



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Update

Date: 5 March 2020

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Executive Director for Corporate Services (Scrutiny Manager)

Outline and recommendations

Members are asked to note the information provided.

1. Summary

- 1.1. This provides a summary of current scrutiny activity. The Select Committee Chairs may provide a brief oral update at the meeting.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the information provided.

3. Select Committees

Public Accounts Select Committee

- 3.1 The Public Accounts Select Committee continues to focus on areas of exception and risk. Over the past year it has extended its oversight beyond the pressures in children's and adult social care spending (where there are sustained pressures with multiple causes) to include scrutiny of the Council's environmental services, where significant challenges remain in managing costs. The Committee continues to review regular financial forecasts and the medium term financial strategy - as well as the preparation of the Council's budget and the cuts programme.
- 3.2 The Committee's ongoing review into corporate culture change and commercialisation has been directed by Councillor Krupksi, the Vice-Chair - who has developed a scrutiny specialism on this topic. A fact finding visit to the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in the autumn demonstrated how that Council had taken a 'big bang' approach to commercialisation through the radical transformation of all of its services. An

informative session with officers from the London Borough of Waltham Forest in the spring demonstrated an alternative 'organic' and 'incremental' approach to commercialisation, which used existing strengths in that Council to grow its commercial capabilities. The Committee believes that the time has come for Lewisham to free officers to innovate and to set in motion new projects. It anticipates that funding will be made available from the transformation budget to take forward this work in the near future.

- 3.3 At its February meeting, the Committee scrutinised the draft budget for 2020-21. Both the Mayor and the Cabinet Member were in attendance to answer questions. It is clear that the significant pressures facing the Council's finances and its resources are set to continue. Sustained improvement is still required in children's social care – whilst the service also works to contain spending pressures and resolve historic overspending. The receipt of grant funding for adult social care – not least from 'better care' and 'winter pressure' funding - have alleviated some of the pressures in that budget but continued uncertainties and risks remain. The Committee expects that the measures taken in environmental services (specifically in relation to fleet costs) will begin to have a positive impact on its budget pressures but some of the issues it faces will take concerted efforts at every level to resolve. Furthermore, there are uncertainties in the broader economy and it is highly likely that the Government's upcoming spending review will result in major challenges for local government. The recent stay from compound years of cuts will not last - and the Council will be required to make approximately £40m of additional reductions to its budget over the next three years.

Healthier Communities Select Committee

- 3.4 The Committee has looked at a range of important issues recently:

- At its last meeting the Committee carried out detailed scrutiny of primary care access and migrant charging at Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust.
- The Committee referred its views on migrant charging to the Trust and M&C and will continue its involvement in the issue over next year's work programme.
- At its next meeting the Committee will take a detailed look at the delivery of the Lewisham Health and Wellbeing priorities over the last year. The Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Director of Public Health are due to attend.
- The Committee is also considering an item on adult social care from local disability group, Lewisham Speaking Up, following its recent "people's parliament" on social care for people with learning disabilities.
- The Committee has also started to engage local NHS bodies, community organisations and Lewisham Healthwatch on next year's work programme.

Children and Young People Select Committee

- 3.5 The Children and Young People Select Committee has scrutinised a range of children's services this year. The Committee identified the Early Help Review as a priority at the start of the year, and has been closely involved in the development of the approach which covers Children and Family Centres, family support work, health visiting and the youth service etc. and will continue to be involved in the coming municipal year.
- 3.6 The Committee has carried out a short review into the impact that living in temporary accommodation has on children and young people. As part of this work, it has heard from homeless families, schools and visited one of Lewisham's hostels. The review is almost complete – recommendations will be agreed at the next meeting on 10 March 2020. Following on from this work, the Committee has been invited to the next meeting of the Housing Select Committee for an item on homelessness prevention and placement policy.

- 3.7 Other key areas for the Committee include CAMHS waiting times for Lewisham children, secondary school improvement and BAME achievement. A major topic is Children's Social Care improvement following the "Requires Improvement" Ofsted judgement in July 2019 where we have focussed on policy, resources and timelines. The Committee has also finalised its recommendations on reducing school exclusions and addressing the disproportionate numbers of excluded black children of Caribbean heritage.
- 3.8 The Committee also heard from parents and carers and commented on the Council's new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy and made suggestions for inclusion in the Council's new Children and Young People Plan and has asked for a report on the use of unregulated educational settings in the borough.
- 3.9 In July the Committee held a joint meeting with Healthier Communities Select Committee which looked at BAME mental health inequalities.
- 3.10 In January, the Committee held another informal meeting with the Young Mayor and Advisors, Youth First, the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum over pizza. Around 15 young people turned up and the event was a great opportunity to hear about the issues of most concern to young people. The Committee is looking at how to take some of the resulting suggestions forward.

Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee

- 3.11 The Committee has been carrying out a review over the course of this year into "How the Council embeds equalities across its service provision". As part of this, the Committee has gone on a number of visits including to Glasgow City Council where there is a strong focus on equalities including consideration of socio-economic factors, and to the London Borough of Sutton where there is a focus on working with community partners to embed equalities. The review also commissioned an evidence submission from the Local Government Association and sought discussion with existing Council partners and community groups. As part of the review three workshops were organised for committee members on: the English Indices of Deprivation; Equalities in the Commissioning and Procurement Process; and Equalities Analysis Assessments in Lewisham.
- 3.12 The Committee has spent time looking at Policing and Crime in the Borough including having updates on the Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction and the Safe Lewisham Plan. In addition to this, the Police Borough Commander for the SE BCU and the Borough Commander for Lewisham Fire Brigade have both attended the Committee to give updates and answer members concerns and queries. This has led to a number of positive actions such as concerns around contacting ward officers being addressed and all Councillors being offered training on dealing with acid attacks.
- 3.13 The Committee has continued to have a strong focus on community groups and the third sector, often through the consideration of equalities. This has led to the committee hearing evidence around adult isolation and the challenges facing older residents with community and voluntary groups such as Age UK, Lewisham Positive Ageing Council and Lewisham Pensioners Forum being invited to speak to the committee. Concerns around disability provision in the borough have also been considered by the Committee and the Chair of the Lewisham Disability Coalition is due to attend the March meeting.
- 3.14 Over the course of the last year, the Committee has made a number of referrals including on the Council budget cuts. This included highlighting the lack of equalities information and detail on budget cut proposal RES 20 related to nursery provision. This was supported by CYP Select Committee and led to this cut proposal being deferred by Mayor and Cabinet to investigate in more detail. The Committee also highlighted that all Council subsidised rents to commercial and voluntary sector organisations should be understood and a list should be available for review and for scrutiny. The Committee also highlighted to Business Panel the importance of all committees considering

equalities implications. A referral was also made to Mayor and Cabinet that Safer Stronger Select Committee endorsed the Council looking at developing a Food Poverty Action Plan and to considering how it could be supported.

Sustainable Development Select Committee

- 3.15 Over the past year the Sustainable Development Select Committee has been focused on the delivery of the new local plan. The plan will have important implications for the borough in decades to come. Its influence on housing, the local economy, culture, green space and the climate amongst many other issues will be far-reaching and fundamental. The Committee has reviewed the preparation of the evidence base for the plan – and commented on the characterisation study and open spaces assessment – amongst other issues. At its meeting in January the Committee scrutinised the completed draft plan. There are still a number of steps in the process before the plan is finalised and the Committee intends to continue its ‘critical friend’ challenge to officers at every opportunity.
- 3.16 The Committee’s review into parks management is coming to a conclusion. Visits and evidence gathering sessions were concluded in January – with Members attendance at a meeting of the Lewisham Green Spaces forum (which represents the borough’s parks friends and user groups). The Council’s planned insourcing of the parks service will represent a significant challenge for officers – and continued scrutiny of the process will be vital. The Council is also due to adopt a new parks and open spaces strategy – which will be considered for pre-decision scrutiny at the meeting on 11 March.
- 3.17 Lewisham’s declaration of a climate emergency is a high priority for the Committee. At the January meeting - officers presented the results of the first stage of research for the development of the climate emergency action plan. What is clear is that the Council will have to work with many different partners to meet the scale of the climate challenge (private housing and transport are two major areas in which there are limits on the Council’s influence). The Government will have to transform its approach to the climate if it is serious about meeting the targets for carbon emissions. The Committee recognises the implications of the emergency on all Council services – and it is mindful of the potential effects of climate change on the most vulnerable. That is why the future work programme will give this issue increasing prominence.

Housing Select Committee

- 3.18 The Committee has looked at a range of important issues recently:
- At its last meeting the Committee made a series of recommendations to Mayor & Cabinet following its in-depth review of resident engagement in housing development. These were considered by Mayor & Cabinet on 12th February and a response is awaited.
 - The Committee also agreed a referral to Mayor & Cabinet on the adoption of the statutory definition of overcrowding. The Committee requested a further report back in 6 months’ time once officers have assessed the potential impact. This was also considered by Mayor & Cabinet on 12th February.
 - At its next meeting the Committee is taking a detailed look at the implementation of the *Homelessness Reduction Act*. The outcomes of this meeting will likely influence the Committee’s work programme next year. Given their recent work on temporary accommodation, Members of the Children and Young People Select Committee have also been invited to attend the meeting for this item.
 - The Committee is also due to consider Lewisham Homes’ business plan at its next meeting, prior to its approval by Mayor & Cabinet.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the information provided in this report. Items in the work programmes of the committees will have financial implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. This report contains information on the activity undertaken by the select committees in relation to the implementation of their work programmes. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, all scrutiny select committees must devise and submit a work programme to the Business Panel at the start of each municipal year.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1. The Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.2. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3. There may be equalities implications arising from items on the select committee work programmes and all activities undertaken by the select committees will need to give due consideration to this.

7. Climate change and environmental implications

- 7.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the information in this report. Items in the work programmes of the committees may have climate change and environmental implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

8. Crime and disorder implications

- 8.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the information in this report. Items in the work programmes of the committees may have crime and disorder implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the information in this report. Items in the work programmes of the committees may have health and wellbeing implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

10. Report author and contact

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