

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 13 October 2020 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown, Sophie Davis, Peter Bernards, Juliet Campbell, Patrick Codd, Joan Millbank, John Muldoon and Luke Sorba

ALSO PRESENT:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Liam Curran and Councillor Kim Powell.

Presenting Officers:

Director of Public Services, Assistant Chief Executive, Head of Business & Committees.

Clerk:

Senior Committee Manager.

The meeting commenced at 7.05pm and adjourned at 7.06pm in order to consider business of the Overview and Scrutiny Education Business Panel.

The meeting resumed at 7.57pm.

1. Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the last meeting held on 29 September 2020 be confirmed and agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of Interests

The meeting noted personal interests in relation to Item 3 "Scrutiny of the Council's Covid-19 Response – Update Report" as follows:

- Cllr Joan Millbank – declared that she is a member of the Lewisham Local Collaborative;
- Councillor Sakina Sheikh – declared that she is a trustee on the board of the British Sign Language Voluntary Services in Lewisham.

3. Scrutiny of the Council's Covid-19 Response - Update Report

The Director Public Services (Director of PS) introduced the report, highlighting progress in regard to the Council's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Panel noted progress, and expressed an appreciation that key metrics used by officers to monitor and manage the ongoing response to COVID-19 were included in the report. It was recognised that the strategy and objectives to be employed by Lewisham had also been revised to reflect developments since the

last report on the subject was considered. As part of the discussion, the Panel asked questions on aspects of the report, and received responses as follows:

1. **Enforcement**

In response to questions raised, the Panel received clarification from the Director of PS that although there was police presence at Lewisham Shopping centre, confrontations would likely occur if enforcement was carried out inside of business premises. Furthermore, the Council do not have sufficient resources to carry out enforcement in queues outside of shops, and across public areas in Lewisham. Thus, enforcement would be a last resort. Notwithstanding that, the police and the Council's stance remained that residents should be informed and encouraged to comply with restrictions and hygiene guidelines to help minimise the spread of COVID-19.

The Director of PS continued with his response with an assurance to the Panel that the Council was applying lessons learnt from the first lockdown in regard to its work in local parks and open spaces, and had recruited 58 community champions to work jointly with the police to communicate the public health message to residents. It stated that the recruitment exercise for community champions by the Council was ongoing, and that those presently employed were kept up-to-date via webinars and emails to ensure the delivery of timely and consistent information about COVID-19 to residents in Lewisham.

2. **Deaths Data**

In response to an enquiry about an increase of 29 in the number of deaths figures reported up to 25 September 2020, the Director of PS advised the Panel that the two primary sources of data on COVID-19 mortality in Lewisham came from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the local Registry Office. It was clarified that the data from the ONS was published fortnightly, and included all deaths that had occurred nationally as a result of COVID-19, irrespective of location at the time of the incident, whereas, the local Registry Office collate similar data immediately after the incidents occur. Thus, the time gap between receiving the ONS data and reporting it locally was the reason for the difference in the figures.

3. **Test & Trace Activities**

Continuing with his response to questions raised, the Director of PS clarified to the Panel that although Lewisham's testing rates increased over the last week, positive tests were lower when compared with other London boroughs. The Panel received confirmation that the Council was deploying and training its COVID-19 Action Teams to test and trace in order to supplement the work of the national team at a local level.

4. Safety in Care Homes

Following on from a question at the last meeting, the Director of PS informed the Panel that councils were now required to designate a care home to manage positive cases and provide evidence of plans in place to keep residents and staff safe.

Commenting on a question raised at the last meeting, the Panel noted confirmation from the Director of PS that the Council had since received a letter from the Department of Health and Social Care regarding the discharge of positive cases of COVID-19 patients into care homes. It was stated that councils were now required to designate care homes in their locality to be checked by the Care Quality Commission as to how positive cases are being managed, and that the right infection controls were in place to keep residents and staff safe. It was stated that the Director of Public Health was currently putting plans in place for compliance.

5. Financial Effect

The Chair, Councillor Bill Brown, asked that it should be noted that the Panel was concerned about the increase of the financial impact on the Council's response to COVID-19, particularly the cost of work to support and protect vulnerable residents in Lewisham.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

4. Update on temporary measures to support safer walking and cycling in response to the COVID 19 pandemic

RESOLVED the update report on temporary measures to support safer walking and cycling in response to the COVID-19 pandemic be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.

5. Key Decision Plan

The report was received as per the agenda, and noted by the Panel.

In response to a question, the Head of Business and Committees stated that he was aware that the 'Adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy' reports would be combined as one overarching report. It was stated that the reason for the combination was to ensure continuous housing provision service to homeless people while the Strategy was being developed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6. Decisions Made by Mayor on 7 October 2020 - open session

RESOLVED that decisions made at the meeting of the Mayor and Cabinet on 7 October 2020, be noted.

7. Scrutiny Update Report

The report was introduced by the Assistant Chief Executive. Members of Select Committees were invited to raise issues they considered necessary for information and/or comment.

Councillor Muldoon, Chair of Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee stated that the Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Panel. However, it should be noted that it made a referral to Mayor and Cabinet on 7 October 2020 to express views that test and trace activities would be effective if conducted locally, rather than by central government.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Chair