

ASSEMBLY

18 MAY 2011

REPORT OF THE DESIGNATED SCRUTINY OFFICER

Title: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11		For Information
Summary: <p>The purpose of this report is to outline the work, outcomes, and observations of the Select Committees on matters considered throughout 2010/11.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny is the process by which Members investigate and examine the services provided by the Council and its partners, on behalf of the public.</p> <p>Scrutiny takes the lead in monitoring the work of the Cabinet, and, where necessary, questioning and challenging its decisions. Scrutiny has also dealt with Cabinet Referrals, Call Ins and petitions over the past year.</p> <p>The four themed Select Committees have each undertaken an in-depth review of an important local issue falling within their remit.</p> <p>Given the different role and responsibilities of the Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee (PAASC), Councillor T Saeed, Lead Member of the PAASC, will present a separate annual report to the Assembly to showcase the work and achievements of PAASC.</p> <p>Both reports will be made available on the corporate website and uploaded to the Centre for Public Scrutiny website.</p> <p>Wards Affected: None</p>		
Recommendation(s) <p>Members are asked to note the report.</p>		
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- Appendix A: Children's Services Select Committee
- Appendix B: Health and Adult Services Select Committee
- Appendix C: Living and Working Select Committee
- Appendix D: Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee

Children's Services Select Committee (CSSC)

Membership

The CSSC consisted of nine councillors, two co-opted church representatives, two co-opted parent governor representatives and one co-opted youth representative.

- Councillor L Rice Lead Member
- Councillor E Kangethe Deputy Lead Member
- Councillor L Couling
- Councillor R Douglas
- Councillor G Letchford
- Councillor E Obasohan
- Councillor T Perry
- Councillor B Poulton
- Councillor S Tarry
- Reverend R Gayler Church Representative - Church of England
- Mrs G Spencer Church Representative - Roman Catholic
- Mrs Tina Woodhouse Parent Governor - Secondary (up to November 2010)
- Mr I Ncube Parent Governor - Secondary (from December 2010)
- Mrs G Youssef Parent Governor - Primary
- Kymberley Otchere Youth Representative

Matthew Whiddett, Scrutiny Manager, supported the Select Committee.

Child protection practices and policies in schools scrutiny review

From July 2010 to February 2011 the Select Committee investigated the issue of how schools identify and report potential child protection issues.

The review covered child protection and links between bullying, truancy, cultural issues and absenteeism from school; anti bullying policies in schools; training for Child Protection Coordinators and relevant staff who work in schools; the Common Assessment Framework; child protection policies in schools; the role of the schools' Child Protection Coordinators and Multi Agency Locality Teams (MALTs); the role of Police in schools and liaison between schools and the Children's Services Department.

CSSC made 30 recommendations that it hopes will improve the process of identifying potential child protection issues in schools and the early intervention needed to address these issues before they escalate to more serious levels.

The recommendations were adopted by the Assembly on 30 March 2011 and monitoring progress of the implementation of the recommendations will begin in June 2011.

An electronic copy of the report can be found by visiting:

- <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Scrutiny/Pages/Library.aspx>

Budget scrutiny

In November 2010 the CSSC scrutinised the Children's Services budget savings proposals for 2011/2012.

As a result of the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, Children's Services had to find £5.65m in savings for 2011/12 and £9m over three years.

Children's Services net controllable budget is £44m, and of this budget £31.5m is the Children Social Care budget. In order to protect Children's Social Care, the majority of savings needed to be made to non-social care budgets, which equated to £8.5 million.

A range of savings proposals were presented to CSSC, mostly focused around transferring costs to the Dedicated Schools Grant, management and staff restructures and reductions in back office functions, all designed to protect frontline services. CSSC questioned savings proposals in apprenticeships, job brokerage and youth provision but were assured there would be minimal reduction in outcomes achieved. It also questioned stopping the use of external consultants for Serious Case Reviews and the cutting of passenger services for children with special needs.

CSSC supported all the savings proposals and hopes that it can work collaboratively with, and support, the Cabinet when it comes to identifying further budget savings options next year.

Serious Case Review

CSSC were presented the Serious Case Review into Baby M to look at the processes involved, the reasons for initiating the review and how the recommendations were arrived at. This Serious Case Review related to a history of needs across three generations in the family that culminated in the death of a baby whilst co-sleeping with the mother.

Cabinet Referral

In January 2011, CSSC considered a Cabinet Referral to look at and monitor the Annual Assessment for Children's Services. CSSC considered the request and reviewed the relevant reports and agreed that the Select Committee would review actions taken to address areas of concern in the assessment on a six monthly basis.

Monitoring Performance

In September 2010 the Select Committee received a report from the Head of Children's Policy and Trust Commissioning detailing the performance of the 16 Local Area Agreement (LAA) Indicators.

Members' attention was drawn to two key areas:

- Performance strengths – six improving indicators

- Performance risks – eight indicators

CSSC will monitor areas of risk in the coming year using the new single set of performance indicators to be released by the Coalition Government.

Contact

For further information on the Children's Services Select Committee, or LBBB scrutiny in general, please contact:

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Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASSC)

Lead Member Foreword

“It has been a challenging time for the HASSC over the last year. The Select Committee, comprised of nine newly elected councillors, was tasked with scrutinising some of the biggest changes to the NHS since it was created as well as the Council’s proposals to reduce spending.

The Select Committee undertook several important work streams resulting in heavy workloads for Members (especially for the Chair, Vice Chair and volunteer member who represented the HASSC on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee). Furthermore, there were a number of significant meetings, on top of our other commitments, relating to the Health for North East London proposals - particularly the re-configuration of maternity and A&E services at King George and Queen’s Hospitals.

As a new Chair I have had to overcome three major challenges. First of these was the amount of knowledge I had to gain in a short period of time to perform my role well. The training the Select Committee received at the start of the year provided a good foundation to build from and certainly helped to guide us through a difficult first year. As much as I had to work hard to keep one step ahead, I am very grateful for the support I received from the HASSC’s scrutiny officer and scrutiny champion who assisted me whenever I had a question or difficulty in understanding the more technical aspects of the subject matter. My scrutiny officer in particular continually supported both myself and the Select Committee in terms of research, structure, availability and a steady stream of viewpoints/potential questions on the topics in question. Throughout the year this proved vital in ensuring I was kept abreast of information and developments on a regular basis. Moreover, regular briefings with the Scrutiny Champion helped me to formulate ideas and questions, often following on from points raised at pre-meetings; this undoubtedly helped me to have a better understanding of the various topics and issues we investigated.

The second challenge was balancing all of my personal, professional, and Council commitments and making sure that I had enough time to digest paperwork. I would like to give special thanks to Councillor Ashraf, Deputy Lead Member of HASSC, who attended several meetings and did an excellent job of deputising in my absence.

The third challenge was supporting my committee through this first year. It has proved difficult to keep myself on the steep learning curve as well as ensure that all HASSC members were fully engaged with the Select Committee. Although I have maintained a close working relationship with my Deputy Lead Member it has been difficult to keep the other members involved as much as I would have liked, largely due to time constraints. I have learned and improved in this area over the last couple of meetings and feel confident going forward that the changes I have tried to implement will lead to genuine improvement not just for me but for the Select Committee as well.”

Cllr D Twomey

Lead Member, Health and Adult Services Select Committee

Membership

The HASSC consisted of nine Councillors, plus one co-opted member.

- Councillor D Twomey * (Lead Member)
- Councillor S Ashraf * (Deputy Lead Member)
- Councillor S Alasia
- Councillor A Gafoor Aziz
- Councillor J Clee
- Councillor H S Rai
- Councillor C Rice
- Councillor A Salam *
- Councillor J Wade
- Sky Young (Co-opted member, B&D LINK)

*These members also sat on the Outer North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Councillors from Havering, Redbridge, and Waltham Forest.

Glen Oldfield, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, supported the Select Committee.

Barking and Dagenham Local Involvement Network (LINK)

In 2010/2011 the HASSC has worked more closely with the LINK to ensure that work programmes and priorities do not overlap. The LINK has shared its Enter and View inspection findings with the HASSC and provided periodic updates on LINK activity. Over the next year it will be essential for scrutiny to strengthen its relationship with the LINK as it evolves into Healthwatch, taking on further responsibilities and a more prominent role in local accountability of health services.

For this municipal year the Select Committee appointed Sky Young (a B&D LINK Member) as a co-opted member of the HASSC. Members would like to thank Sky for her contributions over the last year and welcome her to continue as a co-optee.

NHS reforms

In July 2010, Andrew Lansley MP (Secretary of State for Health) announced the Coalition Government's plans for major reform. The White Paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* proposed that Primary Care Trusts would be abolished and GPs would, as local consortia, be responsible for commissioning health services. Furthermore, local authorities would take over public health and lead statutory Health and Wellbeing Boards to ensure strategic partnership working.

In October the HASSC held a special session to dissect the White Paper and make its contribution to LBBDD's response to the consultation. The Select Committee raised concerns that accountability in the new system was unclear and argued for the power to scrutinise health services to remain exclusively with elected members. This view was

overwhelmingly shared across the country and as a result the Coalition has had to re-think health scrutiny, the role of councillors, and accountability in the system more generally.

Members hope that next year the HASSC will continue to scrutinise the critically important transition period.

Health for North East London

Both the HASSC and the Outer North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ONEL JHOSC) have been involved in scrutinising the re-configuration of North East London health services.

The HASSC invited Helen Brown (Programme Director, H4NEL) to its meeting in October 2010 to discuss the proposals and what impact they would have on Barking and Dagenham residents. Members agreed with the rationale behind the proposals but had reservations about the ability of Queen's Hospital to cope with extra A&E demand and provide high quality care. Members also sought assurances that the Barking Birthing Centre and East Dagenham Community Hospital were not forgotten in the re-configuration.

The HASSC's views on the proposals were passed to Cabinet to inform the Local Authority response to the consultation. All of the assurances asked for by the Council were given by the Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts who agreed the proposals in December 2010. However, in light of the poor performance of Barking, Havering, Redbridge University Hospital Trust (BHRUT) over the Christmas and New Year period, members of the HASSC felt that it was appropriate to exercise its power under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 to refer the matter to the Secretary of State on the grounds that the proposals are not in the interest of Barking and Dagenham residents.

As a result of this referral the Independent Re-configuration Panel (IRP) has been commissioned to review the proposals and will report back to the Secretary of State for Health on 22 July 2011. Members hope that the HASSC will take forward this agenda and continue to speak up to ensure that the H4NEL re-configuration offers a good health service for our residents. Members are happy to lend their support and experience to assist the HASSC and IRP with the review.

Smoking Cessation Scrutiny

From July 2010 to January 2011 HASSC investigated the issue of smoking. The review covered tobacco education in schools, young people's access to tobacco, the role of local businesses to support employees who wish to quit smoking, and how the Council can set a positive example for other local employers to follow.

The HASSC has made 16 recommendations that it hopes will contribute towards reducing smoking prevalence, improving quit rates, and changing engrained local attitudes towards smoking.

The recommendations were adopted by Assembly on 30 March 2011; monitoring progress of implementation will begin in roughly six-month's time.

An electronic copy of the report can be found by visiting:

- <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Scrutiny/Pages/Library.aspx>

Budget scrutiny

As a result of the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, Adult and Community Services were forced to find £4.7 million, of which £1.8 million is related specifically to the remit of the HASSC.

In November 2010 the HASSC scrutinised the Adult and Community Services budget savings proposals for 2011/2012. The HASSC was supportive of the Cabinet's savings proposals and appreciative that savings are to be achieved mostly through back-office reorganisations. However, Members did warn about the danger of cutting back-office staff to the point where the frontline is unable to function as it should.

The HASSC hopes that it can work collaboratively with, and support, the Cabinet when it comes to identifying further budget savings options next year.

Dementia Services Scrutiny - monitoring

In 2009/2010 the HASSC completed a scrutiny review on the provision of local dementia services. Cllr Carpenter, who was formerly Chair of the HASSC and responsible for leading the dementia services scrutiny review, was asked by members to give her comments on the progress report.

Members were satisfied with the progress made so far, but wondered if the essence of the recommendations was being captured in the implementation. The HASSC also felt that more could be done to help GPs diagnose dementia earlier and use the correct referral pathways.

A further update on progress of implementing these recommendations is expected in summer 2011.

Adult Safeguarding

In January 2011, Glynis Rogers (Divisional Director for Community Safety and Public Protection) gave a presentation on adult safeguarding in Barking and Dagenham and invited the HASSC to comment on the results of the most recent Care Quality Commission inspection.

The HASSC is pleased to report that there have been a number of successes in adult safeguarding and the Partnership is working fantastically well to protect vulnerable adults. There is still room for improvement, particularly with regard to protecting adults from self-neglect. Members called for further vigilance against financial abuse and more opportunities for engagement with vulnerable adults to improve services.

The HASSC would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all officers involved in safeguarding adults for their hard work. Members are delighted that LBBDD has performed so well in the inspections and expect officers to maintain the Council's excellence in adult safeguarding.

Autism

In March 2011 the HASSC brought together representatives from NELFT, LBBD, Parents of Autistic Children Together (PACT), and members of the public to discuss services available to children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), support for parents, and how adults with ASD will benefit from the provisions of the Autism Act 2009.

The HASSC was surprised to learn that currently adults with ASD are not diagnosed locally; instead they must travel to South London and Maudsley Trust. Members were informed that this is costly and welcomed plans to commission diagnosis within the sector.

It is widely accepted that having an embedded social worker within Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is a better way of working as dedicated social workers have more time to give and a better understanding of children with ASD. Therefore, the HASSC was disappointed to hear that CAMHS has lost its dedicated social worker due to NHS cutbacks.

Maureen Clulow a local resident described the meeting as “really interesting” and said that “the two guys from CAMHS were very helpful and gave me some information regarding help for my grandson”.

The HASSC would like to take this opportunity to commend the important work being done by PACT to support families in the Borough.

Fairer Contributions Policy

In April 2011 the HASSC reviewed Cabinet’s proposals to change the charging policy for non-residential services. Members raised concerns over the timing of the change and the length of the transition period. Overall the HASSC felt that the new policy was fair and praised the Cabinet for making a number of concessions to protect the vulnerable and minimise the impact to residents.

The HASSC made 3 recommendations to Cabinet that will be considered before a final decision is taken in July 2011.

Monitoring Performance

- **NHS Barking and Dagenham**

The HASSC was impressed by the dramatic turnaround in stroke services (which has risen from red to green since 2008/09) and pleased to see targets were exceeded for Chlamydia screening.

There is still progress to be made in improving overall patient satisfaction, reducing the gap in health inequalities, and limiting incidence of hospital acquired infections.

- **Barking Havering Redbridge University Hospitals Trust (BHRUT)**

The HASSC is pleased that four of the eight conditions imposed by the Care Quality Commission on the registration of BHRUT have been removed. But there are still major concerns over the financial position of the Trust and its ability to cope in testing

circumstances. Members hope that under the stewardship of a new Chief Executive improvement of the Trust can gather momentum.

- **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

The HASSC was pleased to hear about achievements in several areas including healthy eating, domestic violence, immunisations for girls, and the provision of physical activities for over 60s.

With regard to poor performance in teenage conceptions, Members felt it was essential that the Partnership employs a teenage pregnancy co-ordinator and hoped this issue would be resolved soon.

Contact

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Living and Working Select Committee (LWSC)

“This has been a very busy year for LWSC Members, as, in addition to the fly-tipping services review and resulting report and recommendations, Select Committees were required to carry out an examination of the budget saving proposals before being formally agreed by Cabinet and Assembly.

There was also a call-in on an estate renewal programme, a referral regarding the procurement process of Barking Park refurbishment works and a petition referral from Assembly on the installation of digital aerials. All of these, together with other aspects of the scrutiny function, are set out below in detail.”

Cllr James Ogungbose

Lead Member

Membership

The following Councillors served on the LWSC in 2010/11:

- Councillor J Ogungbose (Lead Member)
- Councillor T Perry (Deputy Lead Member)
- Councillor A Gafoor Aziz
- Councillor R Baldwin (Resigned 10 February 2011)
- Councillor P Burgon (Joined 8 December 2010)
- Councillor J Channer
- Councillor J Davis
- Councillor A Jamu
- Councillor G Letchford (Resigned 6 October 2010)
- Councillor S Tarry

Pat Brown, Senior Scrutiny Officer, supported the Select Committee.

Fly Tipping

One of the hot issues that emerged from campaigning in the lead up to the May 2010 elections was fly tipping. Not only is fly tipping incredibly unsightly and unhealthy, it is also extremely costly to the Council. For these reasons the LWSC decided to undertake a short review of fly tipping services. Members interviewed frontline staff and organised a site visit to several strategic locations where fly tipping is persistent to see the problem first hand.

After pulling all of the evidence together the LWSC identified 11 recommendations that are intended to improve education in schools, produce high profile community campaigns, develop local intelligence, share equipment with neighbouring Boroughs and be more rigorous with enforcement.

The recommendations were adopted by Assembly on 30 March 2011; monitoring progress of implementation will begin in roughly six months' time.

An electronic copy of the report can be found by visiting:

- <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Scrutiny/Pages/Library.aspx>

Budget Proposals 2011/2012 Consultation

On the 22 November 2010, the £4.6 million worth of budget proposals for 2011/2012, relating to the remit of the LWSC, were discussed by Members to enable their comments to be considered prior to the final budget being agreed.

The LWSC asked Cabinet to be mindful of developments in national policy as, given the pace of change it is likely that some of the proposals may have to be updated as the Coalition Government's plans became clearer. Members also wanted assurances that consideration is given to the impact on carers in respect of the proposed implementation of the parking strategy and that with the remodelling of the Passenger Transport Service people would not be forced into independence, unless ready.

The proposed saving relating to the Adult College (apprenticeship programme) was particularly concerning to Members and they requested that Cabinet rethink this proposition. The Borough's apprenticeship programme had been regarded by the previous Labour Government as the best in London. However, because of the cuts in public spending by the new Coalition Government, the programme must be reduced. It is hoped that Agilisys, our joint venture partner, will create 500 apprenticeships. However, Members were still alarmed to see opportunities for young people curtailed, officers returned to the LWSC in December 2010 to provide more information on the apprenticeship programme to allay Member concerns.

It became apparent at the LWSC's budget scrutiny meeting that there was concern regarding the enforcement of the conditions of the disabled parking scheme, known as the Blue Badge Scheme. In light of these concerns the LWSC sought clarification on how the scheme is protected from abuses as this is a growing problem (particularly in London). This was followed up in January 2011 when a report was presented to the LWSC.

Assembly Referral – Petition Appeal Communal Digital/SatelliteTV System

A petition was presented to Assembly on 21 July 2010 from residents opposed to the installation of fully Integrated Reception Services Digital Communal Aerial Systems and being forced to pay an extra charge.

The matter was referred to the LWSC by Assembly with a request to carry out an investigation on the installation and associated charges. The Lead Petitioner, accompanied by four other local residents, gave evidence to the Select Committee, together with Local Authority officers responsible for the contract. Members also took time to visit D'Arcy Gardens to gain a better understanding of some of the issues raised and assess how the aerial system had been installed.

A number of recommendations were identified covering both the work carried out in D'Arcy Gardens, Dagenham, and future contract related requirements. The recommendations of the LWSC were presented to Assembly and adopted on 08 December 2010. The LWSC

will be receiving a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations in the next municipal year.

Cabinet Referral - Shopping Parades

The LWSC was asked by Cabinet to scrutinise local shopping parades to assess whether they serve their neighbourhoods effectively. There were five shopping parades identified for consideration to be part or wholly re-leased.

The LWSC organised a visit to speak to shopkeepers from the five locations to get an understanding of the challenges facing local shopkeepers competing with big supermarkets and whether units in the shopping parades could have alternative uses.

The findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Environment for consideration and action.

It had been reported that shop premises owned by the Council were less likely to be empty than those owned by private landlords.

Barking Park Procurement Process

Concern had been raised by Cabinet Members regarding the delay in delivering renovation works to Barking Park and particularly the procurement process of the project. The documentation and discussions had to be held under private and confidential business as a tendering process for the second phase was being undertaken.

The LWSC prepared a report with recommendations, and these were passed to Cabinet Members for consideration.

It is hoped that this review assisted the Local Authority in delivering a better procurement process and avoiding similar errors in the future.

Borough-wide Estate Renewal Programme - Call-In

Backbench Members 'called in' a decision of the Cabinet to proceed with the rejuvenation of council estates in the Borough. Although Members absolutely agreed that estate renewal was necessary and urgent, there was concern that the programme was shortsighted and a feeling that the Council should not consider selling land when prices are at an all time low.

The 'call-in' was dismissed because Members agreed that regeneration of badly built and maintained properties had to move forward as soon as possible for the residents. However, Members of the LWSC expressed concern relating to the disposal of land in the past where small pockets of open space used by the community had been sold off for very small financial gain. The LWSC requested that procedures should be changed to ensure all future land sales would be considered by all Members of the Council before a decision was taken.

Monitoring Performance

The LWSC fulfilled its statutory duty to monitor Local Area Agreement targets that fall under the remits of the LWSC's associated partnership boards which are Skills, Jobs and Enterprise and Clean, Green and Sustainable.

Unemployment is a major challenge for the Borough and although there is a great deal of activity to find people work, it is hard to make progress as redundancies bite and young people have no jobs to go into. Building affordable housing is another area where performance is weak. Although funding for more council housing has been secured and building on Barking Riverside will soon start, the overall stagnation of the housing market is having a profound effect.

The LWSC is sympathetic to the officers working towards improvements in these areas and accepts that there are many external factors impacting on performance against LAA targets. The challenges are only going to get harder in the coming years and the LWSC would like to take this opportunity to thank officers for their hard work in testing circumstances.

The LWSC commissioned a report setting out how the Local Authority will develop its own modified local version of LAA and how performance will be measured and managed in the future.

Supported Housing for Older People - monitoring

In 2009/2010 the LWSC completed a scrutiny review on the provision and quality of supported housing for older people. Cllr Vincent, who was formerly Chair of the LWSC and responsible for leading the scrutiny review, attended the meeting to give his comments on the progress report.

A further update on progress of implementing these recommendations is expected in summer 2011. By this time it is anticipated that more of the work that is currently unfinished will be complete and a clearer picture of the implementation will be available to members.

Housing Allocation Policy

There were a number of misconceptions around the Council's housing allocation policy, some of which are potentially damaging to the Council's reputation. Newly elected Members of the LWSC were being challenged with these myths by residents and felt unsure about all aspects of housing allocation. To bust some of these myths and prepare Members for future encounters with residents concerned about housing allocation, the LWSC requested that Housing Officers brief Members and answer questions on the policy. At the meeting it was agreed that the LWSC will be given updates as to any policy changes and the impact of the Coalition Government's London Housing Allowance reduction.

Strategy to Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions

The LWSC expressed grave concerns that carbon emission targets were not being met both locally and nationally resulting in financial penalties imposed by the European Parliament. For this reason the LWSC took time to go over the Council's strategy to

reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Members also received a report on the energy efficiencies in Council buildings, such as monitoring consumption, targeting high users and energy projects.

The LWSC is pleased to report that the Borough is maintaining its good track record on green initiatives. There are now over a 1,000 solar panels on buildings and the Council is upgrading its assets to be more energy efficient; saving the environment and money for the Council. A possibility to use hot water from Barking Power Station to provide energy to 55,000 homes had been identified but the London Development Agency is yet to lend its support and investment to this idea. The LWSC hopes that the Cabinet Member for Environment will apply pressure to the LDA on this matter.

The News

The Editor of 'The News' - Barking and Dagenham's community newspaper - attended the LWSC in January 2011 to answer questions from Members on the editorial steer of the publication, its ability to self-fund, and whether it could do more to inform residents, and raise the profile of scrutiny projects carried out by backbench Councillors.

Economic Development

The LWSC commissioned reports on the economic development of Barking and Dagenham to scrutinise the strategy for attracting new businesses to the Borough and what is being done to raise household incomes. Members highlighted the opportunities to maximise its Olympic Host Borough status and are hopeful that the Borough can be sold as an attractive place to do business.

The LWSC can see that Officers and Cabinet Members are actively pursuing all avenues available to them to secure resources to raise the profile of the Borough and attract investment.

Members are also very interested in the prospect of Central Government offices relocating to East London, especially as Barking and Dagenham meets the necessary criteria and would be an ideal location. This could potentially create a large number of jobs for local people and help to update the image of the Borough which has been known solely as a manufacturing area.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

The abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), together with the rise in tuition fees and the loss of funding by the Coalition Government, is having a damaging effect on local students wanting to continue their education. Improving the skills and educational attainment of young people in Barking and Dagenham is essential, as this will in turn see economic benefits for the whole community. Given Barking and Dagenham's proximity to the City it is concerning that young people's opportunities for 'white collar' employment are being taken away.

The LWSC feels strongly in the need to invest in our young people and ensure that they do move into further and higher education as well as enrol for vocational courses. The LWSC is of the opinion that further scrutiny on this issue is required and hopes the new membership will consider NEETs.

Recycling in Schools

The LWSC wanted to learn more about how schools were engaging with children to recycle more of their household and school waste. Members were pleased to learn that pupils are taken to the Murphy's World Education Centre at Jenkins Lane Reuse and Recycling Centre to see what happens to rubbish and bring recycling to life for children. In addition to these visits an education officer is available to visit both primary and secondary schools in the Borough to deliver a range of activities aimed at reducing personal rubbish and promoting recycling at home.

Translation and Interpretation Services

There had been complaints from residents in Becontree Ward that the quality of translation and interpretation services was unsatisfactory. The LWSC took this issue up on behalf of residents and questioned officers to see if these complaints were valid and what could be done to address them.

The LWSC was informed that services are to be reviewed with the contractor possibly providing a wider range of services under a 'Hosted Partnership Agreement'.

The expected benefits to the Borough would be:

- Significant cost efficiencies;
- Working with a provider with a good track record that understands the local situation;
- The creation of local employment opportunities; and,
- High and improving levels of performance in service delivery.

Forward Plan

At each Select Committee meeting, items on the Council's Forward Plan relating to the remit of the LWSC were highlighted and any reports that were of interest to Members would be requested to be circulated. If an item on the Forward Plan is considered to be of concern, officers and the relevant portfolio holder would be invited to the LWSC meeting to go through the proposals.

The LWSC feels that pre-decision scrutiny is important and urges new Members of all Select Committees to regularly consider the contents of the Council's Forward Plan.

Contact

For further information on the Living and Working Select Committee, or LBBDD scrutiny in general, please contact:

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Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee (SSCSC)

Membership

The SSCSC consisted of nine Councillors.

- Councillor D Rodwell (Lead Member)
- Councillor L Butt (Deputy Lead Member)
- Councillor S Ashraf
- Councillor J Clee
- Councillor E Keller
- Councillor G Letchford
- Councillor M Mullane
- Councillor T Perry
- Councillor M Worby

Paramjit Nijher, Senior Scrutiny Officer, supported the Select Committee.

Community Cohesion

Barking and Dagenham has become increasingly diverse over the last decade and is now home to a wide range of different communities. This new found diversity has greatly enriched our community but at the same time caused tensions among a minority of our residents. The Place Survey 2010 seemed to show that our community was more divided than it should be and for this reason the Select Committee chose to look at community cohesion and try to see how it could be improved.

To this end the SSCSC consulted face to face with 25 community groups, big and small. Members also heard from several key stakeholders including the Council for Voluntary Services, the Faith Forum and representatives from local schools.

During the review the SSCSC learned that there is a lot of excellent work being undertaken by community and voluntary organisations to bring people together. However, it was recognised that community and voluntary organisations needed to be further supported, acknowledged and promoted by the Council to continue in this vein.

The SSCSC made 21 recommendations that it hopes will contribute towards building community cohesion and enable the community and voluntary sector to take a leading role in this work.

The recommendations were adopted by the Assembly on 30 March 2011; monitoring progress of implementation will begin in roughly six months time.

An electronic copy of the report can be found by visiting:

- <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Scrutiny/Pages/Library.aspx>

Budget Scrutiny

The SSCSC was eager to get a grip on the financial position of the Council and in July 2010 decided to see what impact in-year savings were having on services relating to the SSCSC's remit.

This was followed up in December 2010 after the Coalition's Spending Review was completed and it became clear that the Council would have to save £44 million over the next three years. The SSCSC scrutinised the Adult and Community Services budget savings proposals for 2011/2012. Approximately 60 local people were present at the meeting highlighting the public interest in cuts to council services.

The SSCSC scrutinised 20 savings proposals and made a particular stand against the proposals to close smaller libraries, reduce grant to the Broadway Theatre, and to close Goresbrook Swimming Pool. The proposals that the SSCSC were unhappy with were sent back to Cabinet for reconsideration and as a result the proposal to close smaller libraries was withdrawn.

Travelling Safely

In January 2011 the SSCSC investigated the issue of travelling safely in Barking and Dagenham. The local Safer Transport Team attended an SSCSC meeting to explain their role in ensuring the safety of residents on public transport. After hearing from the Safer Transport Team about their after school patrols and work to engage young people the SSCSC felt that using public transport is much safer than residents perceive it to be and the partnership must dispel these perceptions to restore public confidence.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams

In March 2011, the SSCSC invited key stakeholders to discuss the role of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and how the partnership is attempting to change perceptions of crime in the Borough through community engagement. Members are frustrated that residents see their community as high in crime when in reality the numbers of reported crimes are relatively low when compared to other London Boroughs. Furthermore, total notified crimes have fallen by 2.7% in the last year – the highest crime reduction in outer North East London.

The role of the local media

In April 2011, the SSCSC looked into the role of the media in enhancing community cohesion and reducing fear of crime in the Borough. To this effect, Members heard from Time FM and the Barking and Dagenham Post on how they help promote cohesion and reduce fear of crime. Members were pleased to hear that both Time FM and the Barking and Dagenham Post have assisted the Council, through running various campaigns, to address crime and cohesion issues. Members however felt that the communication between the Council and the media needed to be improved and suggested the Council and the Councillors should interact with the media more often to build a better relationship. Members also felt that the Council and the Councillors should utilise the media to further engage with the local community.

Burglary

Residential burglary is one of the areas of crime that is growing locally. In 2009/10, the Borough was experiencing an increase of 64% in residential burglary; this was the largest increase in London. For this reason the SSCSC summoned the Community Safety Partnership to its meeting in October 2010 to be held to account and explain how this trend will be reversed.

Members noted the various partnership projects and schemes in place to address burglary. Members were pleased to note that through proactive work the number of attempted burglaries had decreased by 1.3% in four months (April – August 2010).

Anti-Social Behaviour – monitoring

In July 2009, the SSCSC commissioned an in-depth review on anti-social behaviour perpetrated by and against young people. At its meeting in July 2010, the SSCSC received a report which provided an update on the progress in implementing the 16 recommendations of the review. Members were pleased to note that seven recommendations had already been implemented and work is ongoing to implement the remaining recommendations.

A further update on progress of implementing these recommendations is expected in summer 2011.

Domestic Violence

In July 2010, the SSCSC, aware that domestic violence accounts for approximately 22% of all reported violent crime, asked for a report providing an overview of domestic violence and the preventative methods that are in place to protect local people.

The SSCSC noted the good work undertaken by the Domestic Violence Strategy Group that oversees implementation and delivery of the Domestic Violence Strategy and Action Plan. Members were pleased to note that there has been a reduction in the number of repeat incidents of domestic violence which shows that more victims are coming forward and attitudes are changing.

Community Grants Strategic review

The Select Committee reviewed the proposals for a revised Corporate Grants Programme and took the view that adequate funding for the voluntary and community sector was necessary to support further community cohesion in the Borough. Comments from the Select Committee were passed to Cabinet and a report was submitted to Cabinet for approval.

Forthcoming Legislation

The Divisional Director of Community Safety and Public Protection briefed Members on the Coalition Government's announcement to pass new legislation to deal with anti-social behaviour.

Members also received an update on the Government's proposed changes to policy around crime and disorder and how it might impact on the work of the local Community

Safety Partnership. The SSCSC is looking forward to the introduction of this policy because it will mean that Local Authorities will be given more power to regulate the sale of alcohol.

Monitoring Performance

In September 2010 and March 2011 the SSCSC reviewed the performance indicators relevant to their remit.

Impressively there was a 20% increase, compared to last year, in the number of people who think that the Police do a good job. Furthermore, there has also been a rise in the number of people who feel that the Police, along with the Local Authority, are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues in their neighbourhood. Whilst the SSCSC is satisfied with performance in most areas, more work is required to tackle acquisitive crimes such as the theft of (and from) motor vehicles and robbery - crimes that are both on the rise.

Members were pleased to note that there has been an increase in the number of visits to libraries, largely due to the opening of the fantastic new Dagenham Heathway library.

Contact

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