

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 September 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Juliet Campbell (Chair), James Rathbone (Vice-Chair), Carl Handley, Jim Mallory and Sakina Sheikh

APOLOGIES: Councillor Pauline Morrison

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Brenda Dacres (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities), Councillor Jonathan Slater (Cabinet Member for Community Sector), Paul Aladenika (Service Group Manager, Policy Development and Analytical Insight), David Austin (Acting Chief Finance Officer), Suki Binjal (Director of Law, Governance & HR), Tom Brown (Executive Director for Community Services), Charlotte Dale (Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Liz Dart (Head of Culture and Community Development), James Lee (Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure), Salena Mulhere (Assistant Chief Executive) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

1. Confirmation of Chair and Vice-Chair

1.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager opened the meeting and requested that members confirm the appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

1.2 RESOLVED:

That Councillor Juliet Campbell be confirmed as Chair and Councillor James Rathbone be confirmed as Vice-Chair for the 2020/21 municipal year.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 4.3.20

2.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 4 March 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

3. Declarations of interest

3.1 Councillor Sakina Sheikh declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 as she was a trustee of Voluntary Services Lewisham.

3.2 Councillor James Rathbone declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 6 as he was on the management team of Manor House Library and a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 as he was on the management committee of Metro VAL.

4. Response to Referrals from this Committee

- 4.1 The responses to referrals on food poverty and the neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) were noted.

5. Select Committee work programme

- 5.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the work programme report to the Committee.

5.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the work programme at Appendix E of the committee report be agreed as the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee's 2020/21 work programme.

6. Financial Stabilisation Budget

- 6.1 David Austin, Acting Chief Finance Officer, introduced the report to the Committee. During his introduction and in the discussion, the following key points were raised:

- The equalities remit of the Committee meant that it was particularly important to have an overview of the current financial circumstances of the Council ahead of the more specific decisions that would be made later in the year and to help with the context for all equalities considerations that the Committee made.
- The Council finances faced an unprecedented challenge from four main areas: the impact from the Covid-19 pandemic on services and finances; in-year overspends as a result of continuing cost and increased demand; uncertainty of public funding; and from the wider impact of any economic downturn.
- The council currently faced an in-year financial gap of around £20m from providing critical services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to this there was a £17m overspend which, it was hoped, could be reduced to 12m by the end of the financial year.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy set out the need to identify at least £40m of cuts over the next three years with the majority, around £24m, needed in the first year.
- The timetable is for detailed cuts proposals for scrutiny in November and December and for a final budget to be presented to council for approval in February 2021.
- Members of the Committee shared concerns with officers regarding the lack of clarity from central government and the extent of the budget cuts needed.
- Some in-year savings may be achieved from services not running due to the pandemic such as the Local Assemblies and library closures. However, there needed to be rapid change and learning in many areas due to the scale of the cuts that were necessary across the Council.
- The Cabinet Member for the Community Sector would be having lots of discussions with all the relevant local stakeholders prior to any proposals being made.

- The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive report.

6.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

7. **How the Council embeds Equalities across its service delivery - Draft Report**

7.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the Committee highlighting that it collated all the information and evidence received by the Committee during its review over the 2019/20 municipal year.

7.2 Councillor Juliet Campbell thanked all the community members and partner organisations who had given evidence to the review and read out the proposed recommendations which were agreed by the Committee.

7.3 Committee members thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair and Scrutiny Manager for their work on the review.

7.3 **RESOLVED:**

That the following recommendations be made as part of the Committee's review and the report and recommendations be sent to the Mayor and cabinet:

1. A Fairer Lewisham Duty should be established requiring the Council to consider socio-economic disadvantage in its decision making process.

a. All Equality Impact Assessments should consider socio-economic disadvantage on the same basis as the nine statutorily protected characteristics.

b. Lewisham Council should produce clear guidance for staff, Councillors, partner organisations and the public, explaining the Fairer Lewisham Duty, with reference to the Interim Guidance for Public Bodies produced by the Scottish Government.

2. Intersectionality should be considered as part of the Equalities process.

a. Each department and all project leads should consider issues of intersectionality, and a range of diverse groups and their needs.

b. The Council should listen to, include, and meaningfully collaborate with diverse groups. There should be diversity of individuals and diversity of organisations. One voice cannot speak for all.

c. In funding, designing and commissioning services the Council should take an intersectional approach. This could include;

- i. Ensuring diverse organisations closest to the ground take the lead in project design and implementation.
 - ii. Recognise and trust the expertise and lived experiences of organisations and movements, especially those representing marginalised groups.
 - iii. Funding diverse organisations and movements to facilitate safe spaces where particularly marginalised communities can feel empowered to speak freely.
- d. The Council should build a senior management team with a culture of inclusion that reflects the diversity of communities and overlapping identities in Lewisham.
- e. The Council should create a culture that celebrates difference by appreciating the contributions that everyone can make.

3 A more proactive approach should be taken to address the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- a. Equality objectives should be specific, achievable and measurable.
- b. Equality objectives should be readily understandable to the public.
- c. Equality objectives should identify areas of work via which improvements in equality can be made.
- d. Progress in these areas of work should be monitored and reported.

4. Staff Diversity Forums should be empowered within the Council.

- a. Forums should have a clear remit as to their purpose and how they contribute to the improvement of the Council.
- b. Forums should have a set time to meet to discuss, promote and air concerns staff may have affecting equality in the Council. This should be adequately resourced and supported by the Council.
- c. Forum leads should be given specific time away from their substantive role to plan, prepare and carry out the forums activities. This should be protected time which will not impact on their hours of work.
- d. Forum members should be given time to participate in its activities.
- e. Forums should be given the opportunity to meet with senior management and communicate the experiences and needs of staff.

5. The Council should adopt an Open Data approach for Equalities.

a. Data sharing across the organisation should be improved. It should not be a challenge to access data that has already been collated by different teams or departments.

b. Guidance for producing Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) should be clear. Equality Impact Assessments should be data driven.

c. Every Equality Impact Assessment should be logged by Corporate Services and published on the Council website making it accessible to all.

d. Steps should be made to ensure individuals are confident sharing their data with the Council to help improve services. At the point where individuals share their data agreements should be in place to allow for this to be anonymised and shared where necessary.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

Chair:

Date:
