

Minutes

Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities
Policy Overview Committee
Tuesday, 6 April 2021
Meeting held at VIRTUAL - Live on the Council's
YouTube channel: Hillingdon London



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Members Present:

Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman)
Lindsay Bliss
Nicola Brightman
Farhad Choubedar
Alan Deville
Jazz Dhillon (Opposition Lead)
Scott Farley
Wayne Bridges

Apologies:

Cllr Vanessa Hurhangee

Officers Present:

Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Manager
David Haygarth, Energy Manager
Dan Kennedy, Director, Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services
Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Vanessa Hurhangee.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

59. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2021

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 4 March 2021 be agreed as an accurate record.

60. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was agreed that items 1-11 were in Part I and would be considered in public and, if required, item 12 was in Part II and would be considered in private.

61. REVIEW: VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC - DRAFT REPORT

Members had reviewed the draft report and raised no concerns or comments. The Committee endorsed submission of the final report to Cabinet for consideration.

RESOLVED That the Corporate Services, Commerce & Communities Policy Overview Committee:

- 1) Agreed the final report and recommendations in principle and endorsed its submission to Cabinet for due consideration; and**
- 2) Delegated any minor drafting changes required prior to the report's submission to Cabinet to the Democratic Services Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition Lead as required.**

62. THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT REVIEW TOPIC - IDEAS / SELECTION PHASE

Members were invited to put forward ideas for the Committee's next review topic. Suggestions for review topics / information report items:-

1. The Council's engagement with the Armed Forces;
2. Town centre regeneration – how the Council is engaging with Hillingdon's high streets to assist with economic recovery further to the Covid-19 pandemic;
3. The Council's procurement – future plans and possible efficiencies;
4. The Council's ICT / digital strategy and current major ICT projects being undertaken / future plans;
5. Ways in which the Council helps local small businesses with their procurement processes;
6. Facilities management within the Civic Centre – updating the building and installing energy efficient equipment;
7. Disability access in public buildings.

It was noted that suggestions 3 and 5 (procurement) could feed into each other. It was agreed that Councillor Choubedar would provide further information regarding 4 (ICT).

In respect of suggestion 6, Members commented that it would be useful to gain a better understanding of the Council's use of building space and where efficiencies could be made; particularly if some staff would be continuing to work from home post Covid.

The Committee observed that most of the topics would be information report items. At this stage the preferred review topic was option 2 regarding town centre regeneration post-pandemic. It was agreed that Democratic Services would liaise with officers to scope this further and report back to the Committee. If Members thought of other ideas following the meeting, these could be communicated directly to Liz Penny in Democratic Services.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered potential topic ideas for their next major review for officers to scope further and report back to the Committee.

63. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

David Haygarth, Climate Action Manager, presented the Climate Change Action Plan which had been presented to Cabinet in March. The Committee was invited to comment on the Action Plan prior to it going back to Cabinet in July 2021.

The Committee heard that a Climate Change Action Plan was essential given the world's changing climate and weather patterns. The plan had a focus on community leadership and leading by example – it aimed to inspire residents to reduce their omissions and supported other objectives such as air quality, fuel poverty and preventing flooding.

Members heard that the Council aimed to be carbon neutral by 2030. It planned to achieve clean energy via the use of wind turbines, solar energy and energy supplied by the local and national grid. The use of fossil fuel would be reduced in the future. The aim would be to purchase green energy when possible and, if not achievable, to consider carbon offsetting.

Members were informed that the plan set out seven themes of focus and outline targets to achieve the goal of becoming carbon neutral – Community Leadership, The Council's Own Operations, Building better places, Using Clean and Green Energy, Waste Management, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and Carbon Offsetting. In terms of the latter, measures would be put in place to compensate for carbon emissions which could not be avoided in the short-term e.g. tree planting.

It was confirmed that the draft plan would be subject to a public consultation period – an online survey would be released on 29 March 2021 and webinars were planned together with direct emailing to interested parties. It was hoped that people would be engaged and involved in shaping the plan.

Members enquired whether the aim to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 was realistic. It was confirmed that this was deemed to be an achievable target but would need to be reviewed nearer the time. The Council had already made significant progress over the last ten years in reducing carbon emissions and switching to green energy. It was anticipated that the residual amount would be reduced further over the next ten years to arrive at a figure which would need to be offset.

The Committee requested clarification as to how savings to date had been achieved and enquired whether the Council could do more in the future to reduce the residual figure further. Members were advised that the Council had committed to the first climate change strategy and had introduced a number of activities to reduce its carbon footprint including the installation of lower energy LED street lighting, more efficient boilers and the purchase of green energy. It was also noted that the UK power network had de-carbonised substantially in recent years. It was anticipated that the residual figure to offset carbon would be reduced significantly over the next 5-8 years and, if the Council continued to purchase green energy, would be relatively low by 2030.

In response to their enquiries, Members were informed that a lot of work had been done to move from petrol to hybrid / electric vehicles. Approximately 50 hybrid / electric vehicles had been purchased in 2020 and more than 50 would be purchased in 2021. It was not yet possible to purchase electric dustcarts but the situation could change in the future as they were being trialled in other local authorities. It was confirmed that any diesel vehicles were of a high Euro 6 standard which drove down their emissions. It was anticipated that carbon offsetting in respect of vehicle emissions would be much lower by 2030. Moreover, it was hoped that the use of fossil fuel for heating would be reduced too.

In response to further questioning from the Committee, it was confirmed that carbon offsetting was becoming more commercialised – rather like a futures market which could be traded on with carbon allowances being bought and sold. Members heard that, in terms of its own housing stock, the Council would use the most efficient form of heating and insulation to improve the thermo efficiency of local authority buildings.

Councillors requested further clarification regarding other innovations which could be used in place of tree planting. It was noted that tree planting could at times negatively impact on nature, wildlife and the water table. Members heard that officers were attempting to develop a strategy around this. Solar farms, renewable power projects and other alternatives were being considered. It was confirmed that the Climate Action Manager would investigate this further and report back to the Committee via Democratic Services.

Further information was sought in relation to point C2.6 on page 37 of the agenda pack which stated that “The procurement of all new Council equipment and services will be measured against the objectives of this strategic plan”. The Committee was advised that this related to goods and services purchased by the Council. In respect of this, Members commented that the pre-requisites should be written into all contracts. It was agreed that the Climate Action Manager would follow this up with procurement colleagues to ascertain what the long-term plan was and would report back to the Committee via Democratic Services. At the request of Members, it was also agreed that the Climate Action Manager would establish the amount of paper currently used within the Council and how this could be reduced.

The Climate Action Manager informed the Committee that the local authority aimed to assume a leadership role in the reduction of carbon emissions. There was a lot of work to do to collect the thoughts of all interested parties and ensure they were co-ordinated in the plan.

In response to further questioning, it was confirmed that the Climate Change Action Plan would not be brought back to the Committee again prior to public consultation but would be monitored in the future via the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Committee provided comments or feedback on the proposed Climate Change Action Plan to be taken into account prior to the report coming back to Cabinet in July 2021;**

- 2) **The Climate Action, Manager, explore the innovations / alternatives to tree planting being considered and report back to the Committee via Democratic Services;**
- 3) **The Climate Action, Manager, consult with procurement colleagues to ascertain the long-term plan regarding contracts and report back to the Committee via Democratic Services; and**
- 4) **The Climate Action Manager establish the amount of paper currently used within the Council and how this could be reduced and report back to the Committee via Democratic Services.**

64. PREVENT

Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Manager, provided an update on current activity in relation to delivering the Council's responsibilities under the Prevent Duty, as set out in the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Members heard that the Council had a responsibility to work towards the aims of its Prevent Duty and the report set out the ways in which it was meeting its objectives and safeguarding those being drawn to extremism.

The Committee was informed that there were 4 or 5 key areas the Council had to respond to working alongside other agencies. A key area of responsibility related to safeguarding – identifying and supporting those who might be vulnerable to radicalisation. Channel was the multi-agency process for the management of cases relating to vulnerability to radicalisation and support of terrorism. The local authority acted as Chair of the Channel panel and multi-agency meetings were held on a regular basis to identify and offer positive support to those at risk.

Members heard that training for staff and partner agencies was key to enable stakeholders to identify those at risk and make referrals thereby ensuring that expectations were being met in relation to safeguarding. It was confirmed that the Council had delivered training to more than 5000 staff across the Borough from within the Council, education, health, voluntary and other settings.

In terms of risk assessment, the Council worked with local partners to understand the picture in relation to radicalisation – what the issues were and how best to respond to them effectively and proportionately. The picture was constantly changing and there had recently been an increase in extreme right-wing extremism. An understanding of the online space and how it was being used to spread extremist material and messaging was of vital importance. The Council worked with local partners to raise awareness and educate people to recognise the signs of grooming / radicalisation.

With regards to building resilience, the Council continued to deliver its MOPAC funded programme in collaboration with the police, schools, the college, the university and community groups. The aim was to enable individuals to build their own resilience and develop critical thinking skills. Workshops had been delivered in schools with pupils discussing topics relating to promoting equality and diversity, challenging discrimination and tackling hate.

Members requested further clarification regarding the Prevent training available to staff. It was confirmed that e-learning modules had been developed by the Home Office which provided a basic introduction to Prevent, how to make a referral etc. These modules took approximately 1-1.5 hours to complete. Key staff could also access further Home Office training and learning. Face to face workshops were organised both for Council staff and for local partners and specialist training was also offered. It was confirmed that all the training provided was Home Office approved and was regularly updated to reflect the changing picture. The Home Office was currently revising its face to face training package. During lockdown, training had mainly been delivered virtually. Some Covid-secure face to face training sessions had been held in schools but this had proved to be challenging.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the local authority worked with health services, mental health services, probation, the police, schools and further and higher education providers. All these local agencies formed part of the local Prevent Partnership group.

Members enquired whether psychometric testing was provided in schools to identify those most at risk. It was confirmed that this was not currently happening in Hillingdon; however, staff in schools were trained to recognise the signs of radicalisation.

In reply to their requests for clarification, Members were informed that there had been a significant increase in the number of referrals since 2010 and approximately 50% of those referred required an intervention or additional support. However, it was noted that the Prevent categories had been broadened and awareness had increased which would partially account for this increase in referrals. It was agreed that the Stronger Communities Manager would provide the Committee with precise numbers in due course via Democratic Services.

At the request of the Committee, it was agreed that the Stronger Communities Manager would compile a training package and arrange a Prevent training day for Elected Members.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

- 1) Noted the report;**
- 2) Endorsed the work that was being undertaken with regards to managing local risk relating to violent extremism and the threat from terrorism, and in safeguarding those vulnerable to radicalisation;**
- 3) The Stronger Communities Manager provide the Committee (via Democratic Services) with precise figures in relation to the increase in numbers of referrals; and**
- 4) The Stronger Communities Manager organise a Prevent training day for Elected Members.**

65. PAST REVIEW UPDATE: HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC & TRANSPHOBIC BULLYING REVIEW

Dan Kennedy, Director – Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services, introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the recommendations approved by Cabinet in June 2019. Members were informed that progress was being made in respect of all the recommendations though some of the actions had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response to requests for clarification from the Committee, it was confirmed that schools had generally embraced the recommended action points and a number of programmes were being run which was a positive step. Progress would continue to be monitored going forward.

In respect of recommendation 4, Members enquired whether any schools had joined the “Stonewall Champions Programme”. It was confirmed that schools were being encouraged to join. Secondary schools had generally engaged more than primary schools; however, it was noted that, over the last 12 months, schools had been focussing on the challenges presented by the pandemic. It would be possible to provide a fuller update at a future date.

RESOLVED That the Committee noted the updates on recommendations as agreed by Cabinet in June 2019.

66. FORWARD PLAN

In response to the Committee’s request for clarification regarding at item due to be considered at the 17 June meeting, Councillor Choubedar confirmed that Microsoft Azure was a cloud-based platform where hardware / software could be held.

It was confirmed that Democratic Services would liaise with the Chairman and Opposition Lead to provide comments on the Climate Change Action Plan before it came back to Cabinet in July.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee noted the Forward Plan and commented on any items coming before Cabinet as they saw fit; and**
- 2) That Democratic Services liaise with the Chairman and Opposition Lead to draft comments on the Climate Change Action Plan.**

67. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

It was noted that the work programme 2021/2022 would be populated with information items / standing items prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Work Programme and agreed any amendments.

68. PREVENT - PART II DISCUSSION

There was no requirement for a Part II Prevent discussion.

