

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE			
Report Title	Update from Cabinet Member for the Community Sector		
Key Decision	No		Item No. 4c
Ward	All		
Contributors	Cabinet Member for the Community Sector		
Class	Open	Date: 29 October 2019	

Purpose

1. This report provides an update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on some of the achievements in the Community Sector portfolio.

Recommendation

2. Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note this report.

Open Lewisham

3. Work is continuing on the development of Lewisham's Comprehensive Equalities Scheme for 2020-24 and its supplementary data digest. The Scheme, which is the vehicle used to carry the Council's equality objectives, will be used as a framework for testing the robustness of the Council's business system. Feeding into the development of the new Comprehensive Equalities Scheme will be analysis from the recently published Indices of Multiple Deprivation, which officers are also preparing and which is scheduled to be presented to members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee at the end of October. In addition to the above, officers are supporting the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee's in-depth review of equalities in Lewisham. As part of this, officers provided written evidence to the Committee at its second evidence session on 9th October 2019.
4. Other areas of work being progressed in this area include a review of the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (SWEI). The Council is looking at aspects of the Index that can be adopted at low or no cost and incorporated into existing business systems and processes. In addition a trans review is in progress, which is looking to update the Council's knowledge and understanding of issues affecting Lewisham's trans community.

Disabled People's Commission

5. I am delighted Lewisham Council will establish a Disabled Peoples Commission led by disabled people that will make public services more accessible and make it easier to get around our borough.

6. The timetable to the launch of the Commission on the International Day of Disabled People is as follows:
 - a. 9 September - 7th October - Advert for Chair
 - b. Week commencing 7th October selection process
 - c. 21st October - 18th November advert for commission members
 - d. 18 - 27 November selection of Commission members
 - e. 3 December - Commission launch

Bringing our community together

7. Age Against the Machine, the Festival of Creative Aging, funded as part of Lewisham's 2018 bid to become Borough of Culture, took place in September 2019. Blackheath Fireworks will take place in the autumn and People's Day (or similar free festival) will return for Summer 2020. In addition there are numerous local events organised via the Local Assemblies e.g. Lark in the Park and as part of our award winning parks e.g. Beckenham Place Park Flower Show.

Community Energy

8. Officers are investigating the various 'white label' not-for-profit energy supply models introduced by the GLA (London Power), Islington Council (Angelic Energy), Hackney Council and others to assess the potential benefits and costs to Lewisham. These 'white label' energy companies seek to offer lower tariffs and green energy to domestic customers using Council branding to offer assurance to potential customers. Any offer the Council wanted to promote would need to be procured and would require some degree of administrative support.
9. Lewisham Council has been awarded grant funding by the GLA to expand its existing fuel poverty advice service to the whole of south London, covering 12 boroughs with targets to support 1,600 households this winter. In 2018/19 Lewisham's South East London Fuel Poverty Project delivered practical advice to 875 low income and vulnerable residents and brought in over £600,000 funding for heating, insulation and ventilation improvements.
10. Lewisham Council launched a new Community Energy Fund in September offering grants of up to £15,000 to local community initiatives supporting fuel poverty and carbon reduction work.

Libraries

11. During the last year visits to libraries grew back past the 2 million mark (2,012,709 +1.65%) and issues increased by 6.5% (579,812).
12. These achievements are more remarkable if we consider that the library service, as a member of the Board of the London Libraries Consortium, implemented the largest migration of a Library Management System in the world! Across the year, Lewisham worked with colleagues to procure and implement the migration from the old library

catalogue to a new one. This meant that in March, all 16 members of the Consortium switched from the old to the new library catalogue. The achievement is significant also because it brings the opportunity borrow books from across London and to develop a shared London Library Platform. In time, the latter will introduce new functionalities and technological innovations that will make libraries more and more accessible to Londoners.

13. The Service is therefore energized and proud of its standing. It is working at its physical collections in the Hub and Community libraries and it is developing its online offer – which is continuing to be an area of growth. In the last 12 months, eLibrary issues increased from 21,492 to 66,237 (+208). Online newspapers, comics, and magazines have been promoted, through taster sessions, social media and staff promotion to users, and show 45.9% increase over the previous year.
14. We are having to reduce the opening hours of some of our community libraries but this situation remains under review ahead of a long term strategy for the library service which is currently in development.

Voluntary Sector Infrastructure

15. Following the re-letting of the Main Grants Programme earlier in the year Rushey Green Timebank, working under the banner of Lewisham Local, receives funding as the strategic voluntary and community sector support organisation delivering support to organisations and encouraging greater collaboration across the sector; working with individuals to increase volunteering and the giving and exchanging of time and skills; engaging with business in promoting giving to local communities and causes.
16. The approach builds on existing good work undertaken through this initiative and is favoured due to its positive a radical approach to capacity building

Black History Month

17. Black History Month is again celebrated through a range of activities coordinated through the Library Service. The Month was launched with an inclusive event at the Civic Suite and continues to be one of the highlights of the year.

Financial implications

18. There are no direct financial implications from noting the contents of this report

Legal implications

19. There are no specific legal implications of relevance to this report.

Equalities implications

20. The information included in this reported makes a direct contribution to the Council's Comprehensive Equalities Scheme 2016-20. The five objectives of the Scheme are as follows:

- Tackle, victimisation, discrimination and harassment
- Increase access to services
- Close the gap in outcomes between citizens
- Increase mutual understanding and respect with and between communities
- Increase participation and engagement

21. The specific equalities implications are contained in the main body of this report.

22. The information contained in this report affects all characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. However, specific reference is made to those of sexual orientation, race, and disability. It should also be noted, that action to promote community energy, will have a particular socio-economic impact for low income households in the borough.