council will know what budget it can set in February.
- It was agreed by Councillors last year that £45m of savings needed to be identified in setting the budget for 2016/17. The proposals presented amount to savings of between £25m and £26m, which leaves a gap of about £20m to fill. Further savings are still being developed, and will be presented to the Committee when they're available.
- The specific proposals for this committee to examine in detail amount to roughly £6m over two years, of which roughly £1m is for proposals for the 2015/16 budget and £5.3m are proposals for the 2017/18 budget.
- The proposal B2 Supporting People had already been discussed at Healthier Communities Select Committee and they rejected the proposal.
- Appendix 18 contains a summary of the equalities impact of the savings proposals, which the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee has specific remit to look at.

4.2 Geeta Subramaniam and James Lee (Head of Service Cultural and Community Development (job share) and Service Manager Prevention and Inclusion) responded to questions from the Committee on savings proposals *B2: Supporting People*. The following key points were noted:

- Supporting People provides both accommodation-based and floating support services. Any savings made from the current budget would have an impact of service users, as not all current service users would be able to access the service in the future.
- There is a risk that costs will increase for other services, such as homelessness, housing, adult social care, crisis management, rough sleeping, and anti-social behaviour services .
- Officers are working to identify ways to minimise the impact of these proposals on vulnerable residents. Officers are also working to identify any alternative support networks in the community that could replace services currently provided by the Council.

- The savings agreed for the 2015/16 budget are currently being implemented. As this is a saving proposed for the budget of 2107/18, the proposal is still being developed.
- The Committee expressed concern that as the proposal doesn't contain any detailed information about the proposal, the Committee wouldn't be able to assess the likely consequences of the savings.
- The service provides accommodation for residents who need support to prevent them becoming homeless. They tend to have multiple complex needs, and are not resilient enough for Bed & Breakfast accommodation. These people tend to access the Council's services via the Council's Single Homelessness Intervention and Prevention service (SHIP).
- The service currently provides 400 – 450 accommodation based units. All provision is for Lewisham residents and provided inside the borough. The savings proposed would likely result in a 20-25% cut in available units.

4.3 The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

The Committee is concerned about the impact of this proposal on vulnerable residents and feels without further information on the consequences for vulnerable residents, the Committee rejects this savings proposal. The Committee supports the concerns raised at Healthier Communities Select Committee meeting about this savings proposal.

4.4 **RESOLVED:** to refer the Committee's views to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

4.5 Geeta Subramaniam and Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer) responded to questions from the Committee on savings proposals *H2: Enforcement and Regulation*. The following key points were noted:

- The budget for 2015/16 meant a saving of £800,000 to the areas of enforcement and regulation. This has meant a restructuring of the service, which became operational at the start of August 2015. The new service operates under a risk-based approach, where the highest risk cases are prioritised in terms of inspection and enforcement. Officers have received a lot of training to ensure they can work across all the different areas the enforcement team now works on.
- This proposal entails a target of £1.2m saving in this area for the 2017/18 budget. There is a monthly review of the new team structure. A 6-month review is due for January. Plans to meet this saving target will likely be developed in February and March 2016.
- The services provided by the Enforcement and Regulation team are statutory services which the Council must provide. However, neither the volume of cases, the level of personnel nor the way services are tailored is specified in legislation.
- Further changes and reductions to the team need to take account of partner organisations' views. Currently, the Food Standards Agency guidance identifies levels of staffing against number of business premises.

- The Committee commented that it wasn't necessarily clear to Councillors what services were available under the new structure, and at what times.

4.6 **RESOLVED:** that a brief note would be circulated to all Councillors to inform them about the new Enforcement and Regulation Team, specifically the services provided, the contact details for the team, and the hours they are contactable.

4.7 Geeta Subramaniam and James Lee responded to questions from the Committee on savings proposals *K4: Drug and Alcohol Services*. The following key points were noted:

- The first aspect of the savings proposal entails a change in the way methadone is prescribed. The second element of the savings proposal would entail reducing the contract price of the service when re-procuring in March 2017. The service is currently funded from the Council's Public Health Grant.
- Currently methadone is prescribed for 12 weeks in all cases. Following this proposal, more regular reviews of the prescriptions would be introduced which would result in the prescription of methadone according to need. This could be less than 12 weeks for non-chaotic users, which would result in a reduction of prescription costs. Discussions with the current provider are on-going about the proposed regularity of these reviews. There would also a change to the way pharmacies are paid for the prescriptions, and the monitoring of the patients taking the methadone.
- The success of the service is monitored against the National Drug Treatment Framework. Lewisham aims to be in the top quartile nationally for performance. A quarterly report is provided by Public Health England, but providers also provide monthly data to the Council. This performance monitoring happens in collaboration with partner organisations across entire pathways for service users.

4.8 James Lee and Aileen Buckton responded to questions from the Committee on savings proposals *L5: Main Grant Funding to voluntary sector*. The following key points were noted:

- The proposal is for savings made in the 2017/18 budget, but no specific proposal has been developed for how the reduction in funding would occur. Some options for this saving could include cutting the funding for a specific theme in the current Main Grant Programme, or there could be a saving across all themes. The saving will result in a direct reduction in funding to the voluntary sector.
- The Main Grants Programme is currently in its first of three years, and this saving would only impact on year 3. Under the current Main Grants Programme, organisations will be funded for the full three years of the programme unless they're not performing. This savings proposal would entail changes to this agreement, and the Compact between the Council and the voluntary sector states that consultation is required for such a proposal. An Equality Impact Assessment would take place before a formal decision would be made on what aspects of the Main Grants Programme would receive less funding.

- All organisations in receipt of Main Grant funding are monitored on their performance against agreed targets. Officers also look at the governance of these organisations in an effort to support them becoming more independent of the Council's funding. The Council is actively supporting the voluntary sector in finding sources of external funding including crowd funding.
- All groups currently receiving Main Grant Funding have received a letter informing them of this savings proposal, to allow them enough time to prepare for a potential reduction in Grant.
- If the Council would want to change the aims of the Main Grants Programme as opposed to reducing the funding for it, this would require a full consultation on the terms of the Compact between the Council and the Voluntary Sector.

4.9 The Committee commented that:

- One of the possible solutions to the levels of cuts in the Council's funding is to look to the voluntary sector for alternative provision, but the Council will be cutting funding to the voluntary sector at the same time.
- Although some savings proposals ask for individual groups of residents to provide alternative provision, there are different levels of capacity and viability amongst areas of the Council for residents to organise themselves.
- When reviewing the impact of potential reductions in Grants, officers should review the geographical spread of funded organisations across the Borough, while keeping in mind that relatively well of wards can often contain pockets of deprivation.
- There is some correlation between the organisations that receive Grant Funding and the organisations that are or will be asked to take on additional responsibilities, but not a direct correlation. Many savings proposals ask that individual groups of residents taken on more responsibilities.
- There a differing levels of capacity and viability for residents to step up across areas in the borough to. Officers should review how groups spread their work across the borough, and which areas might experience a loss of provision. Some groups are better organised to campaign for external funding.

4.10 **RESOLVED:** that officers would report back to the Committee in the new calendar year on their work to support voluntary sector organisations in identifying external sources of funding.

4.11 Aileen Buckton, Antonio Rizzo (Service Manager Lewisham Library and Information) and Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) responded to questions from the Committee on savings proposal *L6: Library and Information Services*. The following key points were noted:

- This proposal is a continuation of the library model implemented as a result of the last major reduction in budget for the library services. The community library model would be extended to Forest Hill, Torridon Road and Manor House libraries.
- Partner organisations would be identified to manage the buildings, while library staff would continue to provide the actual library and advice service on a peripatetic basis. Partner organisations that become responsible for managing any or all of the Forest Hill, Torridon Road and Manor House buildings would

need to sign up to a service level agreement that will guarantee access to library services from the building. This agreement is likely to differ per building.

- All community groups currently responsible for the management of a library building assigned up to promoting the love of books and reading and are committed to good outcomes for their local communities. Opening hours of the libraries and number of visits have increased and partners have invested in outreach work in their communities. Income is earned in different ways including by renting out space in the buildings. This model of library provision is now seen as good practice.
- The libraries in Deptford Lounge, Lewisham and Downham Health & Leisure Centre will form hubs, and would actively support the Council's digital by default agenda by assisting people in accessing services online, who might otherwise find this extremely difficult. Staff are being supported in becoming confident enough to assist residents in accessing digital services.
- The ground floor of Laurence House would be reconfigured to accommodate as many face-to-face services as possible and form a cohesive group of these services. The current Catford library would be part of this reconfiguration. This proposal would entail reducing the staff employed as part of the library service. The Council is struggling to fit all relevant services into the available space on the ground floor. Meanwhile, the Council is also trying to fit as many staff as possible into the other floor space at Laurence House in an effort to rationalise the number of buildings it uses.

4.12 The Committee commented that:

- The amalgamation of services in Laurence House will require more joined up thinking. The possibility of offering space to an independent advice service on the ground floor of Laurence House should be considered, as many residents may benefit from independent advice being available close to Council services.
- The library service has an excellent digital offer, with online access to newspapers as well as magazines and an increasing number of books can be borrowed digitally. Residents should be made aware of these services.

4.13 The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

The Committee supports the proposal to consult on changes to the library services in Forest Hill, Torridon Road and Manor House. The Committee submits that there is insufficient information about the proposal to integrate the library provision in Catford into the repurposed ground floor space within Laurence House. It is currently unclear what kind of services would be on offer from the library, how the space in Laurence House would be used, and what the interplay between the library service and other Council services would be. The Committee submits that the library and information service could play a valuable role in supporting residents in accessing digital services, and that a more comprehensive look should be taken at how all the services on offer on the ground floor of Laurence House work together to support residents.

4.14 **RESOLVED:** to refer the Committee's views to the Public Accounts Select Committee and that all Councillors be provided with information about the digital

services the library and advice service offers, to enable them to promote this to their residents.

4.15 Standing orders were suspended at 21.30 to enable the completion of Committee business.

4.16 James Lee and David Austin responded to questions from the Committee on savings proposal *L7: Leisure Services*. The following key points were noted:

- The proposal is for savings to be made in 2017/18 budget, where the contracts for leisure services would be reduced by £1m. No specific proposals have been developed yet for what the new contracts would provide. Options may include a drop in concession rates, a change in the leisure services and sports on offer, an increase in space provided for classes instead of soft play for families, or some combination of all of the above.
- The £1m proposal is indicative of the amount officers think can be saved from renegotiating the leisure services contracts. Until negotiations with providers have progressed, a breakdown of which provision would be reduced to achieve this £1m could not be provided. The target of saving £1m from the leisure services contracts has previously been agreed by Members as part of the Lewisham Future Programme.

4.17 The Committee commented that:

- If the subsidy for the leisure centres was significantly reduced and there was more freedom for contractors to set their prices, the Council could face a situation where businesses would effectively be allowed to run out of Council buildings.
- Officers could consider the option of closing some leisure centres entirely rather than reducing the quality and quantity of provision across all sites.
- Some elements of the leisure centres, such as halls, provide important opportunities for social interaction as well as physical exercise.

4.18 The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

The Committee requests that when examining re-drafting of Leisure Centre Contracts in the search for £1m per annum savings, officers should: (i) estimate the effect on pricing and on the content of provision bearing mind many residents are on low incomes linked to poor health outcomes and some services are not commercially viable without subsidy; (ii) estimate the potential for savings made by closing entire facilities; (iii) give special consideration to those facilities that have potential dual exercise and social/community use such as halls and outdoor spaces.

4.19 **RESOLVED:** to refer the Committee's views to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

4.20 Ralph Wilkinson and Aileen Buckton responded to questions from the Committee on savings proposal *O5 Discretionary Freedom Pass*. The following key points were noted:

- This proposal does not relate to the provision of the national freedom pass. This proposal relates to the provision of the discretionary freedom pass provided by the Council on the basis of locally agreed criteria.
- This saving was proposed last year, but rejected. It has now been proposed again as part of the effort to save the required £45m by April 2018, and in the context of the other savings being proposed.
- The current users total 1,471, of which 162 have been awarded under the mobility criterion and 1,309 under the mental health criterion.
- The Committee felt that a review of their cases to determine the eligibility of users for the 60+ London Oyster Card and the Job Centre Plus travel discount card, should be relatively straightforward. Those users eligible under the mental health criterion might not be immediately eligible elsewhere. Their needs for assistance with travel would be part of the normal assessments for eligibility for adult social care. These assessments concern many aspects of residents' lives, and transport needs can't be singled out for review.

4.21 The Committee commented that:

- The Discretionary Freedom Pass serves as a safety net for vulnerable residents.
- If other free or concessionary travel schemes are available for these residents, they should be encouraged to use these alternatives instead of making this saving. Identifying residents' eligibility for some of the alternative travel schemes should be relatively straightforward for officers.

4.22 The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

The Committee rejects this proposal in its current form, as the Committee feels vulnerable residents should be protected. The Committee submits that officers should instead encourage residents to use alternative travel concessions. Officers should review which residents are eligible for the 60+ London Oyster Card and the Job Centre Plus travel discount card, while the travel needs of residents currently using the Discretionary Freedom Pass due to a mental health condition should be reviewed as part of the standard assessments for eligibility of adult social care.

4.23 **RESOLVED:** to refer the Committee's views to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

4.24 Paul Aladenika (Service Manager Policy Development and Analytical Insight) responded to questions from the Committee on the *2016/17 revenue budget savings report equalities summary*. The following key points were noted:

- Of the savings proposals, 25 are estimated to have an impact on equalities. Of these 17 would be a medium or high impact, while 8 would have a low impact.
- The report also provides a summary of the expected impact on equalities per protected characteristic.
- The Council is required to have due regard for the likely impact of these savings proposals on protected groups. It can then consider that impact to be

reasonable, or even positive. It should consider relevant data in making this assessment, and if mitigation of expected negative effects is possible, the Council should address this in its decision-making.

- 4.25 The Committee requested that the following information be included in the equalities summary:
- The equalities impact on residents for the protected characteristic of age should be split out between the impact on young people and the impact on older people.
 - The equalities impact on residents for the protected characteristic of disability to be split out between the categories of mental health, mobility and learning disability.
 - The savings proposals to be presented in such a way that it would be clear which residents with protected characteristic(s) would be impacted by multiple saving proposals at once. This should include previous budget for services, how much of this budget would be taken and how much would be left after the proposals were implemented.
- 4.26 **RESOLVED:** to refer the Committee's views on the savings proposals to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

5. Main Grants Programme 2015-18 – Equalities Update

5.1 James Lee introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL) was awarded funding under the Main Grants Programme to coordinate borough-wide work on equalities.
- VAL has established an Equalities Working Group whose members are the Main Grants funded Equalities organisations. It is currently working up a detailed action plan.
- EqualITeam's draft business plan includes 5 strategic aims for the organisations, seen and agreed by Mayor and Cabinet. They are in the process of developing a set of actions to achieve those aims. At their board meeting in early October, officers will be able to review these plans and subsequently report back to the Committee.

5.2 James Lee and Aileen Buckton responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The organisation has not received any funding from the Council since the last Main Grants Programme.
- The organisation has had substantial internal changes, with new Board Members and new Trustees.
- The Committee expressed its discomfort at how the handling of the continuing funding of EqualITeam (using previously agreed funding) has been managed.
- One Member of the Committee commented that based on the current information and without hearing from EqualITeam directly, it was difficult to assess whether the ongoing funding was justified.

- EqualiTeam has scheduled a board meeting for early October, which officers aim to attend after which officers would be able to provide the Committee with more information.

5.3 **RESOLVED:** to register the Committee's discomfort at how the continuing funding (using previously agreed funding) of EqualiTeam has been managed and to receive a further update on this item at the Committee's October meeting.

6. Safer Lewisham Plan 2015-16 – 6 month update

6.1 Geeta Subramaniam responded to questions from the Committee on the report. The following key points were noted:

- The Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) has identified seven priority crimes. In Lewisham in the last 12 months, the figures for three of these crimes have gone up. There has been an increase in the theft of mopeds, an increase in the number incidents of sexual violence and an increase in criminal damage offences.
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is captured under the reporting of seven separate areas of crime such as Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriages. The Council does work in awareness raising for these issues, especially in school around the summer holidays, and also work with health visiting midwives.
- Incidents of knife crime and serious youth violence have increased in the borough, especially amongst young people. A large piece of work is underway between Council officers, focus groups, community groups and people who work with young people to have a clearer local picture of the issues .

6.2 **RESOLVED:** to note the report.

7. Select Committee Work Programme

7.1 Simone van Elk (scrutiny manager) introduced the report.

7.2 The Committee discussed the report and the following key points were noted:

- The Committee agreed the timetable for the poverty review.
- The Committee agreed to add an item to their October meeting to update them on Equalities Grant Aid Funding.
- The Committee agreed to invite the local police and fire brigade to one of their upcoming meetings to update the committee on their work as well discuss their approach to potential reductions in their budgets.
- The Committee requested that the item on the development of the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme would include suggested actions and/or action plans to combat inequalities.

7.3 **RESOLVED:** That the work programme be agreed subject to the amendments discussed.

8. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

8.1 **RESOLVED:** to refer the Committee's views on savings proposals B2, L6, L7 and O5 to the Public Accounts Select Committee