

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 21 July 2014

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 21 July 2014 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Gallagher (Chair), Shaikh (Vice-Chair), Doolan,
O'Sullivan, Makarau-Schwartz, Gantly, O'Halloran,
Parker, Russell, Court, Gill and Erdogan
Also Present: **Councillors:** Hull, Convery, Watts and Andrews

Councillor Troy Gallagher in the Chair

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

None

2 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

None

4 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 March 2014 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)

The Chair stated that the information requested in minute 605 Quarter 3 Performance report had now been circulated to Members. There was also a laid round document in relation to comparative data with other London Boroughs on certain key indicators that was requested previously.

6 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 6)

The Chair welcomed new Members of the Committee to the meeting.

7 MEMBERSHIP, TERMS OF REFERENCE (Item 7)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

8 SCRUTINY TOPICS 2014/15 - VERBAL (Item 8)

The Chair stated that it was necessary for the Committee that evening to approve the scrutiny topics for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee laid round a list of proposals for work for the Committee for the forthcoming year.

Following consideration it was –

RESOLVED:

That the following topics be agreed for scrutiny –
Environment and Regeneration – Community Energy, Fuel Poverty, Communal Heating, –
Future topics/mini reviews - Active travel, 20 mph zones
Housing scrutiny – Estate Services Management, Scaffolding and Work Platforms and
review of bringing the repairs service back 'in house'
Health and Care – to be determined at the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee on 30 July
Children's Services – Impact of Early intervention on prevention escalation to statutory
services, Impact of the SEN changes on children and families and Impact of the Public Law
outline on achieving permanence – final topics to be determined at Children's Services
Committee on 22 July
Policy and Performance – Job Centre Plus and Income Generation

DHASS
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HODS

9 WELFARE REFORMS SCRUTINY REVIEW 12 MONTH REPORT BACK (Item 9)

Ian Adams, Director Financial Operations and Customer Services was present and outlined the report.

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

- The majority of the recommendations had been implemented, however there had been difficulties in Job Centre Plus being willing and able to share data with the Council
- The Council had distributed all of its allocation of discretionary housing payment
- In April 2015 ATOS would be losing the contract for administering the work capability assessments
- It was likely that the Council would be losing Local Welfare funding from 2015 and that this had been taken to judicial review as it was not felt that the Government had fulfilled its equalities requirements
- The BEST team had links with employers and assisted residents in finding employment. Islington has also offered to be part of the Local Support Services Framework pilot which will test out arrangements for offering support at a local level to vulnerable residents who may struggle with the implementation of Universal Credit
- Islington still continued to fund the advice sector to assist residents and it also had an income maximisation team and the focus was on prevention of residents becoming homeless
- In response to a question it was stated that the average length of time a person has been unemployed and being assisted under the Local Support Services Framework is 7 years and the longest 14 years
- With regard to unemployed people with mental health problems, there were other measures that were put in place to assist them around employment and there was a specific service, Mental Health working, and that work was taking place to link in with other support services to provide better support
- The introduction of Universal Credit had been delayed and the latest information was that it would start for all new claims in Islington in 2016 and for existing claimants in 2017 although this could possibly change
- With regard to Personal Independence Payments for those currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance this would take effect from 2015, and there were some

different aspects of entitlement and if claimants had their category lowered this could affect other benefits

- The families having to move out of the borough to date because of the welfare reforms under the Local Housing Allowance, had all been from the private rented sector however, the Council were assisting other families in this regard
- Reference was made to the problems of residents having financial difficulties by moving in and out of the benefits system if they found work and that it was important to get residents into sustainable employment
- In response to a question it was stated that one of the advantages of working with Job Centre Plus was that they could start working on each others systems and that this would assist in obtaining information in advance of changes, however there would be a need for a change to primary legislation to actually share data
- The Chair expressed the view that in his view the BEST team should be better in 'road mapping' career opportunities for employment and that there needed to be an increase in the access to employment opportunities through the BEST team. It was reported that the services to young people were still disjointed and that the BEST team were putting together a network to assist young people and details of support organisations however youth unemployment had reduced
- Members expressed the view that they would like an update to a future meeting detailing how it was intended to improve the service to young people and any gaps in provision and there was a need to challenge schools to undertake more career work with young people

RESOLVED:

- (a) That an update report be submitted on a quarterly basis in relation to the impact of welfare reforms on residents, and challenges the Council faces to mitigate the effect of such changes
- (b) That an update be provided to a future meeting on the measures being taken to improve services for entry into employment for young people
- (c) That the Director of Financial Operations and Customer Services provide Members with the number of BME residents that had been affected by the 'benefit cap'

DF&CS

10 SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING SCRUTINY REVIEW 12 MONTH REPORT BACK (Item 10)

Councillor Paul Convery, Executive Member for Community Safety was present and was accompanied by Alva Bailey, Head of Service, Community Safety.

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

- In relation to recommendation 1 it was stated that this had been attempted but with limited success
- Stop and search had reduced by a quarter however arrest rates had risen as a result of more intelligence led stop and search
- A new strategy was being looked at with regard to dealing with violent youth crime
- There were 9 dedicated school support officers
- Reference was made to the fact that one of the recommendations of the Committee had been that there should be more cross border work and co-operation with neighbouring forces, including the City of London Police. Councillor Convey responded that the City of London had its own separate police force and that there had been instances of co-operation and this had been particularly in the Finsbury Park area
- Reference was made to the fact that criminals could actually be found not guilty or that no further action (NFA) be taken. Members expressed the view that those with

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NFA where it was known that they had connections to criminals or their associates would be kept under review to ensure that active intelligence was gathered

- A Member stated that their Safer Neighbourhood Panel rarely had a PC present and it was usually the PCSO that attended. In addition whilst stop and search may have decreased there needed to be a breakdown on ethnicity and a number of questions put to young people in the survey appeared to be 'leading' questions
- Residents were urged to report crime given the limited resources of the Police and provide active intelligence
- The view was expressed that it was for the Police to convene the Safer Neighbourhood Panels and that they needed to be reminded that it was their responsibility to ensure this happened and they operated effectively
- In addition there was a gap in the services available from the Police and other services to engage young people. It was stated that it was difficult to get young people to attend meetings and there needed to be a different approach taken to youth engagement
- Reference was made to the fact that some residents were complaining that Police were less visible locally and tending to concentrate on targeting night clubs
- In response to a question it was stated that information would be circulated as to whether safer schools officers attended the Schools Forum
- It was stated that local Police officers were now doing investigative work and as a result are more effective
- In response to a question on crime figures Councillor Convery stated that he would circulate to Members the latest MOPAC 7 crime figures to Members of the Committee
- It was noted that Islington did not suffer from serious gang violence in comparison to other areas of London

RESOLVED:

That Members be circulated with information as to the latest MOPAC 7 crime figures for the borough.

HOCS

11 INCOME GENERATION - VERBAL (Item 11)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member for Finance and Performance, Kevin O'Leary, Director of Environment and Regeneration and Steve Key, Finance and Property Services, were present for consideration of this item.

A presentation was made to the Committee, a copy of which is interleaved.

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

- With regard to sources of income parking was the major contributor
- It was stated that the Commercial Board were looking at all possible areas of income generation but the savings achieved were likely to be moderate given the restraints
- A Trading Company was being established by the Council and there was scope for income generation in the areas of energy and commercial waste. The view was expressed that the Trading Company should adopt a co-operative, social approach
- The view was expressed that income may be able to be obtained by offering the new 'in house' repairs service to schools, RSL's and leaseholders and by installing solar panels on schools
- Reference was made to CIL and section 106 monies and that these should reflect the rising cost of property when development was taking place. In addition offering the Council's wi fi services to Cable TV companies etc. could also be investigated

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- There was a need to lobby Government where it was felt that there were areas the Council should have responsibility for that could generate income
- A Member expressed the view that there needed to be an emphasis on ensuring the street environment was safe to encourage active travel
- There needed to be research into the income generation measures that other Local Authorities were implementing and that these should be obtained as documentary evidence for the scrutiny
- The view was expressed that whilst officers had done good work in relation to commercial waste, there was a need to look at cost savings outside 'the box', to generate income
- Advertising could be looked at on Council vehicles and property and the proposals for a Council employment agency and lettings agency could also generate income
- In response to a question as to how the Council, as it is the forerunner for many initiatives such as the Fairness Commission market these to generate income by offering a consultancy service, the Director of Finance and Property Services stated that he would investigate this
- Discussion took place as to whether there should be more than one Trading Company, or several to minimise risk, and in order that they could remain focused on specific schemes to generate income
- Reference was made to the possibility of obtaining European Social Funding

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the above comments be noted and included in the SID, where appropriate
- (b) That Directors be requested to investigate income generation areas in their respective departments for discussion by Members as part of the scrutiny process
- (c) That officers obtain information about income generation measures that have/are considering to be taken and circulate these to the Committee, as part of the scrutiny process
- (d) That officers investigate whether a pan London approach is possible in achieving savings/income generation and report back to the Committee on the possibilities thereon.

DE&R

12

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item 12)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance, was present and was accompanied by Annette Hobart, Corporate Partnerships and Performance Manager and Tim Spafford, Interim Head of the Strategy Equality and Performance Service.

Comparative data with other London Councils was circulated, copy interleaved.

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

- Members referred to the equalities objectives and that these did not appear to have been met on a number of key performance indicators. It was stated that a range of performance indicators that affected equality but the information was linked to the Council's published equality objectives and there was a State of Equalities report published each January
- A Member expressed the view that given the high level of obesity in the borough none of the measures relating to 'Healthy Lives' related to physical activity
- Whilst the report was useful as a 'snapshot' of performance there was a need to respond to new issues coming up
- Reference was made to the fact that crime was falling in the borough but the numbers of calls to the ASB hotline had gone up and enquired the reasons for this

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- Members were informed that if they had suggestions for improvements to the report officers could consider these
- Members enquired as to the rents charged for temporary accommodation by private landlords, particularly the nightly rate for accommodation. Members requested that they be provided with examples of comparisons between the leased accommodation and the nightly rate as it was felt that some private sector landlords were charging extortionate rates

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a report as to the reasons for the increase in calls to the ASB hotline be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee
- (b) That information as to the rates charged for temporary accommodation, as referred to above, be circulated to Members of the Committee

HOCS
DHASS

13 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2013/14 (Item 13)

A revised report was circulated to Members, copy laid round.

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance, was present and was accompanied by Steve Key, Finance and Property Services.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

14 LEADER'S PRIORITIES 2014/15 - VERBAL (Item 14)

Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of the Council, was present and outlined the priorities for the forthcoming municipal year.

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

- The Labour administration had been elected with the largest number of votes they had ever recorded in Council elections
- There was significant progress being made by the Employment Commission and there was now a joint team based at the municipal offices of Council and Job Centre Plus staff to assist the unemployed
- Work was being undertaken with 200 of the longest term unemployed residents of the borough and on the Bemerton Estate, with a view to taking a new approach to assisting them back into work. The project had only just started but already one long term unemployed person had been assisted to find permanent employment
- Islington was one of the pilot boroughs for the Local Support Services Framework to assist in helping long term unemployed back into work and to join up services to assist in this
- There was a target of 1500 new social housing units by 2018 and the Council were trying to get a better deal for private sector rented tenants
- The repairs service was coming back 'in house' on 1 August and there was a need to monitor this to ensure tenants were getting the best service possible
- Energy efficiency measures at Holly Park were in progress and there was an advice team to assist tenants
- Need to continue the excellent progress in schools in Islington and encourage schools to remain community schools
- Work to get changes to gyratory systems in the borough in order to free up additional space
- The Families First programme would provide services around the family

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- The view was expressed that some of the training and courses that Job Centre Plus sent people on were 'box ticking' exercises and one resident had been sent on 7 CV writing courses, which she had no need of and more appropriate training needed to be undertaken. The Council should look at schemes that have worked in assisting the unemployed and those that had not

The Chair thanked the Leader for attending.

15 MONITORING REPORT (Item 15)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

The meeting ended at 10.25 p.m.

CHAIR