

# Community Safety and Environment Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Tuesday 29 January 2019

## **PRESENT**

**Committee members:** Councillors Bora Kwon (Chair), Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler and Iain Cassidy

**Other Councillors:** Councillors Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment)

**Officers:** Mike Clarke (Director of Libraries and Archives), Christina Cato (Director for Finance & Resources), Hitesh Jolapara (Strategic Director of Finance & Governance), Emily Hill (Assistant Director - Corporate Finance), Ann Ramage (Assistant Director for Regulatory Services), Sharon Lea (Director of Resident Services) Fawad Bhatti (Social Inclusion Policy Manager), Simon Davis (Assistant Director for Contracts and Procurement), Graham Morrison (Environmental Health Officer, Regulatory Services)

## 1. **MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Morton and Ann Rosenberg.

## 3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. 2019 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

Hitesh Jolapara, Strategic Director of Finance and Governance gave a presentation outlining the Council's budget proposals. He highlighted the scale of challenges facing local government in recent years. He showed slides that demonstrated the debt levels nationally, noting that local government expenditure and Council services were declining nationally apart from Adult Social Care.

It was noted that grant received from national government continued to reduce. There was a general grant funding reduction of £3.3m from 2018/19 to 2019/20 – this was after receipt of extra one-off social care funding of £1.5m and winter pressures funding of £0.9m as per the Autumn Budget Statement. An inflationary council tax increase of 2.7% was modelled for 2019/20. This increase would generate income of £6.3m over 4 years and £1.56m in the first year. The Council's spending power reduction was 13% more than the national average and expected to deliver extra savings of £34m. In addition, there needed to be savings of £2.4m for residents' services for 2019/20.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked how the additional costs relating to the disaggregation of residents' services, would be funded and whether these had been factored into the budget for 2018/19. In response, Hitesh Jolapara explained that there might be a one-off cost for the disaggregation however the Council was in the process of concluding the new arrangements, therefore this had not been finalised. The current message was to disaggregate within existing budgets.

Sharon Lea, Director of Resident's Services explained that each service area would be required to do a zero-based budgeting exercise and present a business case. This would include a breakdown of how services were currently being delivered and how these could be brought together more effectively. In addition, she added that the Council wanted to ensure that the new staffing arrangements worked cross functionally to improve efficiencies. i.e. how we can embrace change and improve the way services were delivered.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler expressed concerns around the disaggregation of resident services' and asked if there was a wider strategy in place. She queried why the Council had decided to disaggregate, given that the existing arrangements were working well. In response, Sharon Lea explained that the current staffing arrangements were based on a traditional approach. Therefore, this was an opportunity to explore new ways of working and introducing best practice to the Council. In addition, this would be achieved using the funding already set out for resident services'.

Councillors Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for the Environment commented that the bi-borough arrangements were not as successful as the

Council had originally intended, and recommendations were made to remodel the services based on a zero-based budgeting approach.

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked what was the Council's position relating to discounts and exemptions on council tax in comparison to other boroughs. Emily Hill, Assistant Director - Corporate Finance explained that the single person and student discount entitlements were likely to be relatively similar across other London boroughs. However, council tax support was provided to the elderly, and residents working for lower pay. Those on lower income would pay less council tax in comparison to other boroughs as the Council's local scheme provided similar support to the previous council tax benefit. In addition, Councillor Wesley Harcourt noted that it was a political decision to ensure that lower paid workers were not disadvantaged.

The Chair asked whether the new arrangements meant that the Council had greater flexibility to make its own savings as a result of the disaggregation. In response Sharon Lea said that the Council had always been assigned its own budget, therefore had the flexibility to manage and improve its efficiencies and would continue to operate in the same way going forward.

Sharon Lea, explained that currently senior officers, had the responsibility of managing two sets of budgets across two boroughs. She recognised that it was a challenging task for officers to deliver different sets of priorities, whilst managing a difficult workload. The Council felt that the priorities of this borough were not always delivered to a satisfactory standard. By creating a sovereign resident services', this would allow officers to solely focus on the Council's vision, ensuring that this was effectively being achieved.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked for clarification around the risks involved in ending the use of bailiffs to collect council tax debt. Furthermore, she asked how this would be managed going forward. Hitesh Jolapara noted that the introduction of this scheme offered an ethical approach to debt management, avoiding increased challenges for residents' and greater expense for the Council. It was noted that a 97.5% collection rate was assumed for 2018/19. The Revenue and Benefit team were currently looking at new processes that would be put into place. Reassurances were offered that this was closely being monitoring.

Councillor Iain Cassidy, referring to Appendix 1 of the Agenda Pack asked why cycle street furniture advertising was indicated as a high delivery risk. Councillor Wesley Harcourt explained that this was marked as high risk because this had not generated the income that the Council had anticipated.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Committee considered the budget proposal and the proposed changes to fees and charges and noted the report.

## **5. MANAGEMENT OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN THE BOROUGH**

Ann Ramage, Assistant Director for Regulatory Services provided a presentation, noting that the Council had a statutory duty to receive

notifications of infectious diseases (including food poisoning). The Council also had a legal duty to monitor and investigate these cases and take action where necessary. She showed slides that provided an overview of the systems and controls that were in place to keep residents and other members of the public safe.

The Borough's principle partner in this work is the Health Protection Team (HPT) which was part of Public Health England (PHE). The HPT team consisted of Consultants in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC), consultant nurses, and support staff. The CCDCs were appointed by the Council as Proper Officers for receiving notifications from doctors. In addition, PHE would collate and publish monthly details of notifiable diseases by borough and disease.

Investigations of infectious diseases would be carried out by fully qualified Environment Health Officers (EHOs). These would also include cases of food poisoning and Legionella. The officers had the power to close a business posing risk and exclude people from work if they were a risk to others. They also received regular training from PHE, and participated in desktop emergency exercises. An overview was provided around how infectious disease cases were managed and the cost implications to businesses. Those most at risk were the very old, very young, pregnant women those with compromised immune systems and those already ill.

Graham Morrison, Environmental Health Officer, provided an example of a complex case study that was carried out relating to a previous Salmonella case in the borough - this resulted in 60 customers ill with 20 being hospitalised. Details were provided of how this was managed and the appropriate measures that had been put in place by Council officers.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked how many Environmental Health Officers were employed. Ann Ramage explained that there were currently 4 (FTE) food environment health officers who responded to infectious disease notifications and outbreaks. There was a similar number of health and safety officers who handled notifications of Legionella. In addition, noted that that this was a highly specialised department due to the nature of work involved.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked how the Council's figures in relation to the number of infectious diseases, compared to other local boroughs. Ann Ramage explained that a total of 155 cases of Gastro Intestinal Diseases were notified to the North-West London Health Protection Team in 2018. The London Borough of Hounslow reported a higher rate in comparison to the Council, whilst Kensington & Chelsea experienced fewer cases of infectious diseases.

The Chair asked for further clarification around why some diseases fell under the Council's remit. Ann Ramage referring to page 35 of the agenda pack said that there were 31 diseases listed as notifiable. These were categorised as infectious diseases because they were caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi that could spread, directly or indirectly from one person to

another. Furthermore, GP's had a statutory duty to notify a Proper Officer of the Council of these infectious diseases. The Council was also under legal obligation to then notify PHE about the notifications received and carry out appropriate investigations if necessary.

The Chair queried whether the Council faced challenges due to the transitory nature as a London borough. In response Ann Ramage explained that in most cases people, were co-operative to the instructions set out. In addition, the Council also worked in collaboration with local schools and hospitals to minimise risks where possible.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Committee noted the key importance and potential impact of this work in protecting residents and visitors to the borough.

## **6. REFUSE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT OVERVIEW**

Simon Davis, Assistant Director for Contracts and Procurement introduced the report and provided an overview of the waste management and street cleansing services in the borough. These services provided front-line services to residents, businesses, and visitors to the borough. The efficiency and effectiveness with which these were delivered had an impact on residents' quality of life, and the Council's overall ability to deliver a 'cleaner, greener' borough.

Serco managed a collection of domestic waste from approximately 80,000 residential properties. Missed collections were resolved within 24 hours and good behaviour was also factored in as part of their responsibility as a contractor. Furthermore, as part of the borough's clear all policy, Serco proactively removed unreported fly tips, dog fouling and litter. The streets in the borough were some of the cleanest in London with over 96% of streets being kept to an acceptable standard of cleanliness.

The key service standards for street cleaning were outlined. These were to achieve a high standard of cleanliness after each cleanse and remove reported fly tips within 48 hours. In addition, it was also essential to attend emergency responses within one hour.

Referring to page 45 of the agenda pack, Simon Davis provided an overview on the current KPI performance. These were measured against the requirements set out in the contract and noted that improvements were achieved compared to 2017/18. The Council set out the aspiration to be working towards the upper quartile performance for cleanliness and recycling rates in London.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked how the success of the KPI's were measured. In response, Simon Davis clarified that a lower figure indicated a better performance.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler commented that the customer satisfaction indicator was removed and asked for further clarification around why and when this change took place. The Committee also requested that further information be provided around who carried out the street cleanliness inspections.

**Action: Simon Davis/ Lesley Gates**

The Chair asked whether the Council kept a record of the complaints received by the residents. In response, Simon Davis explained that missed collections and fly tipping were recorded on the Council's system and responded to within the proposed timescales.

The Chair asked for further clarification around what action was being taken by the Council to ensure that Serco would deliver the planned contract improvements. Simon Davis explained that the contract had become out-dated and needed to be refreshed to meet the current requirements of the Council. This would be achieved through a reprocurement exercise when the contract expired in 2020/21. To progress change over the remaining life of the contract, a plan had been established and fed back to Serco. The Council were engaging with Serco senior management to ensure service improvements were achieved through the tail end of the contract to 2021.

A resident commented that the Council's winter gritting strategy was reviewed at the Committee meeting held on September 2018. An update was requested around what progress had been made to the gritting of pedestrian and access routes. Simon Davis explained that the key routes would be gritted for the predicted snowfall, however he needed to review the schedule to ascertain exactly what routes had been included in the plan.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for the Environment noted that the gritting strategy had been revised to include the comments raised by members. The routes had been extended from localised gritting spots to include routes of the main road and pedestrian footways and access from them to schools. The Chair said that she would follow this up with Lesley Gates, Area Contracts, and Enforcement Manager, and circulate the revised policy to Committee members once an update was received.

**Action: Councillor Bora Kwon**

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler queried how many other companies provided a similar service to Serco in London. In response, Simon Davis noted that there were around 5-6 London based providers. There had been a notable decrease in the number of providers due to the fluctuation on the rate of materials. In addition, Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler commented that Serco were late to collect Christmas trees on both collection days in 2018. Councillor Wesley Harcourt added that Serco had responded that this was down to a machinery malfunction. The Chair suggested that further investigations be carried out on this matter. The Committee concurred with the Chair and noted that this needed to be raised with Serco to determine what had caused the delays and how this could be avoided in future.

**Action: Simon Davis/ Lesley Gates**

Councillor Iain Cassidy commented that fly tipping had increased over the years and asked how these figures were reported to the Council. Simon Davis explained that majority of the time these were either spotted or reported through feedback received from residents. As part of the contract, it was Serco's responsibility to ensure that these were removed within 48 hours. In addition, he said that 25% of the reported fly tipping was black bag waste.

Sharon Lea, Director of Resident Services explained that current figure for fly tipping needed to be reviewed. Other reported issues were gathered in the current data set and there had been a duplication of reporting, therefore the current information was flawed. Work was being carried out to ensure that our data set was accurate and how this could be better managed going forward. The Chair agreed and noted that this needed to be managed and monitored effectively going forward. In addition, noted that it was essential to have suitable mechanisms in place ensuring that landlords and local residents were well informed.

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked when an accurate data set would be available. Sharon Lea noted that this was currently a work in progress, however an update would be provided to Committee members as soon as this had been completed.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report

**7. WORK PROGRAMME AND DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The PAC's work programme was noted. The next meeting would be held 27 March 2019.

Meeting started: 7:00pm

Meeting ended: 9:10pm

Chairman .....

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