

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday 16 February 2021 at 7.25pm

PRESENT: Councillor Brown, Councillor Bernardis, Councillor Campbell, Councillor Codd, Councillor Millbank, Councillor Powell, Councillor Muldoon, Councillor Sorba, Councillor John Paschoud

Also present: Councillor Howard, Councillor Bonavia

Presenting Officers: Executive Director for Children and Young People, Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm, Head of Business and Committee, Director of Corporate Resources

Apologies: Councillor Davis and Councillor Curran

1. Minutes

Councillor Millbank asked that the minutes be changed from;

Item 5- "Councillor Millbank said that nursery provision was important and Lewisham would be supporting the nursery to find an alternative site because it would only be available for 5 years." to;

"Councillor Millbank said that nursery provision was important and Lewisham would be supporting the nursery to find an alternative site." As the sentence is not factual or an accurate depiction of what was said.

The amendment was agreed.

On matters arising, Councillor Millbank asked if there was any information on her question of whether Lewisham Market toilets were open, and requested that the relevant officer gives this information at their earliest convenience.

The minutes were agreed.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sorba declared an interest as Lewisham Council's governor representative on the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation trust.

Councillor Millbank declared an interest in item 3 as a Member of Lewisham Local Collaborative.

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

The Executive Director for Housing Regeneration and Public Realm presented this report. He summarised the report, giving the following update:

In the last few days infection rate numbers have dropped in the borough. The infection rates are still very high and numbers of admission to hospitals are still high.

He stated that throughout the whole pandemic, services which are critical have been prioritised and the Council has ensured these services remain available. He added that the Council has worked very hard and is managing well, being very agile and flexible around the workforce.

When the report was written there were 140 staff who were transferred from non-critical services to provide support to citizens and residents via the COVID Action Team, working with shielding, tracing, PPE distribution and supporting business grants. This service has been increased as the amount of adults needing shielding in the borough has increased. The government had announced that another 1.7 million people were being put in the shielding cohort. He added that for Lewisham, this meant 8000-9000 more residents in shielding.

Enforcement has been stepped up within the Metropolitan Police to ensure the restrictions since the national lockdown are adhered to. The Council is working closely with the police to assist in the relevant areas.

Councillor Muldoon introduced a call for action to the Panel to make a referral to Mayor & Cabinet.

Jane Keogh from Lewisham Refugees and Migrants Network presented a campaign to promote vaccination for all. She discussed the following:

While the government has stated that the vaccine is available to all, many people are unable to access the vaccine. The Department for Health and Social Care have overlooked the needs of marginalised groups and longstanding barriers to healthcare that deters people from seeking care or even registering with a GP service. She asked that Lewisham sign up for this campaign to ensure nobody will be excluded from the vaccine roll-out. The hope is that local councils will take action to ensure this accessibility.

She furthered that without any action, the virus will have a disproportionate impact on marginalised groups and communities, people who are homeless, and people at risk of homelessness. There is a fear among such communities that if they risk signing up at a GP or to take the vaccine they are at risk of being deported or facing death.

Councillor Bonavia added that there is both self- interest and mutual interest in making sure that the vaccine is accessible to the marginalised groups as the more people that are protected, the safe the community becomes. The Council has signed a joint letter with Doctors of the World to the Safer Services Initiative as reminder that immigration status and NI number can remain as undisclosed information and to point out the services which are available to assist with vaccination information and languages support, but he stated the Council is always willing to do more.

Councillor Campbell said the borough will have to be creative with helping those marginalised as the Council is unable to make its own rules. She pointed out that the purpose of the vaccine is defeated if it is not accessible to everyone as the nation is at risk of another lockdown if the issue is not addressed.

Councillor Bernard asked how these marginalised communities are being notified of the services that are out there to assist them. Councillor Bonavia responded that the Lewisham Migration Forum shares information with people and services who works with migrants to get the information out there. More practically, through the Forum, the Council has produced a cascade operation by asking these networks to distribute the information further.

Based on the discussion and presentation, the following referral was made;-

- 1) Guarantee a firewall that prevents any information governed by the NHS being used for Test & Trace being used for immigration enforcement
- 2) End all hostile environment measures in the NHS, including charging for migrants, to combat the fear and mistrust these policies have created
- 3) Provide specific support for all GP surgeries to register everyone including under-documented and undocumented migrants and those without secure accommodation and ensure that all other routes to vaccination are accessible to everyone
- 4) Fund a public information campaign to ensure that communities impacted by their hostile environment are aware of their rights and access to the vaccine.

The referral was agreed by the Panel.

Councillor Sorba asked if it were possible for the Council to boost testing support as PVI nursery workers are not given the same opportunity to self-test twice a week. The Executive Director for Children and Young People stated that the discrepancy has been acknowledged and the guidance set by the government is very strict and the Council is therefore constrained by these restrictions. The test kits are sent directly to the schools. It was said that the Council are working closely with PVI providers to support them to have their staff tested and testing points across the council has increased.

In response to questions from Councillor Codd, the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm stated that the Council is constantly reviewing what its doing and what needs to be done during this period, particularly its resourcing capability on a day-to-day basis

The report was noted.

4. Decisions made by the Mayor on February 10 2021

Councillor Sorba commented on the decision concerning child and adolescent mental health services. He said that following the discussions around the Council cutting its contribution to CAMHS, it is still the recommendation of the CYP Committee for the cut not to be taken. He also asked the Executive Director of CYP if he knew what circumstances the contingency fund will be used and who makes such a decision. He also asked if no reimbursement is made from the services will this have any bearing on the use of the fund.

The response was that a methodology of triggers for releasing that money is being worked on. The 2 elements being considered are the CAMHS and the work behind it. The triggers include increase of referrals; decrease in the acceptance of referrals; increase in waiting times; then an increase in wait from referral to assessment. It was also said by the Director of Corporate Resources that the cut will be made and the money will be held corporately in a central division to be monitored.

RESOLVED the report was noted.

5. Scrutiny Update

RESOLVED the report was noted.

6. Key Decision Plan

The Head of Business and Committee presented this report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meetings finished at 9.08pm