

Minutes

CORPORATE, FINANCE AND PROPERTY SELECT COMMITTEE

24 November 2021

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman), Lindsay Bliss, Farhad Choubedar and Tony Eginton (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>Also Present: Councillor Wayne Bridges (substituting)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Kevin Byrne (Head of Health and Strategic Partnerships), Matthew Kelly (Head of Procurement and Commissioning), Naveed Mohammed (Head of Business Performance & Insight), Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
41.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Vanessa Hurhangee, Richard Lewis and Raymond Graham with Councillor Wayne Bridges substituting.</p>
42.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
43.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING DATED 21 OCTOBER 2021 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>In response to a query from Councillor Tony Eginton in relation to minute number 35, resolution 3, it was confirmed that the Data Protection Officer on the ICO website should be Raj Alagh, Borough Solicitor. The website would be updated accordingly.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 21 October 2021 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
44.	<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 were in Part I and would be considered in public.</p>
45.	<p>REVIEW: PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING IN HILLINGDON COUNCIL - FINDINGS (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The findings of the review and the seven recommendations set out in the report were</p>

discussed. At the request of Members, it was agreed that recommendation 7 relating to procurement of external software / systems, be amended to include the need for more up-to-date systems which would facilitate automation (rather than manual manipulation of data) and access to live data.

At the request of the Committee, it was further agreed that recommendations 4 and 5 which had regard to dissemination of information / upskilling of officers be amended to highlight the need for increased awareness in teams / departments in respect of data quality.

In response to their requests for clarification in relation to specialisms within the Business Performance Team, Members heard that business continuity and resilience had been built into the Team thereby ensuring there was sufficient capacity to cover for other staff members as required.

Members had no further queries and stated that, subject to the agreed amendments, they were happy with the proposed recommendations.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee discussed the findings of its review of Performance Monitoring and Reporting in Hillingdon Council and considered draft recommendations in relation to the review.

46. **WEBSITE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Due to a lack of officer availability, it was confirmed that this item would be deferred for consideration at the 12 January 2022 meeting of the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee.

RESOLVED: That this item be deferred for consideration at the 12 January 2022 meeting of the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee.

47. **HOW THE COUNCIL HELPS LOCAL SMALL BUSINESSES** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Matthew Kelly, Head of Procurement & Commissioning introduced the report, informing Members that procurement was increasingly seen as a policy lever to deliver national and local strategies. A more proactive approach was being taken to contribute to a broader social value offering including levelling up, net carbon zero and job creation. The Hillingdon Procurement Team was attempting to harness spending power where possible to support local businesses, particularly smaller ones.

The Committee heard that there was no explicit legal requirement for Procurement to support local business; however, attempts were made to do so where it would be of benefit to the Council. There were a number of risks and challenges in relation to this which had to be managed carefully. To date there had been a number of success stories, some of which were highlighted in the report.

In terms of tender documents, Members were advised that these had recently been reviewed to simplify them and remove duplication where possible. The aim was for Hillingdon Council to be a customer of choice. Where it was felt that a requirement could be met by local businesses, attempts were made at the pre-tender phase to support that to happen and to level the playing field with larger businesses who were more proficient at responding to local authority contract opportunities. This was always a balancing act as due diligence and value for money were also essential. The

Committee was informed that Procurement officers operated a one bid local policy when meant that officers were actively seeking bids from local suppliers in all tenders and quotations. The Council was currently exploring options with a business advisory consultancy – Branduin, that could potentially be used to support local businesses.

The Committee was advised that, given the business demographics in the Borough and the prominence of the aviation sector, Procurement officers were also trying to develop local providers. One example was in relation to Occupational Therapists. The services were primarily outsourced at a cost of c£600k pa. Procurement officers had identified that Brunel University had an OT course and had been engaging with them to create a pathway for new graduates to potentially work with contracted suppliers or consider a new enterprise. In terms of reserving contracts for local businesses and/or SMEs, Members heard that the legality of this approach was being debated externally at present; the developing situation would be monitored closely.

With regards to next steps, the Committee was informed that there would be a continued drive to further develop support for local businesses in a number of ways. This would include increased promotion and comms, updating the website, aiming to become a customer of choice and aligning work on support for local businesses with other priority areas such as skills, innovation and net carbon zero.

In terms of the success stories set out in the pack, it was noted that few smaller organisations appeared on the list – the Committee enquired whether smaller companies were possibly being squeezed out by larger rivals. Members were also interested to know whether, in areas where there was little engagement with local small businesses, it was possible that the Council as an organisation was perceived to be too big to work with.

In response to their queries, the Committee heard that, although the Council broke contracts down into smaller lots, each lot was still relatively large. If broken down further, this would result in a more costly and complex system which would be challenging for the Council to manage and was therefore not feasible. It was acknowledged that smaller local contracts could potentially lead to increased prosperity within Hillingdon but it was important to get the thresholds right.

In response to further questions from the Committee in relation to the 80% price / 20% split used to assess contracts, it was confirmed that this had changed to a 50/50 split, although there would still be scope to vary this as necessary.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee noted the contents of the report.

48. **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO HILLINGDON'S LOCAL VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Kevin Byrne, Head of Health and Strategic Partnerships presented the Grants to Hillingdon's Local Voluntary Organisations 2021/22 report which had been submitted to Cabinet in December 2020. It was confirmed that the programme for 2022/23 was still at a draft stage and would be presented to Cabinet on 15 December 2021.

Members heard that the grants set out in the 2021/22 report totalled approximately £2.4 million. The report had been prepared at a time when the country was about to go into another lockdown. It was confirmed that local voluntary organisations were notified in July of each year that they could apply for funding; applications were received in

September and the Council would then decide which of these groups to support by December. Earlier in 2020 a decision had been made to reassure groups that the Council would not seek to claw back any of the grants which had been allocated, should they not be able to function in some way during the pandemic.

The Committee was informed that Hillingdon's scheme was unusual as few local authorities continued to offer core grants. It was felt that the provision of core funding enabled local organisations to provide key services for local residents and contribute to a vibrant voluntary sector in the Borough. It was confirmed that anyone could apply for funding. An information pack was available and interested parties were encouraged to speak to officers prior to submitting a bid. The bar was set high - groups would be expected to demonstrate needs and future plans, together with good governance and financial management. Grants that supported Council plans and priorities were also encouraged.

When choosing which organisations to support, value for money was key. Replication was avoided and it was important that the groups were able to offer added value within the Borough.

In response to their requests for clarification, Members were informed that officers regularly visited grant recipients to monitor progress and ensure the grants were being used appropriately. Every organisation was also required to provide the Council with a monitoring report each summer.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee noted the update on the Core Voluntary Sector Grants.

49. **FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 9*)

RESOLVED: That the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

50. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 10*)

At the request of Members, it was agreed that a report on Corporate Communications be added to the Work Programme and brought to the 2 March 2022 meeting of the Select Committee. Said report would focus on external communications, such as press releases, and their distribution. Democratic Services would request this.

RESOLVED That:

- 1. Democratic Services request a Corporate Communications update report for the March 2022 meeting of the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee: and**
- 2. The Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee considered the Work Programme and agreed any amendments.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.20 pm.

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

Members of the Public.