



Haringey Council

Communities Scrutiny Panel

TUESDAY, 8TH JANUARY, 2013 at 18:00 HRS - CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH ROAD, WOOD GREEN, N22 8LE.

MEMBERS: Councillors Adje, Basu, Bull, Reid and Winskill (Chair)

AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair will consider the admission of any late items of urgent business (late items will be considered under the agenda item where they appear. New items will be dealt with at item 14 below).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A Member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a prejudicial interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered:

(i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, and

(ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must withdraw from the meeting room.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Members' Register of Interests or the subject of a pending notification must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal interests and prejudicial interest are defined at Paragraphs 5-7 and Appendix A of the Members' Code of Conduct.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

To consider any requests received in accordance with Part 4, Section B, paragraph 29 of the Council's constitution.

5. MINUTES (PAGES 1 - 6)

To approve the minutes of the meeting of 3 December 2012 (attached).

6. CABINET MEMBERS QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

An opportunity for the Committee to question the Cabinet Member, Councillor Richard Watson, on the Communities portfolio.

7. CRIME STATISTICS

To receive a presentation outlining the latest crime statistics for Haringey.

Report to follow.

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - REVIEW

To consider and comment on the review of the Community Safety Partnership.

Report to follow.

9. ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

To consider how the Council deals with case of anti social behaviour, turnaround times and how people who have reported instances are kept updated.

Report to follow.

10. MEMBERS ENQUIRES (PAGES 7 - 8)

To consider information on how enquiries from Members are dealt with, including turnaround times and which departments they relate to and to receive the results of the recent survey of Members on this issue.

Report to follow.

11. AREA COMMITTEES - IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNANCE REVIEW CHANGES (PAGES 9 - 12)

To report on progress with the Panel's project on Area Committees. A paper on arrangements adopted by other nearby London boroughs is attached.

12. WORK PLAN (PAGES 13 - 14)

To note the work plan for the Panel (attached).

13. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

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Thursday, 27 December 2012

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**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MONDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2012**

Councillors Adje, Bull, Reid and Winskill (Chair)

Apologies Councillor Basu

LC14. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. An apology for absence was received from Councillor Basu.

LC15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC16. DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS

None.

LC17. MINUTES

The Panel noted that the 3rd and final draft of the needs analysis of the Roma and Traveller would be going out to consultation shortly. It would be possible for the draft document to be shared with residents at this stage.

The Chair reported that, following the accidental tasering of a young man in Turnpike Lane, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had written to the Police Borough Commander requesting that the roll out of tasers within the borough be delayed pending the results of an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident. It was important that the use of tasers had the consent of the local community and the proposal offered the Police the opportunity to look at what had gone wrong and take on board any changes that might be required. The Police had not agreed to the proposal and their response had been communicated via their press office through a third party. The Chair indicated that he would be talking further to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the issue.

Concerns were expressed regarding engagement between the Police Service and Councillors. The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that the issue of community engagement had been raised with the Police Service. The Borough Commander now had a deputy, Superintendent Mark Wolski, and he had been given a particular role in engaging with the local community. There were forthcoming changes taking place in policing within the borough and consultation with elected Members would be required as part of this.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 3 September 2012 be approved.

LC18. DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013-16

The Panel agreed to admit the report as a late item of urgent business. It was late due to the need to finalise the figures within the report and urgent due to the need to

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fit into the budget timetable so that any recommendations from the Panel could be fully considered.

The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that there were only a small number of budget reductions for the areas within his portfolio. This was due to a large extent to significant amounts already having been taken out of the budgets for his area in previous years. The leisure outsourcing was likely to save around £500,000. In addition, future arrangements for White Hart Lane Community Sports Centre were likely to save £470,000, whilst changes to Finsbury Park Track and Gym would save approximately £50,000. It had previously been agreed to safeguard all of the borough's 9 libraries and there were currently no plans to reduce them. It was planned that the role of libraries would be developed further so that they operated as community hubs and this was currently being developed. In terms of community safety, he reported that it was now necessary to bid to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) for funding. There were also budgetary changes to policy and complaints but reductions in funding for these areas had previously been agreed.

The Cabinet Members for Finance and for Communities, supported by officers, outlined the changes included within the budget proposals as follows:

P7: School Swimming: An increase in facility hire fees was planned to raise an additional £70,000 per annum. Benchmarking had been undertaken with other boroughs which indicated a spread of charges between £1 and £3 per child per session. On the basis of this, it appeared that there was scope for raising income. Haringey's current charge was £1.31.

P9: Mobile Library Service: This reduction was planned for 2014/15. A thorough review of the service would be undertaken prior to implementation.

P10: Leisure staffing: This budget reduction was planned for 2014/15. In the light of the outsourcing, it was considered that there was scope for savings in commissioning and clienting functions.

P12: Area Forums/Committees: This saving would be made from the deletion of the engagement function within Front Line Services.

In respect of the increases to swimming charges, it was noted that the additional cost would be borne by schools. The new charge was likely to be £2.60 - £3 per session per child. This would be looked at together with the new service provider. The charges had remained static for a number of years. It was acknowledged that there was a risk that schools would stop using the service but swimming was part of the national curriculum and this was therefore viewed as unlikely. The increased charges were considered as not being out of line with those made by comparable authorities.

The Panel were of the view that it was important to ensure that the proposed changes did not impact negatively on children but that it was unlikely that the increase would deter schools from using the service. It felt that the option of obtaining external funding to mitigate the effects of the increase should be explored. It was agreed that an update would be provided to the Panel on the impact of the changes in a year's time to ensure that this was borne out in practice.

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In respect of P9, the Panel were concerned at the potential impact that the proposal might have on housebound and other vulnerable people. The Cabinet Member reported that the service had 712 users who took out approximately 150,000 items per year. The figure for housebound people was approximately 14,000 items borrowed per year. The service covered streets, sheltered accommodation, housebound people, schools and children's centres. However, the number of users had been going down. The 180 housebound people who used the service all had a number of other service providers visiting them in their homes every day. Consideration would be given to alternative ways in which the service could be provided through, for example, integrating services. It was not feasible to just run the service for housebound as the numbers were too small. One possible option would be to develop a joint service with neighbouring boroughs.

The Panel noted that the figure of 150,000 for items taken out was a "guesstimate" and agreed that it would be checked. It was noted that the review that was planned and looked forward to receiving it. Engagement with users would be arranged as part of the review. The Cabinet Member for Communities agreed to share the outline specification for the review with the Panel in due course. Partners would be closely involved and that this would include Age Concern. The Panel were of the view that it was important that that partner agencies such as the London Fire Brigade, Police Service, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Mental Health Trust and any other relevant partners were also involved and that the option of integrating with health and safety services be fully explored. It welcomed the proposal to develop a joint service with Barnet and Enfield as a potential solution.

In respect of the reduction in leisure service, it was noted that there were currently 30 staff involved in contracting and commissioning. The reduction in staffing would involve the loss of more than one post.

It was noted that the enablement team in Front Line services currently had 4 staff – 3 full time and 1 part time. It was proposed that all of the posts would be deleted. The posts had been created as part of the development of Front Line Services. Part of the reason for their creation had been to sort out the distribution lists for area forums/committees and this had now been done. In addition, they also had a role in assisting with the development of area plans and attending meetings of area forums/committees. The remainder of their time had been used on other functions. The work that they had been doing on area forums/committees would need to be picked up elsewhere within the Council.

The Panel commented that progress on area plans had been slow. This was acknowledged by Cabinet Member for Communities. In addition, a number of the actions that had been included within some area plans were things that were already being done or planned. It was open to question whether work on them represented value for money.

Panel Members questioned whether there was the capacity to effectively support area plans. Although money had been committed to facilitate this, progress still needed to be made. The Cabinet Member was of the view that the role of area forum/committee chairs was important. It was not solely about chairing meetings and there were other ways of engaging with residents.

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It was noted that the Panel was scheduled to meet with area forum/committee Chairs on 5 December to obtain their input on the project that have been undertaking on area forums/committees. It was agreed that the proposed reductions be discussed with them as part of this process and that the Panel comment further on this issue in the light of the response received.

In respect of investment proposal P1 (increased cost of neighbourhood planning), it was noted that there had been additional pressures on planners due to the increased statutory requirements as a result of the Localism Act and the need to be proactive in the development of local plans.

The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that the MOPAC had brought various different funding streams together. There was a lack of clarity on how much could be bid for and the timescale. An integrated bid was currently being put together and would need to be submitted by mid December. It was hoped, though, that the deadline would be moved back to mid January. Current spend was £665,000 per annum. Officers were working on a worst case scenario of there being a 30% cut. The MOPAC's two funding priorities were reducing re-offending and prevention. A rigorous process has been put in place to prepare the bid.

The Panel, whilst wishing the Cabinet Member success with the bid, questioned whether it was ambitious enough. The Cabinet Member responded that the amount that would be bid for was more than currently received and the process that had been used to develop the bid was the most thorough used by any borough.

The Cabinet Member for Finance stated that additional budget pressures had been created by the removal of Youth Justice Board assistance towards the cost of remands to secure children's homes. However, he was of the view that the Council should accept the challenge that this represented so that additional efforts could be made to reduce the number of young people being put on remand.

In response to a question on concessionary leisure charges, it was noted that these were set. They could be reviewed if need be but this would be in consultation with the new service provider.

The Chair requested details of any work that was being undertaken on whole area budgeting and integrated service development with other agencies and proposed that this be scrutinised next year. The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that there was a substantial amount of joint working within community safety. This included work on anti social behaviour, gangs and identifying crime hotspots. The MOPAC bidding process was also helping to develop joint working further. There were likely to be changes to the local policing model and this could involve a reduction in Police front desks. Joining these up with other services was one option that could be explored as a way of mitigating the effects of this.

It was agreed that the issue of pooled budgets be added to the work plan.

AGREED:

1. That, in respect of the increase in school swimming charges (P7);
 - (a). A report on the impact of the increase in school swimming charges be submitted to the Panel in a years time;

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- (b). That the option of obtaining external funding be explored;
2. That, in respect of the proposed deletion of the mobile library service (P9);
 - (a). The figure for the number of items borrowed by users of the mobile library be checked;
 - (b). The terms of reference for the review of the service be shared with the Panel;
 - (c). When completed, the review of the service be submitted to the Panel for comment;
 - (d). The options of developing an integrated service for housebound and other vulnerable people with other service providers and/or a joint mobile library service with Barnet and Enfield be explored;
 3. That the proposed budget reduction to support for area forums/committees be considered further by the Panel following the receipt of feedback from area forum/committee Chairs.

**Clr David Winskill
Chair**

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Member Enquiries Questionnaire

There were a total of 22 Members who responded to the survey. Responses were as follows:

1. What is your experience of the Member Enquiries process since administration of Member Enquiries was centralised in September 2011?

Improved; 14.3% (3)
Slightly improved; 19.0% (4)
No change; 47.6% (10)
Slightly worse; 0
Worse; 19.0% (4)

2. How well do you understand the distinction between a Member Enquiry and a Service Request?

Fully; 15% (3)
Partially; 55% (11)
Not at all; 30% (6)

3. Do you agree that there should be a difference in the way that a Member Enquiry and a Service Request is dealt with?

Yes; 45% (9)
No; 40% (8)
I don't have a view; 15% (3)

4. Does the distinction cause you any difficulties in handling your casework?

Yes; 21.1% (4)
No; 68.4% (13)
I don't have a view; 10.5% (2)

Comments:

"All too often a case involves both a service request and a Member enquiry (as defined) so the distinction becomes a bit theoretical and not very helpful"

"Some enquiries are dealt with effectively and helpfully and feedback officers are always helpful and constructive but sometimes the wait can be long for a not very useful reply"

"Over the last 6 months, there have been a number of occasions when my ME wasn't recorded and therefore I didn't get an answer until I chased it. On one of the occasions, I had to wait a further 10 days despite it being clearly extremely overdue"

"I am confused by the times given for responses to service requests. I think theres one which says e.g. a faulty street lamp will be replaced within 48 hours but the request may perhaps not be acknowledged for several days. I have had officers insist that potholes are filled within a few days of being marked up though I know they have been marked up and not filled for 6 to 8 weeks. There seems little point in promising standards for service delivery which are not met"

"With an ME, you are given a ref and a completion date which you can forward onto residents concerned. This is not the case with an SR."

“A sizeable % of my MEs are dealt with by HfH and my experience of this has been very good. If we are to have a distinction between SRs and MEs than both should have ref numbers and completion dates”

“Sometimes you need to do a service request and you need to understand why the service request was not carried out.”

“I prefer the old system. A simple service request please fill in a pot hole not much can go wrong but sometimes it does go wrong. If an issue has more than one strand, the likelihood is that it will often go wrong. A service request has ended up being a level 2 complaint. I strongly object to being informed that it is not my business. Especially when I happen to know the bigger picture and have further information about the subject and the complainant. Plus when a resident complains and asks for help I respond to the resident and if I spot a policy flaw will raise that too. I am finding that if I want to get things done quickly it's better to go direct, saves a lot of time all round. A recent mistake, frontline staff sent my request to a Tottenham enforcement officer – the officer signed it off. My residents told me the job had not been completed”

“I got the impression that the distinction between Member enquiries and service requests was made in order to get round the deadline for responding to Member Enquiries. On the whole, I get the response by the deadline although occasionally this is a partial response and needs following up. In cases marked urgent, I have generally been happy with the speed and efficiency of the response”

“My main problem is that you cannot rely on getting a response which means you have to try and track the response yourself or end up having a resident come back to you a month asking what happened. I don't get the impression they are being tracked properly centrally so that if a response hasn't arrived by the deadline you know it is being chased”

“The main problem is having enquiries not answered at all or not answered within a reasonable time and having service requests ignored completely”

“The time for response is very variable. Too variable; it can sometimes hold us up”

“My enquiries are often a service request together with an explanation of why the issue has not been addressed previously. I get an initial acknowledgement, not always an action plan and sometimes when I have had an action plan I have had to chase up to get the actual work done.”

“Responses to Members enquiries often do not address specific points raised, jus vaguely replying to the points made. The means I am never able to get to the cause of the problem to prevent it happening again to other residents.”

“The one size fits all response time to MEs is unhelpful. I'd happily wait for longer on some enquiries that are complex if there was a better acknowledgement of urgent issues. For example, an enquiry as to whether a flag could be flown from a Council building for Remembrance Sunday came back with a “well get back to you” date after the event”

Communities Scrutiny Panel

Area Committees

Approaches by Other London Boroughs

Introduction

Many boroughs have reviewed their structures for area based bodies, such as area committees or forums, following the 2010 local elections. The drivers for this appear to be ensuring that structures reflect the priorities of the new administration and the need to make budget savings. There were a number of common threads running through several of these reviews. There appears to have been a view shared by several boroughs that their area based bodies were often poorly attended, did not always mirror natural communities and frequently attracted the same people. Several boroughs have also looked at additional ways of facilitating better engagement between local Councillors and their communities through, for instance, the use of on line tools such as web portals.

There appear to be two general models that have been adopted by nearby London boroughs. These are;

- Area based bodies covering a number of wards which work on a formal basis and often have some delegated powers, particularly in relation to local planning issues. This approach is followed by, amongst others, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey.
- Less formal ward based bodies, This is a relatively recent phenomenon with several boroughs abolishing their area based bodies and replacing them with these. These are less formal and are considered to provide a more flexible approach which is not entirely meetings based. A significant number of authorities have recently moved towards this model including, Camden, Hackney, Islington, Waltham Forest and Hounslow.

The specific models adopted by neighbouring boroughs are outlined below:

Enfield

Enfield has seven area forums, each comprising of three electoral wards. It reviewed their role in 2011 and made a number of changes:

- Their remit was widened slightly to include a greater range of issues and so that better links could be developed with, amongst others, groups representing young people and carers and parents. It was nevertheless recognised that the meetings based format would not necessarily suit some sections of the population.
- Whilst the number of meetings per year of each forum remained the same (4), the number of locations for meetings was increased.

- A less formal style of meeting was introduced. Agendas have been restructured to allow for more discussion, including the greater use of ward based break out groups.

Barnet

Barnet reviewed their Residents Forums in 2011. They had previously had three Forums, which mirrored the parliamentary constituencies within the borough. At these, any resident could comment on any aspect of Council services, plans and proposals. Barnet also had area based environment sub-committees whose role was to discharge the Council's functions in relation to highways use, regulation, contaminated land, pollution and various licensing matters. Residents Forums were viewed as being poorly attended and dominated by the same faces. The Council decided to amend the structure of Residents Forums so that they took a more specific role and complemented the work of the area environment sub-committees.

Each residents forum has a formal membership of two – a Chair and a Vice Chair. However, ward Councillors are encouraged to attend. Attendance at forums is open to anyone on the electoral roll for the constituency that they cover. The range of issues that can be raised by residents is now specified and they can now only comment on specified local public works issues as well as crime. Items to be raised must be notified at least 24 hours beforehand. Issues raised at the resident forums make up the agendas for the area environment committee that follow immediately afterwards. All forum meetings are formally constituted and minuted.

Camden

Camden replaced area forums with area action groups in October 2010. This was intended to be a flexible ward based model that gave local areas scope to decide their precise format. The new model provided officer support for the equivalent of up to four events per year but removed the £200,000 fund previously allocated to area forums for local initiatives.

The new model was intended to build on aspects of the area forum model that were considered to work well, such as a Councillor-led approach which was recognised as key to ward-based engagement, with ward Councillors exploring with residents and local stakeholders issues that mattered most to their local area. The new model was viewed as representing a shift to a more streamlined and flexible approach, with greater emphasis on member leadership, lighter officer support and a desire to introduce a mixed model of engagement mechanisms over time. Ward Councillors were also given the option not to have an area action group if they did not see the benefit of having one and no single model was imposed. In addition to area action groups, Camden has also developed the "We are Camden" web portal, an on-line engagement tool to supplement the traditional evening meeting format. Early indications of the new arrangements have shown an increase in attendance by residents but it is unclear whether or not this can be attributable entirely to the new format.

Islington

Islington abolished its four area committees in 2011. The area committees had powers delegated to them that were not dissimilar to those that Haringey's area committees currently have. Not all wards were covered by area committees. They had been funded by Islington Strategic Partnership but this arrangement ended in March 2011. The committees were replaced by a system that is intended to enable ward councillors to play a greater role in influencing decisions and services within their area.

The area committees were replaced by 15 "ward partnerships". Although there was no funding allocated to the partnerships, a link officer has been appointed to each partnership to facilitate action arising. The intention was that the partnerships would not focus purely on Council matters but would have a wider remit covering a range of issues concerning the area in question. There had been a number of issues – mainly concerned with planning - that previously would have been determined under the powers held by area committees. These decisions are now taken in consultation with the ward partnerships and, although they may not be formally making decisions, there is nevertheless an explicit requirement for them to be involved. It is left up to ward councillors to decide how many times their ward partnership will meet. Each ward partnership is nevertheless expected to hold one public meeting or event per year to provide an opportunity for local residents/service providers to come together to discuss local issues. It is up to each partnership to agree the format. There is a limited budget available to support this.

Hackney

Earlier this year, Hackney abolished its four neighbourhood forums. It was felt that the areas that the neighbourhood forums had covered were too large to deal with the very local issues that people wanted to discuss. The cost for each neighbourhood forum meeting was estimated to be around £3000, which equated to £150 per resident attendance at a meeting and this was not felt to be cost effective.

The neighbourhood forums were replaced by 19 ward forums, each meeting three times per year. Wards have the option to create two and three ward forums if felt appropriate. Meetings are led by Councillors and they can determine whether or not there is a specific role for residents in managing the business of the forum. One key role for Councillors in respect of the forums is the development of improvement plans for each ward, which provide the starting point for agendas.

The same amount of funding that was provided for the neighbourhood forums is also been provided for the ward forums. The changes have been cost neutral as, despite the additional total number of meetings involved, they require a lower level of officer support as meetings are no longer formally constituted. Support is nevertheless provided by officers to book venues for meetings, to provide publicity for meetings, to ensure that there is a record of issues that will be followed up and to facilitate communication at a ward level between Members, partner organisations and residents. There is some funding (£10,000 for all wards) for additional consultation and engagement. It is emphasised that the forums are not just about the meetings but cover a range of activity in each ward.

Waltham Forest

In 2010, Waltham Forest agreed to abolish its area committees and set up community ward forums. This was part of a wider community engagement strategy. The new bodies were intended to better reflect the way in which residents had indicated they wished to be engaged with on issues in their local areas. The aim of this was, working within ward boundaries, to bring individual Members closer to their local residents, contribute to improved evidenced based decision making and enhance the understanding of local areas and the accessibility of the Council to its local residents. The principal elements were:

- More local and relevant meetings with reduced formality, led by Councillors;
- Ward budgets of £10,000 each to provide councillors and residents with dedicated funding to address local issues;
- Developed role for local ward Councillors as community champions and undertaking increased outreach and engagement activity;
- More emphasis on using the information gathered through local area working to inform service improvement and place shaping;
- Exploration of the development of local charters that reflect the priorities of neighbourhoods; and
- Improved communications between meetings.

As with other boroughs using a similar model, the forums are not formally constituted bodies and do not have decision making powers. Each Forum meets three times per year but Members are encouraged to arrange other meetings in their wards. They have the option of joining up with a neighbouring ward if being joined is more reflective of the communities that they serve. Issues raised at the Community Ward Forums are dealt with by councillors through casework and member services routes. Support in relation to booking venues and publicity is provided by Council officers.

Communities Scrutiny Panel**Work Programme 2012/13**8th January

1. Cabinet Question Time
2. Crime Statistics
3. ASBAT: The Panel would like details of how the Council deals with case of ASB, turnaround times and how people who have reported instances are kept updated.
4. Members Enquiries: The Panel would like information on the following:
 - The difference between a Members enquiry and a Service Request;
 - A breakdown of which departments attract Members enquiries
 - % of Member enquiries that are responded to within the agreed timescales.
5. Community Safety Partnership – Review
6. Area committees – Panel project.
7. Work plan

28 March

1. Domestic Violence: The Panel would like details on how the Council and partners deal with domestic violence, who owns the policy, what the policy is, prevalence and any trends.
2. Community budgets

Ongoing Theme/Panel Project

Area committees – implementation of governance review changes

Other issues

LFB in Haringey 2012/13 – Annual Report

Community hubs

Localism

Procurement and engagement

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