

# MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 22 March 2022 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Paul Maslin, Octavia Holland, Joan Millbank, John Muldoon, Luke Sorba and Susan Wise.

MEMBER(S) OF THE PANEL ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY:  
None.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM: Councillor Juliet Campbell and Councillor Louise Krupski.

MEMBER(S) UNDER STANDING ORDERS JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY:  
Councillor Chris Best, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care.

NB. The Councillor listed as jointing virtually was not in attendance for the purpose of the meeting being quorate, any decision taken, or to satisfy the requirement of s85 Local Government Act 1972.

OFFICERS(S) ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Executive Director of Community Safety; Director of Communities; Partnership & Leisure; Assistant Chief Executive; Head of Overview & Scrutiny; and Head of Committee Business.

Clerk: Senior Committee Manager (In person).

## 1. Minutes

The meeting noted that Councillor Wise was unable to send her apologies for absence to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel held on 8 February 2022 because she was unwell.

An amendment to add the letter “t” to the last word of the last sentence on page 5 of the agenda pack to the Minutes of the Panel meeting held 25 January 2022 was noted.

With the above considerations, the Panel

RESOLVED that minutes of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel held on 8 February 2022 and 25 January 2022, be confirmed as accurate records.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

### **3. Lewisham & Lee Green's Local Transport Network: Questions & Responses**

Councillor Paul Maslin, Chair of the Panel, presented the report. He announced that he had requested that responses to questions raised when the Panel considered a decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet on 12 January 2022 relating to Lewisham and Lee Green's Local Transport Network (LTN) at its meeting on 25 January 2022 should be submitted for Members to note or comment on.

Councillor Joan Millbank stated that the report omitted a response to aspects of Question 2, where Members speculated about a lack of consistency relating to the impact on the work of the Council's transport policy and the Lee Green LTN in the event of a change of personnel serving as Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport. In response, the Chair informed the Panel that there had been an email correspondence requesting a response from the Mayor on the matter.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **4. Key Decision Plan**

The Head of Committee Business asked Members to note the report, and stated that there would be no decision-making by the Mayor and Cabinet until after the local elections in May 2022.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **5. Open Session - Decision by Mayor and Cabinet on 9 March 2022**

Councillor Paul Maslin, the Chair of the Panel, informed the meeting that he had received a request from Councillor Mark Ingleby for Members to consider the decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet on 9 March 2022 relating to "Permission to Procure Home Care".

Councillor Maslin welcomed Councillor Chris Best who was attending the meeting virtually in her capacity as Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care. It was noted that the Executive Director of Community Services was also present virtually to respond to questions Members might have.

In addressing the meeting, Councillor Ingleby outlined his understanding of the proposals upon which the Mayor and Cabinet decision was based, and informed the meeting that the questions he would be asking stemmed from the perspective of the Public Accounts Select Committee, which had been examining adult social care and its economies, and the potential for local supply chains. Considering that, Councillor Ingleby enquired whether the neighbourhood provision would be delivered via an in-house team within the local economy or by external providers. He stated that if via external contractors, whether the operations would be based in London, and if so whether it would be close enough in terms of distance to the borough for effective delivery to Lewisham residents.

In response to questions by Councillor Ingleby, the Executive Director informed the Panel that he could not guess the outcome of the procurement process, but that he was aware that the Council considered the potential for insourcing of home care services about three years ago. The Panel was advised that the findings from that exercise highlighted a significant cost differential between insourced services versus externally purchased services, and that the Council would undertake a similar exercise to ensure a fair and transparent procurement process as part of the current review. Following on from that, the Executive Director advised the Panel to note that there would be some impediments to insourcing all home care provision regardless of the cost, and against the backdrop of the duties of local authorities to create a diverse market for social care for those who wished to have services organised for them by their councils, and those who would prefer to organise their own services.

Continuing with his response, the Executive Director advised the Panel that home care providers tended to be registered for operation through local branches to deliver to residents. Thus, it was likely for workforce to be based locally, in particular that the Council was committed to support residents through the 'Proud to Care' Lewisham initiative campaign aimed at developing a better recognition of the social care workforce by comparing pay rates and working conditions with colleagues in the National Health Service (NHS).

Councillor Best added that the Council would be contributing to the integrated programme as a much-valued partner in adult social care, and would work towards the parity of esteem as part of its aspiration to secure competitive pay rates with the NHS. Councillor Best asked the Panel to note that the Council was already paying the London living wage, and had signed up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.

Continuing with her submission, Councillor Best expressed her appreciation for the services provided by local care workers, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. She stated that although there were headlines about shortage of nurses during the pandemic, there were no shortage of local carers. However, to further its work, the Council would benchmark with other providers across Southeast London, with a view to develop a new workforce strategy to combine with its own integrated care system.

The Executive Director further responded to a follow-up question by Councillor Ingleby, advising the Panel that the Council's current providers were small local firms who would be seeking new contracts as part of the re-procurement. It was stated that the Council would expect new interested providers to also be Lewisham-based organisations.

Following a question by Councillor Sorba, the Executive Director confirmed to the Panel that the Council's contract with Newton Europe was a defined piece of work, and not part of the current re-procurement work.

Considering a further suggestion by Councillor Luke Sorba about the Northumbria model of integrated health and social care, the Executive Director informed the Panel that the approach was innovative. However, adapting a similar structure in

Lewisham would be challenging because it would require a significant investment and realignment of the NHS systems in Southeast London.

The Panel a statement made by Councillor Muldoon about the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014 and on the matter, the Executive Director stated that the Council had arrangements that would enable self-funders to use its services for domiciliary care and residential nursing care. However, the majority of residents had opted to make their own arrangements with the Council because of the benefit of a better price, quality monitoring and effective oversight of service delivery.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and the Executive Director for their contributions.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **6. Open Session - Decision by the Executive Director of Corporate Services**

Councillor Paul Maslin, Chair of the Panel, informed the meeting that he had received a request from Councillor Mark Ingleby for Members to consider the decision taken under delegated authority by the Executive Director of Corporate Services regarding "Contract Award Approval for Beckenham Park Place".

In addressing the meeting, Councillor Ingleby stated that in 2014/15, Phoenix Housing Association (Phoenix) suggested planting ideas in Downham fields, with an initiative to include local participation but that the Council did not allocate budget for the work since the expectations were placed on housing associations. Commenting on that background information, Councillor Ingleby highlighted the context to questions he wished to raise by quoting paragraph 3.6 of the report upon which the Mayor and Cabinet decision was based as follows: "At London-wide level, the Mayor of London's Environment Strategy 2018 brings together approaches to every aspect of London's environment, integrating the following areas: air quality, green infrastructure, climate change mitigation and energy, waste, adapting to climate change, ambient noise and low carbon circular economy". Considering that, and the potential for the local circular economy to complement the Council's current plans and vision, with increasing focus on climate change emergency, Councillor Ingleby enquired whether the Council would consider the suitability of Beckenham Place Park East project for managed horticulture or, adapt the social idea of community involvement of creative ideas for a more specialised allotment project likened to the Phoenix's approach.

In response, the Director of Communities, Partnership and Leisure advised the Panel that the Beckenham Place Park environment was on a flood plain. However, as he was not a horticulturalist expert, he would enquire from the architects and provide a response on the suitability of the grounds.

Councillor Ingleby provided a subtext to the response, commenting that food growing initiatives had a potential for local involvement and creative ideas.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## 7. Scrutiny Update Report

The Panel received an update report by the Head of Overview and Scrutiny who confirmed that the final arrangements for Select Committee meetings for the current administration had taken place. It was noted that the final reports of task and finish groups had also been submitted to the Mayor and Cabinet.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny invited Select Committee chairs to comment on their respective committees, and also reported that the Chief Executive of the New Economics Foundation attended the final meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which considered the Future Lewisham priority “An Economically Sound Future”. The Panel noted that the Chief Executive of the New Economics Foundation spoke to Members about sustainable local economic growth, and that the meeting also received an update on the residents’ experience programme, in which some scrutiny Members had participated.

Councillor John Muldoon informed the Panel about challenges in securing a quorum at the two last meetings of the Healthier Communities Select Committee. Councillor Muldoon suggested that it was appropriate for Members to give equal importance to attendance of scrutiny meetings as those of the executive.

The Panel also noted confirmation from Councillor Ingleby that he would be circulating a report to Labour Group Members about the work of the Public Accounts Select Committee (PASC) since he became a chair in July 2021. Councillor Ingleby stated that there had been a progression in work relating to income generation commercialisation. Councillor Ingleby stated that it would be useful for the Council to consider the capital programme, social value, and asset optimisation during the next administration, not only for PASC, but other committees as well.

Councillor Millbank enquired about the future workings of task and finish groups, drawing attention to the fact that they were set up subject to a review.

Councillor Wise commented that the task and finish groups had completed some very interesting work in a short space of time, and that Members were kept interested. However, those groups and select committees, while working separately but complementary to each other, had placed a lot of burden on Members. Councillor Wise suggested that during the next administration, the chair of the Constitutional Working Party should consider a review into the number of meetings that would require Members’ attendance, commenting that she had never experienced such a high expectation during her 24 years as a councillor.

In response to concerns raised, the Assistant Chief Executive clarified that the requirement for attendance at meetings remained that members should be present physically to be part of the quorum formation. She acknowledged that the arrangements had been challenging, but that scrutiny ought to be workable for proper oversight to take place. Thus, there would be choices for Members to make during the next administration as to which vehicles of scrutiny to utilise. Notwithstanding that, the Panel was advised that there was no obligation for Overview and Scrutiny to appoint task and finish groups, as such a formation was

a choice. Therefore, there would be no requirement to amend the Council's constitution if those groups were not to continue in the next administration.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny added that a survey would be sent to Members and officers who had taken part in task and finish groups to complete, and the findings would be used to inform scrutiny practice going forward.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.