

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 14 March 2017

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 14 March 2017 at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Greening (Chair), Jeapes (Vice-Chair), Gantly,
O'Halloran, O'Sullivan, Russell, Wayne, Heather and
Champion
Also Present: **Councillors:** Comer- Schwartz and Hull

Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair

320 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gallagher, Doolan, Klute, Chowdhury and for lateness from Councillors O'Halloran, Heather and Wayne

321 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None

322 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None

323 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

None

324 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)

None

325 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions and filming and recording of meetings

326 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 7)

The Chair stated that he would wish Members to consider whether, in the next municipal year, they should continue to start meetings at 7.00p.m. or revert back to a 7.30p.m. start time.

The Chair stated that this matter could be considered at a future meeting of the Committee in time for any change to take place for the first meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year on 25 May 2017.

327 PRESENTATION EXECUTIVE MEMBER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - TO FOLLOW (Item 8)

Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Executive Member Community Development was present for discussion of this item and made a presentation to the Committee, a copy of which is interleaved.

During discussion the following main points were made –

- Areas of responsibility included VCS, Resident engagement, Arts and Culture, Equalities and Community Cohesion and Licensing
- Noted that a new VCS strategy was launched for 2016/20 and new grants awarded to 50 VCS organisations. Long term – 3.5 year contracts will provide stability for organisations and enable them to plan and develop their offer
- Islington Community Chest programme is a small grants programme in conjunction with Cripplegate Foundation and in 2016/17 4 funding applications were made for the Islington Community Chest of which over 30 were awarded a grant
- The Council provides an Islington funding toolkit which has been established in partnership with VAI and over 50 staff from Islington's VCS community and the Council are trained to use this resource
- Noted that there is a new VCS premises allocation programme and there is a review of Council's current allocation of premises to VCS organisations to identify opportunities to provide affordable work space for the sector
- Work is being undertaken place with strategic partners and the Cally Good Neighbours scheme, established in partnership with Housing Operations and Cripplegate had proven extremely successful
- There were 15 Ward Partnerships and the support arrangements have been reviewed and a co-ordinator appointed
- Under the Local Initiatives Fund each ward has a budget of £15000 for small grants for a variety of activities that benefit residents in the ward
- Community Development through Community Centres and TRA's is taking place, as well as significant youth engagement
- New projects for 2017 included Arts on Estates Programme and an Estates gardening project
- Noted achievements and successes in relation to Arts and Culture including the Inspiring Islington Arts Strategy with a focus on partnership working and brokerage to align limited resources and to share expertise
- In relation to Equalities Equality events delivery have been supported over the past year and Equality key dates have been marked and promoted. The Heritage Services launched the Islington's Pride LGTB archive project in January
- The Equalities work supports a diverse workforce and there are five Council staff forums for the Disabled, LGTB, Carers, Women and BME. There is an inspiring Leaders programme which has been relaunched to support staff in underrepresented groups to develop the skills and experience to progress
- The Council are tackling inequality through the Equality objectives set in 2015 including tackling social isolation experienced by adult social care users, tackling hate crime through increased reporting and detection, increasing the proportion of BME and disabled staff at senior level

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- In relation to Licensing the number of late night premises is slightly increasing year on year but the number remaining open after midnight remains static. Applications received for new licences tend to be of a high quality and compliant with the Licensing policy
- The Licensing policy is to be reviewed this year to be in force for January 2018 and Licensing and Public Health have partnered with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to undertake a number of academic reviews to gauge the success of interventions
- In response to a question it was stated that the provision of green space on Andover Estate for gardening projects could be looked at
- In response to a question on the under representation of staff at higher levels, it was stated that there is an anonymised application form and a rigorous recruitment process takes place. The staff equalities data showed that things were improving, but the higher levels of management were still suffering from lack of BME staff and this is the reason the inspiring leadership scheme had been introduced
- Discussion took place as to the funding for the Borough of Culture award and that if Islington were not to win small amounts of funding would still be available

The Chair thanked Councillor Comer-Schwartz for attending and her presentation

328 ICO SIX MONTH UPDATE (Item 9)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present together with the Director of Environment and Regeneration, Kevin O'Leary for this item.

During discussion of this item the following main issues were raised –

- It was noted that it was encouraging that ICO was producing income for the Council and that Commercial Waste, Memorials, and HR were the principal contributors and it is hoped that the Pest Control service will also pick up income in 2017
- Discussion took place as to 10% equity stake in TES and that the Council were providing advice to the company in return for this. Members were of the view that this partnership could provide significant opportunities such as introducing technology to police the 20mph zone. Reference was made to the possibility of such technology negating the need for speed humps
- It was noted that a number of staff were working on behalf of ICO in addition to their normal workloads
- In response to a question it was stated that the costs of setting up ICO had been more expensive than originally envisaged
- In response to a question it was stated that the next report could include details of turnover, balance sheet and cash flow information in addition to the Business Plan
- In response to a question it was stated that discussions were taking place with Housing Associations over the use of the ICO Pest Control service
- It was stated that discussions would be taking place at a future meeting of the ICO Commercial Board in relation to housing repair services
- It was stated that environmental implications should be contained in the next report to the Committee

RESOLVED:

That the good progress made by ICO in 2016/17 be noted and a further update be considered by the Committee in 12 months time

The Chair thanked Councillor Andy Hull and Kevin O'Leary for attending

329 **REPORT OF PROCUREMENT BOARD (Item 11)**

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present for discussion of this item, together with Steve Key, Service Director Finance.

During discussion the following matters were raised –

- It was stated that the Council did assist VCS organisations to enable them to be more confident in preparing bids
- In response to a question the Service Director Finance stated that he would provide information as to which organisations had taken part in procurement training and had subsequently been successful in obtaining contracts
- Discussion also took place in relation to the Council being a member of the London Procurement Framework and the North London Alliance and that progress on this should be reported to Members in future

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted and that future reports should focus on VCS organisations and be in a shorter format
- (b) That details be provided of which organisations had taken part in the procurement training provided and whether this had resulted in them obtaining contracts

330 **FINANCIAL UPDATE (Item 12)**

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present, together with Steve Key, Service Director Finance.

During consideration of the report the following matters were raised –

- Members congratulated officers on the measures taken to contain any budget shortfalls
- In response to a question as to whether work is going on through the Mayor to look at cross borough savings that could be achieved it was stated that some work is taking place with regard to Domestic Violence responses and work is taking place with regard to gang violence with L.B.Hackney. In addition, the Council had entered into a partnership with L.B.Camden with regard to sharing of digital services
- Discussion took place as to the collection of rubbish and whether the need to implement savings had had an impact on the recent poor performance on rubbish collection. It was stated that there had been problems but these were being resolved and the backlog is nearly cleared
- Discussion took place in relation to fly tipping and that this seemed to be increasing in the borough, particularly on housing estates and Councillor O'Sullivan stated that he would take this up as Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee
- Reference was made to the fact that the intention is to recycle as much as possible and referred to the pilot taking place on Highbury Quadrant Estate and that this should be extended if it proved successful. It was added that in future consideration could be given to having separate chutes on housing estates for items of recycling
- A Member referred to the new rubbish collection arrangements and that some staff were losing take home pay as a result. It was stated that the revised arrangements had resulted in some losses however the scheme had been introduced to achieve

efficiencies in view of the Council's financial position as a result of Government funding reductions

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

The Chair thanked Councillor Hull and Steve Key for attending

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QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE STATISTICS (Item 10)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present for discussion of this item.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- It was noted that the percentage of housing ASB cases that result in enforcement action reflected an tougher stance in relation to anti-social behaviour
- Reference was made to the fact that the sanction detection rate in respect of Domestic Violence is too low, however body cameras were being introduced for the Police in the borough and this may assist this situation and the PI's with regard to stop and search
- It was stated that residents were less likely to report crimes if they felt that the chance of detection or appropriate sanction would not happen
- With regard to Employment PI's it was stated that E1(b) was off target and there are large number of Islington children growing up in workless households and work is needed to address this
- Whilst the number of people placed into Council apprenticeships is good, there is a need to ensure this is kept under review in view of the introduction of the apprenticeship levy
- Discussion took place as to channel shift and that whilst there had been successes in moving to 100% online transactions such as with school Admissions, there is still some way to go on this. Reference was made to the fact that Council staff, such as in Libraries could assist residents in carrying out on line transactions. It was noted that some boroughs had introduced on line transactions only but it was not felt that this was appropriate in Islington at present
- Discussion took place as to the levels of staff sickness absence and that this is higher than other comparable London Boroughs. Councillor Hull stated that the Government funding reductions had placed stresses of extra work and concerns about their jobs on staff and it is hoped that the reasons for this could be identified in the staff survey results
- Concern was expressed at the fact that Islington had a 5% higher level of sickness than other London Boroughs and whether sickness guidelines were being enforced by managers
- In response to a question it was stated that information should be provided to Members on people with disabilities being supported into work through Council efforts and reference was made to the large number of ESA appeals that were upheld at Tribunal
- Reference was made to the new online Housing repairs channel and that it is felt that this could be more user friendly and there needed to be clarification as to what constitutes an emergency repair. The Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee. Councillor O'Sullivan stated that the Committee would be carrying out a scrutiny in 2017/18 on Communications

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- Concern was expressed at the high levels of agency staff despite attempts to reduce this and also the length of some agency assignments. Councillor Hull responded that there had been successes in reducing the number of agency staff in areas, such as in Digital Services and E&R, however in attempt to further reduce agency staff the Leader is discussing with the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors him having to approve any proposals to engage agency staff in future
- It was noted that the Housing Scrutiny Committee had recently conducted a review into responsive repairs
- A Member stated that whilst it was welcome that there is a dedicated LGTB reporting line however the homophobic crimes detected was down on last year. Councillor Hull stated that he would look into this
- In response to a question that the reasons for staff sickness may also relate to the facilities at work such as the poor condition of toilets, working facilities etc. and Councillor Hull stated that facilities had been upgraded however he would ensure these issues were monitored

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that the information requested above be circulated to Members as follows -

Following the results of the staff survey seek to identify the reasons for the higher than average sickness levels amongst Council staff, comparisons with other London Boroughs and whether sickness regulations are being enforced by managers e.g. enforcing trigger points and referrals to the Council's Medical Advisor

Data on residents with disabilities being supported into work through the Council
Information on the reasons why the detection rates on hate crime are so low given that such crimes are less likely to be reported if victims felt that the offender would not be detected and sanctions employed

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MONITORING OF RECOMMENDATIONS, WORK PROGRAMME, FORWARD PLAN ETC. (Item 13)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

The meeting ended at 9.40p.m.

CHAIR