

London Borough of Islington

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 30 November 2017

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 30 November 2017 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Greening (Chair), Jeapes (Vice-Chair), O'Sullivan, Russell, Heather, Williamson, Smith and Champion
Also Present: **Councillors:** Hull

Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair

403 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Councillors O'Halloran, Klute, Doolan, Chowdhury, Gallagher and Clarke-Perry

404 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None

405 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None

406 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the following amendment – minute 399 – the insertion of an additional recommendation as follows-

That the Borough Commander be requested to inform Members of the Committee of the number of pursuits that Police have carried out in relation to moped thefts, how many times requests for moped chases have been received and the number of pursuits that have taken place following these requests

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 November 2017 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them

407 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)

None

408 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)

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

409 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 7)

None

410 ASB UPDATE (Item 8)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present together with Jan Hart, Service Director Public Protection and Andrew March, Housing ASB. Jan Hart and Andrew March made a presentation to the Committee, a copy of which is interleaved.

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

- Jan Hart outlined the operation of the ASB service, including the out of hours service
- There has been a continued increase in ASB calls to the Council, while calls to the Police decrease
- The number of repeat callers has increased also and a new process to tackle repeat callers has now been introduced
- The Community MARAC is continuing to be successful in dealing with vulnerable victims, with full partnership support
- There is new Clinical Psychologist in post to help understand the drivers behind the complex ASB cases
- There is a new approach to tackling street population issues – there had been a 300% increase and work is taking place as to how this could best be managed
- In response to a statement from a Member it was noted that often complaints arose from residents about the ASB service, as ASB issue resolution is often passed on to other organisations where the Council did not have direct involvement. However, there were now 2 staff being employed in order to progress complaints and it was hoped this would improve the situation
- There were 3 area based housing teams serving 29,000 council tenant and leasehold tenancies
- It was noted that evictions had only taken place in 0.08% of cases of ASB reported
- A Member referred to the fact that tenants were suffering from ASB as a result of criminality, such as drug taking and yet it appeared there is a lengthy process for action to be taken and eviction took place in a relatively small number of cases. It was stated that notice to seek possession is sought in about 17% of cases, however there were often measures put in place that did not lead to eviction
- Members were also informed that mental health issues often played a part in complaints of ASB, and that such issues had to be dealt with sensitively, with the involvement of appropriate agencies, where necessary
- In response to a question it was stated that the Council had decided to adopt introductory tenancies rather than opting for demoted tenancies
- Reference was made to the need to ensure that the new housing database is able to contain more 'smart' information such as GPS and ASB hotspots and link in tenants' history. It was stated that a system was being investigated whereby Public Protection and Housing could share information so that data could be combined

- Discussion took place as to problems where there were vulnerable tenants and that often this took time to resolve satisfactorily
- There were also difficulties with cases where a tenant moves between housing and supported housing and work took place with the NHS, Children's Services and other partners in these instances
- It was noted that the ASB and housing teams were co-located
- In response to a question it was stated that often cases went to Court at short notice and it was often difficult to get information together, however discussions were taking place with the Court service to look at these issues
- It was noted that if the Council needed to obtain an injunction because of threats of physical violence, this could be obtained usually within 48 hours
- In response to a question as to how many families with children had been evicted, it was stated that this information would be notified to Members following the meeting. Members were informed that Children's Services would be involved in such cases
- It was noted that often ASB issues were resolved by tenants being told of the effects their actions were having on their neighbours and about 50% of ASB issues were resolved at an early stage
- A Member expressed the view that the victims of ASB needed to be considered as well and that often appropriate action against the perpetrators did not appear to be taken. Often drug dealing and criminality did not appear to be punished sufficiently
- Reference was made to the fact that if there is criminality this was an issue for the Police and that often drug use, such as the use of cannabis, is often carried out by teenagers/young adults and it had to be considered whether the family should be punished in these instances by eviction
- It was stated that often the Council were blamed for not resolving ASB issues, however it had to be recognised that often these issues were passed on to Partners, Housing Associations or other organisations for resolution, however the Council were working with partners to improve the position
- Members expressed the view that there needed to be more consistency in tackling ASB/criminality by eviction, if necessary, of those responsible for such behaviour as this has a profound impact on other residents
- The view was expressed that the Noise app was an excellent idea and would be of great assistance to residents in keeping a record of ASB
- In response to a statement as to street homelessness, it was stated that there is partnership work taking place with Haringey with a view to sharing costs and outreach teams did support individuals. However, it is often difficult to get individual homeless persons to take up the offer of assistance and there is a complexity of issues around street homelessness
- Members were informed that street homeless were encouraged to take up offers of support, and if necessary enforcement action may have to be taken

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the views of the Committee that firm action should be taken against persistent offenders of ASB and criminality be noted
- (b) That the Committee be informed of the number of families with children that have been evicted due to ASB or criminality

The Chair thanked Jan Hart, Andrew March and Councillor Hull for attending

411

PRESENTATION EXECUTIVE MEMBER FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY - VERBAL (Item 9)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present and made a presentation to the Committee, a copy of which is interleaved.

During discussion the following main points were made –

- Members noted the difficult challenges relating to criminal activity in the borough in relation to moped theft, mobile phone theft, drugs and knife crime and that despite efforts made this is not reducing significantly enough
- Members noted the increase in crime in Junction/St.Georges wards, however a number of arrests had been made and it was hoped that crime would reduce
- The Executive Member expressed the view that it should be recognised however that the significant reduction in Police numbers in the borough has had an impact on the rise in crime
- It was noted that the Council's early intervention strategy is thought to be the best way to reduce criminality in the longer term
- The Council has also been focusing on work to reduce hate crime, and whilst the Police were treating this more seriously the detection rates for such crimes were too low
- Work is also going on in relation to violence against women and girls and child sexual exploitation and that a 'drop in' shop is being established.
- Reference was made to Police tweeting on crime and that this may exacerbate Public concern in some cases
- In response to a question it was stated that there were some established gangs in the borough, however there were now individuals becoming involved in crime that had previously not been known to the Police. A great deal of work is being done to divert young people away from crime in terms of youth provision and work to prevent girls being involved in gangs and in relation to child sexual exploitation
- The integrated gangs team is working well and works with siblings of older gang members
- Gangs cross borough borders and work is taking place with neighbouring boroughs in this regard
- In terms of the 2018/19 budget the Council were finding it harder each year to prepare a balanced budget, in view of the significant reduction in Government funding, however it is anticipated a balanced budget would be set despite having to save over £30 million. There is huge pressure on the Children's Serviced budget and it is felt that this will continue
- It was noted that Universal Credit is being rolled out by the Government for Islington in June 2018, and not in March 2018, as planned, however it will still present significant challenges for residents and the Council
- Reference was made to the Council's IT and security systems and whether Members could be assured that these are secure. Councillor Hull stated that a great deal of work has taken place on security of data, and a lot of training now took place for staff, however no system can be totally secure and sometimes 'human error' could occur
- In response to a question about the popularity of the Town Hall as a wedding venue, Councillor Hull stated that he was extremely proud that it was a popular venue and that the Registrars and Town Hall staff worked extremely hard to ensure its success
- A Member enquired how many unemployed residents with long term health conditions had been assisted back into work and whether there was liaison with GP's and CCG's in this regard. Councillor Hull stated that he would provide this information but GP's were generally supportive and packages need to be tailored to

residents to support them back into work. Reference was made to the fact that GP's/CCG were co-located in Laycock Street

- It was stated that the Council were also working to address some of the issues raised by staff in the last staff survey
- In relation to savings as a result of digital transformation it was noted that good progress is being made in Environment and Regeneration and that this needed to be replicated across other departments. In response to a question relating to integration of housing IT management systems it was stated that there had been a delay and that Councillor O'Sullivan would be notified as to the latest position
- Reference was also made to the number of units that were available in relation to the number of social housing units that had been made available to rent on new build housing and Housing Associations in the previous 12 months and Councillor Hull stated that he would provide this information
- A Member also referred to the amount of packaging used by businesses and whether this could be reduced. Reference was made to work that is taking place by the Environment Agency and London level on this issue
- It was stated that the recycling figure is below target and a question asked as to whether there is a savings target for recycling. Members noted that there is no target in the medium term financial strategy but the relationship between recycling and residential waste and the cost of landfill is well understood
- A Member enquired as to the reasons for the large reduction in MMR vaccinations and Councillor Hull stated that he would provide this information to Members
- In response to a question it was stated that staff sickness levels were affected by the huge budget reductions over the past 5 years by the Government and the increased workload of staff as a result due to loss of staff and deletion of jobs. It was noted that the Council were seeking to address this issue and were looking to engage the services of an Occupational Therapist to assist staff along with other measures
- A Member referred to the cryptosporidium outbreak at a local swimming pool and enquired the details of this. Councillor Hull stated that he would investigate and inform Members thereon
- Concern was expressed at the target for Children in Care and that this did not totally reflect the correct position. Councillor Hull indicated that he would look at a more accurate method of reporting this PI

RESOLVED:

That the Executive Member be requested to provide the following to Members of the Committee -

- (a) Information as to the numbers of long term unemployed residents assisted back into work and whether there is liaison in this regard with GP's/CCG
- (b) Information as to the integration of the Housing management database systems and the latest position thereon and reasons for delay
- (c) Information on the number of units made available for the number of new build and Housing Association units made available in the previous 12 months for social rent
- (d) Information as to the reasons for the reduction in the number of MMR vaccinations administered
- (e) Information as to the outbreak of the cryptosporidium outbreak as referred to above
- (f) A different method of reporting the PI on children missing from care in order to more accurately reflect the true position

The Chair thanked Councillor Hull for his presentation

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QUARTERS 1/2 PERFORMANCE UPDATE (Item 10)

This item was dealt with in conjunction with minute 411 above

413

USE OF AGENCY STAFF (Item 11)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present, together with Liz Haynes, Director of Human Resources.

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

- Members were of the view that reports should still continue to come to Committee as per the current scheduling and that the changing of provider also made this imperative
- Members were informed that Islington compared well to other boroughs on agency staff employment and spend and that in addition Islington had a higher proportion of directly delivered services than most other boroughs
- There were a number of measures being taken to further reduce agency staff and there had been a reduction in spend over the previous 12 months
- As Islington delivers responsive services there will always be a need for agency staff and the Director of Human Resources stated that whilst efforts are being made she felt that it would be difficult to reduce agency staff employment much further
- A Member expressed concern that there is still concern amongst Committee Members about the level of agency staff employment and the length of time some staff are employed. It was added that if an agency worker is employed for over 6 months then they should be offered full time employment. The Director of Human Resources stated that agency staff were in many cases offered permanent employment, but for a number of reasons were not willing to take this offer up
- Discussion took place as to the number of social work agency staff employed and that social work recruitment was a problem across London, however Islington had been commended by OFSTED on the level of directly employed children's social workers
- Reference was also made to the fact that whilst some agency staff seemed to have had long term assignments, they may have been engaged to do various jobs if their work had proven to be good, or only employed for specific times a year
- Councillor Hull informed Members that Members of PPS Committee had provided a constant challenge to the Executive and officers to reduce agency spend and he welcomed this. He added that he believed that this challenge had engendered a change in attitude and that this is now seen as a political priority and there is a focus on reducing employment of agency staff, whilst recognising that this will always be necessary in some instances

RESOLVED:

That the information in the report be noted and Members wish to continue receiving such reports three times per year, although reports could be simplified if possible, whilst still providing relevant information to the Committee

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MONITORING REPORT (Item)

RESOLVED:

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That the report be noted

The meeting ended at 10.20 pm

CHAIR