



Public Accounts Select Committee

Healthier Communities Select Committee comments on the budget cuts

Date: 1 December 2022

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1.

Ward(s) affected: All (none specific).

Contributor: Healthier Communities Select Committee

Outline and recommendations

This report informs the Public Accounts Select Committee of the comments and views of the Healthier Communities Select Committee, arising from discussions about proposals for budget cuts.

The Public Accounts Select Committee is asked to consider the views of the Healthier Communities Select Committee as part of its overall consideration of the budget cuts. The referral from Healthier Communities Select Committee will be submitted to Mayor and Cabinet alongside any comments from the Public Accounts Select Committee.

1. Summary

- 1.1. On Tuesday 1 November 2022, the Healthier Communities Select Committee considered a report from officers on budget cuts proposals ([agenda for the meeting of the Healthier Communities Select Committee on 1 November 2022](#)). The Committee received an overview of the report from the Executive Director for Community Services and from the Director of Finance. Following questions to officers, the Committee agreed to refer a number of comments to Public Accounts Select Committee.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Public Accounts Select Committee is asked to consider the Committee's comments and submit them as part of its combined referral to Mayor and Cabinet.

3. Healthier Communities Select Committee views

- 3.1. The Committee requested that the following comments be referred to the Public

Accounts Select Committee:

- 1) **Reducing hours at Lewisham Libraries (COM_SAV_08)**. The Committee felt that in light of the policy on “Warm Welcomes” it was essential that the impact of the cut to library hours did not contradict the Warm Welcome Policy and that those groups particularly affected should be carefully considered before any hours were reduced.
- 2) **Sexual and reproductive health services in Primary Care (COM_SAV_10)**. The Committee felt that having a £30,000 underspend did not show that the money was not needed and that the outcomes for the service such as Lewisham exceeding the London and national average in use of Emergency Hormonal Contraception and in abortion rates including very high repeat termination rates showed that there was already high levels of unmet need.
- 3) **ASC Empowering Lewisham (COM_SAV_04)**. The Committee wanted reassurance that the savings listed were genuinely new savings and not double counting savings that had already been promised in previous budget reduction rounds. The Committee requested a report back on the delivery of the work from the Newton Europe Review.
- 4) **Reassessment of Care Plans (COM_SAV_03)**. The Committee felt the proposal highlighted the importance of the DFG Grant and ensuring it was easy for residents to understand and to apply for grants. The Committee wanted to stress the importance of maximising the spend on the DFG as it was an annual capital grant from central Government and in the past had been underspent. The Committee felt it would be useful to know the previous spends and current spend on the DFG.
- 5) The Committee also highlighted that it was concerned with the implications of the economic context in which the cuts were being taken. The additional pressures faced on residents and the Council from the cost of living crisis combined with uncertainties around the overall budget and financial settlement to local authorities, the Government’s Fair Cost of Care initiative, and the Adult Social Care pre-cept coming through to the Council’s general fund budget, meant that it was challenging to fully understand all the affects the combination of these and the savings proposals would have on vulnerable residents and to key services.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. There are no direct financial implications from this report. However, there may be implications arising from the implementation of the Committee’s recommendations. These will need to be considered as part of the response.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. The Constitution provides for select committees to refer reports to the Mayor and Cabinet, who are obliged to consider the report and the proposed response from the relevant Executive Director; and report back to the Committee within two months (not including recess).

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.2. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

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- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.3. There may be equalities implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

7. Climate change and environmental implications

7.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There may be climate change and environmental implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

8. Crime and disorder implications

8.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There may be implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

9.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There may be implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

10. Report author and contact

10.1. If you have any questions about this report then please contact: Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager) 020 8314 9446 – katie.wood@lewisham.gov.uk

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