



Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel

Scrutiny Update

Date: 25 January 2022

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Assistant Chief Executive (Head of Overview and Scrutiny)

Outline and recommendations

The purpose of this item is for Members to receive an update from Select Committee Chairs on any scrutiny activity related to their Committee that they wish to bring to the Panel's attention. The Head of Overview and Scrutiny may also provide an update if the Select Committees have met since the last Business Panel meeting.

1. Summary

- 1.1. The intention of this item is to provide Members with an update on current scrutiny activity, including the work of the there task and finish groups.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are asked to disuss and note any information provided.

3. Scrutiny Update

Select Committees

- 3.1 The current round of Select Committee meetings is taking place, which includes scrutiny of budget proposals:
- Healthier Communities – 12 January
 - Safer Stronger Communities – 13 January
 - Sustainable Development – 18 January
 - Housing – 20 January
 - Children and Young People – 26 January
 - Public Accounts – 27 January

- 3.2 Select Committee Chairs are invited to provide an update on any scrutiny activity related to their committee that they wish to bring to the Panel's attention.
- 3.3 The work programmes for each Select Committee are attached at Appendix A.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.4 The full Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 30 November to consider a report on the climate emergency and the Future Lewisham theme "A Greener Future". This work was led by Councillor Penfold and Councillor Krupski and a number of recommendations were made. There was also an update on the implementation of the recommendations made at the last meeting, concerning the resident experience programme and it was agreed that councillors would continue to be involved in this area of work.
- 3.5 The next meeting of the committee on 22 February 2022 will focus on the Future Lewisham priority "An Economically Sound Future". Miatta Fahnbulleh, Chief Executive of the New Economics Foundation, will speak to Members about sustainable local economic growth and the Committee will hear from the Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships on the local context and activity relating to attracting and supporting businesses and supporting residents into work. Work being undertaken by partners will also be considered.

Task and Finish Groups

- 3.6 Three time limited task and finish groups (TFGs) were established last year by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at:
- Improving digital inclusion for Lewisham residents with a learning disability to improve quality of life
 - Improving Wi-Fi access and connectivity to improve educational outcomes for Lewisham's pupils, particularly those most in need
 - Retrofitting and insulating homes in Lewisham to achieve climate change targets.
- 3.7 The TFGs recently held informal mid-way meetings to catch up on the work that has been completed so far and to consider plans for the solutions stage of the investigations.

Digital Inclusion for Adults with Learning Disabilities TFG

- 3.8 The review has heard evidence and met with a wide range of groups, organisations and individuals in Lewisham and nationally. For example, Lewisham Speaking UP, Socitm, Leeds City Council, Digital Poverty Action Alliance, Lewisham Homes, Mencap, a range of council officers and many more.
- 3.9 The group is starting to consider areas for recommendations it feels will help increase digital inclusion in Lewisham amongst residents with learning disabilities.
- 3.10 The final meeting of the task and finish group will be held on 3 February 2022. Members of the group will agree their final report, summarising the evidence they have received, and make their recommendations.

Digital Inclusion in Education TFG

- 3.11 The digital inclusion in education in education task and finish group set out with an

ambitious programme to engage with a range of practitioners, researchers and local stakeholders. The group quickly realised that there are many facets to the concept of inclusion and that the issues of connectivity and availability of devices should be seen alongside varying levels of confidence of those using the available technologies. Teachers and leaders from local schools shared examples of best practice and reflected on the challenges of moving schooling online so rapidly and completely during the early stages of the pandemic. The shared experience from the first lockdown (March 2020) was of making the best of the options at hand. Pupils without devices were lent spare equipment and those without access to internet had paper packs delivered to them. In later lockdowns, and in periods of disruption, schools used their experiences to meet the challenge head on. Established ways of working were better refined and crowd funding campaigns and emergency funds were used to provide devices and access to the majority of those who needed it.

- 3.12 Realising that ‘connectivity’ is only part of the issue of inclusion, the group has also considered the availability of space for pupils to learn and encountered familiar issues of overcrowding and unsuitable housing. The group also heard challenges to the idea that young people are ‘digital natives’, who are capable of accessing services online and are confident in engaging virtually. These challenges also relate to teachers, support staff and parents – who might need additional training and support to make the best of the technology available. The group recognises that there may be added challenges for children and young people in temporary accommodation and those with special educational needs and disabilities – and has ensured that it has followed this line of questioning throughout the review.
- 3.13 The group is now meeting with officers to test ideas for recommendations before the final formal meeting in February.

Retrofitting and insulating homes in Lewisham TFG

- 3.14 Determined to support the Council in its ambition to reach net zero emissions by 2030, the housing retrofit task and finish group has been engaging with housing providers, regional partners and local stakeholders. In early evidence from officers, the group heard in detail about the scale of the challenge of retrofitting Lewisham’s homes. The issue is complicated further by the mix of tenures, ages and housing types in the borough. Progress in this area has been slow across all types of housing – and the source of the substantial sums of funding needed to carry out this work has not yet been identified.
- 3.15 Lewisham Homes has produced its first ever sustainability strategy alongside its asset management strategy. The group considered these in their early form. Both documents support the 2030 ambition – and information about the current condition of the housing stock – and the potential integration of retrofit work with planned upgrades and replacements is positive. However, it is estimated that to achieve the targets set out in Lewisham’s Climate Emergency Action Plan £96m of new funding will need to be identified.
- 3.16 All local authorities are grappling with similar issues and the group heard from officers at the Greater London Authority and London Councils about initiatives, ideas and plans to make retrofit successful. The group also engaged with initiatives taking place across the boundaries of the south London borough’s and learnt about the in-depth work taking place with Lambeth and Southwark councils to map the requirements for skills, training and jobs in ‘green industry’.
- 3.17 Residents were invited to give their views on barriers to retrofit through an online consultation and in focus groups held in December 2021. The themes drawn out from this work helped to centre the views and experiences of home owners, many of who

are also concerned about the climate emergency but who currently have limited options for retrofit. The group is working towards producing its final report for submission to Mayor and Cabinet in March. A number of final evidence sessions are planned – alongside: an ideas workshop, discussion with cabinet members and the final meeting in the last week of February. Even in the context of strained finances and limited resources, the group aims to demonstrate that there are levers that the Council can pull to move this work forwards.

- 3.18 As outlined above, is envisaged that all three TFGs will complete their work by the end of February 2022 and have final, formal meetings where recommendations can be agreed. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the Mayor and Cabinet response to any recommendations made by the groups and consider whether any follow up work / progress updates on recommendation implementation are required.

4 Financial implications

- 4.1 Scrutiny work is managed within existing budgets. Formal recommendations to the Mayor arising out of any specific work items within select committee work programmes or considered by TFGs are evaluated in the usual way through the process of formal reports. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6 Equalities implications

- 6.1 The [Equality Act 2010](#) (The Act) legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act, making the law easier to understand and strengthen protection in certain situations. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.2 The Act also imposes a public sector equality duty. This means that in public bodies, of which this Council is designated, they must consider all individuals in carrying out their day-to-day work when shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It also requires public bodies to:
- Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
 - Advance equality of opportunity
 - Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities
- 6.3 The Council recognises diversity is one of its strengths and is committed to creating a more inclusive community. Therefore, having due regard to the Act, is confirmation of the Council's commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination against any group within the community and to actively promote an equality of opportunity and positive community partnership.
- 6.4 The delivery of the Council's equalities objectives is to be achieved through the delivery of all of the Council's strategies, plans and procedures. As such, all select committees and other scrutiny bodies, when planning their work and scrutinising items, bear in mind the delivery of the Council's equality objectives.
- 6.5 Scrutiny tries to make sure that its work reflects the diversity of Lewisham's communities and that the views of residents are fairly represented in scrutiny

processes. Any recommendations arising from scrutiny work support the Council's corporate strategy and reflect the needs of local residents.

7 Climate change and environmental implications

7.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report.

8 Crime and disorder implications

8.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

9 Health and wellbeing implications

9.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

10 Glossary

Term	Definition
Overview & Scrutiny	Overview and scrutiny is the way in which Mayor and Cabinet (the 'Executive'), officers and external organisations are held to account for the decisions that they make. It is led by councillors who are not members of the Executive. They also influence policy development and investigate issues of local concern, making recommendations for improvement.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	A committee made up of all non-executive councillors which carries out scrutiny focussing on strategic and cross cutting issues.
Overview & Scrutiny Business Panel (OSBP) and Education OSBP	<p>Lewisham has two Business Panels (sub-committees of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee).</p> <p>OS Business Panel is made up of the chair and vice-chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the chair of each of the Select Committees, and two other non-Executive councillors.</p> <p>The main functions of Business Panel are reviewing key decisions once they have been taken (potentially "calling in" key decisions that have been made but not yet implemented); coordinating and approving the overall scrutiny work programme; and allocating scrutiny work in the event that it crosses the remit of more than one scrutiny body.</p> <p>Three parent governors and two diocesan representatives sit on the Education Business Panel, alongside the councillors that make up the regular Business Panel. The Education Business Panel reviews (and can call-in) key decisions that are education matters.</p>

Select Committee	Lewisham has six Select Committees (sub-committees of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee), each made up of non-Executive councillors and responsible for scrutinising a specific service area. Select Committees gather evidence to help them review policies and performance and make recommendations to improve outcomes for residents.
Select Committee Work Programmes	The annual programme of work setting out the matters which each select committee will scrutinise over the year.
Task and Finish Group (TFG)	A time limited scrutiny body which gathers evidence in relation to a topical issue of concern in order to make recommendations to improve outcomes for residents.

11 Report author and contact

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