

Minutes

CORPORATE, FINANCE AND PROPERTY SELECT COMMITTEE

20 July 2021

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman), Vanessa Hurhangee (Vice-Chairman), Lindsay Bliss, Farhad Choubedar, Tony Eginton (Opposition Lead) and Raymond Graham</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Naveed Mohammed (Head of Business Performance & Insight), Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer), Gary Penticost (Head of Repairs, Engineering, Planned Works and Facilities Management) and Iain Watters (Head of Finance - Financial Planning, Capital and Systems)</p>
13.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Lewis.</p>
14.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
15.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Tony Eginton requested the addition of the words ‘customer access within...’ to the penultimate paragraph on page 4 of the minutes. The corrected phrase would read ‘it was confirmed that customer access within the Committee’s Terms of Reference encapsulated both physical and online access.’ It was agreed that Democratic Services would amend the wording as requested.</p> <p>In response to a request for further clarification in relation to the minutes of the previous meeting, it was confirmed that an email responding to the action points raised in relation to the Armed Forces item had been emailed to Members.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 3 June 2021 be agreed as an accurate record subject to the addition of the requested wording.</p>
16.	<p>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 (<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>

17. **REVIEW: PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING IN HILLINGDON COUNCIL** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Naveed Mohammed, Head of Business Performance and Insight, introduced the scoping report highlighting the Terms of Reference on page 10 of the agenda pack. It was proposed that the review would focus on 3 themes – ‘Where are we now?’ ‘What do we need to do better and how?’ and ‘Where do we want to be?’ In terms of future direction, Members were informed that discussions were already underway in relation to this and it was hoped that the Committee’s review would assist in shaping the future of data collection and reporting within the Council.

Members noted the proposal for an external consultant from MD Key Intelligence to address the Committee at its second witness session in October. In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that LBH had been working with said consultant for three months. MD had been briefed to review the existing arrangements within Adults’ and Children’s Social Care and to consider how the production and use of data could be improved.

Although it was noted that Children’s / Adults’ Social Care were the most demanding areas in terms of regular and complex data, Committee Members commented that it would be useful if additional witnesses from Waste / ASB could attend the meeting in October to enable Members to hear from a wider range of officers across the Council, rather than focussing exclusively on Social Care and Housing. It was agreed that Democratic Services would liaise with Naveed Mohammed to arrange this.

Members suggested that themes 2 and 3 could potentially be combined. It was also felt that it would be useful to gain a better understanding of ‘Why we are where we are and what has hindered the Council from going further to date?’ The Committee noted that there would be a need to ascertain who the target audience was and how data could best be provided to the senior management team. It was also important to consider ‘people’ when conducting the review with a focus on staff’s attitude to the importance of data and skills. In terms of the future, a phased approach would be required – ideally predictive analytics would be achievable in the longer term. Democratic Services would liaise with the Chairman to ensure these suggestions were encapsulated within the review.

It was noted that the Committee’s Terms of Reference did not appear on the agenda pack. Democratic Services would ensure the Terms of Reference were included in future.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Democratic Services liaise with Naveed Mohammed to ensure that a wider variety of witnesses are invited to attend the October Committee meeting;**
- 2. That Democratic Services liaise with the Chairman to amend the scoping report to encapsulate the Committee’s suggestions; and**
- 3. That the review scoping report be noted.**

18. **MID YEAR BUDGET UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Iain Watters, Head of Finance – Financial Planning, Capital, Treasury & Systems, presented the 2022/23 Budget Planning Report informing Members that he would attend the Committee again in January 2022 at which time more detailed information

would be available.

In terms of the 2021/22 General Fund Revenue Monitoring and the impact of Covid-19, Members were informed that the total pandemic related pressures since March 2020 were projected at circa £48m (approximately £32m in the previous financial year and £15m in the current financial year). To date, sufficient funding had been received from Government to meet these costs without recourse to local resources; however, the Council had set aside £10,126k in a dedicated Earmarked Reserve to manage any costs over and above the funding received from Central Government.

Members heard that the financial standing of the Housing Revenue Account remained sound. In terms of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the Committee was informed that the funding provided by the Department for Education through the DSG had failed to keep pace with growing demand on High Needs following the introduction of the 2014 Children's and Families Act. The Council was working on development of a recovery plan for the management of this deficit, with support from the Department of Education.

Members welcomed the investment in new homes but queried whether sufficient money was being spent on the existing housing stock.

Councillors expressed concern regarding the risk around inflation noting that a 3% annual pay award for NHS staff was anticipated and social care staff were likely to be awarded a similar amount. It was confirmed that inflation and interest rates were constantly monitored. Interest rates were expected to remain at the current low levels for the next 2 to 3 years.

Members enquired how long the current Covid-19 related funding was expected to last and whether any further funding was likely to be forthcoming. The Committee was advised that no further funding was anticipated in the current financial year. It was estimated that the funding already received for 2021/22 would be sufficient; should any further funding be forthcoming, this could be utilised to replenish the local authority's own resources.

In response to Members' requests for clarification, it was confirmed that any further questions regarding the budget could be addressed on an ad hoc basis.

RESOLVED: That the Mid Year Budget Update be noted.

19. **DISABILITY ACCESS IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Gary Penticost, Head of Repairs, Engineering, Planned Works and Facilities Management, presented the report. The Committee heard that officers worked closely with the Principal Access Officer to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. No residents' requests for additional arrangements had been received. Should any issues be raised, they would be investigated and addressed as required.

In response to Members' requests for clarification, it was confirmed that a lot of work was currently underway in the mezzanine area of the Civic Centre. The Principal Access Officer had played an active role in ensuring that any accessibility issues were addressed appropriately.

In cases of non-compliance with the Equality Act, Members enquired re. timescales for

completion of the required works. It was confirmed that any required works would be built into the works programme and actioned as soon as possible.

Members expressed concern that the Hillingdon Trail could be challenging for those with disabilities due to the number of stiles etc on route. It was agreed that Gary Penticost would raise this with the appropriate Head of Service.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the local authority regularly reviewed new technology available to enhance access. Members heard that, in the Civic Centre, access controls had recently been improved and similar works in Hillingdon's libraries were also underway.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Head of Repairs, Engineering, Planned Works and Facilities Management liaise with the appropriate Head of Service regarding the accessibility of the Hillingdon Trail; and**
- 2. That the Disability Access in Public Buildings update report be noted.**

20. **FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Democratic Services had provided Members with an updated version of the latest Forward Plan highlighting any new items.

In respect of item 076, (Consideration of setting a licensed deficit budget in 2021/22 for three schools in the Borough), Members expressed concern that the deficits for these schools were not coming down.

With regard to item 078 (Hillingdon Digital Connectivity Strategy), Members requested sight of this report prior to it being submitted to Cabinet in September.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Members have sight of the Hillingdon Digital Connectivity Strategy prior to submission to Cabinet in September; and**
- 2. That the Forward Plan be noted.**

21. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 9*)

The date change for the October meeting from 12 to 21 October was noted.

At the request of Members, it was agreed that the website upgrade item scheduled for January 2022 would be brought forward to November 2020.

With regard to the Committee's review, the Chairman requested that the MD external consultant be invited to attend the September Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Work Programme be amended as per Members' requests; and.**
- 2. That the Work Programme be noted.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.15 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny on epenny@hillington.gov.uk or Tel: 01895 250185. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.