

# MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday 12 October 2021 at 7pm

Present: Councillor Maslin (Chair), Councillor Campbell, Councillor Ingleby, Councillor Krupski, Councillor Millbank, Councillor Muldoon.

Present remotely: Councillor Bernards, Councillor Wise.

In Attendance remotely: Councillor Dacres

Also Present: Director of Communities, Partnership and Leisure (DCPL), Officers (Housing Services).

Apologies: Councillor Holland, Councillor Sorba

## 1. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

## 2. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were deferred to the next scheduled Committee meeting.

## 3. Key Decision Plan

The Head of Business and Committee presented this item. The report outlined the upcoming key decisions over the next few months.

Councillor Millbank asked if the 'Lewisham and Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood: Consultation report' would consider just that particular neighbourhood or Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in general.

The Head of Business and Committee responded that he would consult with the local authority's transport and highways officer, for further clarification. Councillor Krupski confirmed the consultation would specifically address the consultation feedback with regard to the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood.

Councillor Muldoon noted a typo on page 11 of the Key Decision Plan stating that the report titled 'Permission to award principal contractor to carry out refurbishment works to Lewisham Town Hall' should probably include the word 'Works' as opposed to 'Woks'.

The Head of Business and Committee acknowledged the typo error and confirmed that Councillor Muldoon's assertion, was correct.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## 4. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet - 6 October 2021 in open session

Private Sector Housing - Consultation for introducing selective licensing scheme

The Chair advised Members that he had received a request from Councillor Ingleby, for the panel to consider a decision made by the Mayor and Cabinet, in regard to the: 'Borough-Wide Selective Licensing of the private rented sector – approval to consult' report.

Councillor Ingleby requested:

1. Clarification whether what was being proposed in the report, fell within Article 4 directions
2. Advice on whether the Article 4 directions process, helped or hindered the progress, of the proposal

An Officer who represented Housing Services, advised Members the Article 4 directions related to individual properties that required planning consent.

The Officer informed Members the local authority intended to launch a Selective Licensing scheme, which would regulate the management of HMO's. The Officer concluded that the Article 4 directions would not impact the proposal, as the proposal did not include the development of HMO's.

#### Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2021-26

The Chair informed Members that he had received a request from Councillor Campbell, for the panel to consider a decision made by the Mayor and Cabinet, in regard to the: 'Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls Strategy' report.

Councillor Campbell enquired:

1. What tangible preventative work would be conducted, to prevent violence against women and girls, as well as addressing street violence
2. What work would the police be involved with in support, as stakeholders of the strategy, in partnership with the local authority
3. How would the local authority convey the impact the strategy had, on preventing violence against women and girls.

The Director of Communities, Partnership and Leisure (DCPL), advised Members that the strategy placed a huge focus on the prevention of violence, as priority. The DCPL quoted from the report with regard to the action plan outlined within, which proposed to raise awareness of domestic abuse along with early intervention measures such as: various education programs, public facing campaigns and promoting zero tolerance approaches. The DCPL assured Members, it is now the local authority's role to deliver on the action plan outlined. The DCPL confirmed that once the proposal had been approved, the strategy's offer would be implemented. The DCPL emphasised that continual scrutiny of the strategy would be welcome, as well as guidance from the panel and public, to ensure the action plan was delivered.

The DCPL advised that with regard to the police, it was acknowledged whilst their contribution to the strategy had not been highlighted, their support was at the core of the strategy's delivery. The DCPL advised Members of police strategies, such as: the multi-agency risk assessment conference, co-chaired by the police, which was key to dealing with very high risk abuse cases. Mention was also given to the various domestic violence and other protection orders, referred to in the report managed by the police. The DCPL also emphasised the police work conducted, via constant review of domestic violence cases, under the initiative 'Operation Dauntless'.

The DCPL clarified the dashboard methods, as outlined in section 10 of the report that would convey how the strategy, had made an impact on the prevention of domestic violence.

Councillor Krupski asked:

1. Why the local authority had such a poor record in the prevention of domestic violence
2. Had been any research been conducted, to identify what triggered instances of abuse i.e. stress.
3. What could be done in terms of building expertise in professionals, who work with abuse cases, to help them identify the early signs of domestic violence, so they can assist those affected?
4. Were there any charities or organisations that helped males affected by domestic violence?

The DCPL acknowledged the wide prevalence of domestic abuse cases in the borough and advised a huge amount of research was being conducted, to establish the causes. Members were advised the local authority was in discussion with the police, to obtain full victim profiles for research purposes. The Committee were advised the local authority had officers on standby to engage in the research process.

Members were assured that professional training was being addressed, to equip professionals to identify abuse and respond appropriately. The DCPL recounted the research conducted amongst abuse survivors, which highlighted the importance of professional curiosity.

The DCPL acknowledged that domestic abuse appeared to be gender specific. Members were advised that the strategy sought to use gender neutral language. It was advised that care was taken to neutralise pronouns. The DCPL advised the strategy did recognise and expand on the prevalence of male against female domestic abuse. Members were informed the strategy addressed this and the need for men to challenge and address misogynist behaviours.

Members were advised that the local authority noted the lack of services for male victims of domestic abuse and had launched a campaign to address the issue. The DCPL advised of the campaigns progress, in terms of referrals received.

Councillor Millbank requested:

1. Clarification, with regard to 'cross borough work' referred to on section 6.8 of the cover report, page 68 of the strategy.
2. Assurance that the local authority would recognise White Ribbon Day on the 25 November 2021.
3. How can the local authority add its voice to have misogyny recognised as a hate crime?

The DCPL advised that with regard to domestic violence, there was more cross borough work, than on any other policy area.

Members were assured White Ribbon Day would be recognised on the 25 November, which would be the first of the 16 days of activism, to end violence against women. The DCPL discussed the planned launch of the strategy on the 9 November to tie in with White Ribbon Day and other events.

Councillor Dacres reiterated the DCPL's advice with regard to the launch of the strategy and events in support of the strategy and White Ribbon Day.

Councillor Dacres discussed the work carried out to make misogyny a hate crime, such as the open letter sent to government signed by over 270 female councillors. The Councillor noted the support from councillors for misogyny as a hate crime to be written into law.

Members were assured the work for misogyny to be recognised legally as a crime, would continue.

The Chair advised Members that he was aware that following recent tragic events, the voices against misogyny were mainly those of women. He advised the importance of men in the local authority to acknowledge the need to challenge and address the misogynist behaviours of men alongside women, to ensure success in combating misogyny.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

#### **5. Decisions by the Executive Director of Community Services in open session**

No requests were made for the Panel to consider any decisions.

The item was closed.

#### **6. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the report be noted

#### **7. Part 2 – Closed Session - Decisions by M&C- 6 Oct2021**

RESOLVED that the report be noted

#### **8. Part 2 Decisions made by the Executive Directors**

The Chair advised Members that he had received a request from Councillor Ingleby, for the panel to consider a confidential decision made by the Executive Director for Community Services, in regard to the report 'Permission to Procure Lewisham and Greenwich Appropriate Adult Service for Vulnerable Adults'. A question was asked by Councillor Ingleby which was fully addressed by Tom Brown, the Executive Director for Community Services.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

The meeting ended at 7.48pm