

# MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EDUCATION BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 22 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Juliet Campbell, Councillor Louise Krupski and Bryan Strom

OFFICERS(S) ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Project Manager – Capital Programme Delivery Team.

Clerk: Senior Committee Manager (in person)

## 1. Minutes

RESOLVED: That that the Minutes of Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Education Business Panel held on 12 October 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record.

## 2. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared at the meeting.

## 3. Decision Taken by Mayor and Cabinet on 9 March 2022

Councillor Paul Maslin, the Chair of the Panel welcomed Members and officers present at the meeting.

The Chair announced that he had received a request from Councillor Luke Sorba for the Panel to consider the decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet on 9 March 2022 regarding the “School Minor Works Programme 2022”.

In addressing the meeting, Councillor Sorba outlined his understanding of the proposals upon which the Mayor and Cabinet decision was based, highlighting the large amount of £3.4m to be invested regarding the School Minor Works Programme and the Council’s corporate priorities. Considering that, Councillor Sorba asked whether the Council’s procurement partners would be willing to employ residents so that the generated wealth remain in circulation within in the local economy. Councillor Sorba was of a view that to further boost the local economy, and if there was a financial case to be made in that regard, the Council should perhaps consider the return of direct labour organisations under its control.

In response to questions by Councillor Sorba, the Project Manager from the Council's Capital Programme Delivery Team clarified to the Panel that the actual total value of the contract that the Council would be investing as part of the School Minor Works Programme amounted to £3m. It was stated that the investment would be procured to individual projects between the values of £500,000 and £1,000,000, and the weighting awards 5% to 10% for social value of the overall assessment in accordance with the Council's policies. The Panel also received confirmation that the quality of tender and the exact evaluation method would be developed with the advice of officers in the Council's Procurement Team, and in accordance with expectations of the Lewisham's Labour and Business Scheme.

On the issue of labour, the Officer advised the Panel that the Local Economy and Partnership Team had taken the initiative to upskill small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to bid for funding from the Council. However, given the high values of the contracts to be procured under the School Minor Works Programme, and the need for specialised constructions works, SMEs would be encouraged to work as sub-contractors to main contractors.

The Officer also clarified to the Panel that direct labour would not be appropriate for the re-procurement programme for similar reasons relating to costs and the types of construction works. However, it was usual for schools to employ maintenance staff. It was stated that the Council had funds which schools could bid for to undertake on-site construction repairs works that were suited for direct employment on a smaller scale.

Councillor Sorba expressed a concern that the contracts to be procured would be outside the reach of local SMEs, other than as sub-contractors. Councillor Sorba hoped that the good practice in contract allocations could be reviewed by officers with a view to incorporate arrangements for direct local labour as part of procurement plans. Councillor Sorba suggested that it would be useful if the upskilling of SMEs was considered both in terms of how to deliver the contracts, and how to win the bid.

Councillor Mark Ingleby commented that the Officer's responses illustrated examples of issues which the Public Accounts Select Committee had been considering in relation to local supply chains and social value. Councillor Ingleby suggested that such considerations should continue into the next administration as important elements for boosting the local economy.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair thanked the Officer for responses to questions raised.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.