

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 12 September 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Juliet Campbell (Chair), James Rathbone (Vice-Chair), Sophie Davis, Carl Handley, Jim Mallory, Stephen Penfold, Eva Stamirowski and James-J Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: David Austin (Acting Chief Finance Officer), Gary Connors (Crime Reduction Service Manager), Barrie Neal (Director of Corporate Policy and Governance), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Director of Public Protection and Safety) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July

1.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting on the 16th July be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Councillor Sophie Davis declared a personal interest in item 4 as she had a child attending a nursery in Ladywell ward.

2.2 Councillor James Rathbone declared an interest in item 4 as he helped run Manor House Library, one of whose tenants, was a nursery.

3. Response to Referrals from this Committee

3.1 RESOLVED:

There were no referrals considered at this meeting.

4. Budget Cuts

4.1 David Austin, Acting Executive Director of Corporate Services, gave an introduction to the Committee providing a financial overview and including details of the capital programme and equalities monitoring. During the discussion that followed the following key points were raised:

- There was a continual challenge to be able to budget for emerging agendas. Monitoring overspends closely as well as risks and pressures helped to identify challenges early.
- A member of the Committee commented that it could be useful to look into the possibility for CIL money to be spent corporately to protect key services.

- The Policy and Equalities Analysis of the report included the addition of a priority 8 “good governance and operational effectiveness” to help clarify the areas of corporate priority affected by the budget cuts.
- Socio-economic data was not collected as it was not part of the protected characteristics.
- If a decision required an Equalities Analysis Assessment, it would always be carried out prior to any decision being made by Mayor and Cabinet or any other decision-maker if delegated. Sometimes the full details could not be shown until a later stage. For example if there were staff cuts being proposed the assessment could show who was at risk but it would not be known who was actually affected until full consultations etc had taken place.
- Sometimes it was important to get the opinion of Select Committees at an early stage to ensure the right direction of travel before all consultations and equalities analyses were fully carried out.
- All Directors had had training from the Director of Law on equalities being embedded in decision-making.
- Members of the Committee commented that there was insufficient information regarding the cut proposal RES 20 for nursery lettings for a valuable decision to be made.
- In particular, they felt there needed to be a thorough understanding of the effect the cut would have on the number of nursery places available in the borough, on whether the nurseries were providing particular services such as meeting additional need for free places or providing concessionary rates. Demographic information on the users should also be collated to fully assess equalities implications.
- More work still needed to be done on asset management. **Members of the Committee would be updated on this by the Acting Head of Regeneration and Place once this was available.**

4.3 RESOLVED:

- 1) That the following comments regarding Budget Cut RES20 be referred to the Children and Young People’s Select Committee:

“Members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee felt that the true impact of the proposed cut and more details of the special characteristics of the nurseries involved needed to be known and understood prior to deciding the proposal so that the potential equalities impact on users can be outlined”

- 2) That the following comments be referred to Mayor and Cabinet:

It is important that all Council subsidised rents to commercial and voluntary sector organisations should be understood and available for review and for scrutiny.

- 3) That the following comment be referred to the Public Accounts Select Committee:

“That the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should be aligned to the Council’s Capital Programme.”

5. Violence Against Women and Girls

5.1 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Director of Public Protection and Safety, presented the report to the Committee. During the discussion that followed, the following key points were noted:

- The “one stop shop” model that the Athena service had provided had been very successful in terms of making it easier for people to access services.
- Any new service commissioned would still need to meet statutory requirements, such as refuge beds.
- There was a financial risk involved as currently the service was funded in part through a number of grants including through MOPAC; should external funding streams cease in the future, then the service would need to be reduced or the cost would need to be absorbed by the Council.
- Lewisham had the sixth highest levels of domestic violence in London.
- There would be a stronger focus on evaluating the impact and outcome of services provided under any new contract. This could include training assessments where individuals were asked to demonstrate what they knew before and after rather than just whether they felt they were better informed.
- There would be a continued monthly contract monitoring as part of any new contract.
- A member of the Committee asked whether the potential for CIL and NCIL money being used to bridge any funding gaps could be looked into.

5.2 RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6. Select Committee work programme

6.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager introduced the work programme to the Committee. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Members of the Committee requested that the HR update should remain on the work programme for the 16th January and representatives from the Council’s unions be invited to attend.
- The report on Lewisham libraries would be heard at the meeting on 9th October.
- To balance out the number of agenda items per meeting, the report on Disability Provision in Lewisham could be postponed until January.

6.2 RESOLVED:

That the Disability Provision in Lewisham report be moved to the meeting on 16th January.

7. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

7.1 RESOLVED:

Referrals were made on Item 4 as outlined above.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chair:

Date:
