

# MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 15 November 2022 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Mark Ingleby, Ese Erheriene, Chris Best, Ayesha Lahai-Taylor, Stephen Penfold, James Rathbone and Luke Sorba

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE PRESENT IN PERSON:

Councillor Amanda De Ryk, Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy; and Councillor James-J Walsh, Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure (job share).

MEMBER(S) JOINING REMOTELY:

Councillor Joan Millbank.

OFFICER(S) PRESENT IN PERSON:

Director of Law, Governance & Elections; and Assistant Chief Executive.

OFFICER(S) PRESENT REMOTELY:

Executive Director of Community Services; and Head of Overview & Scrutiny.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor James Royston.

Apologies for leaving early were noted regarding Councillor Joan Millbank and Councillor Luke Sorba.

Clerk: Senior Committee Manager.

## 1. Minutes

RESOLVED that minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel held on 4 October 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

## 3. Open Session - Decisions by Mayor and Cabinet on 2 November 2022

3.1.1 The Committee received the report and:

- Acknowledged that the Council's dealings with the current provider, Glendale Grounds Management, regarding the Green Space Management Contract had been successful over the term.
- Noted that the current contract extension would run until 30th October 2023.
- Noted plans to extend the current contract for a further 14 months to the end of December 2024 at a total cost of £3.1m.

- Noted that discussions were ongoing with Glendale Grounds Management (Glendale) but that in principle, an agreement had been reached that the overall contract expenditure would be in line with current costs.
- That the final decision on the extension contract value would be contained within existing agreed budgets and delegated to the Executive Director Community Services for approval.

3.1.2 In response to a question about the Council's direction of travel to ensure value for money for residents, the Executive Director of Corporate Services advised the Panel as follows:

- That the Council had ran out of permissible extensions regarding the existing contract.
- That 14 months had been determined as the longest time that the Council could extend the existing contract without undertaking a full procurement exercise.
- That given the current financial situation, an assessment by external consultants showed evidence that insourcing costs will be more than the Council could afford. Thus, the flexibility to extend the contract was considered prudent to allow time for some of the rapid inflationary volatilities in the marketplace to ease off.
- That if the Council's financial situation changed overtime, there should be no reason why a review would not include insourcing of the services as an option.
- That if it was determined that full procurement of the services should be undertaken after the agreed 14 months had lapsed, the Council would consider a commissioning arrangement similar in duration of 10 years to that of the existing contact with Glendale.

3.1.3 The Panel expressed a view that it was ironic to request the services of an external consultant to undertake a feasibility study on insourcing of the services. Notwithstanding that, the Panel felt that it was sensible not to commit the Council to a longer-term plan given the current financial situation.

3.1.4 In clarifying views expressed by the Panel, Councillor Amanda De Ryk, Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy advised as follows:

- That there were original internal assessments taken regarding the insourcing option for the contract, but those proved more expensive than the Council could afford. It was stated that the appointment of the external consultant was a follow-up from the lessons learnt in respect of those internal findings.
- That the Council's aspiration of insourcing, which was on hold at this present time, had not been solely financially based because part of what the Council wanted to do was to extend the Parks Service by identifying ways to do things differently, while having the flexibility to react to service demands.

3.1.5 Following a request to clarify statement in the report about the possibility of developing a hybrid model with some elements of the service possibly coming in-house, the Executive Director of Community Services stated as follows:

- That the Council has different arrangements for Beckenham Park Place, as was the case for the other parks around concessions.
- That with plans for Lewisham Homes to be brought in-house, the Council was considering ways to explore opportunities of doing things differently, including undertaking joint working arrangements for concessions to be organised, with a view to attract income generation opportunities and share risks in-house, whilst maintaining an outsourced element of the service.

3.1.6 The Panel noted further clarification about income generation by the Executive Director of Community services as follows:

- That the £35,000 referred to in the report was not income generated from fireworks events held in Blackheath and other parks. It was confirmed that the money was related to sponsorship raised by the Council's in-house Culture Team towards organising the fireworks events.
- That Lewisham's opportunities to host music festivals and other events to raise money cannot form part of the current financial model in the report because the income is expected to be delivered by the Council's budget.
- That Lewisham was working with neighbouring Royal Borough of Greenwich to avoid clashes when delivering of community events in Blackheath.

## 3.2 **The Corporate Strategy of Lewisham (Corporate Strategy) – 2022-2026**

3.2.1 The Panel considered the Corporate Strategy, and made the following general comments:

- That "live music" was mentioned twice under the "inward investment" section.
- That "Birmingham-Lewisham Caribbean & African Health Inequalities" was mentioned twice under "Diversity" and "Health & Wellbeing" sections.
- That the short paragraph on page 23 about young people was very compact, and therefore not explicit about efforts by the Council to embed race equality in schools.
- Equality should read as a theme across the each of the sections.
- That in pages 18 & 25, to consider using culture as a drive for economic growth, and perhaps consider benchmarking to compare with Camden and Haringey councils, and similar organisations where culture had been part of their economic recovery.
- That steps should be taken to backup and underpin opportunities from Lewisham's world class cultural partners. As an indication,

consideration should be taken to drive inward investment by working with partners under the Local Strategic Partnership umbrella.

- That consideration should be given of report back by perhaps informing the Mayor's meetings with local residents/local assemblies after implementation of the strategy. It was stated that progress reporting could also serve as a useful tool for ward councillors.

3.2.2 Specific comments made by the Panel regarding the Corporate Strategy were also noted as follows:

- That in terms of the aims of the corporate strategy, an annual report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee could serve as a means of sharing progress on performance with the public in the form of a dashboard approach to reporting. It was stated that such a consideration would likely provide an opportunity for the Council to be more agile.
- That it could be necessary to consider retrofitting in the final form of the cultural strategy as an opportunity to contribute to the Green Agenda as moving away from fossil fuels onto renewable energy infrastructure.
- That culture should be considered as an economic driver. It was stated that partnership with Lewisham's cultural anchor institutions could be used as an identity vehicle to drive the Place-shaping Strategy.
- That the theme of having diversity and race equality in the report was recognised, but there needed to be more emphasis on that in the young people's section.
- That there was a potential for developing a Health Charter as a means of linking "green" issues with "health". Panel recognised the strength that would present.

3.2.3 The meeting also noted suggested wordings by the Panel as follows:

- To include under quality Housing in the second paragraph of the report: "Working with all housing providers in the borough to encourage retro-fitting as part of our drive to be carbon-neutral by 2030, and to develop a Lewisham Rent Repairs Charter".
- To include under the health section in the report: "Lewisham Health Care and Wellbeing Charter to encourage residents to access the right service at the right time".

RESOLVED that the reports be noted.

#### **4. Scrutiny Update Report**

The Panel received a report presented by the Head of Overview and Scrutiny, and noted the select committee work programme, and that the current round of meetings would consider, amongst other matters, the Budget Reductions for 2023/24.

The Panel also noted the following updates:

- That both Task and Finish Groups were had commenced operation, and would be undertaking a range of visits and evidence gathering activities.
- That the creative and community workspaces Task and Finish Group (TFG) would meet on 16 November 2022, and the community gardening and allotments practice TFG on 30 November 2022.
- That when the Public Accounts Select Committee meets on 1 December, it would consider referrals on the budget from the other 5 select committees, with a view to present at the forthcoming Mayor and Cabinet meeting scheduled to take place on 7 December, along with its own comments.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Meeting closed at 20.12pm

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Chair