

Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Item No.	1
Report Title	Minutes of the meeting held on 12 th May 2009		
Ward			
Contributors	Head of Overview & Scrutiny		
Class	Part 1	Date:	21 st October 2009

Attendance and Apologies

Present: Councillors Russell (Chair), Anderson, Clutton, Fletcher, Hall, Johnson, Maslin, Muldoon, Nisbet, Owolabi-Oluyole, Parmar, Paschoud, Priddey and Till,

Apologies: Councillors Britton, Cross, Long, Luxton, Michel, Phoenix, Stockbridge, Scott and Walton

Also present: Barry Quirk, Chief Executive, Lewisham Council
Barrie Neal, Head of Corporate Policy and Governance
Nike Shadiya, Head of Overview & Scrutiny

1. Minutes

1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2009 and 1st April 2009 were agreed and signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 Councillor Muldoon declared an interest as a directly elected member to the board of the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

3. Executive Question Time Session 1: Presentation by Barry Quirk, Chief Executive of Lewisham Council

3.1 Barry Quirk, Chief Executive of Lewisham Council delivered a presentation outlining the key impact of the recession on London and Lewisham in particular, public finances and spending and key issues, challenges and opportunities for the authority going forward. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A. Key highlights include:

- The recession provides an opportunity to re-design existing services into a new consumer context;
- The focus on the economic recovery provides an opportunity for the authority to re-frame citizen engagement with local community self governance – blinding on local assemblies, ward based initiatives and citizen panels;
- The key challenge of reducing costs whilst maintaining services remains - the efficiency target has risen from 3 to 4% and local government is facing a funding freeze at best.

- Addressing citizens perception about crime and the fear of crime remains a challenge in the context of a stable crime rate;
- Declining residential mobility and its impact on primary school places is likely to be an ongoing challenge;
- The Council is participating in the Total Place pilot initiative;

3.2 The following questions were asked of the Chief Executive:

- Q1. How is the Council preparing for the general election and a possible change of government?
- A1. The current focus centres on how to plan for 6-10% real term reduction over 2 year. The Council does not have any plans as such, but is not unsighted about the significant budget reductions and the lead in times that are required to deliver such savings.
- Q2. Is the Economic Development department supporting the high street and small town centres adequately?
- A2. The information and intelligence gathered on town centres is very good and the service is extremely important for resident confidence as well as local business. In light of the current economic environment, the Council is revisiting its existing approach to economic development and the needs of our largely residential community.
- Q3. What are the risks associated with delivery of the Decent Homes Standard?
- A3. There is a long term policy risk due to the fundamental question about what is affordable housing. Decent Homes funding is not particularly fragile as it does not include the private finance initiative and is backed by HM Treasury.
- Q4. Do you have a view on how we can make our regulatory services appear more effective to members of the public?
- A4. We should look at how we respond to issues and perhaps there is currently a tendency to look for a professional mechanism such as enforcement action to address issues as opposed to an exploration of all avenues available to resolving problems (especially those between individuals such as neighbours). Our professional response and the resultant public perception that enforcement action takes far too long and is cumbersome is due to our legal requirement to ensure we have sufficient evidence to pass the burden of proof test.
- Q5. Does the urgency for a new school remain?
- A5. Yes - the Council currently has 23,000 children in primary schools and 12,000 young people in secondary schools in the borough. We are therefore exporting a large number of young people to secondary schools outside the borough as we do not have enough spaces for all our young children.
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Q6. Will the Total Place pilot build on the Downham example and Is there an opportunity for the scrutiny function to be involved and contribute?

A6. The Total Place project will build on as much of the Downham experience as possible, however some of the requirements of the initiative are quite rigid.

Q7. Could you please outline your additional roles?

A7. I have two additional roles (both on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government) which the Mayor has authorised on the advise of the Head of Human Resources and the Executive Director for Resources:

- Efficiency Champion for Local Government;
- Census lead for London

4. Membership of the Children & Young People Select Committee

4.1 The Chair introduced the officer report and invited the Committee to note the revised membership of the Children & Young People Select Committee.

4.2 The Committee confirmed the following as members of the Children and Young People Select Committee for the municipal year 2010 – 2011:

- Councillor Julia Fletcher,
- Councillor Pete Pattison
- Councillor Jenni Clutten,
- Councillor Jackie Addison,
- Councillor John Paschoud,
- Councillor Marion Nisbet,
- Councillor Seamus McDermott,
- Councillor Stephen Padmore,
- Councillor Romyne Phoenix,
- Councillor Ian Page.

4.3 There being no further questions or business, the meeting ended at 21.00

Chair:

Date:

