

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 14 July 2022 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mark Ingleby (Chair), Ese Erheriene (Vice-Chair), Tauseef Anwar, Natasha Burgess, Will Cooper, Laura Cunningham, Sian Eiles, Billy Harding, Edison Huynh, Mark Jackson, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Ayesha Lahai-Taylor, Jack Lavery, John Muldoon, Oana Olaru, Rosie Parry, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Stephen Penfold, James Rathbone, Aliya Sheikh, Luke Sorba, Liam Shrivastava, Luke Warner and Carol Webley-Brown

ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Councillors Yemisi Anifowose, Peter Bernards, Bill Brown, Eva Kestner, Aisha Malik-Smith, Rachel Onikosi, James Royston, Eva Stamirowski, Hau-Yu Tam and Susan Wise

APOLOGIES: Councillors Chris Best, Suzannah Clarke, Liam Curran, Stephen Hayes, Coral Howard, Joan Millbank, Hilary Moore, Rudi Schmidt and Sakina Sheikh

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Amanda De Ryk (Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy), Salena Mulhere (Assistant Chief Executive), Charlotte Dale (Head of Overview and Scrutiny), Councillor Paul Bell (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care) and Maxine Gordon (Director of Resident and Business Services)

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Atika Mohammed, Sandra Roberts and Angela Scattergood

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 meetings held on 8 March and 25 May 2022

- 1.1 It was noted that the response to the referral made by the Committee on 8 March would be considered in September.
- 1.2 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held be agreed as accurate records of proceedings.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 None declared.

3. Task and Finish Groups: Minutes and Mayoral Response

- 3.1 The three sets of task and finish group minutes were agreed as accurate records of proceedings.

3.2 The Mayoral response to the Digital Inclusion in Education Task & Finish Group final report and recommendations was discussed:

- The contribution from the four councillors no longer on the Council had been significant and valued.
- The work had been very timely given the impact that the pandemic and home learning had had on many pupils during lockdown.
- The work of the Education team, schools and Lewisham Learning to plug gaps in digital provision was recognised and applauded.
- The contribution of the scrutiny managers to the review was noted and the engagement work carried out as part of the review had been comprehensive and valuable.
- The provision of Wi-Fi in council-managed temporary accommodation and hostel accommodation was very important, this had been suggested at a focus group; its inclusion in the report as a recommendation was welcome; and Members were pleased that officers would seek to identify and prioritise children in temporary accommodation for any available devices, dongles and other resources which would facilitate digital inclusion.
- The Council's digital strategy would be forthcoming now that a new Director of IT & Digital Services had been appointed.
- Home visits by teachers prior to children starting primary school and at transition to secondary schools were opportunities to understand levels of digital inclusion.
- Digital inclusion was discussed at every meeting with school leaders and was a key part of the school improvement offer.
- Should another pandemic happen, the negative impact of home learning versus the dangers of schools remaining open must be carefully balanced.
- The Digital Strategy might be something the Committee could consider at a future meeting.

3.3 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held be agreed as accurate records of proceedings and the response be noted.

4. The Resident Experience Programme

4.1 Councillor Bell, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (and the Cabinet Champion for the Resident Experience Programme) and Councillor De Ryk, Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy (and responsible for customer service) addressed the committee. Councillor Bell spoke about the casework element - with the new portal going live at the end of the month and being evaluated after three months – and the broader resident experience element which included support for digitally excluded residents and efforts to equip the digitally included with easy routes to effective digital channels. Councillor de Ryk spoke of the customer service improvements needed, with a change in culture required in addition to some service redesign. Meeting residents' high expectations in the current budgetary environment was difficult.

4.2 Atika Mohammed, Head of Insight, Transformation and Organisational Development, introduced the report:

- The Resident Experience Programme saw digital, customer and insight services working together and using data to transform services and make them more accessible and effective.
- The programme was needed as the experience across channels was not consistent; residents were provided with too many different phone numbers and email addresses to contact the council; and digital inclusion needed to improve.
- Residents really valued empathic language and whilst they often had a positive face-to-face experience, the language used in email and on the website could be improved.
- Libraries had the potential to be important centres of support for the digitally excluded/challenged.
- TPX Improvement were assisting the Council in its journey, in particular by bringing examples of good practice and service design.

4.3 Maxine Gordon, Director of Resident and Business Services, provided an update on the new Member casework portal. Officers had worked hard on the system administration (so enquiries go to the right team); user acceptance testing (so participants could use the system easily on a variety of devices); and trouble-shooting (addressing glitches before the system goes live). Members were encouraged to book on to a user training session prior to the portal being launched.

4.4 The following was noted in response to questions from Members of the Committee:

- TPX Impact were providing additional capacity and sharing knowledge and skills.
- Engagement with residents was being carried out in a way which took diversity and intersectionality into account.
- This was a resident experience programme and not a channel shift programme – a variety of channels, including face-to-face, would be retained and made more effective.
- Whilst some elderly residents valued and preferred face to face contact with the council, others preferred to visit local libraries and be assisted through a digital process closer to home, rather than make the trip to Catford for a face to face appointment. It was important not to make assumptions about how people wanted to interact with the Council – data must be used and we must pay attention to people’s lived experience.
- An alternative point of view expressed was that even the best designed digital system would never be able to be as effective as face to face contact for many groups.
- Lewisham Homes and other registered social landlords currently fell outside of the casework portals so casework connected to those organisations would be dealt with in a separate way.

- The portal allowed collaboration between ward members and would avoid duplication by assigning specific caseworkers to specific areas.
- The specific needs of residents with learning disabilities needed to be taken into account.
- There was a specific workstream on culture change and understanding the skills and experience staff needed to work effectively. Continual learning was important and also embedding responsibility at all levels.

4.5 The Committee discussed running two workshops to feed into the programme now that the discovery stage had concluded and the design and delivery stages were due to begin. Volunteers to co-lead the sessions with a representative from TPX impact were sought and agreed.

4.6 **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted and two Member feedback workshops be held as follows:

- Workshop one to provide a sense check on the insights gathered so far and help inform the design phase by prioritising the insights (led by Councillor Parry)
- Workshop two to consider how to turn the insights into an improvement plan to inform the delivery phase and ensure that sufficient advocacy and support is included for residents (led by Councillor Jackson)

The meeting ended at 8.36 pm

Chair:

Date:
