



MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 17 October 2012 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Van Kalwala (Chair), Councillor and Councillors Green, Harrison, HB Patel and Krupa Sheth

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Clues and RS Patel

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

Councillor Green declared a disclosable pecuniary interest that he was employed by Lloyds TSB Bank.

2. Deputations

None.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25/07/2012

The minutes of the last meeting held on 25 July 2012 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising

Crime Updates

Kisi Smith-Charlemagne, Performance Officer updated members that she would circulate the supplementary report on crime updates to the next meeting in December 2012.

5. Brent Data - The multi-agency data hub with the latest from the census

Cathy Tyson, Assistant Director of Policy, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement gave a slide presentation to the Committee. She pointed out that Brent's population had been significantly underestimated as the statistics relied heavily on birth and death rates with little weight being given to inward migration. She updated members that the position had now been rectified in the 2011 census and would be reflected in the figures to be released in future.

In reference to the borough's demographics, Cathy Tyson informed members that the multiple factors of high birth rates, large family sizes and the aging pattern of the population would put pressure on service delivery including preventative health

services, waste disposal, housing, school places and traffic. It was noted that although Brent was still an attractive residential location in London, unemployment which had peaked in the last 18 months was higher than the London and national average. Members were advised that the higher unemployment figures resulted from the fact that most of the borough's employees worked in small companies and self-employed firms which had been squeezed out in the current economic climate through new technology and increased efficiency. Furthermore, it was noted that 30% of the borough's residents received wage levels below the London Living Wage (LLW) level and that the borough was within the top five of boroughs which would be worst affected by the impact of universal credit.

In respect of housing demand, members were advised that currently there 110,300 households in Brent with at least one resident (2011 census) which was projected to grow by at least 6,000 by 2023. With about 25% of all accommodation in private rented sector, decline in social rented sector from 31% to 17%, higher rent increases at 2.9% per year and an average semi-detached house costing about £375,000, the Council had planned to deliver about 1,171 new affordable homes by 2014

The Assistant Director also informed members that a further challenge was that of education and the provision of school places. She drew attention to the slides that showed primary school and Greater London Authority (GLA) projections 2016/17 to highlight the challenge. She continued that the Council had successfully lobbied for funding to address the shortfall in school places in primary schools and had developed a programme to meet projected demand for school places. She emphasised that the real problem would arise when those children reached secondary school levels and when the council would need to identify sites for two secondary schools to meet projected demand.

On health issues, members learnt that the prevalence of obese children in the reception year and year 6 had taken on a rising trend since 2009/10. In addition, the figures for the following group of persons projected to 2030 were alarming: moderate or serious physical disability for people aged 18-64; the population of people aged 65 and over; those over 75 who were predicted to live alone; those predicted to have diabetes, dementia and long standing illness caused by heart attacks. The grim picture on health issues was likely to impact on adult social care in the borough.

RESOLVED:

that the progress report on Brent multi-agency data hub be noted.

6. CVS Brent - Progress Report

Tessa Awe, Chief Executive of 'CVS Brent' presented a progress report that set out the context for infrastructure support for Brent's voluntary sector, the role of a CVS and the background to the development of 'CVS Brent' to fulfil this role for Brent. Members learnt that the total infrastructure stream was £159,249 each year for three years between April 2012 and March 2015 to commission projects which would enhance infrastructure support for the voluntary sector. This included significant elements of the work and projects of CVS Brent to respond to identified gaps in support for the voluntary sector.

The Chief Executive informed members that in the first six months, CVS Brent had recruited staff to deliver key services, nearly finalised their governance arrangements for the medium term and supported a large number of voluntary organisations in planning their financial strategies and developing bids for funding. She added that CVS Brent would recruit to its Board of Trustees through the usual recruitment process based on skills and aptitude assessment. Through the funding secured from Brent Council, Transforming Local Infrastructures and Well London, CVS Brent currently employed a Chief Executive, a Development Manager and a Well London Coordinator.

Tessa Awe then gave an update on the objectives of CVS Brent. She stated that good progress had been in the first six months with structures in place to create the independent body sought by the voluntary, community and not for profit sector. Membership of CVS Brent was available to the whole sector and currently approximately 200 organisations had registered.

Members learnt that good progress had been made to improve the capacity of local civil society to deliver efficient, effective services and respond to needs and opportunities through advice, information and guidance. CVS Brent was working with external funders such as John Lyon's Charity, Big Lottery Fund, City Bridge Trust, Trust for London, Jack Petchey Foundation, Wembley National Stadium Trust, Lloyds TSB and London Community Foundation to secure funding for organisations in the borough delivering services for Brent residents. Each week saw at least four interventions for organisations to support them in planning for fundraising as well as providing support in general organisational development.

In an effort to advance communication and partnership working within local civil society and with local and regional statutory and private sector partners CVS Brent was circulating regular newsletters to the sector and worked with the council to get regular updates from Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement on relevant upcoming events, review and consultation on policy. CVS Brent would feedback issues important to the sector for inclusion at the Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum.

The first 6 months had been used to establish linkages with existing structure, partnerships and groups. CVS Brent was now advising the council on engagement of organisations in the development of policy. CVS Brent had begun work on a Voluntary Sector Strategy and updated Compact in partnership with the council and facilitated a number of events with voluntary organisations looking at planned changes in council service provision. Recent sessions included Health and Wellbeing (focus on mental health) and consultation in partnership with Brent Council (Reviewing Young People's services in the borough).

In response to the Councillor Van Kalwala's enquiry about the main criteria for intervention, Joanna McCormick, Partnership Coordinator clarified that CVS Brent would make use of the community directory and build a picture of the organisation's needs to identify any gaps to be met. This would be revised at the regular council officer and CVS Brent management meetings. She added that the feedback from organisation was positive as so far none had expressed dissatisfaction with the work of CVS Brent.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the role of CVS Brent and its importance in the present policy context to represent and support the development of the voluntary sector to the benefit of Brent residents be noted;
- (ii) that the progress of CVS Brent as the umbrella representative organisation for the voluntary and community sector in Brent be noted.

7. Voluntary Sector in Brent

Tessa Awe and Joanna McCormick gave a slide presentation on the voluntary sector in the borough including funding and governance arrangements. Members learnt that there are upward of 1100,000 registered community groups of which 800,000 were voluntary associations which had submitted annual returns and therefore marked active.

The sector

In Brent voluntary associations were largely small (with funding levels of up to £20,000) and accounted for 84% of the sector. Medium size associations (£50,000-£500,000) accounted for 9% and large associations (funds in excess of £500,000) accounted for only 7%. The service categories were mainly health and social care, people and places, community groups, employment business and economy. The start-up rate since 2002 had been on the rise, peaking at 2009 and 2010 and then declining slightly in 2011. A fair number of organisations in the sector had closed due to political reforms and funding challenges.

Funding

In terms of funding, members learnt that many nominal Brent allocations held by different trusts and foundations were not taken up relative to the levels of deprivation in the borough for several reasons including the following: bid writing, number of bids submitted; capacity within the organisation to seek funding; timescale within which to submit bids; changes to infrastructure support; lack of awareness of available funding whilst time was spent delivering projects for the benefit of residents.

Governance

Governance rules differed for voluntary associations depending on whether they had assets of less than or more than £5,000. Under the current governance arrangements, charities with assets of less than £5,000 were not required to register with the Charity Commission. Voluntary associations with assets of £5,000 or more were required to register with the Charity Commission, be properly constituted and governed by a voluntary board of trustees. Acting with integrity and honesty, trustees were charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the charity remained financially solvent and compliant with the law as well as ensuring that the charity used its powers to deliver on its objects for public benefit. The three key roles of Chair, Treasurer and Secretary must also be in place. The provisions for Community Interest Companies (CICs) which differed slightly required that they must be properly constituted, be governed by at least 2 Directors (owners) of the CIC and be registered with Companies House.

It was noted that the Council were maintaining a dialogue with the voluntary sector through the voluntary sector liaison forum meetings and working with CVS Brent to facilitate detailed dialogue on particular issues via newsletters and specific events.

Working in partnership with trusts and foundations, levels of funding brought into the borough had been examined. Advice was being given on funding strategy development, bid writing, feedback on bids. Partnership working had also been extended to looking at alternative models of organisation governance, future models of service delivery and engagement sessions on particular topics.

Members of the Committee were informed that they could help voluntary organisations in several ways; inform community groups about upcoming events; highlight issues for the sector with CVS Brent; signpost organisations to CVS Brent for support and advice as well as emphasise the need for organisations to plan earlier. Members were advised to seek advice if they were asked to be a referee and to remember to declare interest where applicable.

During the discussion that followed, Councillor HB Patel enquired about the total amount of funds that CVS Brent had managed to secure for voluntary associations since its inception. Tessa Awe responded that although CVS Brent had not secured funds for any of the associations as yet, they were expecting funding from bids. The Assistant Director added that a lot of effort had gone into bid submission as it was critical for both the Council and CVS Brent to secure a strategy to target bids for the voluntary sector. She added funding for preventative measures such as "Well Chalkhill" was ring-fenced to public health only.

CVS Brent undertook to provide details of upcoming events to members of the committee.

8. Work Programme 2012-2013

In noting the Committee's work programme, members asked that parking be added to the list of items for the next meeting in December 2012.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 6 December 2012.

10. Any other urgent business

None

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Z VAN KALWALA
Chair