

# MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 July 2024 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Rudi Schmidt (Chair), Mark Jackson (Vice-Chair), Stephen Penfold, James Rathbone, Aliya Sheikh, Liam Shrivastava, Luke Sorba and Eva Stamirowski and

APOLOGIES: Councillors Joan Millbank and James Royston

ALSO PRESENT: Spike van der Vliet-Firth (Acting Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships), Charlotte Dale (Head of Scrutiny and Policy), Councillor Mark Ingleby and Councillor Kim Powell (Cabinet Member for Business, Jobs and Skills)

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Councillor Amanda De Ryk and Councillor Luke Warner

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 18 March, 27 March and 15 May 2024

- 1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes arising from the meetings held on 18 March, 27 March and 15 May 2024 be agreed as accurate records of proceedings.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the following declaration of interests be noted in relation to item 5 on the agenda (Economic Development Strategy)

Councillor Rathbone – employee of V22 Communities  
Councillor Ingleby – member of the Musicians' Union

## 3. Task and Finish Group Re-Establishment and Committee and TFG Appointments

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That
- (1) The Task and Finish Group relating to improving scrutiny be re-established.
  - (2) Councillor Pauline Dall be appointed to the Sustainable Development Select Committee.
  - (3) Councillor Pauline Dall be appointed to the Youth Provision Task and Finish Group.

## 4. Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25

- 4.1 **RESOLVED:** That the contents of the work programmes of the six Select Committees, as discussed and agreed by members of those committees, be approved.

## 5. Economic Development Strategy

- 5.1 Kim Powell, Cabinet Member for Business, Jobs and Skills; and Spike van der Vliet-Firth, Acting Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships introduced the item. Key points noted by the committee included that:
- Given current challenges and opportunities, it was felt to be a great time to launch an economic development strategy. Economic growth was central to the vision of the new government and the council was committed to achieving a resilient, thriving and inclusive economy for Lewisham.
  - The (non-statutory) strategy would help the borough respond to economic uncertainty and be creative, innovative and inclusive, recognising the structural inequality in the labour market, with an action plan to address it.
  - The three pillars of the evidence base provided were people, planet and prosperity:
    - The *people* pillar of the evidence base assists understanding of the increase in economic inactivity and the fact that 80% of Lewisham workers work out of borough - and allows Lewisham to understand its sectors, local employment patterns, and the nature and type of local businesses.
    - The *planet* pillar covers matters such as decarbonisation, the retrofit skills gap, carbon intensive jobs and the circular economy.
    - The *prosperity* pillar encompasses issues such as unsecure work, the threat of automation and low pay.
  - The evidence base that had been circulated to members as a background paper had been used to facilitate workshops with the Local Strategic Partnership and other key stakeholders. These workshops – and this scrutiny meeting – would help establish the overall vision.
- 5.2 The Chair welcomed plans to develop an ambitious, inclusive strategy and the opportunity for scrutiny to feed in at an early stage. He highlighted the following from the evidence base:
- Low-income areas in Lewisham tended to be coterminous with poor transport areas which compounded inequality
  - 13% of local jobs were zero-hour contract jobs
  - The borough had lost employment space (office and industrial)
  - There were opportunities and these included the impact of the affordable workspace strategy, the large ‘anchor institutions’ and thriving small businesses.
  - There were also opportunities in skills if we focussed on gaps and the skills required to get better paid jobs.
- 5.3 In response to questions from members of the committee, the following points were noted:
- The skills sector was fragmented with lots of organisations and funding streams but the strategy would aim to orientate partners to, for example, the green skills challenge. Ensuring seamless progression through the skills system was also important for business and residents. There was a role for *Lewisham Works*, the job centre and other employment

organisations in signposting people to skills training and helping them to navigate the system.

- The further education funding system was based on learner demand so the key was encouraging young people to take courses where there are skills gaps.
- Lewisham college was increasing its vocational offer and new courses were in the pipeline.
- There had been conversations with Youth First around piloting outreach in trusted spaces. Young people were particularly interested in the creative sector.
- A new care leavers employment service (Drive Forward Foundation) had already found jobs for seven care leavers. The data on care leavers was not necessarily comprehensive as some care leavers chose not to declare their care leaver status to employment agencies and employers.
- Lewisham had among the lowest job density in the UK and there was an aspiration to create 4,000 more jobs in the Council's 2022 Corporate Plan. The aim was that this would be achieved via a combination of new businesses and scaled up existing businesses.
- Working more closely with housebuilders on retrofit and modern methods of construction was another priority.
- Attracting large employers was difficult due to a lack of suitable sites. Large areas of development land were in short supply and there was competition with other possible uses, such as housing.
- Support for those with long term sickness and/or disabilities was a challenge but *Lewisham Works* had demonstrated that it was possible to work with economically inactive and disabled residents to help them into work. The issue with scaling this work up was resources.
- The Apprenticeship levy was working and there were lots of different types of apprenticeship on offer in the borough. The local authority had an 80% completion rate which was good. However, a number of Level 2 apprenticeships had been withdrawn and Level 3 apprenticeships had GCSE grade entry requirements, so entry level apprenticeships were restricted.
- The London Living wage was now more widespread in low paid sectors.
- As well as increasing local jobs and access to them, helping residents access the wider London economy and supporting them into high paid jobs outside of Lewisham was important.
- Transport access was important and the Bakerloo line extension crucial for improving access to the central London economy.
- Segregated cycle routes could also have a positive impact on areas with poor public transport connectivity.
- The evidence base allows the strategy to be hyperlocal in a very informed way. The strategy will try to assist scale-up and address factors preventing this from happening.
- The existing creative enterprise zone was a great opportunity, it made Lewisham a destination for creative businesses.
- The shared prosperity fund had been used to activate 34 tennis courts' worth of workspace in the borough. There was a 97% occupancy of co-working spaces in the borough. The relatively low land value in

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- The independent food scene in the borough was being promoted as part of the Discover Lewisham campaign and the council was continuing to market Lewisham as a destination.
- The strategy would help foster a pipeline of business support to help grow small and intermediate size businesses.
- Collaboration was key, including with anchor institutions and via the Local Strategic Partnership.
- A growth in GDP can mask a fall in the standard of living if there is population growth. The growth mission was understood by officers but they also considered the distribution of growth and inequality.
- The reputation of Lewisham was discussed and, excluding Deptford, the relative lack of a night-time economy. This was being addressed as part of the 'Discover Lewisham' campaign and as part of the major transformation work planned in Lewisham town centre following the receipt of levelling up funding. Licensing policy would also be considered as, if relatively conservative, could hamper the growth of the night-time economy. The trade-offs were also considered including the impact on local residents and accessibility and facilities (for example public toilets) would be addressed.
- It was important that businesses grew inclusively. Good employment charters were one method of trying to ensure this and it was noted that Lewisham only worked with London Living Wage employers and had adopted the GLA charter.
- It was noted that the increased number of people working from home was having a positive effect on many local businesses.
- Lewisham currently had 42 jobs per 100 workers and the Local Plan was integral to increasing commercial work space and increasing this number. The knowledge economy and the technology economy were potential growth areas.
- Business support services helped businesses become and stay sustainable.
- Lewisham officers worked regionally, for example with colleagues in Lambeth and Southwark on skills. Lewisham participated in Central London Forward and liaised regularly with the GLA.
- Convoys Wharf was progressing, despite concerns about slow progress, and the new economic development strategy would seek to influence how it develops.
- Heritage was important and reflecting what is unique about Lewisham and its communities in future developments.

5.4 **RESOLVED:** That a referral be made to Mayor and Cabinet requesting that, in developing the new economic development strategy officers should consider:

- Falling inequality as a central measure of success
- The council's role in advocating for improved transport connectivity, with targeted employment support in areas with low connectivity
- Strategies for creating a viable and attractive environment for large green infrastructure employers

- How heritage, culture and diversity unique to Lewisham can greater support our ambitions for Lewisham to become a destination
- Specific support for night-time economies including licensing support for music venues in appropriate locations and with appropriate provision of amenities
- Whether Lewisham should develop a borough specific Good Employer Charter which could address: zero-hour contracts, low pay and working conditions, with access to business support conditional on meeting the charter
- The visibility of corporate parenting responsibilities in the strategy
- Placemaking as a part of supporting the growth of local centres
- Work with healthcare providers to address economic inactivity.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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