



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Environment and Residents Services Select Committee Minutes

Monday 11 July 2011

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rachel Ford (Chairman), Robert Iggulden, Jean Campbell, Ali De-Lisle, Lisa Homan, Jane Law, Matt Thorley and Gavin Donovan

Other Councillors: Nicholas Botterill (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Asset Management) and Greg Smith (Cabinet Member for Residents Services)

Officers: Chris Bunting (Head of Parks and Recreation), Gary Marson (Principal Committee Coordinator) and Nigel Pallace (Director of Environment)

Other Witnesses: Detective Superintendent Bill Lyle and Inspector Bob Glynn (Metropolitan Police)

1. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

Councillor Robert Iggulden expressed concern that he was still not receiving invitations from the Police to attend Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panel meetings as had been requested in November 2010. Officers would follow the matter up once more.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Residents Services Select Committee held on 5 April 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- b) progress with the acceptance and implementation of recommendations be noted

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Wesley Harcourt.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted details of its membership and terms of reference for the new Municipal Year, as approved at the Annual Council Meeting held on 25 May 2011. The Chairman took the opportunity to thank her predecessor, Councillor Robert Iggulden, for his contribution to the work of the Committee from the Chair and welcomed Councillor Gavin Donovan, who had joined the Committee in place of Councillor Peter Tobias.

5. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that;

Councillor Wesley Harcourt be appointed to serve as Vice Chairman of the Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP - STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The Committee was asked to comment on the Hammersmith and Fulham Strategic Assessment 2011/12. The document formed a statutory assessment of the situation with respect to crime and anti-social behaviour which would be used to help form the priorities of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. It was the first occasion that the Police, as the authors of the report, had shared its content in the public domain. Detective Superintendent Bill Lyle and Inspector Bob Glynn of the Metropolitan Police attended the meeting to introduce the report and respond to questions from Members. Inspector Glynn apologised to the Committee for the short notice at which the report had been circulated.

Members noted that following a series of year on year reductions there had been a 5% increase in crime rates over the past 12 months. Acquisitive crime, such as burglary and car theft, had risen at the start of the financial year before subsequent improvement while incidents of violent crime had fallen by 17.2% on already low numbers. Knife crime had, however, increased by 1.6% to 309 offences with the numbers of occasions when knives were used to cause injury falling by 1.9% to 106. In total violence, including criminal damage, accounted for over 40% of the crime figures

Anti-social behaviour remained one of the main issues affecting communities in respect of quality of life with rowdy nuisance behaviour of youths giving the greatest cause for concern. Youth gangs were an emerging issue which, although not new, had taken on a greater importance following media coverage in relation to stabbings and shootings in the borough.

The report noted that policing methods for tackling violence and anti-social behaviour were resource and labour intensive and unlikely to deal with the

causative issues behind them. Key drivers of crime included alcohol, in respect of which problems of underage and binge drinking were reported, and issues around deprivation, health and the specific socio demographics of an area. Education of young people was seen as vital to help improve understanding of the criminal justice system and the consequences of certain behaviours as well as the provision of information on topics such as health, alcohol and drugs. The report therefore acknowledged that a multi agency approach was required. It concluded that increased pressure on public service resources, combined with the Olympics and the potential for industrial unrest were risk factors in the borough's attempts to reduce crime.

Members were informed that the recommended priorities had been reduced from previous years in order to help maintain focus. Anti-terrorism had been removed from the list since it was not managed from within the borough whilst local issues such as Status Dogs and theft from shops (largely at Westfield) had been deleted as the former was of diminishing concern and the latter relatively stable. The top priorities were to reduce crime in line with Metropolitan Police targets, reduce the fear of crime, reduce all aspects of anti social behaviour, reduce harm done by alcohol and drugs and to reduce the number of young people being victimised or involved with criminal behaviour.

Councillor Robert Iggulden enquired how families at risk of domestic violence were identified. Inspector Glynn informed the Committee that early possible indicators such as harassment were closely monitored and whenever any incident which might possibly be related to domestic violence was brought to light appropriate interventions were triggered in respect of children within the family.

In response to a question from Councillor Lisa Homan regarding the success of the Fulham Broadway saturation zone, Inspector Glynn replied that the Police were working closely with Licensing officers and publicans in order to manage problem drinking. Initiatives being examined included the issuing of a stamp to customers served with alcohol after 11pm in order that any subsequent crime could be tracked to patrons of particular licensed premises, and work to increase the proportion of customers sitting down in pubs. Research suggested that standing customers were more likely to generate violence. The Police were also keen to encourage more pubs to sell food as this would stop customers congregating outside around burger vans.

Councillor Homan also asked about levels of football related crime. The Police emphasised that while football crime figures were collated separately, matches did not generate serious violence with problems generally restricted to low level aggression. There were just 6-8 pubs in the borough which tended to experience problems on football matchdays.

Responding to a question from Councillor Gavin Donovan, Detective Superintendent Lyle informed the Committee that there was little organised crime within the borough. In the case of vehicle crime there were approximately 10-12 habitual offenders. Since 1 April there had been 41 serious offences with an average of less than 1 robbery per day across the

borough. Knives were rarely used in robberies and knife crime figures were relatively low.

Councillor Nick Botterill, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Asset Management, asked whether recent changes in sentencing policy designed to reduce the number of custodial sentences had impacted upon crime rates. Detective Superintendent Lyle commented that some people were habitual offenders and as soon as they were released from prison there was a spike in crime figures. Surveillance was very expensive but the Police were prepared to use it where it would have an impact on crime figures. Drugs and alcohol were big drivers of crime and some users had to steal daily to feed their habit.

A member of the public enquired whether there was a problem with young people coming in to the borough to cause trouble. Inspector Glynn informed the Committee by way of reply that there was no specific attempt to target the borough but as it possessed several transport hubs a lot of the incidents related to children in transit to school, particularly where rival schools met. Many of the young people were either not aware of, or did not care about, the consequences of their actions. Teachers were often effective in controlling violence and were sometimes deployed at the transport hubs if there were advance intelligence of disorder but could not always be available to police their pupils en route to school. Overall it was emphasised that Hammersmith & Fulham was one of the safer London boroughs and where serious crime did occur there was a 90% detection rate.

In view of the limited time the Committee had to digest the report ahead of the meeting the Chairman asked Members to inform either her or Gary Marson, the Committee Coordinator, if they required more information on any aspect from the Police. It was agreed that it would be helpful if the Strategic Assessment was presented to the Committee on an annual basis in future.

RESOLVED that;

the Strategic Assessment be presented to the Committee annually for comment,

7. LIBRARY SERVICE - TRI BOROUGH PROPOSALS

The Committee received and considered the detailed business case for the integration of the Council's library service with those of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster.

Chris Bunting, Head of Parks and Recreation, informed the Committee that the proposals, approved at Cabinet on 20 June 2011, would help sustain frontline services, enhance resilience, provide greater staff development opportunities and improve the customer experience through the offering of a wider range of books and specialist collections and a consistency of service standards across the three boroughs. The shared service would be delivered in four phases as set out below;

Phase 1; creation and approval of detailed business case
Phase 2; implementation of single management structure and design of single operational structure
Phase 3; implementation of single operational structure
Phase 4; consideration of alternatives for new delivery or trading options

Total savings were forecast at £1.107m, of which £270,493 was attributable to Hammersmith and Fulham.

Councillor Robert Iggulden enquired whether the opportunity had been taken to fundamentally review not only staffing structures but also the purpose of library provision in the 21st century, in particular the balance of traditional reading and book lending with digital media and new forms of engagement. He further asked whether it was felt that libraries or schools should be responsible for childrens' reading opportunities.

Mr Bunting confirmed that all three Authorities had re-examined their core principles during the course of the exercise. The pattern of library usage was changing with the number of visitors remaining constant but book lending in decline. Childrens activities in the libraries were highly popular and quickly filled to capacity. Shared services provided the chance to develop more innovative community events which would attract further visitors to the libraries.

Councillor Lisa Homan expressed concern at the proposal's lack of focus on the customer. Mr Bunting responded that the changes should be seamless from the customer perspective but acknowledged that there needed to be an exercise to communicate the positive service aspects to residents. In response to a further question from Councillor Homan he confirmed that books would be available for lending across all three Borough's stocks. The respective Boroughs all had different IT systems but it was possible that Hammersmith and Fulham's would be adopted as the common platform. Councillor Greg Smith, Cabinet Member for Residents Services, commented that local levels of service would be maintained with each Authority's libraries continuing to reflect existing differences in approach to provision. Back office structures and processes would not be noticed by customers.

Councillor Homan also asked about the extent to which staff had been involved in the development of the proposals and, in particular, the implications of salary harmonisation. The Committee was informed that engagement had taken place with staff at some levels but a wider programme was now being rolled out. For example over 100 library staff from across the three boroughs were due to attend a joint event at Westminster on 18th July. The impact of salary harmonisation was not yet known.

Councillor Gavin Donovan enquired whether there was scope for more community use of libraries. Mr Bunting confirmed that discussions were currently taking place with voluntary organisations regarding the utilisation of space at Barons Court.

Councillor Homan asked whether any independent advice had been sought on the shared service arrangements. Councillor Smith replied that it was not the intention to spend substantial sums on consultancy support. Normal internal processes which provided opportunities for advice from relevant Officers and Members had been applied in the development of the proposals.

Responding to another question from Councillor Homan, Mr Bunting confirmed that local commissioning responsibilities would probably sit with the four senior management posts being created for the service. Job descriptions were currently being worked up for these roles.

In response to a question from a member of the public, Councillor Smith confirmed that six libraries would continue to be maintained in Hammersmith and Fulham. Four of these would be managed by the Council and funded by Library Services with Barons Court and Sands End operating as community led centres staffed by volunteers, possibly in conjunction with local host schools. Councillor Nick Botterill, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Asset Management, was of the view that at a time when many Council's were cutting services it was a significant achievement to be in a position to maintain or even improve provision while also delivering savings.

8. ENVIRONMENT SERVICES - BI-BOROUGH PROPOSALS

The Committee gave consideration to proposals to combine the management of Environment Services with those of Kensington & Chelsea.

Members noted that the Cabinet, at its meeting on 20 June 2011, had agreed the development of a bi borough approach with a new joint senior management structure in place by June 2012 and the introduction of combined services by March 2014. The intention was to reduce costs through the merger of management teams rather than reductions to frontline services. While there was no direct departmental fit with regard to provision of services in the two Boroughs, the scope broadly encompassed the majority of the Environment and Residents Services departments in Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea's Transport and Leisure Department.

Nigel Pallace, Director of Environment, set out details of the proposed services, structures, principles, implementation and delivery vehicles, programme governance, estimated savings and timelines.

It was reported that there would be a 48% reduction in the three top tiers of management across the two authorities with the 29.5 senior management staff in scope reduced over three years to 15.5, resulting in a saving of approximately £1.33m less £175,000 attributed to capital and other sources in the tier three transport and highways posts at Hammersmith & Fulham. Two Directors would be appointed. Subject to the due process it was anticipated that these would be Nigel Pallace and Lyn Carpenter with Mr Pallace managing shared services half the time and sole Hammersmith and Fulham services for the remainder, whilst Ms Carpenter worked whole time in a shared capacity.

Mr Pallace emphasised that for the moment this was merely a headline integration of senior management and not a combination of services. Indicative figures suggested, however, the potential for a further £1.970m in savings through the merger of services and support by 2014/15. It was anticipated that the move towards shared services would be incremental.

The Committee was informed that although it had not proved possible to include Westminster City Council in the arrangements due to its operating models and contractual commitments, there was scope for it to participate at a later date.

In response to a question from Councillor Lisa Homan, Nigel Pallace confirmed that Planning services were out of scope of the new arrangements. There had been a desire to ensure they continued to be provided locally due to their sensitivity to place. Licensing services were subject to similar considerations and, although part of the joint management structure, would continue to operate independently.

Councillor Homan sought reassurances that the proposals would not give rise to potential conflicts of interest for Officers with dual reporting responsibilities. Mr Pallace emphasised that no participating authority would be denied access to independent advice if required. The problem had not arisen in the five years during which the two Councils had shared an Assistant Director of Highways and Engineering.

Councillor Homan further enquired as to the compatibility of IT systems. Nigel Pallace acknowledged that the integration of systems was a major challenge. In the long term the intention was to operate common IT platforms but an exact match was not required to manage services in the first instance. The existing wide variation in systems within Hammersmith & Fulham had not prevented the efficient delivery of services.

9. RESIDENTS SERVICES - PERFORMANCE & PRIORITIES

The Committee received an update on the Residents Services Department's progress against objectives in the previous 12 months and an outline of the significant policy and service changes and challenges in 2011/12 in respect of the main services within its remit.

Chris Bunting, Head of Parks and Recreation, outlined the Department's plans for the delivery of £3.6m of savings in the current financial year as a result of restructuring, enhanced income generation, the provision of shared library services, contractor savings and the release of assets.

Mr Bunting reported that Cleaner Greener and Cultural Services achievements in 2010/11 had included the award of four Green Flags for parks – a fifth had been gained on the day of the meeting – a 2% increase to 78% in residents satisfaction with parks, the provision of external funding to increase recycling rates in flats and the development of the 'More than a Library' brand. Plans for 2011/12 included a senior restructure as part of libraries tri borough arrangements, a fleet management review, a move

towards risk and reward based monitoring of the Serco and Quadrant contracts and an increase in the recycling rate through a new waste plant.

Safer Neighbourhoods, meanwhile, had launched a new neighbourhood warden team, achieved two silver awards in the Mayor of London's Safer Parks initiative and delivered the second highest reduction in re-offending rates in the UK as a result of the integrated offender management programme. Looking forward, phase two of the 'Eyes and Ears' programme was due to bring about further rationalisation of street and parks based enforcement teams, the Community Safety team would be reorganised so as to realign with the localities focus of other partner agencies and the sale of Council assets would enable a reduction in the size of the security team.

Finally, the Committee learnt that the Commercial Division had achieved a 10% growth in external income in 2010/11, established the creation of a consultancy model to other local authorities and was a finalist in the Barclaycard Customer Experience Excellence Awards. The standing of the Authority in terms of customer excellence had also been confirmed by an invitation to speak at the European Customer Experience World Conference. A further 6% growth in external income was projected for 2011/12.

10. ENVIRONMENT - PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES

The Committee received a presentation which set out details of progress against high level objectives for the Environment Services department in 2010/11.

Members noted that significant progress had been made in enhancing the local street scene and environment through the substantial completion of the Decent Homes Standard, the renovation of major longstanding eyesores such as 80 North End Road, a reduction in streetworks and increased collaborative working to keep traffic moving and reduce network disruption. The Licensing policy had been refreshed and a new Sex Establishment Policy established while four additional areas of the borough had been designated in order to reduce clutter from estate agents boards.

With respect to planning and transportation, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy had been progressed to examination by the Secretary of State and Planning Frameworks had been prepared for the Opportunity Areas. In addition to the Council's own regeneration programme there had also been an intensification of activity from developers seeking to bring proposals forward prior to introduction of the Crossrail levy. The highway capital programme had been delivered in full and £8m of funding had been secured from TfL for integrated transport projects between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

The Department had also delivered Medium Term Financial Strategy efficiency savings through improved asset management, including a significant reduction in the department's office footprint, active workforce management and the introduction of new fee charging structures.

11. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Committee gave consideration to its work programme for the 2011/12 Municipal Year. The list of items had been drawn up in consultation with the Chairman having regard to previous decisions of the Committee and relevant items within the Forward Plan.

Members were of the view that two Task Group enquiries should be conducted during the course of the year. The first would meet during August and September to examine the concept of a lane rental scheme for public utility roadworks and establish whether there was any merit in the development of a pilot within the borough in order to reduce traffic congestion and the consequent loss to the local economy. The second, to be commissioned following a wider report on flooding to the September meeting, would focus on sustainable urban drainage and the surface water management plan.

Members also requested that the Committee be given the opportunity to examine some of the large regeneration schemes around the borough, such as those at Earls Court and South Fulham, in more detail, possibly in single issue meetings. It was noted that further consultation on the schemes would take place in the autumn and the outcome of this could usefully be reported to the Committee together with the proposed next steps for comment.

The Committee also noted details of forthcoming relevant key decisions which were due to be taken by the Cabinet and would be open to scrutiny by the Committee.

RESOLVED that;

- i) the Overview and Scrutiny Board be requested to commission a Member Task Group in order to undertake an investigation into the concept of a lane rental scheme for public utilities and the desirability of pilot arrangements in Hammersmith and Fulham; and
- ii) the work programme be approved, subject to updates at subsequent meetings

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 6th September 2011.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.01 pm

Chairman

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