

# **MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Monday, 28 November 2016 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillors David Michael (Chair), James-J Walsh (Vice-Chair), Colin Elliott, Councillor Joyce Jacca, Stella Jeffrey, Jim Mallory, John Paschoud and Luke Sorba

APOLOGIES: Councillors Brenda Dacres and Paul Upex

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Joe Dromey (Cabinet Member Policy & Performance), James Lee (Service Manager, Inclusion and Prevention and Head of Cultural and Community Development), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Antonio Rizzo (Library and Information Services Manager), Simone van Elk (Cabinet Officer) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

## **1. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 19 October be agreed.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Michael declared a personal interest in item 7 as he was the Chair of Equaliteam and a co-opted member of the Marshall Phoenix Trust.

Councillor Elliott declared a personal interest in item 7 as he was the Council representative on the Lewisham Disability Coalition.

Councillor Walsh declared a personal interest in item 7 as he was on the board of Lewisham Disability Coalition.

Councillor Mallory declared a personal interest in item 7 as he was Chair of Lee Green Lives.

## **3. Responses to referrals from this Committee**

3.1 James Lee, Head of Service, Culture and Community Development, introduced the response to the Committee's referral on the Main Grants Programme, in the discussion that followed, the following key points were raised:

- The process for monitoring the use of assets by the voluntary and community sector has been agreed and the report presented to the Committee was the first step in providing this information.
- More information could be provided to the committee on the process undertaken to calculate the market value of rent and in-kind offers to voluntary and community groups.
- Work had been undertaken on "meanwhile" use - the use of a temporarily vacant site for improving the local economy or promoting

community cohesion through pop-up shops etc. The Council was bidding for external funding to support vibrant community based usage where possible.

3.2 Antonio Rizzo, Head of Library and Information Service, introduced the responses to the Committee's referral on the Library Savings Programme Update. In the discussion that followed the following key points were raised:

- New computers for libraries were configured and were ready to be installed. There would be a switch to the new infrastructure at the beginning of December.
- Filtering software had been installed to ensure that only appropriate sites were accessible, however there were on-going discussions particularly at hub libraries to ensure that the software was appropriate and not needlessly prohibiting access to legitimate sites for example on sexual health.

3.3 Antonio Rizzo, Head of Library and Information Service, introduced the responses to the Committee's referral on DBS checks for library staff. In the discussion that followed the following key points were raised:

- The Council's HR department had confirmed that although children used libraries regularly, it would not be appropriate for library staff to have the enhanced DBS check routinely as they were not required to be on their own with children.
- A basic disclosure check would be possible but would only show any current convictions. This approach had been endorsed by Mayor and Cabinet and the Library Service hoped to conclude the DBS of frontline staff by the end of the 2016/17 municipal year.
- The possibility of robust risk assessments being carried out was raised to ensure that where there was a risk of staff being unsupervised with children, enhanced DBS checks were always carried out.

3.4 **RESOLVED:**

That the responses to referrals be agreed.

#### **4. Poverty Commission Scope**

4.1 Councillor Joe Dromey presented the report and provided an introduction to the scope of the proposals. Simone Val Elk, Executive Officer to the Cabinet was also in attendance. During the presentation and in the discussion that followed, the following key points were raised:

- The Poverty Review conducted by the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee had made very pertinent recommendations and the Poverty Commission was as a direct result of these recommendations.
- Councillor Dromey had been appointed by the Mayor as the Executive lead in this area.
- The Commission would combine local and wider expertise and there would also be a voice for scrutiny Councillors. 3 Councillors from

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee were requested to be nominated to be on the Commission.

- Priority areas included looking at: Housing costs including availability of affordable housing; access to employment including fair pay; single person poverty; and community based approaches to resilience.
- There would be four sessions in total with the final report expected to be produced at the end of 2017.
- Issues such as: the introduction of universal credit and mental health inequalities could be part of the review scope. Expertise would be drawn from Councillors and also organisations such as Trust for London and Resolution Foundation.
- The Commission would be a stand-alone commission as part of the Executive function of the Council. However it was set up in response to recommendations from scrutiny and scrutiny Councillors would feature strongly in its composition.

#### 4.2 **RESOLVED:**

That Councillors Elliott, Jacca and Walsh be nominated by the Committee to be on the Poverty Taskforce.

### 5. **The impact of demographic Change: Scoping Paper**

5.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the scoping report to the Committee. In the Committee's discussion, the following key points were noted:

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process was ongoing and new data from this was always useful to assess.
- It could be useful to look at demographics of democratic participation and whether there were any important trends that needed to be addressed.
- It would be important to consider how increases in the population of looked after children could affect service delivery and how services would need to adapt to any changes in this area.
- More broadly it was important to look at projections up to 2030 and how the Council would need to change and adapt based on different demographic projections.
- Health problems such as pressures from increases in obesity rates and school places planning could also be considered.

#### 5.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the evidence session for the review include information on:

1. Changes in demographic participation and demographics of those who do not vote.
2. Projections on the numbers of looked after children and how services will need to adapt to this.
3. Changes in how the Council will manage services due to changing demographics.
4. How will Lewisham change by 2030 and what does the Council need to do to be prepared.

## 6. Capacity in the Voluntary Sector - Draft Report

- 6.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the Committee. In the discussion that followed the following key points were highlighted:
- The Chair's Introduction and the Executive Summary would be added to the report after the recommendations had been agreed by Committee.
  - Paragraph 5.13 should be amended to read "December 2016".
  - It would be useful to include in the report the original source for the statistics provided as part of the evidence under section 8.3.
  - Suggested recommendations were circulated by the Chair.
  - Possible recommendations could include consideration of the role of local assemblies.
  - Any recommendations around schools should be considered carefully as to how realistic they would be for schools to be able to implement.
  - Any recommendations requesting the Council facilitates data sharing could be problematic and extreme care would be needed to ensure compliance with data protection rules and protection of individual's data.
  - A recommendation on a liaison support network specifically for Chief Executives in the Community and voluntary sector could be very beneficial.
  - Agreement was not reached on possible recommendations and Committee members requested the report returning to Committee in January to enable further discussions and agreement of recommendations.

### 6.2 **RESOLVED:**

1. That paragraph 5.13 be amended to read "December 2016".
2. That the original source for the statistics provided as part of the evidence under section 8.3 be included in the report.
3. That the report be agreed subject to the above changes but return to Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee at their meeting in January 2017 for further consideration of the final recommendations the Committee wish to make as part of the review.

## 7. Main Grants Programme Funding 2017-2018

- 7.1 James Lee, Head of Service, Culture and Community Development introduced the report to the Committee and highlighted the following key points:
- £1 million savings was being made from the Main Grants Programme which represented a reduction in funding of 25% across the programme.
  - There was due to be a full review of the grants allocation process going forward to inform the process for future grant allocation rounds.

- There was not scope at this stage to provide detailed information on individual organisations as it would not be appropriate.

7.2 James Lee, responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The organisations that had appealed were: MenCap; Irie Dance Theatre; Lewisham Disability Coalition; and Grove Park Community Group.
- There had been criticism of the Council's feedback process to organisations in the first year of the funding cycle. Improvements had now been made and there was a better understanding of requirements on both sides.
- For monitoring processes for community groups, usually outputs were measured as outcomes could be more challenging to accurately quantify.

7.3 In the Committee's discussions, the following key points were noted:

- Members of the committee welcomed the depth of the report and the amount of information included.
- Members of the Committee felt support for refugees and migrants should be prioritised and consideration of this should be part of the process for allocating funds from the Main Grants Programme. The Committee was informed that this approach may not be legal and that Mayor and Cabinet had instructed officers to focus on grant criteria applied equally to all groups. Resources could be secured outside the Main Grants Programme for example through the Home Office for the Syrian families being housed in Lewisham.
- **Councillor Michael left the room at 8.45pm and Cllr Walsh took over as Chair. Councillor Michael returned at 8.46pm and resumed the Chair.**
- Members of the Committee requested that proposals for the development of a new infrastructure offer, as outlined in this report, should return to Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee for further scrutiny once they have been worked up.
- Members of the committee raised concerns over obtaining qualitative information on delivery of objectives as well as quantitative. For example, if a target was "delivery of 100 booklets" and that was 100% achieved it would be important to monitor where and how to ensure the Council was getting value for money. It was also important that the Council was mindful of any double funding possibilities as well. The Committee was informed that officers visit organisations, attend meetings, talk to users and had a robust approach to looking at qualitative results. There was potential on some occasions for things to be missed and the monitoring team would follow up on any concerns or information raised by Councillors or members of the public.
- Members of the Committee requested details of the assessment and scrutiny of funding of Equaliteam. The Committee were informed that Equaliteam had not received any grant funding since 2015 and were therefore not included as part of the current report. The committee were informed that legal advice would be sought and circulated after

the meeting as to the possible options for scrutiny of individual organisations.

- **Standing orders were suspended at 9.15pm.**

#### 7.4 **RESOLVED:**

That legal advice be sought on further scrutiny of individual organisations and previous legal advice received by the Committee in 2015 be recirculated to members.

That the following referral to Mayor and Cabinet:

1. That the Council should prioritise support for refugees and migrants and consideration of this should be part of the process for allocating funds from the Main Grants Programme
2. That the importance of early monitoring of organisations receiving funding should be noted so as to ensure effective management and delivery by organisations.
3. Proposals for the development of a new infrastructure offer, as outlined in the report to Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on 28 November, should return to Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee for further scrutiny once they have been worked up.

## 8. **Select Committee work programme**

8.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager introduced the report to the Committee, in the discussion that followed the following key points were raised:

- It was proposed that a report on the recent inspection of the Youth Offending Service be added to the work programme for the January meeting.
- Members of the Committee proposed postponing the report on local assemblies and the evidence session on demographic change until the meeting in February.
- The report on provision for the LGBT community should include information on public health, youth provision and community services and build in data from across Council Directorates.

#### 8.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the following changes be made to the Select Committee work programme:

1. Draft Report on “Capacity in the Voluntary Sector” be added to the agenda for January 2017.
2. A report on “Youth Offending Team” inspection report added to the agenda for January 2017.
3. That the item on “Local Assemblies” be moved to the meeting in March 2016.

4. That the evidence session for the review into “Demographic Changes in the borough’s population” be moved to the meeting in March 2016.

**9. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

**RESOLVED:**

The Committee resolved to make the following referral to Mayor and Cabinet on Item 7, The Main Grants Programme:

That the Council should prioritise support for refugees and migrants and consideration of this should be part of the process for allocating funds from the Main Grants Programme.

That the importance of early monitoring of organisations receiving funding should be noted so as to ensure effective management and delivery by organisations.

Proposals for the development of a new infrastructure offer, as outlined in the report to Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on 28 November, should return to Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee for further scrutiny once they have been worked up.

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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