

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13 October 2022 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Ayesha Lahai-Taylor (Chair), Liam Shrivastava (Vice-Chair), Bill Brown and Mark Jackson

ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Councillor Hau-Yu Tam

APOLOGIES: Councillor Moore

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor James-J Walsh (Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure (job share)), Keith Cohen (Head of Lewisham YOS), Sidra Hill-Reid (Head of Adult Learning), Salena Mulhere (Assistant Chief Executive) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Performance), Councillor Amanda De Ryk (Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy), David Murray (Interim Director: Culture, Learning & Libraries) and Sherene Russell-Alexander

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 16th June 2022

1.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

2 Declarations of interest

2.1 RESOLVED:

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Lewisham Youth Offending Service and National Probation Service

3.1 Keith Cohen, Head of Lewisham Youth Offending Service (YOS), introduced the report to the Committee. The Committee was informed that Lucien Spence from the Probation Service was unable to attend. In the discussion that followed, the following key points were made:

- Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to the Youth Offending Service for the excellent work they did and thanked them for providing a tour for members of the committee.
- Sexual offences were an under-reported crime and strategies to address harmful sexual behaviours were in place. Staff had appropriate training including in contextual safeguarding and training took place in schools.

- There remained issues of disproportionality in the system. The YOS continued to highlight this and to do what they could to limit its effects. Many of the drivers of disproportionality were outside the control of the service or the Council so there were limits on what could be achieved. One project undertaken was to work with solicitors regarding “no comment” interviews to discuss the implications for young people involved such as potentially leading to increases in cases going to court and then in turn to increases in custodial sentences.
- Members of the Committee commented that providing a glossary of acronyms would be helpful.
- Those not in education, employment or training (NEET) continued to make up a large percentage of the young people coming into contact with the YOS and working closely with other teams in the Children and Young People Directorate was important as well as ensuring a child first approach.
- Monitoring numbers registered with a GP could be useful to ensuring consideration of the young people’s needs were met.
- Lewisham had the 5th highest rate amongst London boroughs for serious youth violence.
- The YOS was working with community partners to increase engagement such as with Youth First who had been commissioned to deliver a mentoring project with young people.
- A member of the committee commented that the committee report did not include the voice of young people within it. The Committee heard that the YOS continued to do a lot of work on ensuring young people’s voices were heard including working with Goldsmiths University on capturing a range of feedback from parents and young people. For traumatised young people it was essential that they felt safe and they trusted those that worked with them. Survey results in this area had consistently been very high. The report could be shared with the Committee.

3.2 **RESOLVED:** That

1. The recommendations of the annual Youth Justice Plan be agreed.
2. The report and data from the Probation Service be noted.
3. The evaluation carried out by the Youth Offending Team on the voice of young people be shared with members of the Committee.

4 **Staff Survey Results**

4.1 Salena Mulhere, Assistant Chief Executive presented the report to the Committee. Sherene Russell-Alexander, Head of Human Resources, was in attendance online. In the discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Members of the Committee highlighted the following areas as being of particular concern: that 50% of staff said they regularly worked additional hours to complete their work; that 25% of staff said they did not have the resources needed to do their job; that one third of staff had not had an appraisal in the last year; that one third felt they were not invested in; and that one fifth said they were looking to leave within the next year.

- In response the Committee was informed that these were areas of concern and there was a correlation to the reduced resources available. Senior Managers would be developing action plans with their teams to look at the issues in more detail and action plans would be linked to service plans for Directorates.
- Demographics played a part in terms of the numbers of those looking to leave the council.
- There had been a big increase in the number of staff receiving appraisals since the last staff survey. Managers were being monitored and considerations such as additional training needs were being looked at to improve rates.
- Exit surveys were not always carried out and this would be looked at in more detail to see if improvements could be made.
- Some pressure on staff time was from vacancies and there remained many roles that were hard to recruit to. However, in the context of the financial pressure on the Local Authority it was important to consider vacancies as to whether they needed to be filled, as it was preferable to delete vacant posts than having to make people redundant.
- Roles in Planning, Finance, HR and Education were all becoming harder to recruit to and this was a problem faced by many other local authorities.
- Members of the Committee requested additional analysis of the survey results including by protected characteristics and by grade. Additional information would be provided to the Committee once it became available.
- Lewisham had the highest retention level of social workers in London.
- There was limited money available for training but investment in staff could take place through other methods such as rewards and recognition programmes, secondments in other teams and volunteering opportunities.
- Members of the Committee expressed thanks to staff across the Council for their work and commented on the high level of cuts from central government in the last 10 years.
- A member of the committee highlighted a reciprocal mentoring scheme as a positive way to help staff development.
- The Committee was informed that the Employee Profile could be shared with them either as a formal committee report or for information.

4.2 **RESOLVED:**

The Assistant Chief Executive would provide members of the Committee with more detailed data, including breakdowns by protected characteristics, once it became available.

5 **Adult Learning Lewisham - Equalities update**

- 5.1 Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, and Sidra Hill-Reid, Head of Adult Learning Lewisham, presented the report to the Committee. David Murray, Interim Director of Culture, Learning and Libraries was also in attendance virtually. During the discussion, the following key points were raised:
- Members of the Committee praised Sidra and her team for the outstanding work they had been doing.
 - A member of the Committee asked why so many of the students were female (78%). The Committee heard that this was similar to other adult learning settings across the country and reflected a number of issues. The service would be looking at it to consider whether more could be done to encourage men to participate.

- Changes from the Department of Education meant that there would no longer be targets related to social cohesion which was of concern to the service as they were proud of the work carried out related to this.
- Adult Learning Lewisham had the full details of ethnicity of learners available. Categorisations in the report had been matched to census data and the GLA data. The funding for the service was through the GLA and data needed to be supplied to them in their standard format.

5.2 RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

That Sidra Hill-Reid and her team be thanked for the outstanding work they were doing.

6 Select Committee work programme

6.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the Committee.

6.2 **RESOLVED:** That

The work programme be agreed.

The meeting ended at 9.02 pm

Chair:

Date:
