

**Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 20 April 2021**

Non-confidential minutes of the virtual meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 20 April 2021 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:**        **Councillors:**    Debono (Chair), Gallagher (Vice-Chair), Bell-Bradford, Chapman, Gantly, Heather, Hyde, Jeapes, Nathan, O'Sullivan, Poyser, Russell and Wayne

**Also Present:**        **Councillors:**    Lukes, Ngongo, O'Halloran

**Councillor Theresa Debono in the Chair**

- 278        **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**  
Apologies were received from Councillors O'Sullivan, Chowdhury and Picknell
- 279        **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**  
None
- 280        **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**  
None
- 281        **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**  
RESOLVED:  
That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 March 2021 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them
- 282        **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**  
None
- 283        **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A6)**  
The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions
- 284        **COVID 19 UPDATE (Item C1)**  
Linzi Roberts Egan, Chief Executive and Councillor Sue Lukes, Executive Member for Community Safety were present and outlined the report

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

- First step of roadmap reached on 8 March, with schools and colleges fully reopening, a lot of work had taken place with schools to support safe full reopening

- Support to local businesses for reopening and the Shop local, Shop safe campaign has been revived. In response to a question it was stated that on easing of the guidelines last weekend, businesses had been supported by the Council, however some businesses had chosen not to reopen at the present time. Public Protection officers were investigating breaches of COVID regulations, and any examples of breaches should be reported. Councillor Lukes stated that all Members should encourage shopkeepers to sign up to the Shop local, Shop safe initiative
- Infections have slowed and are at relatively low levels. Symptomatic testing rose significantly in March and non-symptomatic Lateral Flow tests has remained at high levels in the community primarily linked to schools. Latest infection rate 17.3 residents per 100,000 population and amongst over 60's the infection rate is 3.3%, compared to the national average of 11%
- Vaccination and testing – at current time 4 fixed vaccination sites in the borough, continuing to vaccinate priority groups. Also outreach vaccination to homeless and bespoke clinics at GP hubs for those with learning difficulties. Community pop up vaccination centres have also been used. Vaccination programme is currently significantly better than others within London, but is significantly below the national target of 95%. Uptake of vaccinations is now higher than the flu vaccine programme, and is continuing to increase across all groups. Whilst lower in some Black communities the gap is narrowing
- We are Islington has provided a significant role in supporting local residents and financial support has been provided to residents
- Food support has also been provided and there have been 4095 requests since the service was launched. There has also been fuel support given
- Well-being support and support to shielded/critically extremely vulnerable residents has also been provided
- Staffing – noted that as of 6 April the percentage of staff unable to work was approx. 20% and staff working on site was 32% and support is available to staff and residents through a number of services. It was stated that this level of staff absence was also due to staff taking annual leave and those who are currently unable to work due to non COVID reasons, and had been at a similar level since the start of the pandemic
- Noted that there had been instances of large groups of people gathering in Parks and open spaces on easing of lockdown, and that more toilet facilities would be made available in future
- In response to a question it was stated that with regard to surge testing for variants that had taken place in other parts of London, lessons had been learnt from this, and a plan was being formulated in case Islington had to undertake surge testing for variants
- A Member referred to paragraph 4.3 of the report and the implementation of People Friendly streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. It was stated that implementation had been affected by the pandemic, that the Executive Member Environment and Transport was committed to the Council's Net Zero Carbon 2030 strategy, and that there would be more 'face to face' contact with residents over proposals
- A Member enquired as to the numbers of staff who had been vaccinated in Adult Social Care, Domiciliary Care and residential care and it was stated that

these figures could be provided to Members, however it was felt that a collaborative approach to vaccination was preferable rather than compulsion

- In response to a question it was noted that there had been some issues with vaccine supply, as some vaccines had been redirected to other parts of the country, where infection levels were higher. Second dose vaccinations were also affecting those waiting for a first dose. This was an issue across NCL

RESOLVED:

That details of staff vaccinated in Adult Social care, residential, and domiciliary care establishments be circulated to Members of the Committee

The Chair thanked Linzi Roberts–Egan and Councillor Lukes for attending

285

### **PRESENTATION - EXECUTIVE MEMBER COMMUNITY SAFETY/CRIME STATISTICS (Item C2)**

Councillors Sue Lukes, Executive Member Community Safety and Councillor Michelline Safi – Ngongo Executive Member Children, Young People and Families were present and accompanied by Keith Stanger and Curtis Ashton.

Detective Superintendent Dave Courcha was also present at the meeting to respond to questions

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

- Noted total crime figures had fallen in all areas, apart from racial and domestic violence offences – reduction of 24% reduction in crime overall, but this is slowly increasing again and the reduction may be partly attributed to lockdown measures. Areas of concern centre around a small number of parks/estates, where established gangs/groups are causing issues with increased drug dealing and robbery
- Huge uptake in services provision from street homeless, and drug users
- Knife crime reductions sustained, and attributed to work of Gangs Teams, partnership approach to youth offending, and joined up Police and partnership work
- Police have responded with a number of initiatives – creation of violence suppression unit, cross borough initiatives, weapon sweeps, higher level of NP patrols in high crime areas, multi-agency offender management, work with Pentonville Prison, and engagement in youth custody worker programme
- Achievements – reduced number of first time entrants into the youth justice system, reoffending rates for young people amongst best in London, reduction in the number of people receiving a custodial sentence, and reductions in youth violence, and serious youth violence. Challenges include impact of pandemic on exploitation of children and young people, surge in violence after the first lockdown ended, organised crime groups, cross border crime. Work taking place with Haringey on cross border crime initiatives. In addition there were still high levels of moped and pedal theft
- Initiatives being undertaken to support those subject to domestic violence, and violence against young women and girls. Challenges include ongoing

impact of pandemic, safety of women and girls in communities, schools and workplaces, increasing criminal justice outcomes and awareness of young people as victims of domestic abuse. Noted a new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy was being developed, and that Islington charged more perpetrators for Domestic Violence than any other Domestic Violence unit. Noted that the Police had established a new predatory offender unit, and that a violence and aggression unit was being relocated from Camden to Islington to offer a rapid response to violence and robbery issues. A Drugs Focus desk would also focus on drug dealing

- In response to a question it was stated that caretakers and repairs staff did receive training to report any issues of domestic violence or other concerns
- Reference was made to the increase in 'cuckooing', and that this had increased. These were often complex cases and the community MARAC was supporting victims
- Noted that there were plans for a mental health nurse to be embedded in the Police Control room in order to assist officers where there are issues of mental health with offenders
- Measures taken to improve women's safety, including the Safe Havens scheme, targeted communication campaigns, treating misogyny as a hate crime, early intervention workshops
- Delivering multi agency projects to reduce ASB and crime, including tackling drugs and violent offending in south of borough, continuing to develop tri-borough partnership to tackle crime in Finsbury Park area, increased CCTV across a range of crime hotspots, and helping embed the remerged Probation service in June 2021. A Member stated that he appreciated the work that had taken place on Operation Perch, however there was a need to support the Chairs of the Police Ward Panels in their improvement and to ensure these Panels were more effective
- Increasing confidence in reporting hate crime is a priority with a new Hate Crime Strategy being introduced, successful hate crime awareness week, dip sampling of hate crimes to identify areas of good practice, and areas for improvement
- Focus on exploitation and extremism
- Street population team expanded with a dedicated complex needs women's worker, funding application made for further funding as part of the Rough Sleeper programme, monthly street user outreach meeting. Numbers on streets are low, currently under 10, but numbers are not static. Housing first scheme expanded providing positive option for those with a long term history of rough sleeping. Challenges include eviction ban being lifted and the economic situation may lead to an increase demand for services with increased complexity of needs. There is a challenge to deliver current level of support once funding ends, and an opportunity to review the current outreach offer during the procurement for service covering 2021/24
- Noted that there is now a Daily Safeguarding meeting, rather than as fortnightly previously, and this was working well, and high numbers of residents had been supported over the previous year
- In response to a question as to community tensions, it was stated that there was an issue with an increase of the far right, and this was being looked at

and an organisation was doing a mapping exercise in the borough in this regard.

The Chair thanked Councillors Lukes and Ngongo, Detective Superintendent Dave Courcha and officers for attending

**286 PRESENTATION - EXECUTIVE MEMBER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (Item C3)**

Councillor Una O'Halloran, Executive Member Community Safety was present and accompanied by John Muir, Head of Community Development, and made a presentation to the Committee, a copy of which is interleaved

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

- Working to the Council's VCS strategy, the Communities Team has contributed and informed a range of corporate strategies to enable communities to thrive, connect and give. The Communities Team focuses on building communities and strengthening the voluntary and community sector by strategy, community networks, places and spaces, funding and investment, capacity building and volunteering, communications and digital development
- Grants programme – Council new programme started on 21 January 2021 running until 31 March 2024, and there is a commitment to protect levels of grant funding to the local and voluntary community sector. The current budget is £2.7m per annum, and has been designed around the Council's Corporate Plan. A Residents Impact Assessment identified new positive aspects of the new grant programme – 19% increase in the funding of BAME organisations compared to previous grants programmes
- Reviews are being carried out under 3 strands Capacity Building and Volunteering, Equalities and Cohesion Networks, with a focus on the needs of the Black/Afro Caribbean community and Residents with Disabilities
- Organisations can access independent, impartial advice on welfare benefits, debt, housing and immigration issues. Discretionary rate relief, food connection grants, grant funding programmes and payment of LLW are strategic priorities
- Small grants programmes include Community Chest, Local Initiative Fund
- Ward Partnerships are a forum for community engagement, and all wards have had WP meetings throughout 2020/21. Work is taking place to develop the Ward Partnerships, and will be set out in a community plan, which has leverage to influence delivery in the area
- Estate based community centres – work taking place to improve some centres. COVID has restricted activities in community centres. It is proposed to deliver a 3 year community centre strategy
- Estate based Active Space Programme – this includes Arts on Estates, Estate Environment, Active Spaces and these activities are free and advertised specifically through estate based and local media
- Community Development and Partnerships in Finsbury Park and Caledonian Wards are taking place

- Equality events taking place and EU nationals supported with targeted work to support vulnerable EU residents
- COVID service offer and We are Islington – worked with VCS partners providing guidance, engaged network organisations and individual organisations to ensure lock down compliance, established a COVID service directory as part of the We are Islington helpline. 14 community conversations undertaken on COVID 19 with communities on testing and public health messaging, worked with Islington’s mutual aid groups providing flexible support. VAI delivering the volunteering programme for the borough, and an additional 20 volunteer roles specifically to support COVID 19 have been identified, and advertised
- VCS Funding and well-being – contact made to VCS grant funded organisations, London Community Response Fund, National Lottery Coronavirus Community Fund. Advice sessions to ensure organisations are supported in writing funding bids, developing income etc. assisting organisations to apply for additional Government grants during the pandemic
- Supported 23 community food projects, and Andover Food Project scaled up to meet increasing needs of Finsbury Park residents. Also work to increase social connectedness, and established a social connectedness network. Noted that going forward there is a need to improve social connectedness, and to use organisations such as the Food Poverty Alliance in this regard. There is also a plan to use outside activities to assist with mental health and loneliness issues, and to encourage more use of Council services
- Members congratulated the Executive Member and officers for the excellent work that they had undertaken during the pandemic
- Reference was made to the digital divide in the borough, and that this may deter a number of residents from utilising Council services, and there needed to be consideration given to this
- A Member stated that the work carried out in Caledonian Ward had been excellent, and was a good example of a resident led approach to community development
- In response to a question it was stated that the issues of engagement with TRAs was being looked at, in conjunction with the recommendations of scrutiny on TRAs, whether TRAs are representative, and the future possible relationship to Ward Partnerships
- Reference was made to some TRAs not being contacted in regard to estate based active services, and it was stated that details should be supplied to the Executive Member in this regard for investigation

The Chair thanked Councillor O’Halloran and John Muir for attending

287

**MONITORING REPORT, WORK PROGRAMME ETC./CONSIDERATION OF SCRUTINY TOPIC 2021/22 (Item )**

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that consideration be given at the next meeting to the following scrutiny review topics for consideration in 2021/22

The meeting ended at 9.20 p.m.

**CHAIR**