



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 2nd September 2013 at 7.00pm in Committee Rooms 6 & 7, 17th floor, City Hall, Victoria Street, London, SW1 6QP

Present: Councillors Ian Adams, Brian Connell, David Harvey, Andrew Havery and Barrie Taylor

Also present: Mike More (Chief Executive), Peter Brambleby (Interim Director of Public Health), Mark Ewbank (Scrutiny Manager) and Ellie Simpkin (Senior Committee & Governance Officer)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

1.1 Councillor Brian Connell proposed that Councillor Ian Adams be appointed as Chairman. This was seconded by Councillor David Harvey and agreed by the Commission.

1.2 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor Ian Adams be appointed as Chairman.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.1 No apologies for absence were received. All Members were present.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 No declarations of interest were made.

4. MINUTES

4.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2013 be agreed.

5. WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

5.1 The Commission considered its work programme for the current municipal year. Members requested that an item reviewing spend against the scrutiny budget be brought to the next meeting. Members also asked that previous

work undertaken on the role of the Commission be re-circulate to current Commission Members with a view to inform future conversations on the remit and purpose of the Commission.

- 5.2 **RESOLVED:** That the work programme be agreed subject to the addition of item on the scrutiny budget being added to the agenda for the next meeting.

6. Q&A SESSION WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- 6.1 The Commission welcomed Mike More, Chief Executive, to the meeting. Mr More provided an update on matters of corporate interest explaining that it was currently a profound period of change for both the City Council and public service policies as a whole with continuing questions over the role of the 'Council' in the context of what the authority was being resourced for and being held account for. The 'Better City, Better Lives' programme had been launched by the Leader and aimed to connect activity across departments and challenged services to drive on themes and outcomes rather than working in silos. The Chief Executive highlighted that the figures included in the appendix to the report were currently being verified and he undertook to provide an updated version to the Commission once they had been reviewed. Other points of note were:

- A 'light' Corporate Spending Review for figures for 2015-16 had been undertaken in June which also looked at the prognosis for figures for 2014- 18. Consideration was being given to driving down costs, generating commercial value, preventing unnecessary demands on council services and promoting economic activity as well as opportunities for people to look after themselves and their communities. The Chief Executive explained that the scale of the budget reductions in 2010 and the speed at which they were needed had led to relatively short-term, quick decisions being made and he wanted to avoid this in the future. He emphasised that this was not a budget or target setting exercise but a reflection on the approach.
- The West End Partnership Board had been established – a significant exercise which hoped to help address questions around the role of the Council in running an international space which was also important to the UK economy. The Partnership Board was due to meet again in September and would be looking to establish a 'shared vision' as to what defines the West End, how to maintain international competitiveness and its contribution to UK economy, establish better management and better public realm.
- Cross-party discussions were taking place with London Councils over a 'City Deal' for London - a Government programme which granted cities new powers, freedoms and flexibilities to promote economic growth, from which London was currently excluded. Despite the view that such functions were already the fulfilled by the Mayor of London, the Chief Executive explained that it was important for London authorities to be asking whether it was positioning itself properly given the affect on future resources.

- The 'Better Together' programme, which aimed to ensure staff were being helped to give their best and being supported by the Council, was being delivered. Quarterly Corporate Leadership Team half-day conferences involving the Council's top 50 managers had been established and a fundamental review of remuneration, which included developing more ways of recognising hard work, was taking place.

6.2 The Commission asked a number of questions and discussed the following issues:

Performance Indicators

Discussions were had over the usefulness of some of the performance indicators and the importance of ensuring that the outcomes and achievements were reflected in the targets which were being set. Members suggested that some of the metrics did not suggest that the Council was being particularly ambitious in some areas. The Commission also suggested that there may be too much focus on the corporate element of the organisation and a lack of interpretation with regards to the community element of services - it was important that the narrative behind the targets was considered. The weight given to targets was also important. The Commission felt that there was a need to move away from process towards a focus on useful outcomes.

Use of Agency Staff

Members also asked about the targets relating the use of agency staff and were informed that although higher than the target, many staff included in the figures were genuinely short-term to deliver specific projects such as the implementation of the Managed Services, the Customer Services Programme, the Highways contract and the Total Facilities Management contract. The Chief Executive undertook to provide a further breakdown of the figures.

Commissioning Structure

The Commission asked about the lessons learnt from the establishment of a commissioning structure. The Chief Executive explained that commissioning working in practice could be best seen in the areas of adult social care and sport and leisure. Public Health also worked on a commissioning model. Due to the sudden need in 2010 to make large savings the council did not, at the time, invest in establishing commissioning processes across the council. A service mapping exercise was being carried out to achieve a better appreciation of connections across services. The Chief Executive also thought that activity costing in local authorities needed to be improved.

West End Partnership

The Commission agreed that consideration should be given to scrutinising the work of the West End Partnership Board, including the cost and accountability. It was noted that Board meetings were not open to the public but the product and vision would be publicised and discussed. The Chief Executive recognised that processes needed to be visible and the Board would need to have conversations with businesses and engage with the local community.

Tri-borough Working

The Commission asked for an update on tri-borough services and noted that the Chief Executive believed it was working well and achieving the savings targets set. Resilience for services had also been achieved. From a frontline service point of view, support services needed to be streamlined to complement service delivery structures.

- 6.3 The Commission thanked the Chief Executive for his presentation and for responding to Members' questions.

7. THE HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY – RESULTS OF THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

- 7.1 Peter Brambleby, Interim Director of Public Health, introduced the report which presented the current draft of the Westminster Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The report also provided a high level summary of views received during the consultation process and the next steps in developing the Westminster Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The draft strategy had been scrutinised by the Commission and improved as a result. The real test of the strategy would be if it provided a challenge to GPs and other health service providers including the Council's adult and children services departments. The Commission asked a number of questions and discussed the following issues:

7.2 Value for Money

The Commission discussed the approach to value for money and how this would be ensured and tested. Mr Brambleby explained that they would be working with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to carry out a mapping exercise to see where NHS money was actually being deployed. The order of priorities across all three of the tri-borough areas was the same with the most spend being on mental health, followed by circulatory disorders and then cancer treatments. A mapping of the public health budget spend per age group was nearly completed. Although a long way from achieving value for money collectively it was important to ensure that each party was aware of where money was being spent in a common 'currency' which, he thought, would be by age group. This would also allow for outcomes and output to be measured.

Building Influence and Cultural Challenges

Members were interested to learn of the cultural challenges which the service may face, especially given it that was being delivered on a tri-borough basis. Mr Brambleby explained that he believed that the local authority was the 'natural home' for public health services. A business planning exercise had been undertaken and a mandate for public health was being developed. He had been very impressed with the quality of the staff, the range of backgrounds and perspectives which they had brought to the service. A number of initiatives to help public health infiltrate into different areas of the Council such as the 'Public Health Presents' events which are held every 6 weeks. The Chief Executive added that historically public health had been viewed by the local authority as having an advisory role which could not directly influence service delivery. The measure of success would be whether public health could directly affect service delivery in areas such as housing,

environment health, transport and licensing and whether colleagues looked to public health as co-partners. Public health had been set up as a corporate function with the Director sitting on the senior executive board.

Population Changes

The Commission asked about the use of denominators and the accuracy of data given the often rapid changes in population. Mr Brambleby explained that the populations were categorised into the resident population which was where a person lived, regardless of where the service was received and the registered population which took into account where a person was registered with a GP. Metrics were often broken down by ethnic background, age and sex. Possible changes in population needed to be considered when attributing the improvement or the decline of health measures. There was a 'hardcore' of residents which often included disadvantaged people.

Mental Health Services

It was noted that there were specific challenges around the delivery of mental health services. Mr Brambleby stressed the importance of having quick access to treatment when needed and the role that a local authority could have in liaising with NHS services, especially in terms of prevention. Local authorities could have control over areas which contributed to a person mental health such as the built environment, employment and noisy neighbours for example. It was important that consideration was given to how to help people 'live' with illness and the support given to carers. There was also work which would be done on reducing the stigma surrounding mental health illness and whether value for money was being achieved in the way illness was treated. Mr Brambleby believed that there was scope give further consideration to non-pharmaceutical treatments such physical activity.

7.3 The Commission, having considered and commented upon a previous draft, commended the current strategy. It was agreed that the Commission would consider Public Health on an annual basis, given the cross-cutting nature of service.

7.4 **RESOLVED:** That the strategy be noted and endorsed.

8. POLICY & SCRUTINY – DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FUNCTION

8.1 Mark Ewbank, Scrutiny Officer, introduced the report which considered the results of the recent survey of the Senior Leader Team and all external witnesses who appeared before the policy and scrutiny committees in the last municipal year which sought to evaluate the changes made in 2012 to the policy and scrutiny function. The responses received had been largely positive.

8.2 Members agreed that consideration should be given to encouraging back-bench members to engage with the Parliamentary Select Committee Programme.

9. END OF MEETING

9.1 The meeting ended at 9.03 pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____