

# MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 March 2016 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Brenda Dacres, Colin Elliott, Alicia Kennedy, David Michael, Luke Sorba, Paul Upex, James-J Walsh and Alan Hall

APOLOGIES: Councillor Pat Raven

ALSO PRESENT: Paul Aladenika (Service Group Manager, Policy Development and Analytical Insight), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Roz Hardie (Director Lewisham Disability Coalition) (Lewisham Disability Coalition), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) and Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016

- 1.1 **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016 be agreed as an accurate record.

## 2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 The following non-prejudicial interests were declared:

Councillor David Michael: a member of the Safer Neighbourhood Board, the Council's representative at the Citizen's Advice Bureau and a working patron of the Marsha Phoenix trust.

Councillor Brenda Dacres: member of the New Cross Gate Trust

Councillor Walsh: the founder of Lewisham Council's LGBT+ group.

Councillor Elliott: Council representative at the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

## 3. Lewisham Disability Coalition report on disability related harassment

- 3.1 Roz Hardie (Director – Lewisham Disability Coalition) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:
- Lewisham Disability Coalition provides guidance, advice and support for Lewisham residents with a disability. The bulk of its work is in providing support to people facing a perceived immediate crisis, often either financial or related to their housing situation. National changes to the employment support allowance have created a lot of work for the charity.
  - The Equality and Human Rights Commission conducted a statutory inquiry in 2009 review into disability related harassment called 'Hidden in plain sight'. In the 10 or 15 years before that report, it had been quite common that services that tackled hate crime did not include disability related hate crimes in their work.
  - The case studies featured in the report are all allegations that have been related to employees of the Lewisham Disability Coalition. People do not tend to report incidents of disability related harassment to Lewisham Disability Coalition in the first instance, but if mentioned, experienced caseworkers tended to carefully enquire further. It takes

experience and awareness from staff to know when to ask further while not shocking people.

- Lewisham Disability Coalition serves as a third party reporting site for hate crimes. The organisation had an extended period where they were without a director. This had led to a loss of information about how to properly operate as a third party reporting site. Maintaining this knowledge is the responsibility of the Lewisham Disability Coalition, but it would lead to a concern that similar problems might exist in other organisations that serve as third party reporting sites. Lewisham Disability Coalition has reported this issue to the Hate Crime working group of Lewisham's Safer Neighbourhood Board.
- Advisors working for the Lewisham Disability Coalition have found that people often won't name incidents as disability related harassment or hate crime. This could come from a lack of awareness or of confidence.
- The Centre for Public Scrutiny's 'Equal to the task' report published in 2007 could provide useful advice on how scrutiny can take account of a local authority's equality duties. The legislation quoted in the report was somewhat out of date though, given the time that has elapsed since the report was published.

3.2 Roz Hardie, Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager) and Geeta Subramaniam (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- LDC was funded by the Council to provide advice services to people regarding welfare. For general advocacy services, LDC would signpost people to other organisations that provide advocacy services. LDC has had a lot of success in supporting people in fighting the conclusions of their work assessment under the new welfare system. It was likely that the recent announcement by central government about changes to the assessment criteria for the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) would result in more people needing advice from the LDC.
- Different people with different protected characteristics respond in different ways to incidents of hate crime and report these differently. As part of the Safer Neighbourhood Board, the Council is developing third party reporting sites. As staff in the Council and organisations change over time, this was a continuous effort.
- Hate crimes in general, not just those committed against people with disabilities, are under reported across the country. People would often change their lifestyles to a large degree to avoid low level abuse. One person mentioned in the report had opted to avoid public transport at busy times in the afternoon where abuse from local school children was more likely.
- It would be helpful to review the physical space in the borough to look at any barriers to general accessibility that may exist. There was no longer a disability access officer working in Lewisham Council's planning department to review the accessibility of proposed schemes. People tended to assume that access for disabled people only related to people in wheelchairs.
- Lewisham Disability Coalition is planning to set up an interface between the LDC, the Council and other major public services in the area to identify and tackle the many small things that make services less accessible to disabled people.

**RESOLVED:** that the Committee noted the report.

#### **4. Comprehensive Equalities Scheme**

4.1 Paul Aladenika (SMG Policy Development and Analytical Insight) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- Local authorities had a statutory duty to publish their equalities objectives. Lewisham Council used the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme (CES).

- The development of the CES for 2015 – 2020 was based on statistical analysis of the Lewisham’s population, presented to the Committee at their October meeting.
- The CES contained a statement of the Council’s key equality objectives but also provides a framework through which the Council’s decisions can be evaluated according to their impact on equalities.
- The five key objectives were: tackle victimisation, discrimination and harassment; improve access to services; close the gap in outcomes for all residents; increase mutual understanding and respect within and between communities; and increase citizen participation and engagement.
- The implementation of the CES is done through other key strategies of the Council, such as the Safer Lewisham Plan.

4.2 Paul Aladenika and Barrie Neal (Head of Policy and Governance) answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The CES was normally reviewed annually by the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee. Changes in the demographics of the borough could be included in that presentation to the Committee.
- If the Council was to start working as a private landlord, it would still need to comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Specific strategic documents of the Council had been identified that identifies work the Council does in the area of the five strategic objectives of the CES. Each strategy would normally be presented to one of the Select Committees for comment, including the action plans that would identify how the Council would aim to achieve the objectives set out in the strategies.
- Data about the population in Lewisham had been carefully analysed and had led to the five objectives in the CES. The objectives were also deliberately broadly defined so anyone with any or multiple protected characteristics could identify themselves in the objectives.
- The Council would undertake reasonable steps to increase participation and engagement. Some of those steps might be to listen to communities instead of talking at them. The Council could for instance make an effort to go out and be present at meetings of community groups rather than waiting on these groups to approach the Council.
- The Council could improve the feedback it gave to residents who had responded to consultations to enhance confidence in the consultation process. The Council could also see if consultations could be combined so people did not feel fatigued with the number of issues they were being asked to comment on.
- The Lewisham residents’ survey of 2015 showed that 60% of respondents trusted the Council to make the right decision even if they disagreed with that decision. This showed a large amount of trust from residents in the Council.

4.3 The Committee made a number of comments. The following key points were noted:

- The objectives listed in the CES were very high level, and the CES did not contain detail on how these objectives would be achieved. The Committee would not be easily able to evaluate whether the objectives were being achieved.
- Other Select Committees that would normally review the Council strategies that had been identified as the vehicles for the implementation of the CES, might not have the CES and its objectives at the forefront of their mind if they had not been presented with this information.

4.4 The Committee resolved to advise Mayor and Cabinet of the following:

*The Committee noted the work done in drafting the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme 2016 – 2020. The Committee also noted the links between the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme and the five high level strategies that have been identified as vehicles for the implementation of the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme.*

*The Committee felt strongly that the success of the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme should be evaluated on the basis of the Council's performance against the five objectives listed in the Scheme, and that it was therefore imperative that consideration for equalities was actively incorporated in all of the Council's work with specific emphasis for five high level strategies identified as vehicles for the implementation of the CES.*

*The Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee recommends that the Mayor identifies community stakeholder groups that are particularly affected by each of the five objectives of the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme. The Committee feels that formal relationships should be developed between these groups and the Council to enable constructive feedback to be provided on the Council's performance against the objectives in the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme and its associated strategies.*

4.5 The Committee resolved to advise Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel of the following:

*The Committee noted the work done in drafting the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme 2016 – 2020. The Committee also noted the links between the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme and the five high level strategies that have been identified as vehicles for the implementation of the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme.*

*The Committee felt strongly that the success of the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme should be evaluated on the basis of the Council's performance against the five objectives listed in the Scheme, and that it was therefore imperative that consideration for equalities was actively incorporated in all of the Council's work with specific emphasis on the five high level strategies identified as vehicles for the implementation of the CES.*

*The Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee therefore recommends that each Select Committee is presented with the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme to enable the Select Committee to consider the equalities implications of agenda items presented to them, and specifically those Council strategies and their action plans that will determine the Council's performance against the five objectives of the Comprehensive Equalities Schemes.*

RESOLVED: that the Committee noted the report, and that the Committee's views in paragraph 4.4 be referred to Mayor and Cabinet and that the Committee's views in paragraph 4.5 be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel.

## **5. Safer Lewisham Plan 2016-17**

5.1 Geeta Subramaniam (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced the item. A report was tabled at the meeting. The following key points were noted:

- The Safer Lewisham Plan would contain priorities that are specific to Lewisham based on an annual process of a strategic assessment. Whilst there are areas that cover regional aspects such as the MOPAC 7 Lewisham has always ensured the plan met local issues and needs. The Safer Lewisham strategy was a three year programme for 2014-2017.
- A survey was conducted of Lewisham residents to which 249 people responded. There were a number of questions which have fed into the strategic assessment. The main underreported crimes according to the survey were hate crime and burglary.

- The first priority in the 2015-16 plan was to reduce the volume of crime according to the specific targets set by MOPAC. Lewisham borough has seen an increase in violence with injury, motor vehicle crime, criminal damage and domestic crime. There have been increases in the areas of domestic crime across the area covered by the Met. There has been a change to practice of recording which could explain the rise but it could also be that the number of incidents of the crimes themselves had increased. The number of reported incidents of domestic violence with injury had decreased in Lewisham.
- The second priority was to reduce key violent crime in the borough. Incidents of serious youth violence rose by 14% in 2015, but remain at historically low levels.
- Priority three was to tackle anti-social behaviour. There has been a 10% reduction in reports of ASB to the police in 2015-16. The production and sale of illegal tobacco is being targeted as it tended to be linked to other criminal behaviour including organised crime.
- Some examples of good practice were commented on: The Safer Lewisham Partnership had a statutory responsibility to address PREVENT, the government's anti-radicalisation strategy. One Council officer had been responsible for providing training to over 3000 staff including some employed in local schools regarding the PREVENT strategy.
- Baroness Young had conducted a nation-wide review into the disproportionately negative outcomes experienced by Black and Muslim male offenders. A Lewisham specific review had been conducted to assess what the outcomes of Baroness Young's review meant in Lewisham.
- The Council's newly commissioned service for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Athena had seen increased self-referrals.
- The new priorities from MOPAC would not be known until the summer at least, as a new Mayor of London would be elected and a new police and crime commissioner would be appointed. The draft Safer Lewisham Plan 2016-17 would incorporate any MOPAC priorities when they became available.
- A national review is being conducted into youth justice, commissioned by the Secretary of State for Justice. The interim report had been published last month.
- The Lewisham-specific priorities for the 2016-17 Safer Lewisham Plan were peer on peer abuse, VAWG and organised crime.

5.2 Geeta Subramaniam and Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager) answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- There has been an increase in self-referrals to Athena, but not everyone who self-refers will report a crime to the police. There has been an increase in what's called 'sanction detection', which is where the police can link a suspect to a crime. This would not necessarily mean that a case could also be taken to court. Figures looked at a few years ago showed that approximately a third of cases failed because a victim could withdraw their statement for instance. Another third of cases may fail because of a procedural issues, and a final third of cases may be heard at court – and if at a trial the outcome may not always be a conviction. The Athena service would support victims of VAWG crimes when through the journey of a case through the justice system.
- The increase in motor vehicle crimes related mainly to theft from a motor vehicle or theft of a moped. If someone on a moped was being chased by the police and not wearing a helmet, the police could be liable if they fell during that chase. Perpetrators, who were aware of this, would choose to drive a moped while leaving the scene of a crime and throw away their helmet if being chased by the police. The police are trialling a number of tactics to identify and arrest perpetrators.
- The survey had been sent out through any agencies the Council works with as well as individuals.

- Work done by the Council last year has led to the hypothesis that organised crime was related to a number of serious other crimes such as commercial robbery, drug dealing, serious youth violence and brothels, and impacts on local areas and local residents.
- The reported increase in noise nuisance consisted of the number of incidents reports in the Council's case work system. It did not include the incidents reported to the police.
- The Council was doing a test where it was dimming street lighting in certain areas under its street lighting PFI contract. The impact of this will be monitored.
- A number of businesses had organised into a forum where one of the areas they were working on was reducing incidents of shop lifting. They were committed to sharing information about persistent offenders in shop lifting with each other to prevent further crimes by banning offenders from entering their premises. MOPAC funds a London wide group of businesses - Business crime partnerships which will look at a range of issues including this. They had access to a radio link system to report incidents, and were supported by the CCTV images. Any businesses taking part had signed a confidentiality agreement.
- Officers acknowledged that hate crime should be a priority in its own right based on the small but increasing numbers. This will be added to the SLP plan .

5.3 The Committee made a number of comments. The following key points were noted:

- The Council could do more to encourage residents to participate in the survey, for instance via social media and by alerting councillors to the fact that the survey was taking place.
- The community pay back scheme could be promoted to the local community and to local assemblies.

5.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.

## 6. Select Committee work programme

6.1 Simone van Elk (scrutiny manager) introduced the report. The Committee agreed the following suggestions for next year's work programme:

- Provision for the LGBT community: to identify best practice across local authorities in London, to gain information about the services for LGBT community available in the borough, and to identify how other public bodies in the borough are interacting with the LGBT community.
- Local police service update on budget and service delivery.
- Building capacity in the voluntary sector; specifically in light of budget reductions for local authority as well as voluntary and community sector.
- Evaluation of the impact of the changes to voluntary sector accommodation.
- Implementation of the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme, and its impact on communities with protected characteristics.
- Review of the enforcement service.
- Increasing prosecution and conviction rates in the borough.
- The impact of welfare reform on Lewisham residents
- Accessibility of the public realm to residents with disabilities: the report to be provided by the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

6.2 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee noted the report, and that the Committee thanked Councillor Pauline Morrison for her work as Chair of the Committee over the years.

## 7. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

7.1 That the Committee's views under item 4 be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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