



MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 3 October 2013 at 7.00 pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors RS Patel

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 July 2013

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 July 2013 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

David Murray, Interim Policy and Partnerships Adviser, informed the Committee that the Council were looking at a number of anti-burglary measures, one of which was SmartWater. He said that Procurement was currently working with the Ward Working team on the tender process to ensure that the Council got the products that gave the greatest value for money.

David Murray also advised the Committee that Chris Williams, the newly appointed head of Community Safety, would be able to provide the Committee with the relevant crime statistics in comparison with the adapted performance indicators. He added that Chris Williams would also be able to provide the Councillors with a list of the Sergeants and Police Officers posted to each ward and the location of all the police front offices in the borough. Councillors were also advised to engage with the Met police's consultation on the proposed location and opening times of police stations.

Councillors sought clarification whether the Council owned cars that had traffic enforcement cameras on them and also whether it was legal to stop your car in order to drop people off on zigzag lines. Kisi Smith-Charlemagne agreed to find out this information and report back to the Committee.

4. Ward Working report

Councillor Denselow, lead member for Customers and Citizens, introduced the report by thanking his predecessor Councillor Jones for all the work that she had done in this area. He then selected some of the highlights from the report. He explained that £40,000 had been spent per ward in the last year, which was a record high. He stated that this had funded 276 projects and over 25 walkabouts with councillors.

He informed Councillors that there had been one Ward Working project that had been referred to Audit and Investigation. The Committee were assured that it was concluded that no money had been used fraudulently. However the Council were given a number of recommendations that were being implemented to avoid a similar situation in the future.

Christine Collins, Community Engagement Manager, provided further details about the outreach work that her team had conducted in the past year, including a number of festivals and community events that they had attended. She directed the Committee to the breakdown of how the budget was spent in each ward which was detailed in the appendix to the report. She stated that at request of this Committee, they had tried to seek more feedback from younger people. She explained that they had been very successful at this by going to sporting events and youth clubs. However, she added that the majority of respondents were 65-85 but they were still working to readdress this. At the request of this committee, they had also compared the ethnicity data against the census figures so that the data was put in some context and was more meaningful.

It was stated that 160 of the 276 projects that were funded were projects in the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Due to this partnership working with the VCS, schools, housing associations and other departments they had managed to obtain match funding totalling over £930,000.

In regards to the issues that Ward Working had faced over the past year, other than the project referred to audit, the other main issue had been how the team dealt with project proposals that were not in line with council policy. The Ward Working Member Reference Group (MRG) agreed that it was not conducive to forward projects for consideration that would be later rejected as they were not in line with council policy. However it was agreed that a copy of each proposal that fell into this category and email explaining why it had been rejected would be sent to the relevant ward councillors.

The committee thanked Christine Collins and Councillor Denselow for their report and presentation. The committee questioned the number of meetings that Councillors should expect to have with officers in Ward Working per year. The Committee asked if it would be possible to get more analysis and feedback on the projects and how they helped the groups they targeted in the long run. The Committee then asked for more information regarding the project to help people in the Borough affected by the welfare reforms. The committee concluded their questions by asking what the Officers and Lead Member believed were the risks facing Ward Working at the moment.

In response to the questions raised, Christine Collins explained that there should be at least three meetings per year between Councillors and Ward Working. She stated that the level of workload and the number of projects varied between each

Ward and therefore some Councillors may have more meetings per year. In regards to analysing projects and the effects that the project had had, she stated that it was hard to quantify this as the projects were often small, one off projects. She added that they did work with bidders to pass on the knowledge they had gathered to ensure that the proposals were as robust as possible. David Murray added that it was important to get the balance between bureaucracy and analysis to ensure the process did not become too consumed with paperwork.

Christine Collins explained to the Committee that they accumulated over £90,000 to help people in the borough affected by the changes to the welfare system. She stated that they were currently in the procurement stage to determine who to award the money too.

In regards to the risks that ward working faced in the future, Councillor Denselow stated that it was the same risks that the rest of the council faced in the current times of economic hardship. David Murray stated that there was a big risk that at a time of extensive budget cuts the Council would find it increasingly difficult to respond rapidly and effectively to the information that Ward Working gathered from residents and that this issue required careful thought.

5. Localism Act - Assets of Community Value and Community Right to Challenge

Cathy Tyson, Assistant Director of Corporate Policy, introduced the report, explaining that the Localism Act had established the 'Asset of Community Value' process and the 'Community Right to Challenge'. It was explained that this meant that certain community groups could nominate certain buildings as having value to the community and therefore have that land or building included on a list of community assets. This meant that when that asset was due to be sold the community group could have up to additional six months to raise the finances to buy the property. To be deemed as an asset of community value the building or land had to have been used by the community in the recent past and also it had to be demonstrated that it would continue to be used by the community in the future. Cathy Tyson also briefly explained what constituted an eligible organisation.

Members were then informed that the council had to publish a list of buildings that did meet the requirements to be deemed as an asset, as well as those that did not meet the test as well. Cathy Tyson provided details of the only two nominations to list building as community assets the Council had received. Firstly was a nomination for Kensal Rise Library building, which had successfully been listed as an asset of community value and the other nomination was for land and buildings at 110 Walm Lane (including the Queensbury Pub), which had not been successful.

In regards to the community right to challenge it was stated that it was the Government's intention to diversify the providers of public services. Therefore community groups could submit an expression of interest to provide Council services and trigger a procurement exercise. Only community groups have the ability to do this and they only have the right to trigger a competitive market testing process. However once the process had been triggered then any group or company could join the tender process, like a usual tender process. Cathy Tyson explained that the Council had to have a window of opportunity where members of the public

could submit expression of interests. In 2013/14 that bidding window had been open between June and August and in the future it would be open between April and May. It was explained that only one expression of interest had been received so far from Brent Tenants Rights Group in relation to the Council's Tenancy Relations Service. This expression of interest was deemed to be compliant and therefore a procurement exercise was due to start by the end of September 2013.

6. **Deputations**

Sujata Aurora addressed the committee on behalf of the Save the Queensbury pub campaign and the NW2 residents group. She informed the Committee that the Queensbury Pub, that was due to be redeveloped, had an important role within the community as it played host to a nursery group six days a week as well as other community activities. Therefore NW2 Residents group had twice requested, unsuccessfully, that the Council list the Queensbury Pub as an asset of community value to ensure its protection. Sujata Aurora explained that they were still confused why their applications had been refused as other authorities in the country had listed pubs as assets of community value.

When questioned by the Committee, Sujata Aurora stated that there was not another space in the NW10 or NW2 vicinity to accommodate the nursery and therefore the nursery would probably have to fold if the pub was sold. Also that NW2 had taken advice from the charity Locality in regards to their bids and that they were considering making a third bid.

Cathy Tyson explained that the reason the bid had failed was due to the fact that the Queensbury Pub only made up an auxiliary part of the land at 110 Walm Lane. Most of the land at 110 Walm Lane was not used by the community. Therefore the Council could not deem 110 Walm Lane to be an asset of community value under the scheme brought in by the Localism Act.

The committee thanked Sujata Aurora and NW2 residents group for the presentation to the committee.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the committee will write to the lead member for Environment and Neighbourhoods and ask them to consider implementing a policy on Assets of community value.

7. **Partners for Brent**

Cathy Tyson explained that the Council, as well as its partners, had gone through and were continuing to go through significant change. Therefore this had had a big impact on partnership working. There was now more emphasis on partnership working and in the future partnership working would be more far reaching as different partners, including the council, had their budgets reduced.

In response to a number of questions raised by the committee, Cathy Tyson stated that there were no plans to make the Children's Partnership a subcommittee of the Health and Wellbeing Board, although she stated she would be open to looking at

the rationale behind this. David Murray added that there would be some duplication between the two committees and therefore it was important to ensure that intelligence was shared between the different forums and work was not duplicated. It was explained that Health and Wellbeing boards looked quite different across different Local Authorities.

David Murray explained that in the future that partnership working would be more challenging as there would have to be more structural and financial integration to ensure the financial efficiencies that all partners would need to save. It was also explained that most of the partners that the council worked with had very different decision making mechanisms. A lot of partners found it challenging to accept that decisions and partnerships could change depending on the political makeup of the council.

In regards to the Business Hub, Cathy Tyson, explained that whilst the Civic Centre was being built they had been able to use a lot of local services due to the good work done on supply chain work. However now the building was complete the supply chain work had decreased. The Committee informed officers that there needed to be a focus on supply chain work outside of Wembley as well. It was agreed that supply chain work should be put on the next agenda.

8. Work programme 2013/2014

The Chair drew members' attention to the work programme and informed them that the next meeting was due to take place on 20 November. It was agreed to add 'supply chain work' to the work programme.

9. Any other urgent business

None.

10. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Partnership and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on 20 November 2013 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm

Z VAN KALWALA
Chair