

London Borough of Islington

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 30 March 2023

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 30 March 2023 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Kay (Chair), Jackson, Clarke, Chapman, Heather, Staff, McHugh, Nargund, Weekes, Ibrahim and Russell

Also Present: **Councillors:** Ward and Woolf

Councillor Jenny Kay in the Chair

83 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Ozdemir, Chowdhury, Graham, Pandor, and Nathan.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Staff, Weekes and Ibrahim.

84 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)

Councillor Wayne substituted for Councillor Pandor.

85 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)

None.

86 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

87 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)

None.

88 EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (Item A6)

None.

89 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)

None.

ANNUAL PRESENTATION OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY (Item D1)

Councillor Woolf, Executive Member for Community Safety, presented to the committee on matters relating to his portfolio.

The following main points were raised in the discussion:

- The Baroness Casey Report into the conduct of the Metropolitan Police had recently been published. The Executive Member noted the abhorrent findings of the report. The Executive Member had been invited to review the Metropolitan Police's turnaround plan, and emphasised that root and branch reform and urgent action was required to improve policing standards.
- The Executive Member was pleased to report that Islington now had its own Superintendent. The Executive Member had requested the creation of a ten-point action plan for Islington developed with the community setting out clear tangible actions for the borough. The Executive Member had also requested a public charter from the Police setting out their priorities and promises to the community and clarity over their use of policing powers. A memorandum of understanding between the Council and the Police was being developed to ensure clarity on roles, responsibilities and communications. The Executive Member was also keen to see the adoption of a joint Anti-Racist Policy between the Police and the Council.
- The Executive Member would be meeting regularly with the Superintendent and Borough Commander to hold them to account. While it was right to be critical of policing standards, the Executive Member also noted that the Metropolitan Police was a key partner organisation and strong working relationships must be maintained to ensure the delivery of local priorities.
- The Executive Member supported a public health approach to addressing crime and community safety matters. He favoured a data-led approach, working with the local community, considering short-, medium- and long-term solutions. This approach was set out in the Council's violence reduction strategy that had been developed following engagement with the local community. Performance indicators and other measures of success were currently being developed.
- The Executive Member highlighted the Anti-Social Behaviour transformation programme, which sought to improve the council's response to ASB issues. This involved reviewing internal processes and structures. It was essential that safety was not seen in a silo, but was embedded in all local services. The council sought to foster a culture of care between the council, partner organisations, the voluntary sector, and local businesses.
- The Executive Member commented on the importance of a data-led approach to community safety. To improve trust and confidence, it was essential that reporting of ASB was as easy as possible and that actions were clearly communicated. It was important to consider both qualitative and quantitative data, as perceptions of crime and safety was as important as the statistical number of incidents.
- A member asked about the deployment of CCTV cameras to address crime and anti-social behaviour in hotspot areas and the use of technology in reporting anti-social behaviour. In response, it was noted that the council had invested £3.5million in upgrading the CCTV network, and had agreed an

information sharing agreement with LB Hackney to effectively tackle issues around Finsbury Park. Although CCTV could be an effective tool, it was also noted that deploying cameras on estates was not always welcomed by residents and clear communication with the community was needed. The Council was considering options for developing an app to assist with ASB reporting, similar to the Cleaner Islington app. The ASB telephone line received around 1,200 – 1,500 calls a month and the use of an app could assist with managing this high volume. Following a further question, the Executive member noted that it would take a couple of years to fully upgrade the CCTV infrastructure.

- A member asked about local policing action to disrupt drug supply networks and how the council could assist with this. Islington had received funding through the government's 'Combating Drugs Partnership' programme. This was to support a multi-agency approach to tackling drug harm and Cllr Woolf was working with the Executive Member for Health and Care and the Director of Public Health on insuring that a public health approach was embedded into this work. The Executive Member advised that he could provide more information on this work outside of the meeting.
- A member commented that recent 'community conversations' events on crime and policing had been very valuable, however it was important to engage with young people on these issues, including addressing perceptions of crime, as young people were disproportionately the victims of violent crime and were often those most fearful for their safety in the borough. In response, the Executive Member commented that a specific event for young people and their parents would be held the following week. The Executive Member had recently attended an event with headteachers and youth councillors to discuss muggings outside of schools.
- A member noted that the staff turnover in neighbourhood policing made it difficult for ward councillors to develop effective working relationships with the local police. The Executive Member agreed, and highlighted government cuts to neighbourhood policing since 2010. It was understood that the police were to end the 'carousel' system of rotating officers between roles, and this was welcomed by the Executive Member as effective relationships in the community were key to building trust and confidence.
- A member noted the increase in crime across the borough, and that crime had risen disproportionately in Junction ward. It was suggested that crime and ASB was so frequent that local people had stopped reporting, however concern was expressed as crime and ASB statistics were used to support the allocation of resources to local areas. The Executive Member commented on the importance of reporting, and the need to engage particularly with local businesses to report issues.
- A member commented on recent incidents of thefts from supermarkets around the Holloway Road area and linked this to the ongoing cost of living crisis.
- A member queried the council's actions to promote safety in parks and if any activities were planned ahead of the summer. The Executive Member commented on the work of Park Guard and others in patrolling local parks. These resources had previously been deployed to hotspot areas, however over recent years the council had reduced the threshold for what constituted a "hotspot" and regularly reviewed these to ensure that resources were

deployed effectively. The council also considered youth outreach work as a means of diverting young people from anti-social behaviour around hotspot areas.

- A member welcomed that knife crime incidents had fallen over the previous four years and queried if it was expected for this trend to continue. The Executive Member welcomed that these crimes had decreased, and emphasised the need for continued work to reduce knife crime incidents. It was also noted that crime statistics were compared with 2018 as this was prior to the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- A member commented on work to tackle extremism under the government's Prevent programme and shared concerns that this disproportionately targeted the Muslim community, particularly in light of increased Far Right activity. The Executive Member echoed these concerns, highlighted that the 2017 Finsbury Park terror attack was perpetrated by the Far Right, and commented on the council's positive relationship with Finsbury Park Mosque and Muslim Welfare House. In relation to diverting people from extremism, the council sought a harm-reduction approach that recognised that many people referred under Prevent were vulnerable.
- A member noted instances in other areas of protests against the rehousing of refugees and migrants and queried the work underway to make refugees and migrants feel safe in Islington. In response, the Executive Member commented on the importance of listening to the experiences of refugees and migrants and that the Community Safety team were aware of such issues.
- A discussion was had on violence against women and girls and the need for men to call-out other men for misogynistic behaviour. The Executive Member summarised the council's work to prevent and respond to domestic violence and abuse and commented on the importance of learning from survivors. The council's Violence Against Women and Girls strategy included an emphasis on holding perpetrators to account and making them visible. The council also worked with schools to raise awareness of male violence and healthy relationships.
- A member commented on the findings of the Casey Review, highlighting the institutional racism, misogyny and homophobia in the Metropolitan Police, and queried how the community can be best involved in shaping the future of policing in Islington. The Executive Member noted the importance of having genuine dialogue with the community on local policing and safety issues and indicated that he had raised this issue with the Metropolitan Police. Community engagement was expected to feature as a key theme in the turnaround plan developed following the Casey Review.
- A member expressed concern about the government's recent announcement to criminalise users of Nitrous Oxide canisters, despite health experts highlighting the relatively minimal harm associated with these. It was suggested that this would criminalise young people and potentially increase drug-related harm. It was queried the council was engaging with the police on enforcement activity and if public health principles would be applied to the response. The Executive Member commented on the council's trauma-informed approach to working with young people in the criminal justice system and summarised the work to provide safe spaces for young people.
- A member asked about the council's Safe Haven scheme, how to raise awareness of the scheme, and how success would be measured. The

Executive Member noted that the number of safe havens had trebled, and the council was making a video to engage with young people as well as an app. Performance measures were currently being developed. Members noted that it was important for local businesses participating in the scheme to be given appropriate advice and guidance on how to respond to incidents.

- A member asked about the experience of victims in Islington and if they felt supported through their journey. In response, the Executive Member commented on the importance of supporting victims and the council's work in listening to survivors of domestic abuse, but acknowledged there was more that could be done to support victims of crime. It was noted that domestic abuse survivors who had engaged with the council's services had reported a high level of satisfaction with the support received.
- Following a question on the Police's Ward Panels, the Executive Member acknowledged members' frustration that these were not held regularly in all wards and that the meetings were not always reflective of Islington's diverse communities and their concerns. The council was engaging with the Police on how these meetings could be improved.
- Following a question on cross-border crime, the Executive Member reported that he regularly met with his counterparts in neighbouring boroughs to discuss cross-border issues and also discussed these with the GLA.
- In response to a question on crime associated with the night-time economy, it was noted that this was considered by the Late Night Levy Board that discussed issues such as Licensing, unregulated taxis, and deploying officers to hotspot areas. It was noted that the council had recently agreed a new Licensing Policy to regulate licensed premises.
- A member asked about how the performance of the new Community Safety division would be measured and how members could review and scrutinise performance. In response, the Executive Member advised that KPIs for the new service were being considered and members would have an opportunity to review these as they developed. It was suggested that performance measures should include progress against priorities, the involvement of resident voices in safety issues. The Executive Member suggested that KPIs were likely to include resident satisfaction, decreases in repeat referrals, decreases in referrals to MARAC, and a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. It was agreed that the Executive Member would provide an update to the committee once new performance measures were established.
- A member shared her view that the current structure of ward panels and the Safer Neighbourhood Board did not provide for sufficient democratic oversight of policing and asked how this could be improved. In response, the Executive Member commented that engagement with the community on how they want to have their say on policing issues would be key. It would be important for any oversight arrangements to reflect the diversity of local communities. The Member commented that the publication of the Casey Report presented an opportunity for governance structures to be reviewed. The Executive Member agreed that revolutionary reform of the Metropolitan Police was required. It was requested that the Executive Member provide an update on these matters at a future meeting.
- A member noted the importance of police officers reading the Casey Review but also acknowledged that this could be triggering for some officers who had experienced discrimination and abuse and requested that the Executive

Member ask the Borough Commander to ensure that police staff were appropriately supported as the response to the review was developed.

The Committee thanked Councillor Woolf for his attendance.

ACTIONS:

- It was agreed that the Executive Member would provide an update on new performance measures relating to Community Safety once these were established.
- It was requested that the Executive Member provide an update on any changes to local democratic and community oversight structures to a future meeting.

91 COST OF LIVING CRISIS SCRUTINY REVIEW - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (Item D2)

The Chair provided a progress update on the development of the recommendations and a discussion was had on possible areas for recommendations.

The recommendations would be submitted to the next meeting for approval.

92 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (Item D3)

Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance, and Paul Clarke, Director of Finance, introduced the report.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- A member asked a question about the installation of individual end point heat meters in council homes and the risks associated with that. Although heat meters allowed greater control over heating usage for residents, and could have a positive environmental impact through reduced energy usage, it was acknowledged that the current pooled system meant that all residents would have their homes heated. There was a concern that low income households moving to individual heat meters may turn off their heating and live in cold properties. In response, it was advised that the financial implications and impacts on households were complex. It was suggested that this may be an area for the Housing Scrutiny Committee or Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to review.
- A member asked about the overspend in the Chief Executive's Department relating to communications. In response, it was advised that this related to a one-off project to make the council's website meet statutory accessibility standards.
- It was noted that the North Central London Integrated Care Board had made a one-off contribution of £5million towards the council's Adult Social Care budgets.
- A member asked how the council supports local schools in managing their budgets. In response, it was advised that the council offered advice and guidance on being financially resilient, however falling roll numbers would have a detrimental financial impact on schools.

- A member asked about the financial investment in the Resident Experience Programme and why this included spend on interim staffing resource. In response, it was advised that this spend was for specialised services that the council did not have the resources or expertise to deliver in-house. This was reviewing telephony services needed for the contact centre, IT infrastructure, and process mapping. The Executive Member noted that the Executive would be considering further investment in the Resident Experience Programme at its next meeting.

The Committee noted the budget monitoring report.

93 MONITORING ITEM (Item D4)

Scrutiny Response Tracker

In relation to point 40, on the occupancy of cycle storage, a member welcomed that a digital platform was being developed to simplify the management of bike hangars, and appreciated that it was not sensible to implement a performance measure prior to the implementation of the digital platform, however requested a further update on occupancy three months after the new platform was in place. It was noted that this may be a matter for the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to point 4, on Islington Lettings being discontinued, it was requested that some learning from the programme be submitted to the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to point 30, on Complaints Handling, it was requested that the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance and the Chief Executive be invited to the next meeting to provide an update.

In relation to point 34 on Fairer Together Hubs, following the confirmation that the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee was the relevant committee for this work, it was agreed to write to officers and the Leader and request an update on this work.

In relation to point 41, on establishing Challenging Inequality Performance Indicators, a further update was requested.

Work Plan

It was noted that a Budget Monitoring Report was not produced for Month 11 and would not be submitted to the next meeting.

The progress updates on previous scrutiny reviews would be deferred until the next municipal year to allow more time for the recommendations to be implemented following approval by the Executive in March 2023.

It was requested that the Metropolitan Police be invited to attend to provide an update on their response to the Casey Review.

ACTIONS:

The scheduling of the items requested above to be discussed with Members and Officers

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

CHAIR