

# MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 16 January 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors James Rathbone (Vice-Chair), Sophie Davis, Carl Handley, Jim Mallory, Lionel Openshaw and James-J Walsh and Bill Brown

APOLOGIES: Councillors Juliet Campbell, Stephen Penfold and Eva Stamirowski

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Kevin Bonavia (Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees & Accountability), Councillor Brenda Dacres (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities), Adam Bowles (Head of OD & HR), Simon Dobinson (Chief Superintendent) (Metropolitan Police Service), Keith Cohen (Head of Lewisham YOS), Gary Connors (Head of Crime, Enforcement and Regulation), Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer), Nathan Hobson (Station Commander, Lewisham Fire Station) (London Fire Brigade), Madeleine Jeffery (Director of Housing), John Newing (London Fire Brigade), Natasha Valladares (Projects and New Supply Strategy Manager) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2019

### 1.1 RESOLVED:

That the attendance of the meeting on the 26 November 2019 be amended to show that Cllr Dacres, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities was present at the meeting.

## 2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Cllr Davis declared an interest in item 4 as she worked for the Behavioural Insight Team; the Metropolitan Police were clients of the organisation.

## 3. Response to Referrals from this Committee

### 3.1 RESOLVED:

There were no responses to referrals to be considered at the meeting.

## 4. Update from local Police and Fire Services

4.1 Chief Superintendent Simon Dobinson, Borough Commander, SE BCU gave a presentation to the Committee, a copy of which will be included in the Committee papers and on the Council's website. During the discussion that followed, the following key points were highlighted:

- A member of the Committee asked about whether the capacity to provide crime prevention advice around burglary had been impacted by reduced numbers of officers. The Borough Commander responded that there was a focus on targeting neighbours and

neighbourhoods where there had been burglaries and providing advice and smart water kits etc. This was through the dedicated ward officers and PCSOs.

- Information on fraud prevention occurred through targeted Police campaigns. The Council's Crime Reduction Team had also been working on an operation called "Operation Neptune" focussing on scams and fraud. Work was done through trading standards and in partnership with other organisations. There was also a rapid response vehicle.
- The Pensioners Forum and other groups had been working with partners on practical examples of helping people be aware of scams and rogue traders.
- A member of the Committee highlighted that there was a lack of attendance by Police Officers at some of the Council's Local Assemblies. Written reports had been helpful but attendance would be more useful for the public that attended. This had been experienced in Lee Green/Blackheath. Members felt that some PCSOs would be able to substitute for officers at assembly meetings on occasions if that was appropriate.
- A member of the Committee highlighted that the Safer Neighbourhood ward panels had been challenging to work with recently due to high turnover of staff. The generic e-mail address was no longer being responded to. **It would be useful to have a clear procedure for contacting the teams.**
- A member of the Committee commented on the emergency response time for incidents following a personal experience where an emergency response took over 25 minutes and where he was informed that the resource was not available to investigate. **The Borough Commander would look into this specific incident to understand the details and provide more information.**
- A member of the Committee commented that the 101 number was ineffective as the wait was so long for calls to be picked up that people give up. This was a national system and at a local level there was no control over the speed of answering the call. Online reporting was being encouraged.
- The figures for crime in Lewisham showed that between May 2018 and April 2019 crimes across London had risen by 8% compared to a 5% rise in Lewisham. Robbery had fallen by 1% across London compared to a 7% increase in Lewisham. Knife crime with injury had decreased by 11% in Lewisham and Gun crime had decreased by 7% in Lewisham compared to an 18% increase across London.
- Regarding the neighbourhood ward teams, members of the Committee felt it would be useful to find a way to better engage. **The Borough Commander would look into the issue of e-mail contact addresses and get back to the Committee.**
- A member of the Committee commented that the Police recorded figures on their own were not always that helpful due to under-reporting and asked as a borough, for our own statistics, whether Lewisham would be able to triangulate with other data sources such as the Crime Survey for England and Wales or Hospital data to get a

more accurate picture. The Committee were informed that the Police local intelligence teams did use a range of data for crime patterns and analysis.

- **Ward data was used in analysis and targeting resources. The Director of Lewisham Youth Offending Service would provide additional information on this to the Committee.**
- A member of the Committee raised an issue with reporting to Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) in terms of data being passed on. Local residents had complained that they were reporting moped related incidents to the SNT in Ladywell as they occurred in Ladywell Fields. When Councillors tried to follow up on this they were informed by the Ladywell Team that it was related to Rushey Green so they had no details and the Rushey Green Team said they had not received the reports. It was important to ensure that there were processes to ensure that SNTs appropriately shared information. **The Borough Commander reported that he would look into this and respond to the Committee.**
- Quality of some CCTV was variable and not always able to be used. The Council managed CCTV was focussed in the town centres. Officers worked 24/7 so cameras could be targeted. There were 185 cameras in total plus with partners such as Lewisham Homes. **Additional information on where the cameras were placed would be provided to the Committee.**
- Members of the Committee were invited to visit the Council CCTV operation room. Members of the Committee were also invited to attend a ride along or walk around or to attend the Police operations room.

4.2 John Newing, Borough Commander for Lewisham, London Fire Brigade presented his report to the Committee. Nathan Hobson, Station Commander for Lewisham Fire Brigade was also in attendance. During the discussion that followed, the following key points were made:

- **Members of the Committee were invited to receive awareness training on corrosive substance attacks.**
- A member of the Committee asked whether pay levels were a challenge for recruitment. There were support mechanisms in place through the Firefighters charity and financial advice etc. was available. The Borough Commander was not aware of issues around officers in Lewisham needing to use food banks but would be happy to look into this if more details were available.
- The Fire Brigade would only charge for flooding call outs if they were related to commercial premises. Many of the call outs were from vulnerable people often on a low income.
- A member of the Committee asked whether the comparative London borough figures were based on overall incidents per borough or whether they took into account the number of residents to give a per head figure. **The Borough Commander would look into this and update the Committee.**
- A member of the Committee asked whether there was appropriate access to training across all levels of staff and how the service was

doing in terms of equal opportunities including the number of female staff and whether the workforce reflected the diversity of the community. **The Borough Commander would provide more information on training to the Committee.**

- There were 342 female fire fighters in London. Work was on-going with Bromley Fire Brigade to support female applicants. Lewisham Fire service was more diverse than many but still not representative enough compared to the population of the borough and work was on-going on this.
- Regarding hoarding, a member of the Committee asked for additional information on the process for supporting people that Councillors identified as at risk. One method could be to phone and connect to the nearest fire station to speak to them regarding fire risks, then the fire service could support the individual case. The Fire Service also worked with partners to identify vulnerable people and provide some support. **There was a Council Hoarding and Self-Neglect Protocol which would be circulated to Committee members.** Members of the Committee felt that a related information sheet for Councillors would be useful. The London Fire Brigade may also be able to provide phone numbers for Councillors.

#### 4.5 **RESOLVED:**

That Simon Dobinson, John Newing and Nathan Hobson be thanked for attending the meeting and for their reports and presentation to the Committee; and that the requested information as listed above be provided to the Committee.

### 5. **HR Information Update**

5.1 Adam Bowles, Director of Occupational Development and HR presented his report to the Committee. During the discussion that followed, the following key points were raised:

- Apologies were received from the representative from Unite who was unable to attend but thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak.
- Comments from the Chair, Cllr Campbell, were tabled and a copy would be included in the agenda documentation.
- The report was a public document and the report had been cleared by the Council's legal department.
- There were low numbers of non-voluntary leavers that were dismissal and this figure was lower than most London Councils.
- It was not possible from the report to know how many of those who had requested flexible retirement were still working for the Council. The Committee were informed that a number had left including the Chief Executive and two Directors.
- A member of the Committee asked whether a review process was built into a request for flexible retirement and whether the policy was robust to ensure it was not open-ended and how Lewisham compared to other local authorities and to best practice models. The Committee was informed that the normal process was for the applicant to be sponsored by a line

manager and for the application to then go to an panel chaired by the Head of Occupational Development and HR. In the case of the Chief Executive, this was the appointments committee and the agreement included a review date. At Lewisham, the policy was to a reduce to a maximum of three working days. Other authorities had different arrangements. The Council policy had not been reviewed since age discrimination legislation came into place and therefore should be reviewed as soon as possible.

- A member of the Committee raised a concern that requests for flexible retirement did not seem to be considered at the same time as a conscious decision to reduce posts to part-time positions.
- A review of flexible retirement arrangements in Lewisham would be undertaken in the next municipal year.

## 5.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

That it be noted that the Committee strongly supported a review of the Council's Flexible Retirement Policy.

## **6. Sanctuary Borough Commitment and Strategy**

6.1 Councillor Kevin Bonavia, Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees and Accountability, introduced the report to the Committee. Natasha Valladares, Projects and New Supply Strategy Manager and Madeleine Jefferies, Assistant Director of Housing Services were also in attendance. Members of the Committee were invited to comment prior to the strategy going to Mayor and Cabinet. Following their presentation the following key points were raised:

- It was highlighted that the lack of data around the characteristics of being a refugee, asylum seeker or migrant was reflected in the report's Equalities Analysis Assessments. There was a hope that going forward individual services would be more aware of these service users and find out more about the communities.
- Working in partnership with partners such as the Police and local Health Trusts was important.
- **More information on the LGBTi sanctuary provision would be provided to members of the Committee.**
- A member of the Committee asked how the Council was planning to constructively work with partners such as landlords. The Cabinet Member responded that action plans for all services were being created including guidance and information on communication methods. It would be positive to reach out to community partners to offer them this training as well.
- A member of the Committee asked how the Council would work to ensure communities in Lewisham continued to integrate and be welcoming. In response, the Executive Member stated that they were working with community groups and using opportunities to foster positive relations such as Refugees Week.
- **Standing orders were suspended at 9.15pm**

- A member of the Committee asked about how the role of churches fitted in with the strategy as in the past they had provided a sanctuary role. The Strategy was the Council's corporate strategy governing officers' work so did not include some of the wider work around sanctuary. There was, however, a lot of on-going work with faith groups and this could be explored further.
- A member of the committee requested additional information on the Sanctuary Borough wider ambitions and vision as a possible follow up report in the next municipal year.
- A member of the Committee commented that it was important to be mindful of intersectionalities within migrant communities as heavy dependence on faith groups could alienate and marginalise further some people such as those from LGBT+ groups.

### 6.3 **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a report on Lewisham as a Sanctuary Borough be put forward as a suggestion for the work programme for the next municipal year.

## 7. **Equalities Review - submitted evidence since last meeting**

7.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager introduced the report to the Committee. During the update and in the discussion that followed, the following keys points were raised:

- The handout from the Committee's workshop on the indices of deprivation was tabled at the meeting, a copy of which will be included in the agenda documentation.
- It was noted that following the committee's request at the last meeting for information on the exact thresholds for officers to produce an Equalities Analysis Assessment (EAA), new guidance had been drafted for officers which had been shared with the Committee.
- A member of the Committee highlighted the evidence provided in Appendix D from the Interfaith Forum and that a possible recommendation from the Committee's review could be around more work and engagement and dialogue around some of those issues. In particular there could be tensions between different equalities strands and it was important to engage with people on this.
- A member of the Committee also commented on the evidence from young people about a possible recommendation around improving dialogue and discussion.
- **It was requested that the list of faiths represented by the Interfaith Forum be included in the evidence in the final review the Committee produced.**

### 7.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report and possible recommendations be noted.

**8. Select Committee work programme**

8.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the Committee. Members of the Committee agreed that there were too many items on the agenda for the next meeting to be able to have productive discussions, and made suggestions for which items could be deferred until a later date.

**8.2 RESOLVED:**

That the following items be deferred from the Committee's 2019/20 work programme to the next municipal year:

- 1) Stop and Search and Prevent Review - 6-month update
- 2) YOS monitoring and progress against action plan.

**9. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

**9.1 RESOLVED:**

There were no referrals to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 10.05 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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