

Decisions of the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee

16 September 2020

Members Present:-

Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman)
Councillor Roberto Weeden-Sanz (Vice-Chairman)

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| Councillor Reema Patel | Councillor Jennifer Grocock |
| Councillor Sara Conway | Councillor Danny Rich |
| Councillor Lachhya Gurung | Councillor Helene Richman |
| | Cllr Nagus Narenthira (substitute) |

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

2. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed all to the first virtual meeting of the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee (CLLC).

The Chairman noted with deep sadness the recent passing of Cllr Brian Gordon, who had made an enormous contribution to the London Borough of Barnet as a Councillor for many years, and would be greatly missed.

3. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS (IF ANY)

Apologies were received from Cllr Charlie O-Macauley, who was substituted by Cllr Nagus Narenthira.

4. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS (IF ANY)

None.

5. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None.

7. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

8. RECOVERY PLAN REPORT

The Chairman introduced the report.

Cllr Rich asked a question regarding point 1.12: how had the figures for burglary in the Hendon Park area been arrived at, as many people don't have insurance and don't report burglaries so the most disadvantaged in the community may not have reported burglaries?

The Community Safety Manager responded that the figures are based on Metropolitan Police reported crime figures and that unfortunately for the bid it had not been possible to take underreported crime into account.

Cllr Patel asked about civil society organisations and non-profit organisations (NGOs) in Barnet - how had Covid-19 affected their sustainability, and what is the Council doing to provide support for them?

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement responded that the Council has provided £50,000 for organisations to bid for, and continues to review the sector to see where support is needed. Cllr Patel enquired whether information on this piece of work would be shared in the near future; many of these partner organisations are best placed to respond to the crisis, especially regarding domestic violence and mental health issues. The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement reported that he hoped to bring details to CLLC towards the end of this year.

The Chairman introduced the following six amendments to the report that had been proposed by Cllr Conway:

3a The Way We Work - Community Engagement:

'That the Committee works in partnership with the Housing & Growth Committee to supplement its Community Engagement stream with a specific cross-cutting engagement programme for housing estates; proposals to be brought back to both Committees for discussion and agreement.'

The Chairman noted that a piece of work had recently been undertaken by the Housing and Growth Committee (H&GC), where an agreement had been made on this. H&GC would be better equipped to deal with such issues and given that Cllr Conway is a Member of H&GC he recommended that she bring specific issues of concern to CLLC for consideration. Cllr Conway agreed.

3b. The Way We Work - Community Engagement:

'That the Committee works with the Safer Communities Partnership Board to improve information flow between the two bodies, and suggest a strategy for prioritising issues from ward councillors on urgent community safety matters; proposals to be brought back to both bodies for discussion and agreement.'

Cllr Conway expressed concern that the SCPB had not met for some time and that there is a lack of communication between the Board, CLLC and Members. She requested that this matter be discussed at SCPB. The Chairman of SCPB, Cllr Weeden-Sanz, reported that committees without extremely urgent business had been cancelled but that the meeting on 23 October 2020 would go ahead. The Chairman suggested that this be discussed at that meeting.

3b The Way We Work - Community Engagement:

That the Committee includes in this stream a revised food security strategy, which the Council is already working on with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS). The Strategy needs finalising urgently and to be in place before a second wave of the pandemic and any second lockdown.

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement reported that a Food Insecurity Action Plan had been developed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and that this is being reviewed as part of the Recovery Plan. This would be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Chairman noted that this matter sits within the remit of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

4a Clean, Safe and Well Run - Community Safety:

That the Committee notes the rising incidence of mental health issues and specifically a range of crisis cases involving drugs, fire and other risks to residents' safety; and agrees to convene a series of meetings with all local housing providers to refresh their awareness and action on the process for handling these cases.

Cllr Conway noted that there appeared to be a gap in knowledge of how to quickly bring the relevant people together and that it would be helpful for CLLC to have awareness of where mental health issues cross over with community safety issues. The Chairman suggested that additional data over a longer time would be helpful prior to further action being taken since the data was not clearly available showing an increase in incidents since the pandemic. The Chairman asked Cllr Conway to bring a Member's Item to the Committee with more detail.

4b Clean, Safe and Well Run - Community Safety:

That the Committee instructs officers to review how effectively the community safety MARAC process is working in light of the impact of Covid-19, and report back to the next meeting with any proposals required for improving it.

The Chairman suggested that it would be more appropriate for SCPB to consider this due to the community safety aspect. There had been some challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic as ways for the Safer Neighbourhood Boards to meet had become disjointed. The Chairman suggested that Cllr Conway forward this matter to SCPB.

4c. Clean, Safe and Well Run - Community Safety:

That the Committee notes the increase in enviro-crime including fly-tipping this year, and the impact this can have on individual and community well-being; and asks for a progress report from the new Action Taskforce to be presented at the next meeting.

The Community Safety Manager agreed that fly tipping is an ongoing concern. In 2019 6000 perpetrators had been identified and enforcement action had been taken. Also the Council had targeted hotspots, provided additional patrols and CCTV, and this had resulted in reductions though some fly tipping had been displaced to other locations. The Community Safety Manager added that the Council is focusing on its communications campaign, both by posters and online, and is looking into enhancing its investigation and enforcement. The Council is working closely with partners and the community on this issue.

The Head of Counter Fraud Operations noted that a report would be submitted to Environment Committee in November with details of actions taken so far and the results of this.

The Chairman noted that it is helpful for CLLC to be aware of the impacts of fly tipping on community cohesion but that this issue is reported to Environment Committee.

Cllr Rich suggested that environmental crime be reported to CLLC as well as Environment Committee, due to its impact on community cohesion. The Chairman agreed and suggested that this be discussed further outside the meeting.

The Chairman to a vote on the officer's recommendations:

The committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the work already undertaken in regard to the council's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic for the service areas that the committee is responsible.
2. To note the continuing work on recovery planning for the service areas that it is responsible for, including any next steps outlined within the report.

9. ARMED FORCES COVENANT UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the item. He recommended the Armed Forces Covenant online training which he had found helpful. Cllr Rich also highly commended the training.

The Mayoral Services and Civic Events Manager and Armed Forces Champion for Barnet presented her report. In 2019 Barnet Council agreed to renew the Covenant and since that time a series of stakeholder meetings and training of staff including senior management had been undertaken. Currently Barnet is 'Bronze' in the Employer Recognition Scheme and on re-signing will attain Silver accreditation. Due to the coronavirus lockdown this had been delayed but it was hoped that this would happen in November 2020.

The E-learning package for Barnet Council staff had been launched and sent to over 1200 staff to complete, as well as elected Members, the LBB Gurkha community and Barnet Homes. Recently two veterans in need of housing had been provided with permanent accommodation. The E-learning would also be rolled out to Middlesex University and the RAF Museum.

The Mayoral Services and Civic Events Manager and Armed Forces Champion reported that London Councils is due to publish a best practice guide with recommendations in two weeks' time. Barnet Council had already undertaken most of these

recommendations. It was important to map out armed forces statistics working in partnership with neighbouring boroughs, and for all areas of the Council to ask the question 'have you served in the armed forces?' so that this is not missed when engaging with residents.

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed:

- 1. To note the revised Armed Forces Covenant has not yet been signed due to the Coronavirus lockdown**
- 2. That Officers be instructed to continue to implement the Barnet Council Action Plan.**

10. EQUALITIES POLICY DRAFT CONSULTATION

The Chairman introduced the report on the draft consultation. He reported that the Committee would be asked to note the report only – the equalities policy draft consultation had been moved to CLLC's Terms of Reference, from Policy and Resources Committee but this had not been formally agreed due to the postponement of Constitution and General Purposes Committee. CLLC would therefore be due to consider the final policy at a later date.

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement reported that the last update on the equalities policy in Barnet had been in 2014. The approach is to have equalities running through the Corporate Barnet Plan. The Council Management Team has nominated people within the service areas to manage workstreams.

Cllr Rich asked how Barnet compared on life expectancy to national figures (paragraph 2.2). The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement noted that this and greater detail would be added prior to publishing the consultation with more evidence behind the policy.

Cllr Patel enquired about the methodology behind the consultation; typically the most affected groups were often the most difficult to engage with.

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement responded that both Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement had prompted the reassessment of the policy. The policy focused on looking inward as an organisation to improve itself to begin with and to set the principles. The consultation would be carried out online due to the pandemic and efforts would be made to reach those who are digitally excluded. He added that Members' assistance in this would be greatly appreciated. Voluntary and community groups would also be approached.

Cllr Patel noted that the organisation www.demsoc.org (Democratic Society) has a toolkit on how to engage a more diverse group of people given the shift to digital working. <https://participedia.net/collection/6499> and <https://www.involve.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/practice/how-can-councils-engage-residents-tackle-local-issues> feature community engagement initiatives during Covid-19.

The Chairman moved to a vote on the officer's recommendations:

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed:

1. To note that the draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion policy will be sent out for consultation
2. That the consultation responses come back to the committee for consideration prior to the policy being approved.

11. ANNUAL EQUALITIES REPORT 2019-20

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement reported that the report had been due to be presented at the June 2020 meeting, which had been cancelled due to Covid-19. The Action Plan will be brought to CLLC in 2021 as part of the annual cycle.

Cllr Conway commented:

- It may be useful to bring together different communities so that they could feed their views into this piece of work. She added that the term 'BAME' is currently being debated as a suitable term to use.
- There has been a long delay in the Committee having a dialogue with the Communities Together Network. She suggested adding an item with a theme such as mental health or housing might help people to engage with this.
- (2.2) Location inequality is not considered in the report, even though male life expectancy is several years lower in some wards in Barnet than in others.
- (3.14, 3.15) Should the Equalities Champions Network be externally focused, if it isn't already? A briefing on the Action Plan by a representative from the Network would be helpful.
- (3.3) How often does the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group meet, who sits on the Group and can residents can provide input into it?
- (3.5) A more specific focus on diversity and inclusion may be needed and a Citizens' Enquiry might be appropriate.
- (4.2) Cllr Conway welcomed the fact that Barnet staff are offered pro bono support and recommended that community groups are also offered this.
- (4.6) It is positive that 500 young people had been included in the survey. How were they engaged, and could a breakdown of their area and diversity be provided? Also when would the Life Chances Strategy be published?

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement noted that the Equality and Diversity Steering Group publishes papers and details of its membership on the Barnet website. The Group has an external focus but monitors the Action Plan and receives reports from the Workstream Leads. The Group also provides reports to the Council Management Team. Barnet Equality Allies will report to the Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) in October in response to a Member's item from Cllr Mittra. They could also be invited to present to CLLC.

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement reported that the Equalities Champions have an internal procedural role to assist people to carry out an equalities impact assessment on any policy change.

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement agreed to address the other points outside the meeting.

The Chairman commented that he would welcome any contributions from the Barnet Equalities Allies and other organisations that have a contribution relevant to a future agenda item, to inform the Committee before it considers items.

Cllr Narenthira stated that the term 'BAME' applies to a wide section of the population so it may be better to refer to different groups individually. She asked about the vacancy since the previous Equality Officer left the Council. The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement responded that conversations were ongoing internally about which term to use and whether 'BAME' continued to be appropriate. The Equality Officer post was deleted in 2018 but the responsibilities had been distributed throughout the organisation and this had also raised its profile.

Cllr Weeden-Sanz noted that the Jewish and Muslim faith communities are underrepresented in Council staff so asked whether others were overrepresented. The data did not appear to be accurate as the total figure is 78%. The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement responded that the survey was 'opt-in' so some had not completed it. He would check the figures again after the meeting. Cllr Weeden-Sanz requested that this be added to future reports so that it is clear what percentage did not respond. He continued that it is concerning that the Jewish community appears to be underrepresented given that Barnet has the largest Jewish population in the country. The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement offered to look into this.

Action: The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed:

To note the Annual Equalities Report 2019/20 and that it will be published on the Council's website.

12. FORWARD PLAN

Cllr Conway requested that the Borough Command Unit (BCU) update on environmental crime be added to the agenda for the November meeting. The Director of Assurance responded that she would consider this together with the Chairman and the BCU, when looking at proposed items for the Forward Plan, but the Covid response may mean this is delayed.

Cllr Patel asked whether a report on the civil society sector, as mentioned in the Recovery Plan report, could be added to the agenda either in November or January. The Chairman responded that given the ongoing pandemic November and January are likely to be too soon.

The Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement noted that the first part of

the Barnet Plan will be brought to Policy & Resources Committee in December, at the heart of which is Barnet's relationship with its partners. Some insight is likely to be available at that point.

The Chairman added that their critical work is ongoing so asking partners to provide a report would distract them from this, so it is difficult to commit to a deadline at the moment.

RESOLVED that the committee noted the Forward Plan.

13. ANY ITEM(S) THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 8.30 pm