

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 2 March 2015

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 2 March 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Gallagher (Chair), O'Sullivan, Comer-Schwartz, Ismail,
Jeapes, O'Halloran, Russell and Gill
Also Present: **Councillors:** Andrews, Convery and Hull

Councillor Troy Gallagher in the Chair

92 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Councillors Jenny Kay, Gary Doolan, Martin Klute, Dave Poyser, Caroline Russell for lateness. Councillor Asima Shaikh, Executive Member for Community Development also gave her apologies for not being able to attend for the item on the Scrutiny Review BEST team – Presentation/SID

93 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

Councillor Jeapes stated that she was substituting for Councillor Kay

94 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None

95 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 February 2015 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them

96 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)

None

97 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 6)

None

98 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)

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

99 SCRUTINY REVIEW - BEST TEAM - PRESENTATION AND SID (Item 8)

Lela Kogbara, Assistant Chief Executive, Strategy and Community Partnerships, was present and outlined the proposed Scrutiny Initiation Document for the scrutiny review.

During consideration of the Scrutiny Initiation Document the following main points were made –

- It was noted that the Employment Commission has now reported and the BEST team will be merged from 1 April 2015 to form a new Learning, Skills and Employment service. The new structure brings together the strategic business

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- engagement functions, the job brokerage and recruitment functions and the front line employment support functions together with Adult and Community Learning
- The Council successfully bid for approximately £2m from the London Enterprise Pane to provide resources until March 2017 to support the employment agenda. This means that the Council has resources to develop the work of BEST, Islington Working for parents and careers work in Children's Services. The bid included assistance for the over 50's in finding employment
 - The Chair stated that he would wish the Committee to look at the lessons learnt from the experience of the BEST team in order to feed them into the new structure to ensure a better experience for residents and to see where delivery gaps in the Council so these can be addressed
 - The BEST team did not provide direct employment support for young people
 - There were 1.3 jobs for every resident in Islington and there was a need for employers to give young people a chance. Kings Cross development had 35,000 jobs available however employers could select from across the country and from Europe and there was a need to persuade employers to take on local people
 - There were a number of groups that proved difficult to get into employment such as those with mental health disorders and here there was strong evidence that some residents were being excluded from employment because they had BME names
 - In relation to posts within the Council there was a lack of advancement for BME staff in higher graded posts. The Council did have an inspiring leadership programme for BME staff which applied to all grades
 - In response to a question it was stated that work was carried out with schools and employers worked with schools but these tended to be one off events but there were proposals for Children's Services to engage and work more with schools
 - A Member enquired whether more work was going to be undertaken on New River Green to engage residents to get them back into employment. It was stated that this was the intention and that as this had not gone well to date further efforts would need to be made, possibly by actually engaging residents by going onto the estates
 - In response to a question it was stated that it was hoped that there would be progress within 6 months and lessons had been learnt from the experience of the BEST team
 - The Chair stated that there had been a number of residents in his ward that had dealt with the BEST team and that there had been problems with the service especially with the attitude of some of the staff and residents not being notified of interviews or staff had not responded to e mails. The Assistant Chief Executive stated that the examples quoted appeared to be more staff not doing their jobs properly and that if she was provided with details she would investigate these
 - In response to a question about whether the increase in employment in the borough being due to economic conditions it was stated that it was thought the improvement in Islington was largely due to the measures put in place by the Council, as youth unemployment had fallen in Islington, however this was not the case in the majority of the rest of the country
 - It was stated that Islington had a good spread of jobs at all levels and there were 1.3 jobs for every working age person in the borough
 - In response to a question it was stated that the Assistant Chief Executive would provide details of the number of apprentices who had gained full time employment following completion of their apprenticeship
 - A Member expressed the view that some employers kept raising the requirements of qualifications for jobs. It was stated that employers were able to recruit skilled workers from a global market
 - In response to a question it was stated that those residents with disabilities were less likely to and when they were employed they were likely to be in lower grade posts

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- Social mobility was a problem in Islington

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Scrutiny Initiation Document be approved subject to the following amendments –

Objectives of the review – the addition of an additional objectives as follows – To review the lessons learned from the BEST team to ensure that a more effective service is provided to residents and to look at social mobility in the borough and how this can be improved

- (b) That the Assistant Chief Executive provide details of the number of apprentices who have obtained full time employment following completion of their apprenticeship

The Chair thanked Lela Kogbara for attending

100

QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item 9)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance, was present for discussion of this report and outlined the report for the Committee. Lela Kogbara, Assistant Chief Executive, Strategy and Community Partnerships, was also present.

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

- There had been good progress in service users who receive their services through a direct payment
- The number of supported people into paid work was well above target and figures for parents supported into work are also well above target with 312 paid job outcomes for Quarter 3.
- All services are now being asked to report on sustained job outcomes for those supported into work to ensure that not only people are helped to get a job but to ensure they stay in a job for a reasonable amount of time
- The figures on missed waste collections were excellent
- A market supplement factor had now been introduced for 'hard to fill' posts and a number of agency/temporary posts in Environment and Regeneration had now been transferred to permanent posts
- There was a need to reduce the number of face to face consultations and telephone conversations taking place with residents and deal with more on line in order to generate savings. There had been problems with cavity wall insulation in some small blocks and this work may need to be scaled back
- Staff sickness was over target and measures were being taken which would assist in reducing this
- There had been a worrying increase in serious youth violence, culminating in the tragic death of a young person in Caledonian Road and 23 of the 32 London Boroughs had seen similar increases
- In response to a question as to the impact of reductions in posts due to financial savings targets in the Council, it was stated that the Council did have an employee assistance programme in place to assist staff if necessary suffering from stress or anxiety
- Members indicated that their casework indicated that there were problems with the new housing repairs service and that there was poor service and lack of communication with residents in some instances. In addition some tenants had complained about numerous visits to complete a repair and some operatives refusing to show name badges when requested

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- Members expressed the view that there should be a 'traffic light' system to indicate where there were problem repairs when a repair takes more than one visit to complete so that this could be investigated
- It was stated that the Housing Scrutiny Committee had requested detailed information to future meetings on housing repairs and that he would take up these issues with relevant officers. The Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee, Councillor O'Sullivan, indicated that the Scrutiny Committee were planning to undertake a scrutiny within the next few months on the implementation of the new 'in house' repairs service
- Members also expressed the view that it would be useful to establish details of all their specific complaints on repairs in order to ascertain if there was a pattern to the complaints and in future specific complaints could be referred to the Customer Excellence team
- A Member referred to the problems of anti-social behaviour, particularly on the New River Green Estate and some estates in the south of the borough, and that action did not appear to be taken. The Executive Member Community Safety stated that there were a number of enforcement actions that could be put in place and that there were a large number of cases that had resulted in specific action being taken. Crime was very mobile in Islington and tended to move from area to area and the reduction in mobile phone theft had resulted in increased serious crime, as the offenders had moved back to drug crime
- It was noted that there were a small number of families that were responsible for a large amount of crime in the borough and there was a need for smarter use of enforcement powers
- The number of reoffenders had fallen however a small group of young offenders were committing a large number of crimes

The Chair thanked Councillor Hull and Lela Kogbara for attending

101

FINANCIAL UPDATE (Item 10)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance, was present for discussion of this item. Steve Key of the Finance and Property Services Department was also present.

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

- There was a projected underspend of £0.5 million on the General Fund for 2014/15
- There were pressures on the temporary accommodation budget and measures were in place to try to address these
- Discussion took place as to the lack of funding provided for No Recourse to Public Funds by the Government and that this placed a significant burden on Local Authorities, such as Islington, and pressure was being put on the Government to provide funding but this to date had been unsuccessful. The Chair stated that he would discuss this issue with the Executive Member
- There were 2 frontline officers and a part time temporary officer dealing with over 170 cases and work was carried out with other agencies, such as the Islington Law Centre
- The majority of cases under No Recourse to Public Funds were failed asylum seekers or people who had overstayed their visa but there were challenges where people had a child whilst in the country or where there were issues of Domestic Violence

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- In response to a question it was stated that the roadworks in Essex Road were undertaken in half term and that works at Highbury and Islington and Holloway were the responsibility of TfL and discussions were taking place with them to minimise disruption. The view was expressed that signs should make clear that these were TfL works

RESOLVED

That the report be noted

The Chair thanked Councillor Hull and Steve Key for attending

102 REPORT OF PROCUREMENT BOARD/PROGRESS REPORT ON SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS (Item 11)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance was present and outlined the report. Steve Key, Finance and Property Services Department was also present.

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

- This was the first of regular reports that would be coming to the Committee, as a result of the recommendations of the scrutiny review
- It was noted that the Procurement Board had looked at the use of purchase cards across the authority and there were a large number of transactions for relatively low amounts. The level of fraud was very low

The Chair thanked Councillor Andy Hull and Steve Key for attending

103 INCOME GENERATION - SCRUTINY REVIEW - FINAL REPORT (Item 12)

The Executive summary of the report and the draft recommendations of the Committee were considered by Members for forwarding on to the Executive.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration, Kevin O'Leary, Lead Officer for the scrutiny review, was also present.

RESOLVED;

That the Executive summary and the draft recommendations be approved and forwarded to the Executive for consideration

The Chair thanked Kevin O'Leary for attending

The meeting ended at 9.35p.m.

CHAIR