

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 15 September 2016 at 7.00 pm

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Joan Millbank

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources), Emma Aye-Kumi, Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development), Antonio Rizzo (Head of Library and Information Service), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) and Andrew Jacobs (Organisational Learning and Talent Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 be agreed.

2. Declarations of interest

The following non-prejudicial interests were declared:

Councillor David Michael is a working patron of the Marsha Phoenix Trust and the Chair of EqualiTeam Lewisham.

Councillor Elliott declared an interest as the Council's representative on the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

Councillor Elliott declared an interest as Chair of a community group that had benefitted from the fund.

Councillor Dacres declared an interest as Trustee of the New Cross Gate Trust.

3. Response from Mayor and Cabinet: referral on the employee survey

Andrew Jacobs (Organisational Learning and Talent Manager) presented the report. The following was noted in discussion:

- The Interim Head of HR had taken up post two weeks prior for a term of 6 months

- Members felt that the work plan was reasonably robust but wanted the inclusion of SMART KPIs. In addition they wanted to see comparators with London Councils.
- Members requested that this item come back to Committee at the end of Q1 2017 once KPIs and comparative figures were available. (*ACTION* → Scrutiny Manager to add to work plan)

RESOLVED: That the views of the Mayor and Cabinet on the Action Plan be noted.

4. Lewisham Future Programme

David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) introduced the report. He informed the Committee that progress against previous savings had been relatively good, with some 95% of savings on track as at July 2016. He explained that financial monitoring of the savings programme was done by Mayor and Cabinet on a quarterly basis, as well as locally by the service area assuming the savings. The Committee heard that Looked After Children (LAC) and Adult Social Care were the two most pressured services owing to demand pressures in the budget rather than due to savings.

B3: Service Procurement

Officers explained that the savings proposal had already been achieved through ongoing activity, therefore this was an accounting record rather than a new proposal.

Members questioned whether the savings had been achieved by cost-shunting onto health partners. Officers provided assurances that they had resulted from efficiency savings achieved by SLAM procuring.

Members asked for a comparison with other South London Boroughs.

RESOLVED:

That progress against savings target B3 be noted.

That a comparison with other London boroughs be provided.

L8: Review of Facilities Management Arrangements

Liz Dart (Head of Community and Neighbourhood Development) presented the savings proposal, emphasising that the savings would not see a reduction in provision, rather an efficiency saving through a change in management arrangements.

The following points were noted:

- Change on the ground should be seamless as core facilities would remain open, albeit with a potential change of staff depending on whether TUPE would apply.
- Timetables for tendering would likely differ for each premises.

- Members were concerned for staff and the impact of this period of uncertainty on them. Furthermore, Members were adamant that there should be no undercutting of staff and that the London Living Wage should be a minimum standard by any contractor. Staff protection should be a priority.
- If a charity were to manage a venue, free use of space could be a demonstration of public benefit.
- In response to concerns about equal access to hiring premises, officers stressed that equalities monitoring requirements would be specified and the contract monitored.
- Sedgehill Community Centre would be the last to go out to tender as it could be considered for primary school expansion.
- Contract length for all premises would not exceed 5 years, with the option of an earlier break.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Public Accounts Select Committee to accept the proposal, and express the view that any groups or organisations taking on management contracts must uphold the council's values and be committed to enabling access to the wider community. Staff should be safeguarded as much as practicable and the London Living Wage should be used as a minimum standard.

L9: Removal of the Assembly Fund

The Committee was unanimously opposed to the proposal, and Members made the following assertions:

- The impact on the community of cutting the fund would be too great to justify the relatively modest saving
- Without the fund, Local Assemblies would have meaningless engagement with the community
- Assemblies benefited the wider community – there was a misconception that they were solely for older people, although the Committee did accept that owing to the timing of meetings, the appeal to families may be limited
- Awareness-raising of assembly meetings could be improved
- The Assembly Fund was a useful tool for galvanising people to make positive contributions to their communities
- The Assembly Fund had already been cut to £15,000 since its inception in 2007.
- Members reported a mixed picture of officer support. Some Local Assemblies had experienced high support staff turnover, others had had more consistency. Officers explained that the support team was a matrix team that was not solely dedicated to assemblies and that many staff had progressed to other opportunities
- In 2014/15 some 114 projects had been funded, of which 49% were under £1,000. The largest ever pot awarded was £10,000 to the Crofton Park Neighbourhood Forum.

- Crowd-funding was good for community buy-in but was not a substitute for funding. Reliance on crowd-funding would also throw up equalities issues as access to the internet was required
- The majority of Members were against reducing the fund, even partially.

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Public Accounts Select Committee that the proposal be rejected. It was felt that the removal of the fund would have a negative impact on community cohesion, participation and engagement, and that the impact would be disproportionate to the relatively modest level of saving that would be achieved. The Committee was of the majority view that a partial saving would be similarly unacceptable.

M6 – Handyperson Service

The Committee endorsed the view of the Housing Select Committee, and asked to be provided with a list of groups that were approached as part of the consultation.

5. Library service - provision of community library facilities update

Liz Dart presented the report. The following points were noted in discussion:

- The proposed interim opening hours were arrived at by balancing when people want to use the library with the needs of other users, for example the Children’s Centre users.
- Members wanted longer opening hours at the weekend, arguing that open for 4 hours over the weekend (Friday – Sunday) seemed imbalanced against the proposed 12 hours across Monday and Tuesday.
- Potential partners would have to abide by a number of agreements, for example about data sharing.
- There were concerns that the library should be a source of information and that a blanket ban on anything that was not family friendly could be unhelpful. An example given was a block on the word “gay” with the effect that the Stonewall website, or advice on pre- or post-exposure prophylaxis could be unavailable. The Committee heard that limitations in technology meant that such a situation could not be prevented.
- Members urged that consideration be given to the mechanism for requesting that content be unblocked and reviewed quickly. It was suggested that the Websense standard message be replaced with a message along the lines of “The page you are trying to view has been blocked because... If you think that it should be able to be viewed, email ...”

The time being 9:18pm, it was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders and allow the meeting to extend beyond two and a half hours.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

6. Safer Lewisham Plan - monitoring and update

Geeta Subramanian presented the report and invited discussion.

Priority 1 – peer on peer abuse

There was some discussion of the television documentary “Gangland”. It was felt that the programme had not done damage to the perception of Lewisham in the wider community, rather it had portrayed the unglamorous reality of carrying a knife.

The use of Snapchat and Periscope as a mode of dealing drugs was highlighted. The Committee heard that officers would be unable to tackle this behaviour until or unless it became a Met priority.

It was flagged that Safer Neighbourhood Boards did not have youth involvement, and that the Met Commissioner was keen to increase support for local community policing.

Priority 2: violence against women and girls

The Committee was advised that cultural practices – breast hammering and forced marriage by way of example – were being challenged, and that these practices often gave rise to child safeguarding issues.

Priority 3: Organised Crime

Members felt that more needed to be done to protect vulnerable people from cold calling and internet scams, and asked officers to actively reach out to groups who are at home during the day. This could be achieved by officers producing a communications plan

It was brought to the Committee’s attention that large quantities of “Nike” trainers were being sold on Lewisham Market for significantly lower prices than they would retail for in the shops, suggesting that they could be counterfeits or stolen. This would be investigated by the Council.

Members requested more information on rogue landlords and the council’s Right to Rent policy.

Priority 4: Hate Crime

Members heard that reported hate crime was on the increase. The following was noted in discussion:

- Members presented anecdotal evidence of members of the LGBT community having had negative experiences when trying to report hate crime, with the result that many no longer bother to report such crimes
- The Lewisham LGBT+ Forum would be held on 11th October and it was felt this might be a good starting point for dealing with under-reporting of hate crime against the LGBT community
- The Committee was divided as to whether hate crimes should be categorised according to their seriousness. Some felt it would be helpful to

- know whether the figures were referring to name calling or actual violence, whereas others felt that this would mean that some hate crimes would be taken less seriously, when in fact a zero tolerance approach was required
- One Member flagged that the Prevent strategy was seen as divisive within the Muslim community, citing the example of an Islamic Society at university that could not find a Chair due to fear that taking such a position would put that person on a “list”
 - Officers explained that Prevent had always been embedded in Lewisham’s approach to community cohesion and that there had been robust conversations with Muslim community groups. Officers considered that the upcoming Extremism Bill had not helped community relations.

RESOLVED: that

- 1) the report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee requested an end of year update and to have sight into the 17/18 Annual Plan.
- 3) That the Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People speak to Home Office and Goldsmiths/ Trinity re training session on forced marriage
- 4) Members requested more information on rogue landlords and the council’s Right to Rent policy.

7. Select Committee work programme

Timothy Andrew presented the scoping paper element of the work programme report.

Councillor Paschoud declared an interest as a Member of VAL Forum Steering Group.

Members stipulated that they wanted to hear more from small groups, citing the Small Charities Coalition and the Community Finance Group as examples.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the work programme be amended to delay consideration of the Criminal Justice System, National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company and London Metropolitan Police Plan Consultation items until the November meeting.
- 2) That the November meeting be used as an extended evidence session for the Short Review: Developing Capacity in the Voluntary Sector to include evidence from groups such as the Small Charities Coalition and Community Finance Group.

8. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

The Committee’s views under Item 4 were referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 22:57pm.

The meeting ended at 11.00 pm

Chair:

Date:
