

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 3 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Juliet Campbell (Chair), Rachel Onikosi and James Rathbone (Vice-Chair)

ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Councillor Pauline Morrison

APOLOGIES: Councillors Bill Brown and Liam Curran

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Brenda Dacres (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Safer Communities) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY: James Lee, Jannet Hall, David Murray and Antonio Rizzo

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2022

1.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 13th January 2022 be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 RESOLVED:

Cllr James Rathbone declared a personal interest in item 4 as he was an employee of a community library.

3. Safe Lewisham Plan

3.1 Councillor Brenda Dacres, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Deputy Mayor introduced the report and provided information on the Safer Lewisham Partnership Board. The Board was multi-agency and met regularly with a range of partners to work to keep Lewisham a Safer place.

3.2 James Lee, Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure, and Jannet Hall, Head of Safer Communities also addressed the Committee and gave a summary of the presentation. In the subsequent discussion, the following key points were raised:

- The information in the presentation was relevant to both the current Safe Lewisham Plan and the work on the future plan being set for the next few years. The new plan would have a greater focus on data.
- Members of the Committee welcomed the increased emphasis on data in the new plan and the focus on community engagement.
- A member of the Committee asked how the responses from surveys on stop and search would be used to change how things were done by the Police and reduce disproportionality. In response the committee were informed that depending on the responses, there might be clear details of what elements of practice have been most unpleasant which would then give the opportunity to share this qualitative information with the Police. There may also be work the Council could undertake on public information and engagement. Currently the Council only had data through the Police so this would be a chance for the Council to analyse its own data.
- A member of the Committee asked that in respect of the work with partners discussed in the presentation, this should include academics in particular from Goldsmiths University. The Committee were informed that there was work being undertaken to investigate how to work more closely with Goldsmiths University as a partnership.
- A member of the Committee commented that the data did not show outcomes to date to help the committee evaluate and scrutinise the work from the current plan. In the next municipal year it would be important that outcomes on this came back to the committee based on the 9 work-streams. The Committee heard that some data was already available and could be further shared with the Committee.
- A member of the Committee asked about incidents of violence involving dogs in Catford South. The Head of Community Safety would welcome additional information on this and it could be discussed further.
- In response to a question from a Member, the Committee heard that the Council wasn't working with the courts and magistrates on disproportionality. It could be possible to do more on this but this would be challenging with the level of resources available within the service. This was however being done in the Youth Offending Service.
- Following a question on the use of swords and knives, the Committee heard that removing knives from the streets remained a key reason why stop and search could be a useful Police tactic. Knife amnesties were considered to not necessarily target the right people and could be used by people who wanted to dispose of evidence.

3.3 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

4. **Libraries and Information Service**

- 4.1 Councillor Brenda Dacres introduced the report and highlighted the important role libraries played in the community and the importance of libraries involving with the needs of the communities as well as how librarians and library staff were seen as highly trusted members of the community.

4.2 David Murray, Director of Libraries and Learning and Antonio Rizzo, Head of Library and Information Service were also in attendance to introduce the report and respond to queries. During the subsequent discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Members of the Committee commented that the report was very good and clearly identified the challenges and highlighted the next steps in particular the ICT requirements and building maintenance concerns. A member of the Committee commented that the “Digital by Default” agenda meant that the IT infrastructure and appropriate funding for it was crucial to supporting vulnerable residents.
- The scale of cuts in the Library Service had been very large which meant that commitment to investment in the services’ buildings and IT infrastructure was crucial to maintaining its London leading service. The Committee heard that the annual budget had been reduced from around £6 million to approximately £2 million.
- In response to a question from a member regarding how an entrepreneurial approach could be assured in the service, the Committee heard that the Library Service was thinking in an entrepreneurial way focusing on the many areas libraries supported residents including working with partners to add value. They were focused on the guiding point of what the library service is required to do and within that had lots of examples of innovative ways of working. For example, despite the significant budget restrictions services had been maintained and opening hours extended by 26% and areas such as the transport contract that Lewisham manages and leads on for 20 different local authorities and is being extended further which will deliver substantial efficiencies.
- Further benefits could be delivered to the Council as a whole as the Library Service becomes a resource for other services such as colleagues in Housing Options and Parking which bring in revenue to other services.
- A member of the Committee asked whether it was possible for the libraries to generate income by having organisations providing information and support to residents in Lewisham libraries. The Committee heard that this was possible and there were already existing partnerships where this had been successfully done.
- In terms of how libraries could support people from being digitally excluded, the committee heard that the libraries had an opportunity of being part of helping those who are currently excluded to being part of the digital process, supporting and enabling them to get online. This made getting the IT infrastructure right increasingly important.
- The Community libraries reflect their own community and respond to their own community needs. There is more that can be done to support the libraries such as with support for volunteers.
- Lewisham Library has not had the resources to invest in infrastructure up to this point but questions on how it should be developed could be further discussed as part of the strategy. It would be important to ensure that the Library was suitable for modern usage rather than recreating a reference library model that may now be outdated.

4.3 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

5. Select Committee end of administration work programme and report

5.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the Committee and invited members of the Committee to comment and make any suggestions they would like to put forward to the Committee for consideration in the next Administration.

- A member of the Committee commented that it would be useful to review the Committee's terms of reference. Although the Committee did not have the power to change its terms of reference it could make recommendations in this area.
- A member of the Committee put forward a suggestion that the next Committee prioritise considering the Safe Lewisham Plan as soon as possible in the new municipal year.
- A member of the Committee suggested that early in 2023 it could be useful to have a review of the Borough of Culture to focus on the legacy beyond 2022.

5.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the following items be put forward as suggestions to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee in the next municipal year:

- 1) Consideration and discussion on the Committee's terms of reference.
- 2) Further scrutiny of the Safer Lewisham Plan.
- 3) Scrutiny of legacy work from the Borough of Culture.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

Chair:

Date:
