

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 19 February 2019 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown, Juliet Campbell, Liam Curran, Jim Mallory, John Muldoon, Luke Sorba and Susan Wise

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor De-Ryk and Councillor Kalu

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joan Millbank and Councillor Alex Feis-Bryce

172. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the open meeting held on 29 January 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

173. Declarations of Interests

None received.

174. Outstanding Scrutiny Matters

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

175. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 13 February 2019

Budget 2019/20 and Budget Report Update

Councillor Wise said she was concerned that the Council was looking to make additional cuts of £11.8m in 2020/21. Councillor Wise commented that she knew about the overspend in Children's social care, and Adult Social care, and asked how these services were being monitored.

The Acting Chief Financial Officer responded that there were further cuts to be made but not more than those decided. He said the numbers had moved in relation to the timing, but the aggregate remained the same. The Acting Chief Financial Officer said the Fair Funding Review would make things clearer. He reported that incidentally there was an underspend in Adult Social Care, and the work done with the CCG reflects how Fair Funding money was utilised.

Councillor Sorba asked whether the money left over from Adult Social Care could be used to expand services, and was told £200k in a budget of £72m was not a significant amount that could be diverted or reshaped. Councillor Sorba also asked about the consequences of pausing cuts in the number of Health Visitors.

Business Panel noted that the numbers were not problematic, but the grades of the posts were, and the kind of duties they could do. The Acting Chief Financial Officer said the Trust made a commitment not to reduce posts, and they would not be changing the establishment. He said discussions would continue, and officers would do some more work which would result in proposals to Mayor and Cabinet next year.

Councillor Mallory said given the overall pressure on the Council budget officers should try to manage spending effectively. Councillor Muldoon said the Council should now be looking at radical transformation of services by officers acting under strong political leadership.

Councillor Curran said the Council should be more enterprising. He said the Council owned a lot of land and the land should make money for the Council, especially as land prices in the locality are so high. Councillor Curran said it would be helpful to have a single database of all Council's assets, which Members have requested several times but still had not been produced.

The Acting Chief Financial Officer said the Asset register had been compiled, but was told by Councillor Curran that Members were expecting a more sophisticated Asset Register that would include all the necessary information but that that had not been provided. Councillor Curran said Members had received a presentation in the past of what could be provided, and the proposed template was very good. It was what Members needed, but nothing came of it.

The Acting Chief Financial Officer informed Business Panel that an update on the Council's asset register will be going to the Public Accounts Select Committee on 20 March, and Members could voice their concerns at this meeting. Councillor Mallory said Members were welcome to attend the meeting. Councillor Wise suggested that officers check the list of properties diligently to ensure what is on paper corresponds with reality.

Following a question from Councillor Wise, the Acting Chief Financial Officer told Panel Members that parks income had been scrutinised and some doubts were raised which resulted in the Mayor asking for an update, and it was also agreed that scrutiny would continue.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Skills & Jobs (Job Share) thanked Members for their questions and said that she agreed complete transformation was necessary. She said the Council would not be able make further cuts in Adult Social Care unless there was total transformation. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Skills & Jobs (Job Share)said she shared Members concerns and aspirations.

RESOLVED that the decision of Mayor and Cabinet be noted.

176. Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees Work Programmes 2018-19 update

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report and informed Business Panel Members that there would be a meeting of Our Healthier South East London Joint

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 February 2019 to discuss population health and life expectancy.

Business Panel Members noted that those Select Committees conducting in-depth reviews this year have largely concluded their evidence sessions, visits and observations and would be preparing their final reports and recommendations soon.

Councillor Sorba said he understood that the number of meetings for the year had been cut from 8 to 6 to allow for new Members induction, but hoped that it would revert back to 8 meetings next year as their Select Committee found it very difficult to absorb all the items over the 6 meetings. He asked that proper thought be given to how this is managed in future election years.

Councillor Mallory said Public Accounts Select Committee focused on fewer major items. He added that Select Committees need to look at the number of meetings available and see how best their items could be managed.

Councillor Wise reported that out of the 6 meetings she was not able to attend one of them. She said new Members needed to learn about their committees and committees work. She said the Housing Select Committee would be looking at this, and their in-depth review at their next meeting.

Councillor Curran said he did not think there was enough time to deal with their items therefore he had asked for information reports and updates for most items unless an item was very important. He said the Sustainable Development Select Committee's main focus was on Catford Town Centre Regeneration.

Councillor Muldoon reported that it was still unclear what work scrutiny could do and Members awaited guidance from CLG. He said Scrutiny had to concentrate on items which adds value to the governance process.

Councillor Wise informed Members that Lewisham Homeless Forum was invited to their last meeting and she found it very informative and interactive. She said it was her best meeting so far in the year. Councillor Sorba endorsed this format, adding that the value of inviting community representatives to meetings was enormous as Members get a different picture of situations.

The Chair said Select Committee Chairs might have to assess their agenda bearing in mind the limited time available to do the work. The Scrutiny Manager said Chairs should note that very few items need to be on their list in accordance with their terms of reference; items are usually suggestions and could be removed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

177. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule

12(A) of the Act, as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (Amendments) (England) Regulations 2006:-

The following is a summary of decisions made at the closed meeting:

178. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 13 February 2019

Response to a Call-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel for Reconsideration of Mayor and Cabinet's decision regarding awarding a Contract for the Provision of Carer Information, Advice and Support Services

Following a detailed confidential discussion Business Panel agreed to make a motion referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to request a review of the Council's Procurement Procedures.

Meeting ended:8:30pm