

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 28 January 2020 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown, Peter Bernards, Patrick Codd, Liam Curran, Joan Millbank, John Muldoon and Luke Sorba

ALSO PRESENT:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sakina Sheikh, Councillor Juliet Campbell and Councillor Jim Mallory

267. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the open meeting held on 3 December 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

268. Declarations of Interests

None received.

269. Outstanding Scrutiny Matters

RESOLVED that the report noted.

270. Notification of Late and Urgent Items

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

271. Response to Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel on Equality Issues

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

272. Report-Back on Call-In result on the "Re-Commissioning of building-based day Services for Older Adults"

The Chair of the Panel, Councillor Bill Brown advised the meeting that following the decision to all-in result on the "Re-commissioning of building-based day services for Older Adults", guidance was currently being developed by the Head of Law for overview and scrutiny chairs in relation to "call-in" procedures. It was stated that any comment by chairs of overview and scrutiny select committees should be forwarded to the Head of Law.

273. Open Item(s) - Decision by Mayor and Cabinet on 15 January 2020

The Chair of the Panel, Councillor Bill Brown, announced that he had received a request that for Members to consider a decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet on 15 January 2020 in relation to the disposal of former Wide Horizons sites in Wales and Kent. The Chair advised that the decision would be implemented on 29 January 2020, unless called-in by Members of the Panel.

The Interim Executive Director of Children and Young People, and the Property Strategy & Technical Support Manager made a presentation on the decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet on 15 January 2020 in relation to the “Disposal of former Wide Horizons sites in Wales and Kent”. The Panel noted that Wide Horizons was an adventure learning charity formed in 2004 as a result of a joint initiative. Wide Horizons went into administration in 2018 and at the time were managing eight outreach services providing adventure experiences for nearly 47,000 children and young people each year. It was recognised that three of the outdoor centres, two in Wales and one in Kent, are owned by Lewisham Council.

In response to questions raised, the Officers advised the Panel that since the liquidation of Wide Horizons, Lewisham Council had been responsible for maintenance and other property associated costs for the properties it owned. Hence, the recommendation to the Mayor and Cabinet to grant authorisation to agree to dispose of the sites, subject to the Secretary of State for Education’s consent being obtained. It was stated that the Council’s newly designed Beckenham Place Park had been earmarked to deliver outdoor educational services and also to run family workshops over the summer months

In a follow-up question, the Officer confirmed to the Panel that disposal of the assets in Wales and Kent would not be detrimental to children and young people in Lewisham because there were other easily accessible and safer alternative facilities elsewhere. However, it was the view of Members that the sale of the land would be detrimental to future generations, and therefore should only be considered as a last resort. Members also agreed that the offer available at Beckenham Place Park was excellent, but not comparable, as it was not residential.

In view of the considerations, Members resolved to ‘call-in’ the decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet on 15 January 2020 relating to the “Disposal of Former Wide Horizons sites in Wales and Kent, in order to enable the Mayor and Cabinet to reconsider its decisions, requesting that:

“Consideration should always be given to retain the freehold on land we own. In the circumstance, options for income generation should be properly considered to help cover costs currently incurred from the land, including possible future use and opportunities”.

The Panel

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

274. Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees Work Programmes - 2019-2020

The Scrutiny Manager gave an oral update report in relation to the Overview and Select Committees work for 2019-2020.

That Panel noted that as part of the scrutiny review, the final proposal on changes to the current scrutiny structure would be considered by Members in a couple of weeks’ time. The agreed proposal will then be submitted to the Local Democracy

Working Group and the Constitutional Working Party, before submission to the Council AGM.

Also noted by the Panel was that the work programmes for select committees were progressing, and all those identified for in-depth reviews were on track, with a view to conclude this municipal year:

In relation to current work undertaken by the Housing Select Committee (HSC), the Panel was pleased to note that work relating to residents' engagement review was nearing completion. The HSC's would consider recommendations Mayor and Cabinet at its meeting on 30 January 2020

The Scrutiny Manager further advised the Panel that the final report and recommendations on commercialisation and culture change in relation to work by the Public Accounts Select Committee (PASC) would be considered in March 2020. It was stated that an evidence session with officers from LB Waltham Forest currently took place, that Members of the PASC would be attending a pilot commercialisation training session.

In relation to work of the Sustainable Development Select Committee, the Scrutiny Manager advised the Panel that the final report on parks management would be considered in March 2020, with a view to include suggestions for closer working with parks user groups and issues relating to planned insourcing of the service.

The Scrutiny Manager also provided an update on the work of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee, advising the Panel that the draft report for the equalities review would be considered in March 2020. It was further advised that prior to the meeting in March meeting, 4 evidence gathering events would have taken place, including a visit to Glasgow City Council to see how they embed equalities, including socio-economic deprivation, into their services. It was stated that a session on Lewisham's Equality Impact Assessments, and another on Lewisham's Commissioning processes and the consideration of equalities during service redesign/tendering would also would have taken place, including a meeting with the Chair of Lewisham's Disability Commission.

An update relating to the work of the Children and Young People Select Committee (CYPSC) was also provided by the Scrutiny Manager. It was noted that the CYPSC had considered the effect of out-of-borough temporary accommodation placements on children and young people, and would be making recommendations at its next meeting.

Chairs of select committees were invited to comment on their respective work programme.

The Chair, Councillor Bill Brown reported that he would be attending a meeting of senior council managers, at the invitation of the Chief Executive, to speak about the role and importance of scrutiny. The Chair invited suggestions and comments from chairs of select committees via email directly to him on the issue.

Councillor Curran reiterated the importance of member engagement on the Local Plan and the Overview. The Scrutiny Manager reported that there would be a

member workshop on the Local Plan on 24 February – 6.30pm to 7.30pm before Labour Group. It was stated that the workshop was an opportunity for Members to have input into the plan prior to consideration by the Mayor and Cabinet in March 2020.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

275. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

276. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 15 January 2020

RESOLVED that the report be noted.