

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 5 March 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown (Chair), Obajimi Adefiranye, Tauseef Anwar, Peter Bernards, Juliet Campbell, Patrick Codd, Liam Curran, Aisling Gallagher, Leo Gibbons, Alan Hall, Carl Handley, Octavia Holland, Coral Howard, Mark Ingleby, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Silvana Kelleher, Jim Mallory, Paul Maslin, Joan Millbank, Hilary Moore, John Muldoon, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Stephen Penfold, James Rathbone, Alan Smith, Luke Sorba, James-J Walsh and Susan Wise

APOLOGIES: Councillors Sakina Sheikh, Abdeslam Amrani, Tom Copley, Sophie Davis, Colin Elliott, Sue Hordijkenko, Caroline Kalu, Louise Krupski, Pauline Morrison, Olurotimi Ogunbadewa, Lionel Openshaw, Kim Powell and Eva Stamirowski

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Performance), Councillor Chris Best (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care), Councillor Brenda Dacres (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities), Charlotte Dale (Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Stephanie Fleck and Barrie Neal (Director of Corporate Policy and Governance)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2020

- 1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2020 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following addition:

The bullet point stating that: *“There was a £30k grant to support volunteers working with refugees so this should be able to fund DBS checks if required”* will have a clarification in brackets after it reading *“Following the meeting it was clarified that £20k of grant funding had been made available to Lewisham Refugee Welcome for the voluntary support of refugees in Lewisham”*.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the following declarations of interest be noted in relation to the *Executive Question Time* item on the agenda:

Cllr Jacq Paschoud – close relative is in receipt of a social care package from the Council.

Cllr John Paschoud – governor of a school attended by 4 or 5 Lewisham children; and declared his spouse's interest as described above.

Cllr Luke Sorba – Member of the governing body of trustees for the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.

Cllr Liz Johnston-Franklin - Non Executive Director for Youth First.

3. Scrutiny Update

- 3.1 The Chair of the Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee reported that her committee had considered the proposals around the distribution of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy monies the night before, and made a referral to Mayor and Cabinet outlining their concerns.
- 3.2 The Chair of the Housing Select Committee reminded those present that members of the Children and Young People Select Committee had been invited to the next meeting of his committee, on 12 March. The Committee would be looking at homelessness which was pertinent to the Children and Young People Select Committee's review into the effect of temporary accommodation on children.
- 3.2 **RESOLVED:** That the updates provided be noted.

4. Executive Question Time

- 4.1 Cllr Dacres was questioned first. In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the following points were noted:
- Athena would provide confidential and non-judgemental support to all Lewisham residents experiencing gender based violence.
 - The "public health approach to serious youth violence" strategy had been published and the approach was making a real difference, in particular the school immersive programme being piloted at Coopers Lane School and Sydenham Girls School. The approach was also making a difference in the home environment and leading to better engagement between parents and children.
 - 22 people had been trained to hold community conversations and deliver community based engagement and officers could look to do something specific for parents (of victims and perpetrators). The support required by parents varied and it was important to be led by their wishes and arrange support on a case by case basis.
 - Police were receiving training on unconscious bias and were spending time with young people whilst training, which was having an impact on the way stop and search was being carried out. Work was also being undertaken to ensure that young people knew their rights in relation to stop and search; and there was also collaboration with the Racial Disparity Unit.
 - Three local community organisations had received central government funding to deliver projects to tackle hatred and intolerance in Lewisham. Key approaches included theatre programmes (Second Wave), the provision of advocacy and accurate information, advice and guidance (African Advocacy Foundation) and using football as a hook (the Rio Ferdinand Foundation).
 - The concern hubs were dealing with 192 cases at present (136 male and 59 female) using a genuinely multi-disciplinary approach.
 - Deprivation was a key factor in violent crime, with 54% of violent incidents in Lewisham occurring in three wards.
 - *A query about step free access to Bellingham Station would be referred to Councillor McGeevor.*

4.2 Cllr Barnham was questioned second. In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the following points were noted:

- There has been a recognition that previously, the Council had perhaps taken formal safeguarding action too readily and there was now a greater focus on the ‘front door’ and taking the correct action straight away using a robust risk management framework. In terms of the number of children on protection plans, Lewisham was still above its statistical neighbours, but improving. The planned stronger emphasis on early help would be beneficial.
- There was a genuine will amongst schools to treat exclusion as a last resort. Fair Access Panels were used to ‘challenge’ headteachers seeking permanent exclusions to make sure there was no alternative.
- The strategy for improving school attainment would be reviewed. There was a new director of Lewisham Learning and schools were now able to commission support from a wider range of places.
- Because Lewisham exported more high attaining pupils at the secondary school phase than any other London borough, its schools were not truly comprehensive. Efforts were being made to attract the parents of all Lewisham pupils to Lewisham schools.
- With regards to the Youth Service, “reach” was the most important thing. Negotiations were ongoing with Youth First to ensure more targeted work would be provided.
- Due to improved financial processes, schools were now finding that they could run their budgets more effectively.
- The most important action people could take to halt the spread of coronavirus was to wash their hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water. The council was not aware of any schools having issues procuring sufficient liquid soap.
- Special educational needs support was regularly refocused to ensure it was meeting the needs of the borough’s young people. The expansion of special schools was not designed to cater for children in mainstream schools, but to increase the specialist provision available in the borough for those with specific high needs, to avoid them having to go out of borough.
- The Council would like to initiate a “Pause project” which would encompass supporting parents of children with special educational needs and learning disabilities. However, the current priority for the directorate was the workforce structure and the quality of practice.
- Following Ofsted’s “requires improvement” judgement in relation to children’s social care; a fresh inspection would likely take place in three or four years’ time, with two or three focused visits before then, looking at areas of weakness. One was expected this year, potentially looking at domestic violence or permanence planning. The Council was currently in year two of its four year improvement plan.
- The Council was not aware of any schools planning to academise, apart from Sedgehill which was subject to an Academy Order and would probably join the United Learning Academy Trust this summer.
- Although the Council was proposing to sell its outdoor education (Wide Horizons) sites, local schools would still have a wide range of other providers to choose from that were more fit for purpose.

4.3 Cllr Best was questioned third. In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the following points were noted:

- The Council had received £160k to reduce childhood obesity and would be holding market events for organisations that were interested in bidding to deliver associated contracts and these could be used to help smaller groups tender for work.
- Should the air quality monitoring sites reveal that certain particulate levels were increasing, further information could be provided, including on any action being taken to address this and improve air quality.
- The BAME Network were working with the Council to address 16 action points in relation to mental health.
- The Cabinet Member was not aware of any sexual assaults in Lewisham Care Homes. The work of the Independent Chair of the Adult Safeguarding Board was very important in helping ensure the safety of Care Homes.
- The Young Mayor's programme was an excellent initiative and the participants had a very productive working relationship with the Positive Ageing Council.
- The Cabinet Member was confident that the Council's coronavirus plans were robust. Actions included weekly meetings with the Council's emergency planning GOLD officer; the ordering of additional soap dispensers; regular partnership meetings to discuss plans; the display of posters encouraging people to wash their hands; and the updating of business continuity plans.

4.4 **RESOLVED:** That a referral to Mayor & Cabinet be made, outlining the further information requested by the Committee:

Safer Communities Portfolio

- **Athena** – Can sex workers be confident that they will get non judgemental support?
- **Concern Hubs** – Can a full range of statistics on useage be provided, including a breakdown of client ethnicity?

School Performance and Children's Services Portfolio

- **Schools in deficit** – How many Lewisham schools are in deficit and can some further information on their situations be provided?
- **Hand sanitising gel / handwash** – are any Lewisham schools experiencing difficulty in procuring these products as a result of shortages arising from the coronavirus outbreak?
- **School playing fields** – can more information be provided on the current strategy including whether there are any plans to expand the number of school playing fields?

Health and Adult Social Care Portfolio

- **Air quality** – Should the monitoring sites reveal that certain

particulate levels are increasing, can further information be provided on what is being done to address this and improve air quality?

- **Youth support** – Can more information be provided on the successful bid for funding to support youth support in two local accident and emergency departments?
- **Vaccinations** – can more information on uptake be provided?

5. Referrals to Mayor & Cabinet

- 5.1 A referral was made in relation to the item on the agenda entitled “Executive Question Time”.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

Chair:

Date:
