

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 14 April 2016 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors David Michael (Chair), James-J Walsh (Vice-Chair), Brenda Dacres, Jim Mallory, John Paschoud, Luke Sorba and Paul Upex and

APOLOGIES: Councillors Colin Elliott, Stella Jeffrey and Alicia Kennedy

ALSO PRESENT: Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People), Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager) and David Edwards (Food Safety Manager)

1. Confirmation of Chair and Vice Chair

1.1 Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the item, and invited Members to confirm the election of Councillor David Michael as the Chair of the Committee and Councillor James-J Walsh as the Vice-Chair of the Committee.

1.2 RESOLVED: that Councillor David Michael be confirmed as Chair of the Committee and that Councillor James-J Walsh be confirmed as Vice-Chair.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2016

2.1 That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2016 be agreed, subject to the following amendment:

- That paragraph 5.3 include that the Committee wanted to be kept informed about the progress of the community payback scheme.

2.2 The Chair asked about the Committee's referral on the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme to the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel. Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager) related the following based on the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel: that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel suggested that all members briefing on the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme be arranged.

2.3 RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2016 be agreed, subject to the amendment in paragraph 5.3

3. Declarations of interest

3.1 The following non-prejudicial interests were declared:

Councillor David Michael is a working patron of the Marsha Phoenix Trust.

Councillor John Paschoud is a member of the Voluntary Action Lewisham's Children and Young People Forum (in relation to agenda item 4 Select Committee work programme).

Councillor Jim Mallory is a member of the Lee Green Lives community organisation (in relation to agenda item 4 Select Committee work programme).

Councillor Brenda Dacres is a Trustee of the New Cross Gate Trust (in relation to agenda item 4 Select Committee work programme).

4. Select Committee work programme

4.1 Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- That the draft work programme contained suggestions from officers, items considered each year, items considered by virtue of the Committee's Terms of Reference, and suggestions from last year's Committee.
- That some meetings already have four or more items scheduled.
- That the Committee might find the prioritisation process on page 17 helpful in prioritising its work.

4.2 In the discussion that followed, the Committee agreed to:

- To move the Tuesday 6 September meeting to Thursday 15 September.
- To remove the item on VAWG service from the draft work programme and to incorporate information on work done more broadly against VAWG into the report on Safer Lewisham Plan monitoring and update scheduled for the September meeting.
- To combine the item on the Council's employee survey 2015 and the Council's employment profile into one report scheduled for the 4 July meeting.
- That the item on the Leisure Centre Contracts may fall within the Terms of Reference of Healthier Communities Select Committee but the Committees specifically requested that this item was also presented to them.
- That the item on the Criminal Justice System and the Probation Service are brought to the same meeting on 19 October.
- To receive a report on the London Fire Brigade at the 4 July meeting, instead of inviting Lewisham's Borough Commander for the fire brigade to the 19 October meeting. The item was to include information on which decision was taken by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority to save £6.4m for 2016-17, the Council's submitted response to the consultation around the two options for this budget saving, and any available information about drafting of the 6th London Safety Plan.
- That the item on developing capacity in the voluntary sector be considered for a short in-depth review instead of an agenda item for 28 November meeting. The topic would include questions around how the voluntary sector could be best supported in developing and maintaining capacity. The topic should also look at how volunteering could be encouraged as well whether there would be opportunities for crowdfunding activities.
- That the report on Local Assemblies be scheduled for the 28 November meeting. The item should contain information about how each assemblies' grant programme was managed. Evidence should also be sought from fellow

Councillors and members of assembly coordinating groups in addition to Council staff.

- That the item on the evaluation of changes to the voluntary sector accommodation be moved to the 8 March meeting.
- That, while this item and its scheduling still needed to be discussed with the Lewisham Disability Coalition, the item on Lewisham Disability Coalition: Accessibility of the public realm for people with disabilities could be considered as an item for the Sustainable Development Select Committee.
- That the item on library service performance monitoring should include information on any lessons learned from the experience with the community libraries set up in 2011. The item should also include information about the building maintenance of community libraries, their general facilities and provision of IT. The item should be scheduled so that any new contracts with community groups to manage any of the libraries had been in existence long enough to provide the Committee with a meaningful opportunity to evaluate their performance alongside the rest of the libraries. This could mean the item would be considered in 2017-18 municipal year.
- That the item on the impact of welfare reform would be removed from the work programme. That the Committee instead consider a short in-depth review to look at modelling of the demographic changes in the borough so the Committee can evaluate the balance of socio-economic groups across the borough.

4.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee's meeting scheduled for 6 September be moved to 15 September, and that Committee's suggestions be incorporated into its draft work programme for submission to Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel.

5. Review of the enforcement service

5.1 Geeta Subramaniam (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) introduced the item. The following key points were noted:

- The new service was created following a proposal from the Lewisham Future Programme, which had been agreed by Mayor and Cabinet. This report details a review of the service after it had been operating for 6 months.
- All staff had received training on all aspects of the work of the new service.
- Information about the new service was not yet available in one place on the Council's website. This was area that the service was looking to improve.
- There had been a lot more activity in the area of licensing than originally expected, but no deadlines had been missed.
- There had been 15 unauthorised traveller encampments in the borough since August 2015. In the same period last year, there had been three.
- Some services had had to be stopped following budget reductions and the subsequent forming of the new service, for example a monthly surgery for any issues. This has now stopped as a standard practice and instead a risk based approach is taken. A lot of preventative work in schools) has been decreased. A number of road shows to raise awareness about the service have also stopped.
- There are a number of risks for the service and its performance. Changes are happening in partner organisations such as the police, fire brigade and

probation while the new service has been developing which could lead to problems in the future.

5.2 Geeta Subramaniam, Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager) and David Edwards (Food Safety Manager) responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- Officers would investigate the issues raised by Committee Members that residents had found it difficult to reach the noise service over the weekend to report noise, and would provide feedback to the Committee. The number of complaints around noise was greatly reduced compared to the same period last year.
- The work by the contact centre that captures issues raised by residents was under constant review. There was currently a system in place for staff to respond to any contacts made within 48 hours, and ensure an appropriate follow-up to the issue was put in place. Where residents were suffering from alarm, distress or harassment they would always be referred to the police.
- There are areas where there is a clear overlap between the work of the Crime, Enforcement and Regulation Service (CER) and planning enforcement, but there are also clear areas where the work of planning enforcement ties in more closely with the work of the rest of the planning service. One consideration for the future could be to look at how planning enforcement and CER establish closer links - senior officers responsible for both areas would need to discuss the options.
- The savings target for this service area had been met.
- The CER performed test purchasing of licensed goods such as tobacco, alcohol and knives to test whether premises were adhering to their licenses. There had recently been an inspection by surveillance commissioner which judged this particular part of the service to be functioning well.
- The service was moving to a system where instead of issuing many temporary events notices for the same premises, premises would apply for a venue license. This had the advantage that conditions could be set on the license which would be enforceable.
- The service reports on the number of cases raised but it would be difficult for the service to meaningfully capture and quantify the success rate of the response to each case.
- The service have made their work around contaminated land an area of focus.
- The digital strategy would allow staff to work more efficiently whilst mobile as part of their work. This improved mobile working service should significantly reduce unnecessary travel time back to the office for staff.
- The list of training provided to staff is extensive and all staff have completed all those training sessions. All members of staff would have used knowledge from all those different sessions within a two week period of working for the new service.
- There were no concerns around staff retention at this point, as some members of staff from elsewhere in the organisation had specifically asked to be notified if new positions became available.
- A risk based approach has been used in the area of food safety since the early 1990s. Venues were assessed for whether they cater to vulnerable groups such as hospital, schools or nursing homes. They were also assessed for whether

they were using particularly high-risk methods such as for example dry ice. If a complaint was raised about a venue, an immediate review would take place.

5.3 Standing orders were suspended at 21.25 to enable the completion of the Committee's business.

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

- The Committee requested again that a brief note would be circulated to all Councillors to inform them about the services provided by the CER, the contact details for the team, and the hours they are contactable.
- The Committee expressed concern about depleted resources for the Environmental Protection Service given the potentially serious consequences of cases of contaminated land.
- If partner organisations and external agencies such as consumer rights advice were experiencing budget cuts, there was a risk for the service provided to residents if these organisation had to be relied upon for referrals.
- That the service seemed to be doing good work and needed to be properly supported in their communications with the public. The information on the Council's website should be improved so all information about the service was in one easy to find location.

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

The Committee was concerned about the depleted resources available to the environmental services including those areas dealing with contaminated land. The Committee sought assurances that adequate resources have been put in place to both minimise the risk of a major incident occurring and, should a major incident occur, that sufficient resources are in place to respond given the potentially serious consequences.

The Committee was also concerned about the increased reliance by the service on external agencies to provide advice and support to residents (such as Consumer Advice). The Committee specifically highlighted the dependence on organisations in the voluntary sector in light of reducing budgets in both the voluntary sector and public sector more generally.

The Committee noted the good work done by the new Crime, Enforcement & Regulation Service (CER) and the Environmental Health Service during and following reorganisation. The Committee felt this work should be adequately supported by a dedicated communications strategy as well as general support from the Council's communications service, especially with regards to information on the service being available in one place on the Council's website.

5.6 RESOLVED: That the report be noted, and the Committee's views as agreed be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

6. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

The Committee's views under item 5 were referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

Chair:

Date:
