

Scrutiny Café 2024 – 20 September 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Top Priorities from Scrutiny Survey from within terms of reference:

- 1) Council Customers Services/Resident Experience – 56
- 2) Parks and Green Spaces – 48
- 3) Cost of Living Crisis – 44
- 4) Local Economic Growth – 42
- 5) Co-production and co-design of services - 35

Top Priorities from the Scrutiny Café:

- 1) Reviewing the Ethical Debt policy
- 2) Jobs, Skills & tackling worklessness
- 3) Customer Experience and improving how the organisation communicates with residents

Specific Suggested Issues or Concerns:

No.	Suggestion	Comment(s)	Priority – High, Medium or Low	Proposed Action (Item for OSC meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action).
1.	Use of bailiffs and stopping their use	<p>Acorn asserted that bailiffs were called to nearly 9000 households, and they are using aggressive methods and adding fees for defaults. the use of bailiffs was higher in the Tottenham Hale, Tottenham Central and Northumberland Park than in Fortis Green or Alexandra Park and suggests that this is low-income households that are seeing the worst impact.</p> <p>Acorn group say that there needs to be better data gathered on the use of bailiffs and impact to guide policy changes. The Ethical debt reduction policy is not working and needs to be reviewed. The use of bailiff needs to stop, and focus be fully on debt support or use of a combination of debt support and internal enforcement agents supported by better data to inform decisions.</p> <p>Additional improvements that can be immediately implemented which are not sending bailiffs to</p>	High	Report on the Council's ethical debt policy to come a future OSC meeting.

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		households with children, introducing flexible payment options and proactively information residents of their rights when interacting with bailiffs.		
2.	Tackling Worklessness in the borough and in particular Tottenham	<p>Employment local conditions and worklessness was a key area of discussion.</p> <p>Impact and spread of worklessness is a critical issue and which underpins many other issues for residents. Tackling worklessness can support residents come out of poverty and reliance on benefits. The council need to look at this issue and understand what they and partners need to do to effectively reduce worklessness. There needs to be a fuller understanding of the underlying issues around worklessness, especially in Tottenham and why the council and partners have not been able to reduce this over the years, despite initiatives such as Haringey Works and taking forward recommendations in the Fairness Commission.</p> <p>Need to limit the overreliance on hospitality and working roles with poor conditions and strive for sustainable work opportunities in the borough. This can mean attracting more high value to work to the borough. As part of the review also important to have an audit of the skills currently needed in the borough and how the council and partners can support residents get these skills and get high value work.</p> <p>Considering key employment partners in the borough such as Spurs and ensuring that they are providing the right level of terms and conditions for local people to get these local jobs.</p> <p>Also including entrepreneurship as an avenue to work and support and encourage residents that want to start their own business.</p>	High	Report to a future OSC meeting.
3.	Informed Decision - making	Having a review considering the journey of a decision from co – production, data collection, decision making through to implementation and understanding the improvements that could be made.	Medium	Question to the Cabinet Member and Leader at a future meeting.

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4.	Improving daily resident contact with the council	<p>There are issues with general lack of response to emails of delay with payments as well as delays in re-assessing circumstances and changing payments efficiently to save money for the council. The call centre seems not to be responding to calls efficiently, this leads to increased calls and then call waiting when the issue is still not dealt with. There seems to be a lack of record keeping and lack of baseline data being held by the council which is causing even more contact with the council. There are areas of good practice for customer contact in the council and this can also be shared and learned from by other departments.</p> <p>There seems to be a lack of performance management of customer contact with the council to target and improve this and this needs to be an area of focus.</p> <p>Noted that the council are procuring the new telephony system and will be able to better performance manage customer contact with the council. This procurement process can involve scrutiny and add residents voice to the process for this new contract. Can test the system and how it can be better</p>	High	<p>A report to a future OSC meeting around Customer Services/ Resident Experience.</p> <p>This report to include the work the Council is doing to support those who are digitally excluded</p>
5.	Communication with the council	Having a wider review to look at how we communicate with the residents, together with decision making and record keeping.	Medium	As above.
6.	Support to Jewish families that have Children with disabilities and complex health needs	<p>Growing Jewish Haredi population in South Tottenham and families that have children with disabilities and complex health issues that need more support from the local authority and are finding it hard to access services and support they need. Families are in great need of respite support.</p> <p>Further issues highlighted were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transition from Children's to Adults is difficult with services getting stopped. • More information and support needed on eligibility criteria and access to support. 	High	Referred to the Children & Adults Panel for inclusion on their work programmes.

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		Need a contact person in Children’s services for Haredi families with children that have disabilities and complex needs and support to get diagnosis and get support needed.		
7	The Digitalisation of Universal Credit & Digital Exclusion	<p>Concerns were put forward in relation to the ongoing process of digitisation of universal credit.</p> <p>Digital exclusion was a prevalent issue for marginalised communities and those on low incomes. Concerns about changes to Pension Credit and its incorporation into Universal Credit payments.</p> <p>What is the Council doing to tackle Digital Exclusion?</p>	Low	Will form part a future update to OSC.

