

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 17 DECEMBER 2015

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY,
17 DECEMBER 2015 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6, COUNCIL
HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Iqbal in the Chair;

Councillors Cartwright, Harmer, Hartley, Jenkins, Lines, Mackey, Pears, Phillips
Spence and Williams.

ALSO PRESENT:-

Mashuq Ally	- Assistant Director, Equalities, Community Safety and Cohesion
Gary Ladbrooke	- Integrated Services Head
Rose Kiely	- Group Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Amanda Simcox	- Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer
Marie Reynolds	- Committee Services

NOTICE OF RECORDING

52 It was noted that the meeting was being webcast for live or subsequent
broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and
that members of the press/public may record and take photographs. The whole
of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt
items.

APOLOGIES

53 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Phillips and Singh for their
inability to attend the meeting.

MINUTES

- 54 The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2015, having been circulated to Members, were confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Councillor Sharon Thompson's name was deleted from the minutes as she was not present at the meeting.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHALLENGE INQUIRY

Gary Ladbrooke, Integrated Services Head, provided a brief overview of the introduction of Neighbourhood Challenges for districts which had emerged from work relating to the Kerslake Report and the Governance Review.

He highlighted the changes to districts in terms of responsibilities which had resulted in the removal of budgets and with the introduction of the Neighbourhood Challenge, allowed districts to focus more on public services which was more potentially challenging and demand led and specific to their particular area.

He subsequently detailed the 10 Neighbourhood Challenges that the districts were undertaking highlighting that there were 3 duplicated which were pertinent to those districts. The challenges were; 'Clean and Green', Youth Employment, 'Twenty is Plenty' Jobs and Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Employment, Anti-Social Behaviour and the Private Rented Sector. It was noted that from the challenges, this should help to shape service provision and drive out duplication thereby improving quality and performance of those services with the potential of reducing costs and in turn, provide better outcomes for the citizens of Birmingham.

Gary Ladbrooke highlighted that Yardley District had chosen the challenge linked to the jobs and skills plan which each of the districts had. He stated that they were looking to focus specifically on youth employment and associated issues with the object of providing appropriate and meaningful career advice in terms of jobs and skills. He confirmed that in Yardley, two jobs and skills meetings had taken place with Councillor Anderson taking the lead in this area of work. He added that a third meeting of the jobs and skills team which was a partnership comprised of both public and voluntary sector organisations which was linked to Job Centre Plus, would be taking place in January which was to be held at Yardley Job Centre. He referred to the work that Councillor Anderson was undertaking with the schools and the difficulties she encountered in gaining access into the schools.

He reported that in Sutton Coldfield the Neighbourhood Challenge was focusing around 'health and well-being' which specifically included dementia, falls and obesity. He added that within the district, 20% of the population was over 60 years of age and therefore the work relating to falls was very relevant with regard to prevention and the savings that could be made. He confirmed that it

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was early days yet to come back with any significant tangible evidence of what had been achieved.

As a result of the overview, in response to comments and questions from members, the following were amongst the points raised:-

Councillor Williams stated that she would be interested to know how the evidence was being gathered in Edgbaston and suggested that either a verbal or written report from the Chairman/representative be provided.

Councillor Cartwright referred to the anti-social behaviour challenge in Northfield District and suggested that either Councillors Peter Griffiths or Steve Booton be invited to the meeting to present the report. He highlighted the difficulties when dealing with housing associations pertaining to anti-social behaviour, and the fact that travellers often came under the same category thereby stressing, that he would like to see some action taken in this area.

Councillor Jenkins referred to the difficulty Councillor Anderson was encountering in accessing schools which was a re-occurring theme and questioned whether something could be done to aid the process.

Councillor Jenkins referred to the Hall Green Neighbourhood Challenge which was Road Safety and “Twenty is Plenty” highlighting that across the district, there had been a large number of accidents resulting in injuries and some fatalities. She suggested that as the Chairman or Vice Chairman had undertaken a great deal of work in this area, that they be invited to the February meeting to provide an update. She subsequently agreed with Councillor Williams’ suggestion that more detail from the districts be provided on the work that was being undertaken in order for the Committee to be able to scrutinise appropriately.

Councillor Williams referred to the life expectancy statistics and the need to dig further in order to find out what the factors were and the reasons as to why this was such a large issue.

Councillor Hartley referred to the private rented and multiple occupational type issues which was the Neighbourhood Challenge in Ladywood and although objections to planning applications were being made, there did not seem to be any real protection for the streets and areas affected by this.

She referred to the interest held with regard to the move in getting private landlords to register in order that some kind of regulation was introduced albeit on a voluntary basis. She further referred to point 5 of Appendix 2 with the meeting of the stakeholders, the private and social landlords in working together on these areas of intense multiple-occupancy as a means to bring stability and a greater attractiveness to the streets within the district.

Councillor Spence referred to the issues caused by the hostels within the district to local residents and the multi-occupancy homes whereby disturbances were taking place throughout the day and evening, and although the police had been

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alerted, disturbances continued.

Councillor Lines made reference to the priorities that had been agreed by the ward chairs highlighting that anti-social behaviour was at the top of the list which covered a variety of areas across the city council. He further referred to the difficulties encountered by residents in contacting the council complaints system.

Councillor Harmer made reference to anti-social behaviour issues that were considered by the department as being dealt with effectively, however, he highlighted that this was not the case, and subsequently provided an example of where the issue had not been dealt effectively. He therefore emphasised that unless there was more honest reporting further progress would not be made.

Councillor Mackey agreed with Councillor Harmer and stated that the information recorded did not reflect the feedback received from residents.

Mashuq Ally, Assistant Director, Equalities, Community Safety and Cohesion stated that through the Community Safety officers' programme anti-social behaviour issues were monitored, however, agreed to take back members' comments to the department.

At this juncture, the Chairman suggested that a representative from the Place Directorate be invited to a future meeting. He further suggested that either district or vice-chairs be invited to the meeting scheduled in February 2016 or that written submissions be provided.

Gary Ladbrooke referred to life expectancy and stated that they were looking to invite the Public Health Service as they were undertaking work at city level as well as at a local level. He referred to the Neighbourhood Challenge and stated that members should have agreed their challenge through their district committee highlighting that there should be regular updates and if this was not on the agenda, members should raise under 'any other business.' He stated that this could potentially be an excellent piece of work whereupon a lot of learning could be obtained and information shared across the districts.

He referred to the difficulty regarding the access to schools and highlighted that there were now 5 district education co-ordinators in place through Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) and each co-ordinator covered 2 districts. He stated that at present their focus was on schools that were failing educationally.

He concluded by referring to road traffic accidents and associated maps and advised that the starting point should be raised at the tasking meetings which were held regularly across the districts. He confirmed that from 1 January 2016, he would be managing all of the engineers and agreed to discuss with them what could be done for each district.

The Chairman thanked Gary Ladbrooke for his presentation.

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RESOLVED:-

That the information and comments be noted.

PROGRESS ON EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Mashuq Ally, Assistant Director, Equalities, Community Safety and Cohesion presented the following report and as a result of comments and questions from members, the following were amongst the points made:-

(See document No. 1)

Mashuq Ally confirmed that the briefing for elected members would take place in the early part of January and that the champion would be contacted in order to ensure that as many members of their parties attended. With regard to helping parents and the development of the Equalities and Cohesion tool kit, he referred to the number of parents that had made referrals to Channel (a pre-criminal space) which enabled young people/adults to obtain support without being criminalised. He highlighted that there had been a dramatic increase of parents coming forward who had suspicions about their young people which had resulted in a greater confidence of parents reporting to the city council and the police in the hope that they could be supported. With regard to the tool kit he confirmed that it was out for consultation and anticipated that more detail of this would be provided at the next meeting.

Mashuq Ally stated that at the moment the schools were trying to use the Curriculum Statement in a way that enabled them to shape their curriculum and also their policies and regulations, and in order to assist them in doing this, there were a number of initiatives operating within schools to ensure that these values were being reflected within their curriculum which would be reinforced and monitored through the equalities tool kit. He highlighted that the tool kit was a self-assessment programme however in the meantime, there were a number of projects which the city council had supported or that schools had bought in, to ensure that British values were being embedded in the schools programme. He further highlighted that it was not just a matter for pupils but also that parents and communities understood the responsibilities they had in promoting these values.

Mashuq Ally agreed that the language within the report could be improved however highlighted that 'super diversity' was used regularly as there were a great number of languages from a wide variety of backgrounds spoken in the city. He stated that the city was diverse and that the Equalities and Inclusion Programme was about how that diversity was recognised and valued.

With regard to the reference of 'protected characteristics,' he confirmed that this came directly from the legislation and included the following; race, religion, sexual orientation and disability. He referred to the number of characteristics that had to be considered in order to ensure that there was no discrimination against anyone. With reference to the evaluation and monitoring of the

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equalities tool kit, he added that whilst reports from Ofsted would be welcomed, the city council would be involved in ensuring that the tool kit was being implemented which self-assessed progress within schools.

Mashuq Ally agreed that the programme was somewhat overdue and should have been carried out over the last decade. He stated that it was not an exercise in ticking boxes, but a process by helping young people in a number of ways in finding a stake for themselves in the city and neighbourhoods, ensuring that there was an evolution of cultural change within schools and young people. He referred to young people entering into the education system at various points, the continuous process of support and the fact that they used their skills which they were developing in schools and within their environment in order to make them think and develop choices that would contribute to enriching their lives. He added that it was not just continuing with the culture and traditions they had brought with them, but being able to look at them more critically and how they would contribute positively to their life and help them in being good citizens in Birmingham.

He referred to the pressures relating to Channel with the increased take-up and the need for more mentors for women and the fact that they had written to National Government for more support.

Mashuq Ally referred to the issues relating to social workers and stated that it was not within his remit and that it would have to be taken up with the People's Directorate, adding that he had no control over the quality and numbers of social workers within the city.

With regard to embracing 'super diversity', he stated that it was about accepting the fact that there was a considerable amount of diversity within the city and it was how that diversity was used both positively, and also to ensure the promotion of cohesion which means that whilst that diversity was there it was helping people integrate more into the city.

With regard to valuing young people, it was a fact that there were reports that the city did not use this asset sufficiently enough and more importantly, that was why there had been a Youth Champion nominated in order to help move the agenda forward regarding achieved shared values. He agreed that the report was a snap shot of high level values which underpinned those other values as well, which included obligations and responsibilities as far as discrimination was concerned. He agreed that discrimination could not be completely eliminated however, there was the need to ensure that the people who suffered discrimination were supported, and the number of acts of discrimination reduced and to ensure the processes were in place to deal with this.

With regard to the challenges relating to 'hate crime', he stated that it had increased at certain points and confirmed that due to the Paris attacks, there had been an increased number of 'hate crime' incidents in Britain and within the city, whereupon he agreed to provide the statistical information to members.

With regard to equalities and cohesion, he stated that cohesion was aspiration

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which fluctuated according to circumstances. He added that what undermined cohesion were issues for e.g., 'hate crime', inequalities, poverty which were not restricted to anyone community. He further added that cohesion was not an activity and was not there all of the time, but was something to continuously aspire to and that was how the city council saw it with its partners.

With regard to Trojan horse he stated that it was not the fact that people did not want to mention it but that people were fed up with it being constantly in the press. He stated that people had admitted to their faults and the city council had taken a response to this and believed the work of the schools improvement plan led by the city council had addressed a lot of issues emanating out of the Trojan horse. He suggested that everybody needed to move on and have a more positive approach about the city.

Mashuq Ally agreed that the city was segregated albeit not deliberate adding that a great deal had to do with migration. He stated that a number of levels brought communities together however, part of the work the department were undertaking around schools and cohesion was how this situation was bridged. He stated that often young people were more engaged with each other than their parents or first generation had been, and referred to the various areas that included public spaces, neighbourhoods, music, cuisine and dress where there was a greater exchange amongst young people. He stated that the equalities agenda was taken far more seriously by young people than previous generations as they were learning more about each other in the arenas in which they engaged in.

He referred to the cohesion agenda and the issue around identity which was challenging to all young people, as they were living in a global world whereby they were bombarded with all kinds of issues and it was how they addressed them. He stated that the cohesion agenda was about relationship building in neighbourhoods and across communities, whereby there was a mutual respect amongst people although not always agree with each other's view point, agree to disagree and move on. He further stated that the cohesion agenda was a lot deeper than believed regarding how young people were evolving their own culture conducive to the timing in which they live, and therefore by doing so, they make a positive and constructive contribution to the city and society and in fact that is what many were doing, although in some arenas this was not being captured.

Several comments were made by members highlighting that as a city council there needed to be more involvement of young people within the democratic processes. It was further highlighted, that empowering people to shape their neighbourhoods, there needed to be the investment in time and the creation of opportunities for young people if they wanted them to reciprocate by investing in their neighbourhoods and communities, as it was important to note, that it was a two-way process. Further reference was made to the importance of joined-up working of professionals in order that young people were being safeguarded properly.

Comments were made relating to the events that had taken place involving

young people from different areas of the city meeting up, and although more events were continuing to take place, further opportunities were needed to be provided in this area of work. Reference was made to the litter programme that had been presented to City Council by young people of Soho Ward and the litter picking that had taken place by the children during the school holidays, which highlighted the importance of involving children at a younger age in taking pride in their neighbourhoods.

Mashuq Ally illustrated some of the work that was taking place in and around the city which included a great deal of voluntary activity by young people and in co-operation with adults. Reference was made to the piece of work relating to Stan's café working with 120 young people around issues of democracy which should complete in March 2016, the Tapestry project and the Feast working with young people of faith, and Football for Peace which had been piloted in 7 schools in the city which was a very successful pilot in building positive relationships and promoting health and wellbeing.

In response to a comment relating to the reputation of schools being damaged and the importance of this not re-occurring, Mashuq Ally highlighted that the whole purpose of having a schools improvement plan was to address the issues which was led by the Leader, Cabinet Member and Senior Officers of the city council and taken very seriously. He added that it took time for issues to turnabout however believed that positive progress had been made, and anticipated that schools were back to where they were in terms of quality, and in terms of the work they were doing to support young people.

56

RESOLVED:-

That the information and comments be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

57

The following paper was received:-

(See document No. 2)

The Chairman confirmed that the discussion for the next meeting would be child poverty and outstanding recommendations from the previous scrutiny enquiry.

In response to Councillor Lines' comment relating to the re-organisation of the police, the Chairman agreed to progress once he had received the email.

The Chairman concluded by wishing everyone a happy Christmas.

DATES OF MEETINGS

58

It was noted that the Committee meets on the following Thursdays at 1400

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hours in the Council House:-

17 March - Committee Room 2 21 April - Committee Room 6

**REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS
RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

- 59 The Chairman advised that there had been no requests for call in/councillor call for action/petitions received.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- 60 No other urgent business was raised.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

- 61 **RESOLVED:-**

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 15:40 hours.

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CHAIRMAN