

## Minutes

### SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

23 September 2020



Meeting held at VIRTUAL - Live on the Council's  
YouTube channel: Hillingdon London

	<p>Ian Edwards (Chairman) Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman) Judith Cooper Alan Deville Tony Eginton Janet Gardner Becky Haggar Paula Rodrigues Steve Tuckwell</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Ian Anderson, Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries Alex Coman, Head of Service for Safeguarding and Partnerships Kate Kelly-Talbot, Assistant Director - Adult Social Care Gemma McNamara, Finance Manager - Transformation and Business Partnering Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer Claire Solley, Head of Service Safeguarding Adults and Principal Social Worker for Adults</p>
3.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
4.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
5.	<p><b>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS DATED 6 FEBRUARY 2020 AND 14 MAY 2020</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes of the meetings dated 6 February 2020 and 14 May 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
6.	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items of business were marked as Part I and would be considered in public.</p>

7.

**2020/21 BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING & PUBLIC HEALTH POC** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Gemma McNamara, Finance Manager, presented the information in the report. Key points highlighted included:

- This was the first of two opportunities within the planning cycle for the Policy Overview Committee to consider issues relating to budget planning for 2021/22 and beyond;
- The budget gap and savings requirement for the two years to 2022/23 stood at £19,987k after allowing for an assumed 3.8% per annum increase in Council Tax. This comprised a core Council Tax increase of 1.8% alongside a 2% increase relating to an Adult Social Care Precept to fund ongoing pressures within Adult Social Care;
- The inflation requirement was driven by workforce inflation through anticipated annual 2% pay awards and a further 0.5% increase in employers' pensions contributions, with £4.829k increases on the cost of care provision where annual pay inflation of around 4% was expected to keep pace with growth in the London Living Wage;
- Corporate items represented the second largest contributor to the budget gap with £7,589k growth required over the Medium Term Financial Forecasting (MTFF) period;
- Increasing demand for services linked to a growing and changing population accounted for £6,886k of the projected savings requirement, linked to Waste disposal, Adult Social Care, SEN Transport and Children's Social Care;
- In relation to Covid-19, General Fund pressures of £25m were projected in relation to the impact of the pandemic and the Council's response during the 2020/21 financial year. Grants towards this of £15,617k had been confirmed and a further £8,500k was expected. It was anticipated that these funding allocations, together with the use of earmarked reserves, would contain this exceptional pressure in the current financial year;
- Unallocated General Balances totalling £28,266k at 31 March 2021 were projected;
- Within the MTFF there was inevitably a higher level of uncertainty than usual and both the Spending Review 2020 and the Business Rates Retention policy had been delayed;
- The pandemic had left Councils facing huge pressures; however, Hillingdon Council was well placed to respond to the ongoing financial challenge with a solid track record of delivering balanced budgets and retaining £34,239k of unallocated General Balances at 31 March 2020;
- In terms of next steps, the MTFF would be considered by Cabinet in December 2020 and would be consulted on during December 2020 and January 2021. This would include detailed consideration by each of the Policy Overview Committees of the proposals relating to their respective services.

Members requested clarification as to how the actual pay award for Council staff of 2.75% - higher than the 2% budgeted for – would affect these figures. It was confirmed that this had been allowed for in the budget for the coming year and, in the current year, was being contained within existing resources.

Members enquired whether the projected savings could be achieved in the next two years without the need for frontline service cuts. It was noted that this was a matter for Cabinet to determine rather than the Policy Overview Committee.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the financial context in which the 2021/22 budget setting process would take place in advance of detailed proposals being developed and approved at Cabinet in December 2020.**

8. **HILLINGDON SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020**  
(Agenda Item 6)

Alex Coman, Head of Safeguarding – Children’s Services and Claire Solley, Head of Service – Safeguarding Adults presented the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019-20. It was noted that this was the Partnership’s first report under the new arrangements and was a final draft version still awaiting validation from the Safeguarding Partnership’s Executive Leadership Group which was due to meet at the end of October. Key points highlighted included:

- Safeguarding arrangements had been reviewed and the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership worked towards strengthening the collaborative working between Children and Adult Safeguarding and other strategic forums in the Borough. Legislative changes had introduced a new approach to safeguarding partnerships whereby the local authority, the local Clinical Commissioning Group and the Police shared equal responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable children;
- Hillingdon was striving to be a pioneer in its collaborative safeguarding arrangements;
- The report focused on work done by both the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Safeguarding Adult Board;
- There were still distinct areas of work and separate legal frameworks for children and adults but a collaborative shared approach was possible in a number of areas – the Modern Slavery Sub Group, the Practice Development Forum and a Serious Case Panel;
- In terms of adults, the key priorities in 2019-20 were financial abuse, modern day slavery and domestic abuse. An ambitious action plan – ‘Making Safeguarding Personal’ had commenced whereby the views of adults were at the centre of everything. 84% of individuals in safeguarding cases had been asked what they wanted to happen and 94% of these outcomes had been achieved. The total number of adult safeguarding concerns received by the local authority had increased by 20% year on year. A number of individuals had praised the local authority for the work undertaken to help them feel safe. Section 6.7 of the report outlined the work of the Provider Risk Panel and the Care Governance Board. These groups aimed to optimise the quality of the care and support delivered by providers within the Borough. Section 6.8 highlighted the work of the high-performing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard Team (DoLs). This team was recognised across London and nationally as an example of excellent practice. Areas to work on were to strengthen the voice of the adult with a move towards having lay Members and adults represented on the Safeguarding Adult Board. Work on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had commenced – this would sit alongside the existing children’s MASH to strengthen the approach across the Borough in responding to safeguarding concerns. This would also link to developments around domestic abuse - One Front Door;
- In terms of children, colleagues and agencies who had contributed to the report were thanked for their hard work and commitment. Priorities in 2019-20 included the protection of children at risk of contextual safeguarding and a focus on neglect. It was anticipated that the new coherent strategy across all ages would lead to great outcomes. Another key area of focus for the partnership was the learning from good practice both locally and nationally. The excellent work of the

adolescent team was highlighted. The team had introduced an innovative way of working with vulnerable young people who were at high risk of exploitation and criminal activity. This innovative approach had been recognised both regionally and nationally. In January 2020, Children's Services and the Partnership had been scrutinised by Ofsted and a very positive letter had been published by Ofsted on their website in February 2020. To engage children and young people, they were encouraged to participate in meetings and more than 300 looked after children had done so over the past year – either face to face, by phone, by video, via an advocate or in writing. Collaborative working had led to good placement stability which was a very positive outcome. The Committee was informed that the Children in Care Council had prepared and delivered a very insightful training session entitled 'Walking in Our Shoes' which focused on their experiences of being in care and what 'good' looked like. Following delivery of this training, feedback had been excellent. The Children in Care Council had also won an award for best community group which they had received in the House of Commons. The success of the Troubled Families Programme was also highlighted – above average successes had been achieved in turning around the lives of families in Hillingdon.

Members congratulated officers on their in-depth and focused report and were reassured to hear that the Partnership was working so successfully to safeguard all residents – both young and old.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that, in cases of domestic abuse, the children involved were being safeguarded and their needs considered. Information was received in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and a whole family approach was taken – consideration was always given to the needs of the children involved in such cases. The report mentioned the success of the Independent Domestic Violence Abuse (IDVA) service which was going from strength to strength in supporting victims of domestic abuse and their children. An IDVA colleague had been placed in Hillingdon Hospital to increase awareness of domestic abuse; this had led to an increase in referrals from 51 the previous year to 129 which was a positive development.

Members noted that some of the charts were a little unclear due to the lack of colour used in the printing process (pages 64 and 65 of the agenda pack). It was confirmed that there were always more concerns than enquiries – 25% of concerns had progressed to enquiries which was an increase of 7% on the previous year. It was noted that adults did not always welcome interventions and therefore a concern may not progress to an enquiry in such cases.

The Committee requested clarification regarding the impact of Covid-19 on adult and children's social care. It was confirmed that the report covered the previous financial year (to March 2020) and therefore did not focus on the Covid period itself. Members were advised that, during the Covid-19 period, officers had continued to contact residents in need of support. Essential visits had continued (having taken into account the necessary risk assessments) and members of the public had still been able to make contact in the usual ways – via the online forum, by phone, letter, email etc. In terms of training, the Partnership had contacted providers to ask them to deliver training virtually. The option of e-learning had been re-visited and some small Covid-secure workshops were also ongoing. The Professional Development Forum had also developed some strong guidance in relation to staff development. A multi-agency training matrix across children's and adult social care was currently being worked on.

Councillors requested further clarification regarding the serious case review referred to

in the report and enquired whether the 16 recommendations had been addressed. It was confirmed that the recommendations had been accepted when the review was published and the Safeguarding Partnership was monitoring implementation of those recommendations utilising a coherent tracking mechanism. A learning event involving nearly 200 participants had been planned for the end of March 2020 but had not taken place due to the pandemic. Instead a briefing note had been sent out and the action points were under constant review. The responsibility for safeguarding was shared between the local authority, the CCG and the Police who made up the Executive Leadership Board which held the Partnership to account. In response to Councillors' requests for clarification, it was confirmed that a new National Safeguarding Panel had been introduced. Since September 2019, whenever a significant incident happened, the local authority and the safeguarding partners would have to arrange a Rapid Response meeting within 15 days to consider the incident and reach a decision regarding further action and the best way in which learning could be extracted. This decision was always shared with and scrutinised by the National Safeguarding Panel. It was confirmed that, during the financial year in question, all decisions made by LBH and partners had been endorsed by the National Safeguarding Panel.

In response to questioning from the Committee, it was confirmed that LAC children were encouraged to complete a Children's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Officers worked closely with care providers and health colleagues to ensure that the person closest to the child helped them to complete the assessment. It was encouraging to see that the SDQ scores were continuing to decrease. If any child scored over 17, the MAPS or CAMHS service would be engaged to support them.

Members sought reassurance that, at an operational level, the relevant agencies were committed and engaged and were attending meetings as required. It was confirmed that the attendance of police and health professionals, particularly at strategy meetings, was monitored. To improve police attendance, the Police's Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT team) was now co-located in the MASH alongside domestic abuse officers, social workers and health colleagues. Police representatives attended Child Protection conferences and forums attended by the local authority and the police were held regularly. A new process had started during the year whereby the School nurses and health visitors were also notified of strategy discussions and child protection conferences with sufficient information and notice to enable them to attend. It was further confirmed that social workers were always in attendance at Child in Need meetings and Child Protection conferences.

Members thanked officers for the comprehensive reports and were reassured that steps were being taken to safeguard residents in Hillingdon.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the report be noted; and**
- 2) That delegated authority be granted to the Chairman and the Labour Lead in collaboration with Democratic Services to agree the wording of the POC's comments on the report which was to be presented to Cabinet in October.**

Ian Anderson - Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries, introduced the report. Members' attention was drawn to a poem on page 102 of the agenda pack which had been written by a young person to thank her social worker and Personal Assistant for the help they had given her. The Committee was reminded that residents were often very appreciative of the services supplied by the Council.

Key points highlighted in the report included:

- The data focused on the last two years 2018/19 and 2019/20 – future reports to POC would cover a five-year period;
- During the financial year 2018/19, 2756 informal complaints had been recorded – this had reduced to 2339 in 2019/20;
- Over the same period, the number of Stage 1 complaints had risen by 3% from 837 to 861 and Stage 2 complaints had increased from 73 to 80;
- Statistically it appeared that 91% of complaints were being resolved at Stage 1;
- There had been a significant drop in the number of cases investigated by the Ombudsman from 86 to 59;
- The number of compliments received had risen from 234 to 301;
- A large number of compliments had already been received in the period 2020/21 and it was estimated that the number would reach approximately 600 by the end of the financial year;
- Residents had been particularly complimentary about the wild flowers across the Borough;
- The volume of Members' enquiries had dropped slightly from 11,308 to 11,047;
- Residents Services accounted for 97% of all enquiries from Elected Members – the majority were in relation to Waste Services (5,949 enquiries);
- Few Members' enquiries regarding Children's Services and Adult Social Care were received; however, it was noteworthy that those received were generally more complex and took longer to investigate and resolve;
- An area for improvement was in relation to the timeliness of responses. It was important that complaints and enquiries were responded to on time. At present 99% of Finance complaints, 93% of Adult Social Care complaints and 86% of Children's Services complaints had been responded to within target. However, 72% of Resident Services complaints had been responded to within target. The Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries was working with the relevant teams to improve response times in this area.

Members congratulated Ian Anderson on his detailed and thorough report and appreciated its transparency and honesty. In response to Councillors' requests for clarification, it was confirmed that it was difficult to say that 91% of Stage 1 complaints were resolved as a complainant could escalate a complaint to Stage 2 many months later. The only conclusion that could be drawn from the numbers was that the complaints process was doing what it was designed to do in that as you went up the Stages, there were fewer complaints.

With regards to a correlation between Stage 2 complaints and those which progressed to the Ombudsman, Members were informed that it was difficult to draw any conclusions from this as Ombudsman investigations took a very long time to be concluded and the findings could even be reported the following year. However, it was confirmed that the Council took the Ombudsman's findings very seriously and, if the Council was found to be at fault in some way, officers at all levels would consider what needed to be done to ensure that it did not happen again. Officers were committed to providing the best service possible and when things went wrong, to put them right. Members were informed that officers engaged in a constructive and positive way with

the Ombudsman and were mindful that if the Ombudsman was unhappy with the operation of a particular local authority, it could publish a public report to this effect.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the contents of the report and provided any comments to officers as appropriate.**

10. **AUTISM REVIEW - 'MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY'** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Members were informed that the Scoping Report had been updated and the timings revised due to Covid-19. It was confirmed that all Members had been invited to complete an online Basic Autism Awareness training module.

In terms of next steps, it was confirmed that the October meeting would focus on Children's Services, Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood while the meeting in November would cover Wider Council Services. It was hoped that a representative from the Parent Carer Group would attend the October meeting while a member of the Hillingdon Autistic Care Service (HACS) would be in attendance at the November meeting. A survey of Council frontline services would also be conducted to ascertain how autism-friendly they were.

Members requested the attendance of a representative from the Benefits Agency at witness session 3 as it was unclear how the system worked in terms of the allocation of benefits to those with autism. This would enable the Committee to understand how autism-friendly the access to benefits was at present.

The Committee enquired whether it would be possible to invite a representative of a charity for adults with autism to attend a witness session. It was also noted that it was important to establish the autism-friendliness of establishments (including shops) within Hillingdon both for adults and children. Members were informed that the Centre for ADHD and Autism Support offered help to both adults and children but focused mainly on the London Borough of Harrow.

It was suggested that an additional witness session could be required and, if necessary, the work programme would be adjusted accordingly.

For the October meeting, the Head of Safeguarding – Children's and Young People's Services was informed that it would be useful to understand from parents whether they felt the Council was receptive to the issues regarding which they were seeking help. For older children, it would be beneficial to understand how the Council ensured it listened to them and how it dealt with potential conflict between what the children might want and what their parents might prefer.

**RESOLVED That the Committee:**

- 1) Gave consideration to the updated scoping report and made comments and suggestions on the detail contained therein; and**
- 2) Considered the information received from officers.**

11. **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MINUTES - 19 MARCH 2020** (*Agenda Item 9*)

The minutes of the Corporate Parent Panel meeting on 19 March 2020 were agreed, including resolution 5, point 33 in respect of an increase in the Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel to include a Senior Officer from Children's Services.

	<b>RESOLVED:</b> that the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting on 19 March 2020 be approved and the proposed increase in the Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel to include a Senior Officer from Children’s Services be agreed.
12.	<p><b>FORWARD PLAN</b> (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that, on 24 September 2020, Cabinet would consider the Covid-19 local outbreak control plan. It was suggested that this report be further scrutinised at the October meeting if time allowed. Alternatively, a special meeting of the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee could be convened to consider this. It was agreed that the Chairman, Labour Lead and Democratic Services would discuss this further outside of the meeting.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee noted and commented on the items going to Cabinet; and</li> <li>2) That the Covid-19 local outbreak control plan be scrutinised, either at the October meeting of the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee, or at a specially convened meeting.</li> </ol>
13.	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME</b> (<i>Agenda Item 11</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee considered the report and did not request any amendments.</p>
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.37 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

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