

# MINUTES OF THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY WORKING GROUP

Tuesday, 26 March 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Kevin Bonavia (Chair), Sakina Sheikh (Vice-Chair), Chris Best, Juliet Campbell, Patrick Codd, Colin Elliott and Aisling Gallagher

ALSO PRESENT: Rosalind Jeffrey, Salena Mulhere, Barrie Neal and Kath Nicholson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alex Feis-Bryce

## 1. Minutes of the last meeting

Prior to consideration of the minutes, Cllr Bonavia informed the Working Group that Cllr Feis-Bryce had stepped down as a Lewisham councillor.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 3. Draft report and recommendations of the working group

Salena Mulhere (SGM Interagency, Service Development & Integration) gave a presentation on the draft report and drew the Working Group's attention to the following areas:

- Terms of reference and review timeline
- Evidence-gathering process and key findings
- Development of the report and recommendations
- Implementation and further investigation

Members of the Working Group welcomed the report and recommendations. The following points were highlighted in the subsequent discussion:

- The review process had been a learning experience for the Working Group and demonstrated the need for a change of culture (including language and behaviour) within the Council in order to build further trust and confidence in local democratic processes
- Respondents to the online consultation did not necessarily reflect the demographics of the borough as a whole – members of the Working Group had made efforts to address this through their face-to-face engagement, but they recognised that further work was required (specifically in relation to reaching and empowering seldom-heard groups)
- The review had looked at opportunities to reform rather than replace existing democratic structures – its ultimate aim was to ensure that councillors, as the representative voice and champion of all their constituents, were at the heart of Council decision-making and communication processes
- The Working Group acknowledged that a small number of respondents had expressed cynicism about Council decision-making – they recognised the need to involve residents earlier in the decision-making process and provide better

feedback about how and why decisions were made (as well as being clear about the Council's statutory responsibilities and obligations)

- There was a need to increase the engagement and involvement of young people – mechanisms to achieve this (such as improving the Council's wider approach to communication on social media) should be co-designed with young people and their representatives (including the Young Mayor)

Members of the Positive Ageing Council made a request to address the meeting, which was agreed. They welcomed the references to older people in the report, but suggested that the recommendations should also reflect the importance of engaging with and involving different groups of older people (in addition to young people).

RESOLVED: The Working Group approved the draft report and recommendations.

RESOLVED: The Working Group agreed that the minor amendments discussed at the meeting which are required to facilitate publication of the report be delegated to the Head of Corporate Policy & Governance.

RESOLVED: The Working Group agreed to refer the report to Mayor & Cabinet for agreement and endorsement.

RESOLVED: The Working Group agreed to refer the report to Full Council for agreement and endorsement.

Cllr Bonavia thanked the Vice Chair and members of the Working Group, Council officers, local community groups and members of the public for their contribution to the Local Democracy Review. He stated that the ambition of the review was to improve Lewisham, both as a borough and as a Council.

The meeting ended at 8.25PM.