

**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

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MONDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2012

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.

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL MONDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2012

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.

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL MONDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2012

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;

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

- (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**