

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 28 March 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD - Islington Town Hall on 28 March 2019 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Champion (Chair), Khondoker (Vice-Chair),
Bell-Bradford, Clarke, Convery, Hamitouche,
Jeapes and Russell

Councillor Rowena Champion in the Chair

265 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nathan.

Councillor Ismail submitted apologies for lateness.

266 DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)

None.

267 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)

None.

268 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)

It was agreed to amend minute 262 to insert the words 'and class', as follows:

With regard to the questions on the ethnicity and class of children participating in the summer reading challenge and the number of apprentices supported into fulltime employment, members were advised that responses were with the Director Employment, Skills and Culture for sign off.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 February 2019 be agreed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them; subject to the amendment set out above.

269 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 6)

The Chair advised that questions from members of the public would be taken in relation to each agenda item.

270 OVERVIEW - SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS WITH LONG TERM CONDITIONS INCLUDING LEARNING DISABILITIES AND MENTAL HEALTH (Item B1)

The Chair advised that this item would be taken together with Item B2, the Quarter 3 Performance Report for Employment, Skills and Culture.

271 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2018/19)- EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS (Item B2)

Councillor Shaikh, the Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs, presented the report summarising performance of the services within her portfolio. The Executive Member also presented on the employment support services available to residents with long term conditions, including learning disabilities and mental health issues. Andrea Stark, Director of Employment, Skills and Culture, and Nicky Freeling, Head of iWork, also contributed to the presentation.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- 900 residents had been supported into paid work between April and December 2018; exceeding the target of 750 by 20%. The Executive Member commented that the "Team Islington" approach of working closely with partner organisations had contributed to this success.
- The Executive Member advised that the offer of employment support services had developed considerably since the Employment Commission concluded in 2014 and would continue to evolve further in future. It was thought that local employment support services had benefitted from shared marketing and communications and the development of an online directory.
- The number of young people aged 18 to 25 supported into paid work was below target, however it was explained that accurate statistics were not available. Work was underway to address this.
- The Committee welcomed that the number of residents with disabilities and long term health conditions supported into paid employment was above target.
- Employment support services worked closely with adult social care to commission suitable support and create appropriate placements for those with long term conditions, including learning disabilities. This included adult community learning programmes, flexible employment opportunities with wrap around support, and wellbeing therapies for the long term unemployed.
- Flexible work placements were particularly beneficial to those who did not have experience of regular employment, as it was important to build the confidence of residents who may have previously struggled to access employment.

- The council's iWork service had brokered work placements in a nursing home that were ring-fenced for residents with learning difficulties. These placements made use of an adjusted recruitment process which included one-to-one support in completing an application form and attending a work trial instead of a formal interview. Applicants were then assessed on their ability to complete tasks rather than their interview responses.
- The council had set a target of supporting 20 adults with learning disabilities into paid employment each year. This target was set due to the intensive support that these residents required to maintain employment.
- The Committee watched two short video case studies of Islington residents who had been supported into paid employment through the council's support services. A member asked how effective the videos had been as an outreach tool. It was advised that this would be taken up with the Communications Team.
- The council was reviewing how adult community learning courses were promoted. It was hoped that better targeting of communications would help to increase participation, particularly among parents of children aged 0 to 18.
- The Committee welcomed that 900 young people had taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge. An ambitious target of 1000 participants had been set. Although this had not been achieved, engaging 900 children in reading was a positive outcome.
- There had been almost 800,000 visits to libraries from April to December 2018. It was queried if the council could track the activities in libraries, as this may help to measure performance against corporate priorities, such as digital inclusion.
- The Committee was pleased that the target for the number of residents supported into paid work had been exceeded, however queried if this employment had been sustained. In response, it was advised that the council monitored the employment status of those it had supported into work for one year and apprentices for two years. Approximately 75% of those who had participated in employment support programmes delivered by the council had maintained their employment over the previous year. However, not all partner organisations that delivered employment support services collected comprehensive data on employment sustainability. The council was working with these partners to encourage them to collect more accurate data.
- Officers noted that previously the council's primary focus had been on supporting residents into employment. More recently, there had been a stronger focus on supporting residents into high-quality employment that paid at least the London Living Wage. The Committee suggested that the council should further emphasise its focus on high-quality employment, to demonstrate that the council's employment support programmes were superior to others.
- The Executive Member advised that Islington aspired to be the first London Living Wage place, where all major employers paid the London Living Wage and where major employers adopted flexible working practices.
- A discussion was had on the number of BAME residents accessing employment support programmes and how this data was collected. It was agreed that further demographic breakdown would be provided outside of

the meeting, with greater detail of the types of programmes and opportunities being accessed, and an analysis of any trends related to residents with protected characteristics.

- A member advised that she had recently attended the event celebrating five years since the conclusion of the Employment Commission. It was reported that this was an interesting and useful event, however a couple of the partner organisations present had advised that they currently had vacancies that they were struggling to fill. It was queried if the council was actively working to support residents into those vacancies. In response, it was advised that services were working to support residents into a range of vacancies, however this was sometimes challenging work. Some residents had entrenched issues and were not ready for full time employment, others did not want to engage with employment support services.
- A member asked if the council could provide small tables and chairs for children in libraries, suggesting that these could be rolled out at the same time as Lego Clubs. In response, it was advised that the council had limited resources for library furniture, however a written response would be sent.
- The Committee requested further details of the adult and community learning courses available and a detailed demographic breakdown of those accessing the courses, including ethnicity and class.
- The Executive Member advised that a range of adult and community learning courses were available, including English and Maths, and also vocational courses which were sector-specific. It was commented that other boroughs offered courses which were more focused on leisure activities, however Islington required that all courses had a strong focus on skills and employability.
- It was advised that adult and community learning courses were promoted through various means, including through the local organisation Help on Your Doorstep, who were trusted in the local community.
- The Committee suggested that the organisations taking part in the council's Cultural Enrichment Programme "11 by 11" may also be able to offer work experience or other opportunities, such as apprenticeships and traineeships.
- It was noted that 60 cultural organisations had signed up to the 11 by 11 programme and 50 of 65 local schools were present at the recent launch event. The council would be monitoring the progress of the programme and outcomes would be reported to a future meeting.
- Cultural organisations were expected to be active partners in the 11 by 11 programme, hosting a free visit, school assemblies, and learning resources for teachers.
- The Executive Member commented on the opportunities associated with the London Screen Academy opening in Islington in 2019.
- Officers advised that non-British BAME residents were under represented in the local construction sector and the council was working with employers to address this.
- Officers commented that there was a growing demand for apprenticeships in digital employment sectors.
- A member of the public asked how many schools and businesses had signed up to the "100 hours' World of Work" pledge. In response, it was advised

that work was already underway and was being mapped and a platform was being developed for schools to use. The response from primary schools had been very encouraging and a number of businesses were keen to participate. It was expected that more comprehensive data would be available in the next academic year.

RESOLVED:

That the progress that the end of Quarter 3 against performance indicators for Employment, Skills and Culture which fall within the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee be noted.

272

UPDATE ON THE ACCELERATOR FUND BID - OFFICER AND NEXT STEP (Item B5)

Andrew Bedford, Head of Greenspace and Leisure Services, provided an update on the Heritage Lottery Fund "Accelerator Fund" bid.

It was advised that Islington was one of 11 organisations shortlisted. If the council received an award, then this would assist with delivering the vision of transforming the borough's parks and greenspaces into spaces which promote health and wellbeing.

A discussion was had on the cultural and historic role of parks in promoting health and wellbeing.

It was suggested that greater partnership between parks, the NHS and others would be beneficial in helping to tackle loneliness, social isolation, obesity and related long term conditions. It would be crucial to develop the workforce to carry out this role; at present park keepers were asset focused, however it was thought that they could have a real impact on health and wellbeing by adopting a people focused approach. For example, it was thought that park keepers could be informal sports facilitators, could host coffee mornings, and could support community events.

The additional funding would support the council in transforming the parks service. It was essential that any service change adopted a sustainable model that could be continued after the Accelerator Funding expired.

In response to a question, it was advised that park keepers could discourage anti-social behaviour by fostering a positive community atmosphere in parks, developing relationships with the local community, and facilitating more cross-generational activities.

It was intended to train park keepers on facilitating community activities by developing greater partnerships with Islington Play Association, Arsenal in the Community and others. Officers accepted that this could be challenging for some

staff, however it was intended to build on staff passions and enthusiasms and it was hoped that staff would welcome the opportunity to work differently.

The Committee thanked Andrew Bedford for his contribution.

273 **SCRUTINY REVIEW: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (Item B3)**

The Chair provided an update on the status of the draft recommendations of the scrutiny review. The recommendations were currently being drafted but would partly depend on the outcome of the Accelerator Fund bid.

A discussion was had on possible recommendations. The recommendations would focus on maximising the potential of volunteers, gardening groups and "Friends of" groups. Greater skill sharing, networking and coordination between groups could be beneficial. It was thought that the council could provide a more consistent offer of support to these groups. This may include facilitating mentoring, providing practical support, training, and developing relationships with key officers. The recommendations would also focus on promoting the "Parks for Health" agenda and developing a sense of ownership of parks and greenspaces in the local community.

It was suggested that committee members could visit the Tufnell Park Community Plant Nursey run by the Octopus Network and hold a further evidence gathering session with officers in the Homes and Communities division about the role of estate groups.

The Committee discussed examples of estate groups that worked to maintain and improve the local environment and considered how the council could offer practical support to those groups. In particular, was suggested that the council could offer communications support and promotion of their activities.

A member highlighted that some parks were poorly utilised and attracted anti-social behaviour, suggesting that such parks would benefit from improved safety features, refreshed play and sports equipment and provision of basic facilities. It was suggested that such improvements would need to be made before local residents embraced the park as an area for health and wellbeing activities. Officers advised that different parks had different needs and it was important for parks to meet the needs of their local communities. Officers provided examples of parks which had been significantly improved over recent years in partnership with their local communities.

It was advised that suggested recommendations should be communicated to the Chair prior to the next meeting.

Officers agreed to circulate the Islington Play Association survey on young people's perceptions of local parks.

It was suggested that committee members should visit Bingfield Park.

274

QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2018/19) - ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT (Item B6)

Kevin O'Leary, Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration, summarised performance of the council's environmental services.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Staffing levels in the planning service had impacted on performance.
- Angelic Energy was progressing well.
- The installation of on-street bike storage facilities was on target.
- The Committee requested that members be provided with further information on the parking appeals process.
- Highbury Leisure Centre was able to partially re-open in December 2018 following the fire which significantly damaged the pool area in September 2018. Matters related to the fire were still with the insurers and a detailed structural survey had been scheduled. The re-build project would be a complex project and would not be completed for at least a couple of years. Despite the disruption, the centre had 3,700 registered members compared to 4,000 before the fire. All swim classes that were held at the centre had been rescheduled elsewhere. Officers were impressed with how GLL had handled the response to the fire.
- The Committee asked if there were opportunities to improve Highbury Leisure Centre in the re-build. In response, it was advised that minor improvements could be made, and the installation of solar panels would be considered, however it was not expected to significantly upgrade the facilities. Planning consent would be needed for the demolition and rebuild of the centre.
- A member highlighted some customer service and management issues at local leisure centres. Officers advised that their experience of working with GLL was very positive, however would investigate any issues as required.
- It was suggested that the results of air quality monitoring in schools should be communicated to parents.
- Members commented on local School Street campaigns. Whilst these had been received positively by some schools, others were more cautious about the implementation of new traffic restrictions. Further work was needed to communicate the benefits of such measures to parents.

RESOLVED:

That progress to the end of Quarter 3 be noted.

275

RECYCLING WORKSHOP - MEMBER FEEDBACK (Item B4)

Members provided feedback on a recent workshop on the council's recycling service. It was agreed that the Committee's views would be communicated to officers.

276 **WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19 (Item B7)**

Noted.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm

CHAIR