

**Cooperative Council Citizens Commission
Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton**

11.30pm – 1.00pm

Wednesday 13 October 2010

Minutes

PRESENT:

Commissioners:

Councillor Steve Reed (Chair)
Councillor Jackie Meldrum

Delegates:

John Craig (Innovation Unit)
Max Wind-Cowie (Demos)
Dan Leighton (Demos)
Ch Supt Nick Ephgrave (Borough Commander,
Metropolitan Police)

Supporting Lambeth Officers:

Derrick Anderson (Chief Executive)
Sophia Looney (Director of Policy, Equalities and
Performance, OCE)
Thomas Man (Senior Policy Officer)
Julie Stoltman (Senior Policy Officer)
Gary O'Key (Democratic Services)

APOLOGIES:

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair of the Commission, Councillor Steve Reed, welcomed everyone and highlighted the aims and objectives of the meeting.

2. Delegate initial statements

John Craig (Innovation Unit)

Mr Craig explained that the Innovation Unit worked with organisations such as local authorities and federations of schools to support innovation in public services. He addressed the Commission regarding the significance of the white paper and strategy, making the following points:

- The white paper made some profound points about strong leadership, which would be important in making the Co-operative Council model a success
- People such as head teachers and GPs would be the visible faces of Lambeth and it was vital to have them on board. They would take on a critical role in the democratic process as well as service delivery
- While it was acknowledged that community volunteers were often an unrepresentative minority of “usual suspects”, these same people would be the most important champions of the Co-operative Council model and would need to be supported in building relationships with the wider community to create an interdependence between citizens and services
- Culture change was essential, and it was important to get the principles, emotions and behaviours right in order for new ways of working to take hold
- There would be a need to look in practical terms at capacity building to ensure innovation was sustainable
- The invest-to-save principle was important and there would be costs associated with the double-running of services while innovations were implemented. Other sectors could be challenged to match-fund capital in order to provide more investment
- It would be important to look more closely at ethnography and citizen insight, and to conduct a resource audit

Max Wind-Cowie and Dan Leighton (Demos)

Mr Wind-Cowie was head of the Progressive Conservatism project at Demos and among his specialist areas was the “Big Society”. He was particularly interested in the idea of Lambeth engaging practically around community participation and genuine localisation, and made the following points:

- The process must be geared towards enhancing trust
- Levels of trust in Local Authorities was variable but almost always low; however, certain engagement procedures could increase this
- Quality interactions and genuine reciprocal conversations not only increased trust but also had benefits for services as people who trusted council officers were more likely to regard services as important and useful
- It was important to recognise that the Co-operative Council was about staff as well as services and end users
- Deliberation with the community would need to be built in to the procurement process in order to shape services appropriately. This would also get the ball rolling with respect to engagement

Mr Leighton continued by outlining the following points in relation to the white paper:

- Co-operatives needed to put a premium on choice mechanisms and give people a voice regarding service provision. If users were to also become owners, this would result in more horizontal accountability structures
- There were varying levels of community participation; genuine citizen control would only ensue if power and budgets were delegated, for example via a community kitty or area-based budgets
- Measurement of outcomes in relation to pilot projects could be difficult and resource-intensive
- It was important to look at social return on investment
- It could be beneficial to employ random selection when looking for community volunteers as they could give interesting and refreshing views; however, there could be issues regarding Nolan Rules

Ch Supt Nick Ephgrave (Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police)

Ch Supt Ephgrave explained that his background was rooted more in the practical than the academic and as such he would draw on his experience of situations which had echoes in the white paper. He made the following points:

- Principles 2, 3, 6 and 7 in the white paper (providing personalised, community-based services; empowering citizens and communities to design and deliver services; taking responsibility for services regardless of which agency provides them; and simple, joined-up and easy access to services) were elements which the Met had been trying to tackle for some time
- The Safer Neighbourhoods model of localised policing meant that citizen-led panels had the power to set priorities at ward level, and this had helped rebuild confidence and trust. This could be a good basis for the localised work envisaged in the white paper
- The longer these local structures existed, the more trust and positive feedback was engendered
- One challenge concerned representativeness and the “usual suspects” argument, and this could have a detrimental impact on confidence in certain localised areas
- It was important to give community representatives some kind of recognition and reward; this could include travel reimbursements or a council tax rebate
- A pilot operation was currently taking place whereby the Police and the Community Safety Team had strengthened partnership working by aligning themselves to the same structures, allowing a surgery approach which enabled a variety of interrelated issues to be tackled in one go. This linked strongly to Principle 7
- While this approach would begin with officers acting as problem-solvers, it would in time lead to community empowerment and true partnerships which could act as a blueprint for other areas
- The challenge with this approach was that it could be time-consuming and, at times, difficult.

3. Round Table Discussion

A discussion session took place, resulting in the following information:

- Lambeth was an “escalator borough” with people frequently moving on – 30% of residents moved house every year. This made achieving outcomes harder and more expensive, and provided a challenge when attempting to localise services
- An holistic, joined-up approach would see investment in certain budgets having a pay-off in other areas – for example, teaching assistants helping with parenting-type issues
- It was important to understand communities at a very local level in order to ascertain the boundaries of co-operation
- Empowering communities to analyse local problems and commission solutions could result in better value for money
- An enormous amount of real-time data was produced by residents using social media and new technology, and this could be analysed to spot trends, assess needs and identify trusted community contacts
- Culture change inside the Council was vital as the structure of an organisation had a big impact on how people saw their role. In turn, empowered public servants acting as dynamic, articulate advocates would encourage more public engagement and participation
- The amount of rules and principles formulated to embed culture change should be as few, simple and powerful as possible
- Evidence from the environmental clean-up scheme suggested that enabling communities to renovate particular areas led to residents taking more ownership of their environment and looking after it
- While systematic evidence-gathering was important, anecdotal evidence could provide invaluable insights into understanding the challenges residents faced
- Processes and techniques to better analyse the barriers and fears which prevented people from engaging with public services, such as those used by the NHS Social Marketing Centre, could be of great benefit
- The reshaping of satisfaction surveys to provide more insight into people’s lives could provide a very useful evidence base

Councillor Reed thanked all the participants for presenting to the Commission.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 1.05pm