

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 9 September 2021 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT IN PERSON: Councillors Paul Maslin (Chair), Tauseef Anwar, Peter Bernards, Bill Brown, Mark Ingleby, Jack Lavery, John Muldoon, Olurotimi Ogunbadewa, Rachel Onikosi, Jacq Paschoud, Stephen Penfold, James Rathbone, Luke Sorba, and James-J Walsh

PRESENT REMOTELY: Councillors Octavia Holland (Vice-Chair), Juliet Campbell, Suzannah Clarke, Colin Elliott, Coral Howard, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Caroline Kalu, Silvana Kelleher, Louise Krupski, Samantha Latouche, Jim Mallory, Joan Millbank, Lionel Openshaw, John Paschoud, Joani Reid, James Royston, Sakina Sheikh, and Susan Wise

APOLOGIES: Councillors Obajimi Adefiranye, Aisling Gallagher, Leo Gibbons, Hilary Moore, Jonathan Slater, Alan Smith and Eva Stamirowski

ALSO PRESENT: Charlotte Dale (Head of Overview and Scrutiny), Murray James (Director of IT and Digital Services), Salena Mulhere (Assistant Chief Executive), Stephen Gerrard (Interim Director of Law and Governance), Emma Talbot (Director of Planning), Kim Wright (Chief Executive), Atika Mohammed (Head of Insight, Transformation & OD), Councillor Kevin Bonavia (Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees & Accountability) and Councillor Amanda De Ryk (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

1. Minutes of the meetings held on 10 November 2020; 26 May 2021; and 21 July 2021

1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 10 November 2020; 26 May 2021; and 21 July 2021 be agreed as accurate records of proceedings.

2. Declaration of Interests

2.1 None.

3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the response be noted.

4. Membership of Task and Finish Groups

4.1 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor Sophie Davis be appointed to the Retrofit Task and Finish Group.

5. Improving the Resident Experience

- 5.1 The Chair introduced the item, followed by Councillor Walsh, who had led on the development of this piece of scrutiny work. Councillor Kevin Bonavia, Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees and Accountability (with responsibility for customer services and complaints and the council's digital strategy) then made a short introduction. Salena Mulhere, Assistant Chief Executive; and Atika Mohammed, Head of Insight, Transformation & Organisational Development, introduced the report.
- 5.2 A call for evidence had been sent to Members in advance of the meeting, posing three central questions and asking for submissions on these areas of focus. The submissions had been collated and summarised at appendix 1 to the report; and it was noted that the information provided would be taken forward as part of the programme.
- 5.3 31ten were invited to give a presentation on improving the resident experience. It was noted that they had recently produced a report - "Service Transformation Savings Research" - jointly with London Councils, which was included in the meeting papers. Their presentation covered trends across the public service sector and in the private sector; and the influence of technology on resident expectations and digital inclusion, which would be a key consideration when developing Lewisham's programme.
- 5.4 In the discussion that followed, Members of the Committee made a number of points and observations:
- The importance of residents having a phone option as well as a digital option when contacting the council – and the ability to speak to a live individual (either on the phone or via a walk-in service) if required.
 - Getting the balance right between in person, telephone, digital services and making each channel as effective as possible for residents.
 - The importance of digital inclusion and ensuring that everyone who wants to be in the digital space can be.
 - Making sure that there is an option for all transactions can be carried out online (such as paying business rates).
 - Concern at the efficacy of the Council's automated telephone switchboard. It was reported that the system regularly failed to put callers through to the right service area and had difficulty in understanding the wide range of accents that Lewisham residents possess.
 - The need to ensure that the 'new normal' is fully fleshed out and supported; and that temporary changes, such as increases in response times, are reassessed and revert back to pre-Covid levels, if appropriate. Recognition that new ways of working were developed quickly, so are not perfect, and now need to be improved.

- Ensuring staff voicemail is checked and inboxes emptied before they are full.
- The possibility of good and effective systems (such as ‘fix my street’) being extended to other service areas.
- The possibility of the council developing Apps for some services.
- Ensuring that people in the community whose first language is not English or who have only recently arrived in the country and are not used to navigating British systems, benefit from comprehensive and accessible signposting to services. Utilising cultural and faith groups - and community leaders.
- The importance of consulting residents *and businesses* on the design of services. How will they be consulted?
- Ensuring appropriate channels for communication between councillors and residents (e.g. Members should not be expected to carry out casework via social media).
- Making sure that Members are sighted on customer service issues and are supported and enabled to raise matters relating to the resident experience of service delivery – and that this is considered as part of the programme.
- The importance of using local hubs for the delivery of services. Do we want a “15 minute” borough? How can we take the needs of *all* local communities into account, involving the voluntary and community sector, local businesses and partners?
- Ensuring that staff are supported and invested in.

5.5 Salena Mulhere acknowledged that sustained service delivery improvements were required and that this was something that the organisation’s leadership was committed to, which was why the resident experience programme was being developed. She expressed her belief that the culture and commitment of staff was outstanding and that the organisation had the capacity to transform the delivery of services.

5.6 Councillor Bonavia acknowledged the views expressed by Members, the barriers to good service delivery that existed, and the importance of treating residents as individuals with individual needs.

5.7 Councillor Walsh summarised the discussion and proposed a series of recommendations which were agreed by the Committee.

5.8 **RESOLVED:** That:

1. The key issues raised by Members at the meeting be noted and taken on board as part of the resident experience programme.
2. Officers review, as part of the resident experience programme:

- (a) the pathways and gateways for members to raise cases (first-stage and escalated) to departments; and
 - (b) member casework digital systems, to ensure they are working for all stakeholders, including members.
3. A series of Member-led, themed workshops be held to examine in detail the key themes raised by Members, to help shape the resident experience programme.
 4. Prior to the workshops, to inform Member thinking, a facilitated session be held with councillors to really understand and focus on how our services can be reshaped with residents at the centre.
 5. The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny write to the Chief Executive to request an urgent review of the Council's automated telephone system, to assess its usability, with the results reported back to Members of the Committee.
 6. An update report be received at the next meeting, feeding back on the above recommendations; and their impact on the resident experience programme.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

Chair:

Date:
