

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2015**

**COUNCILLORS:** Derek Levy (Chair), Krystle Fonyonga (Vice-Chair), Abdul  
**PRESENT** Abdullahi, Katherine Chibah, Joanne Laban, Edward  
Smith.

**STATUTORY** 1 *vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), Mr*  
**CO-OPTees** *Simon Goulden (other faiths/denominations*  
*representative), Mr Tony Murphy (Catholic diocese*  
*representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent*  
*Governor representative) – Italics Denotes absence*

**OFFICERS:** James Rolfe (Director of Finance, Resources & Customer  
Services), Kate Robertson (Assistant Director Gateway  
Services), Julie Gibson (Head of Libraries and Museums),  
Shaun Rogan (Head of Policy, Partnerships, Engagement  
and Consultation), Andy Ellis (Scrutiny Officer), Elaine  
Huckell (Scrutiny Officer)

**Also Attending:** Councillor Ayfer Orhan (Cabinet Member for Education,  
Children's Services and Protection), Councillor Yasemin  
Brett (Cabinet Member for Community Organisations and  
Culture). Paula Jeffery (Chief Executive of Enfield  
Voluntary Action), Councillor Alessandro Georgiou (part)

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**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Statutory Co-optees Simon Goulden and Alicia Meniru, and for lateness from Councillor Orhan and Councillor Brett

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**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

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**LOCAL STUDIES AND MUSEUM CONSULTATION**

Councillor Levy stated that he believed it was important that this Committee uses its time to gather information on how policies are determined as well as reacting to decisions made. He said it would be useful to better understand the rationale that informed the consultation process relating to the proposed operational changes to the Local Studies and Museum Services.

The Chair invited James Rolfe (Director of Finance, Resources & Customer Services) to explain the issues being considered by the service prior to the start of the consultation process.

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James Rolfe said proposals followed on from the Council's need to make savings and the desire to modernise and develop the service. This included an aim to increase access to heritage resources through a programme of digitalising the borough's artefacts. He referred to a new resource for the Palmers Green library, of a large exhibit case which will provide an interactive experience, which should be particularly interesting for children.

The findings from the consultation exercise were considered, and after listening to comments changes have now been made to the proposals. This operational decision had been made by James Rolfe as the responsible officer.

The original proposal to have an appointments system only for the Local Studies Centre has been amended. It will now be open to the public for three days a week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9am to 5pm..There will also be a planned access/ appointment system for those requiring professional support from the Local Studies Officer. The Local Studies Centre will be closed to the public on Mondays and Fridays to enable staff to increase the amount of stock which is available digitally

It was asked whether the museum exhibition space currently based on the ground floor would be moved to the first floor and James Rolfe stated that the decision had now been made to retain the exhibition space in its current location on both the ground and first floors of the Dugdale Centre.

When asked why consideration had been given to moving the museum exhibition space from the ground floor to the first floor and what was the service hoping to achieve from this? It was answered that it would have allowed the space to be used either for another council service or alternatively for an additional retail area.

A number of people had voiced their concerns about the proposed changes to the Museum and Local Studies services. It was asked what was hoped to be achieved from the proposals and what had we discovered from the consultation process?. Kate Robertson (Assistant Director Gateway Services) answered that it had never been intended to digitalise all objects and prohibit access to resources, which some people had thought. She believed there had been a misunderstanding by some people and our aims could have been made clearer in the consultation. The digitalising of objects would allow for items to be viewed on line and staffing resources would be utilized to do this, some funding had already been provided for this through the Heritage Lottery fund.

The digitilising of assets would not free- up extra space as the objects would remain in the museum. It would increase access to our resources especially for those who are unable to come to the Dugdale Centre. Julie Gibson (Head of Libraries and Museums), anticipates a high number of on-line visits and thought that this would lead to more people coming along to view objects. She referred to a similar programme undertaken by Essex Council where there was an increase in the number of visits by people viewing objects/ artefacts following on from digitalisation. It was confirmed that there would not be a

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charge for this service. Some objects are very delicate and would not usually be accessible, the digitisation process would enable people to view these items. Members asked that they be kept informed of the increase in numbers of people using the service in future

There are some items that are of particular interest including a document with Elizabeth I signature, also the 700 year Royal Charter for Enfield market, it is hoped that when these are digitised these would hopefully act as a 'springboard' to generate interest for other items in the collection.

The current users of the Local Studies and Museum service do not appear to be reflective of the Enfield population, however it is hoped that the digitisation process will mean that the service will reach out to more people. During the consultation process fears had been expressed that the valuable knowledge /experience that current staff possess would be lost. It was confirmed that two of the most experienced staff will remain, and it was thought important that their knowledge is shared so that others can benefit for the future.

Councillor Orhan,(Cabinet Member for Education, Children's Services and Protection) spoke of the need for the Council to make savings and was pleased that in light of this we had managed to keep the borough's libraries open and would also be able to continue the Local Studies Centre and provide an enhanced digital service.

The Chair suggested that an area for concern in the consultation process was that there is a core set of people who use this service and who may have benefitted from a pre-consultation meeting. Although staff had spoken to users it was thought their own uncertainties about the future of the service meant that they did not ease their concerns.

Kate Robertson summarised the findings from the consultation exercise. She mentioned that 412 responses were received of which 85% had previously used the Local Studies Centre and 88% had visited the museum. 84% of respondents were over 40 and 71% over 45, 78% were White British. She said a lot of people gave contradictory disagreements. Half the respondents agreed that they would be interested in using an on line function to access the Local Studies documents while 31% disagreed. When asked if there was a preference for when appointments may be available during office hours 73% said no while 27% said yes, however of those that selected yes, 40 selected all three periods (morning lunchtime and afternoon sessions).

As it appears that the users of the service were not reflective of the demographics for Enfield, it was asked how it is intended to reach out to all ages and all members of the community. Julie Gibson referred to the repaired display cases at Fore Street library which are available for local community artefacts, she also referred to Edmonton Library where it is anticipated there will be an increased space for Local Studies. It is hoped that cultural events throughout the borough will help to engage with local communities such as the Edmonton Festival and Palmers Green Festival.

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Councillor Orhan and Councillor Brett (Cabinet Member for Community Organisations and Culture) referred to the rich heritage of local communities and how cultural exhibitions could be held, and display cases used to reach out to communities at our libraries/ facilities such as at Forty Hall.

We also needed to look at ways to engage young people to inspire their interest in their local heritage. It was thought that much was being done to do this through our local schools and this would be promoted further by the new on-line digitilising process.

Reference was made to the vast heritage information available from the cemeteries in the borough, it may be viable to look at the possibility of making this archive material available on- line.

James Rolfe as Director of Finance, Resources & Customer Services signed this decision he confirmed that an 'operational decision' is determined by the costs involved i.e the value is under the threshold of £250K.

**AGREED** that a meeting be arranged next year for officers and the Cabinet Member for Education, Children's Services and Protection to look at the participation statistics for people using the Local Studies and Museum service.  
**ACTION: Councillor Levy / Claire Johnson**

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### **THE COUNCIL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

The Chair introduced Paula Jeffery (Chief Executive of Enfield Voluntary Action), to the meeting he stated that although the relationship with the voluntary sector had not been selected as a separate workstream theme, Members were concerned at how the voluntary sector is managing the current financial situation and how their expectations/ support is being met .

Shaun Rogan (Head of Policy, Partnerships, Engagement and Consultation) spoke of the diverse range of voluntary and community organisations that operate in the borough and spoke of the challenges they face. He spoke of the need for us to be focused to look at subjects 'in the round' rather than having a 'silo' approach . He said it was necessary to focus and prioritise carefully – with more accountability and evidence based needs covered, in what is, an increasingly competitive grants process.

He stated that monitoring now includes the need to show accountability for every quarter before funding can be given. Our role as primary donor is changing – organisations need to be more agile, modern and able to embrace new ways of working such as hot desking, and remote working . It is necessary for organisations to develop to become more sustainable, our role is to help them evolve, to help them become more agile and to enable them to access funding opportunities.

Paula Jeffery referred to the VCS -Central information group hub - which has 651 organisations registered. It provides information to voluntary groups and helps to keep them updated on various issues including grants.

Paula explained that every organisation is different, some are large such as Age UK and others small. Each one has a different relationship with the Council, for example some may attend a partnership group, they may lobby Councillors or, as in the past, made use of the Enfield Residents Priority Fund. Some relationships with LBE are better than others, however she stated that the relationship between LBE and VCS has generally been considered as a good one, both with this, and the previous Administration. She referred to work that was currently been undertaken with the Health Housing and Adult Social Care team on the consultation process to look at supporting residents re resilience issues.

Councillor Levy suggested that the Health Scrutiny Standing Panel should consider an item on its 2016/17 Work programme relating to those VCS groups working specifically in liaison with the HHASC Department

**ACTION: Cllr Abdullahi/ Andy Ellis**

Councillor Laban raised a concern that some issues being dealt with by Council services were not linking in properly with our voluntary organisations. Reference was made to the Public Realm department spoiling some planting work that had been carried out by Parks volunteers. There was also a concern that the Enfield Residents Priority Fund had been used as a way to 'top up' funding for some organisations, as this funding has now come to an end, organisations would now need to look at more sustainable options. Shaun Rogan agreed that communications needed to be improved with VCS. He said that sustainability for voluntary groups was an issue that needed to be addressed and mentioned that in terms of availability of grants/ finance in London, there is the potential for Enfield to improve/ increase its bids for funding. He thought processes were being improved and organisations are acting in a more business oriented way i.e they are accustomed now to providing quarterly returns.

It was asked how we monitor the grants process and Shaun Rogan referred to the Voluntary Sector Framework which sets out this procedure, it has recently been updated. He will send a copy to Councillor Abdullahi. He said it is key that when an application is received, it is dealt with in a consistent manner regardless of which point of entry it comes to the Council. One of the aims of the Enfield 2017 project is to ensure that subjects, such as grant applications, are dealt with in this way.

**ACTION: Shaun Rogan**

In answer to how Councillors can provide support to VCS, it was thought useful for them to be briefed on what is happening in their Wards and can, therefore promote key messages. Paula Jeffery referred to workshops being held to help groups with financial planning. Due to financial constraints she thought a number of small groups may only be able to survive if they become completely voluntary in future.

Councillor Brett paid tribute to the large number of organisations and volunteers in the Borough, she mentioned that the work undertaken on a

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voluntary basis may also provide experience for those wishing to gain experience and help them gain employment in future. She referred to a positive way forward where the Mayor for London had introduced the volunteer police cadets, to encourage young people into the service.

She said it was necessary to ensure that organisations are robust, that we help them to develop, by focusing on improving their financial knowledge and by training volunteers. These organisations can be seen as 'engines for change', it is important for the Enfield Community to work together.

Councillor Smith referred to concerns about historical cases where the funding of voluntary groups had been subject to abuse by some local authorities. He mentioned that the Enfield Residents Priority Fund had needed to be carefully managed as some groups had tried to submit more than one application for projects. The voluntary framework agreement sets out clear guidelines to be followed by voluntary organisations.

Paula Jeffery said only a small proportion of the 651 voluntary groups receive any funding, although some contracts/ arrangements with HH&ASC are long standing. The aim is now for all voluntary group funding to be through 'voluntary funding agreements' and the standardisation of forms/ letters are to hopefully be introduced from April 2016. .

It was confirmed that letters regarding decommissioning have been sent to voluntary organisations. A suggestion was made that Councillors attend local voluntary organisations in their wards so as to get an understanding of issues. Members would be issued with geographical information of voluntary groups in their wards, this was welcomed by them.

**ACTION** Shaun Rogan

Reference was made to organisations working at Community House and the need for LBE to work with them to evolve and adopt new ways of working. Councillor Brett has met with Property Services about these issues. It was stressed that we needed to ensure our voluntary organisations are empowered and happy to embrace change, we must ensure our 'bond of trust' is not weakened and organisations are dealt with equally. Mention was made of the Better Care fund partnership consisting of the Council, local Voluntary Sector organisations and local NHS hospitals, commissioning would take place for a three year period using competitive grants process.

Councillor Levy thanked everyone for attending this meeting.

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### **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Potential Call-Ins:

Tuesday 22 December 2015

The next business meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be Monday 14 December 2015.

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