



Mayor and Cabinet

Response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee - requests for further information

Date: 7 October 2020

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Assistant Chief Executive

Outline and recommendations

This report provides responses to requests for further information at the meetings of Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held on 27 January 2020 and 5 March 2020.

Mayor & Cabinet is asked to note the responses from officers and agree that they be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides responses to requests for further information at the meetings of Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held on 27 January 2020 and 5 March 2020.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Mayor & Cabinet is asked to note the responses from officers and agree that they be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3. Requests for further information

Democracy, Refugees and Accountability portfolio

- 3.1. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for an update on the accessibility of polling stations and information on whether all polling stations used for the forthcoming London Mayoral and Assembly elections will be fully accessible.
- 3.2. Officers have reviewed all polling stations as part of the Polling District and Places Review 2019. The results came into force on 31 January 2020 and the new polling scheme will be used for future elections. The review concluded that all polling places in the new polling scheme are fully accessible. However, should councillors or residents identify an issue with any polling place they should bring it to the attention of the Electoral Services Manager who will ensure changes are put in place for future elections.
- 3.3. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for further information on the content and date of the 'general training day' for NRPF officers and on the organisation that will be delivering the training.
- 3.4. The NRPF service has received training delivered by the NSPCC on human trafficking and modern slavery. The service is also and working with MOPAC and the Council's community safety team to ensure smooth referral procedures to the National Referral Mechanism across the Council. The training being delivered is detailed and involves the allocation of responsibilities to key first responders in the statutory and voluntary sector. Due to the importance of aligning its initiatives with the MOPAC initiative, several training sessions will be sequenced throughout the year. A steering group will be set up to monitor progress. Separate training on the Lewisham Citizens charter on customer service is also being arranged and complements the Council's commitment to meeting the Children's Charter commitments.
- 3.5. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for the communications plan relating to school admissions (with the aim of ensuring that parents are properly informed about the process and their options) to be shared with members of the Children and Young People Select Committee.
- 3.6. Last year a range of marketing work was undertaken which resulted in a 10% increase in preferences from Lewisham parents choosing Lewisham schools, the highest in the last 10 years. Seven secondary schools saw an increase in 1st preferences, these are Deptford Green, Forest Hill, Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College, Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy, Prendergast Ladywell, Sedgehill and St Matthew Academy. An [interactive school distance map](#) was launched giving parents a clear idea of furthest distance travelled. To build on this success, a range of work is planned for this year and although this work has been affected by COVID-19, more information about applying for a secondary school place is available on the [Council's website here](#). Further plans for 2020 can be shared with members on request.
- 3.7. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for some examples of consultation activities where there has been good feedback to participating residents.

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- 3.8. Each year the Council undertakes about 50 public consultations, which are published on a dedicated [online portal](#). In addition, numerous other engagement activities take place as part of which, the views of local residents are sought on various issues. In terms of online consultations, the consultation on 'Health Watch and the NHS Complaints Advocacy Service' is a good example of how the "[we asked, you said, we did](#)" function on the Council's new consultation and engagement platform has been used effectively to provide feedback and assurance to local residents in response to their views. The [Achilles Street estate](#) regeneration proposals are a good example of how local residents were consulted and engaged extensively and often through the design and development process. A series of events were held between February 2016 and March 2017 which enabled proposals and designs to be reshaped in response to resident feedback. In total 92% of eligible residents voted in the Achilles Street Estate resident ballot for estate regeneration. This is the highest turnout of any resident ballot for estate regeneration held anywhere to date. The extension of additional [licensing for Houses of Multiple Occupation and introduction of a selective licensing scheme](#) is a good example of how residents' concerns have been addressed in a formal report. An officer report setting out the Council's responses to respondents' comments was included as a supplementary link to report to Mayor & Cabinet on 11 March 2020 and published on the Council's website.

Housing portfolio

- 3.9. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for a briefing on the work being carried out in relation to the Domestic Abuse Bill and the potential changes to the allocations scheme in relation to survivors of domestic violence.
- 3.10. Officers are currently starting a review of the allocations scheme, which will include the possible changes to the scheme for survivors of domestic violence. Alongside this, officers are working on achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which will involve a full review of the Council's response to all forms of domestic abuse, ensuring we are following best practice, working in effective partnership across the organisation and providing the best possible support and assistance to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. The accreditation process will also ensure that the authority is fully compliant with the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Act. Officers are intending to discuss the outcome of these with Housing Select Committee. Officers will circulate a briefing when the review of the allocations policy is further underway, and to provide an update on the progress to achieving DAHA accreditation.

Finance and Resources portfolio

- 3.11. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for further information on the in-sourcing of the school meals contract, including timelines and implications for schools.
- 3.12. Schools have requested additional time to consider the Council's proposed model of service delivery and the Council will undertake further engagement with schools and governors during this time. Officers will be able to provide a further information in due course.
- 3.13. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for reassurance that the Council correctly applies the council tax reduction for students.
- 3.14. The Council correctly applies the council tax reduction for students where an application is received, where the applicant meets the criteria as stipulated in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and where the applicant provides the required student certificate as evidence. Details about the student reduction and how to apply is publicised on the Council's website at <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/counciltax/reductions/council-tax-for-students>

Environment and Transport portfolio

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- 3.15. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for an update on officer efforts to make renting a bicycle rack more affordable, following the rent increase that was put in place following the end of TfL funding.
- 3.16. The current cost of access to a cycle hangar in Lewisham is £60 per year (plus returnable key deposit to cover costs of provision). This works out as £1.15 per week or 16p per day. However, officers are currently exploring options for subsidising cycle hangar rentals, particularly for those residents on lower incomes, including how this would be funded and the logistics of undertaking the required checks.

Safer Communities portfolio

- 3.17. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for an update on whether sex workers using the Athena service can be confident that they will get non-judgemental support.
- 3.18. Any sex workers accessing Lewisham's Athena Service are all supported in a non-judgemental approach, as any victim of gender-based violence. The Athena Service supports clients experiencing: domestic violence (physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse); rape and sexual assault; stalking; prostitution; sexual exploitation; human trafficking and modern slavery (for example, sexual exploitation; forced labour; domestic servitude); female genital mutilation (FGM); forced marriage; or so-called 'honour'-based violence. Council officers and Lewisham Police Officers have also worked closely with National Ugly Mugs over the last few years to support sex workers in Lewisham. National Ugly Mugs (NUM) is a pioneering organisation which provides greater access to justice and protection for sex workers who are often targeted by dangerous individuals but are frequently reluctant to report these incidents to the police. These offenders are often serial sexual predators who pose a huge risk to the public as a whole.
- 3.19. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for a full range of statistics on usage of the Concern Hubs, including a breakdown of client ethnicity.
- 3.20. The Operational Concern Hub is unique to Lewisham. The hub incorporates a number of adolescent safeguarding, youth justice and community safety functions. The Operational Concern Hub went live in January 2019 and to date has accepted 246 referrals. The Operational Concern Hub accepts referrals from all agencies working with Lewisham children and young people up to the age of 25. Of the 246 cases dealt with, 55% of cases identify as Black, 20% identify as white, 3% identify as Asian, 9% identify as mixed race, and 1% identify as "other". 13% of cases did not provide ethnicity data. These matters are being identified as a key theme within the developing Child Exploitation Strategy.
- 3.21. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for more information on the successful bid for funding to support youth support in two local accident and emergency departments.
- 3.22. Redthread (<https://www.redthread.org.uk/>) were awarded a contract by the London Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC) to deliver youth support and intervention in both Lewisham Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Following an initial mobilisation and recruitment phase, which was hampered in part by COVID lockdown, Redthread have been up and running in both hospitals since 7 September 2020. The Team Leaders in both sites are linked in with both Lewisham's Violence Reduction Team Manager and Children's Social Care and linked in to the weekly Concern Hub meetings. Lewisham Hospital's team have had 11 cases referred since 7 September 2020 and 6 of these are engaging well.

School Performance and Children's Services portfolio

- 3.23. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked how many Lewisham schools are in deficit and for some further information on their situations.
- 3.24. There are 11 schools in Lewisham with deficits. The Schools Finance Team is

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continuing to work with schools in developing sustainable budget plans, to prevent further schools moving to a deficit position. New budget plans incorporating metrics management have been developed to support schools to review budgets with a strategic view. These enable schools to compare their deployment on leadership, teaching, support administration, contact time etc. Feedback from schools on this has been very positive. Officers are working on deficit recovery plans with all our schools that are in deficit.

- 3.25. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked if any Lewisham schools are experiencing difficulty in procuring handwash or sanitising gel as a result of shortages arising from the coronavirus outbreak.
- 3.26. The Council is continuing to support schools through COVID-19. Schools have been able to access all the handwash or hand sanitizer that they require.
- 3.27. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for more information on the current school playing fields strategy, including whether there are any plans to expand the number of school playing fields?
- 3.28. Officers in CYP are currently developing a broad asset strategy to encompass how we best utilise facilities to deliver services. School playing fields will be explored as part of this work. In addition, the Lewisham Playing Pitch Strategy is being refreshed.

Health and Adult Social Care portfolio

- 3.29. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for further information on what is being done to address certain particulate levels in the air increasing.
- 3.30. The Council is taking a number of measures to improve air quality, particularly PM2.5 in the air. Unlike other pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, a large percentage of PM2.5 in London comes from regional, and often trans boundary, sources. Therefore, the powers to tackle these emissions lie elsewhere within London, the UK and with other European governments which can make it more difficult to address with direct measures. However, pending the availability of funding, the actions that will be considered during the review of our current Air Quality Action plan include: installing new air quality monitors to measure PM2.5 concentration in air; the adoption of tighter minimum emission standards for burning stoves and we will consider banning domestic burning in areas with high PM2.5 levels; there are within the Clean Air Act which enable local authorities to tackle smoke emissions from chimneys of buildings, fixed boilers and industrial plant; more actions will be considered to target domestic combustion as the major source of PM2.5; prohibiting buildings, like schools and care homes that are designated as sensitive receptors, being built near main roads; installing more PM2.5 monitoring around schools and other vulnerable receptors like hospital and care homes. It should be noted that although a combination of complementary initiatives is key to creating a positive impact in both the short and longer-term PM2.5 on-air quality in Lewisham, initiatives with evidence of positive impacts on air quality in the short term such as increasing parking charging, idling enforcement and traffic management will be given priority. The Council's Air Quality Annual Status Report is available here:
<https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/environment/air-pollution/read-our-air-quality-action-plan-and-other-reports>
- 3.31. Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for more information on the uptake of vaccinations.
- 3.32. Vaccination has been one of the most effective public health interventions. In the UK, primary vaccination uptake for infants by their first birthday is above 90%, similar to Lewisham, but uptake of later childhood vaccines and seasonal flu and whooping cough vaccines recommended in pregnancy, varies from year to year. Uptake is sometimes lower in more deprived areas, and among some BAME groups. The

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COVID-19 pandemic and the on-going challenges it presents has impacted on childhood immunisation uptake and could pose challenges in delivering the flu vaccination programme over the winter. Along with the challenges of implementing a flu immunisation programme that meets infection control guidelines and routine winter pressures, the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic may further impact on general practice's ability to deliver childhood immunisation programmes. SEL CCG (Lewisham) with support from the Council's Public Health Team is considering possible strategies to manage delivery of the childhood vaccination programmes to ensure as many children as possible are protected from infectious diseases. The impact of COVID-19 has also been seen in other immunisations, including school-aged vaccinations. The school-aged immunisation programme was not delivered when schools were closed during lockdown. In Lewisham the school immunisation programme has now resumed and Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust is delivering catch-up immunisation clinics in community areas.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. There are no financial implications arising from the updates in this report at this time. However, there may be financial implications in relation to the range of issues, proposals and plans referred to in this composite report as they are worked through and decisions made to put them into action. Financial implications will be provided individually on these specific matters at the appropriate time in line with the Council's constitution and control framework for committing spend.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from the updates in this report at this time. However, there may be legal implications in relation to the range of issues, proposals and plans referred to in this composite report as they are worked through and decisions made to put them into action. Legal implications will be provided individually on those specific matters at the appropriate time.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1. There are a range of equalities implications arising from the various responses provided for this report. The report makes reference to voting in elections, No Recourse to Public Funds, school admissions, the Council's domestic abuse work active travel schemes – which may impact on protected characteristics. In addition to this, socio-economic implications may arise for those who face disadvantage as a result of their income status. In due course, relevant implications will be provided as specific proposals are developed. As appropriate, any proposals that are taken forward will also be considered in light of the objectives of the Council's Comprehensive Equalities Scheme:

- Tackling victimisation, discrimination and harassment
- Improving access to services
- Closing the gap in outcomes for our citizens
- Increasing mutual understanding and respect within and between communities
- Increasing participation and engagement

7. Climate change and environmental implications

- 7.1. There are no specific environmental implications arising from the updates in this report at this time. However, there may be environmental implications in relation to the range of issues, proposals and plans referred to in this composite report as they are worked

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through and decisions made to put them into action. Environmental implications will be provided individually on these specific matters at the appropriate time.

8. Crime and disorder implications

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

9. Health and wellbeing implications

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

10. Report author and contact

10.1. James Noble, Head of Mayor's Office, james.noble@lewisham.gov.uk

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