

Minutes

**Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy
Overview Committee
Tuesday, 25 July 2017
Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**



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Members Present:

Councillors Scott Seaman-Digby (Chairman)
Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman)
Wayne Bridges
Beulah East
Duncan Flynn
Raymond Graham
Henry Higgins
Robin Sansarpuri

Apologies:

Jazz Dhillon

Officers Present:

Mike Talbot, Workforce and Organisational Development Manager
Luke Taylor, Democratic Services Officer
Iain Watters, Financial Planning Officer

Also Present

Ms Sarah Rose, Senior Account Manager, Stonewall

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dhillon.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2017

With regards to Item 12 of the minutes from the previous meeting, the Update on Previous Review - Tackling Social Housing Fraud, Members noted that they were still awaiting confirmation regarding recommendation 3e that witnesses were counter-signing tenancy agreements, as per this agreement, and asked for a written update on this.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2017 were approved as a correct record.

18. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was agreed that all items would be considered in public.

19. HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Ms Sarah Rose, Senior Account Manager at Stonewall, attended the meeting and introduced a presentation to the Committee regarding biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools.

The Committee heard that the Government estimates that 6% of the population is lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), while 1% is trans; these figures would suggest that roughly 5,000 children and young people in Hillingdon were LGB and 500 were trans.

Ms Rose stated that LGBT young people were some of the most vulnerable in Britain, and the results published in Stonewall's School Report in 2017 confirmed this was the case following a survey of over 3,700 LGBT young people. Some of the more significant figures were as follows:

- 45% of LGBT pupils in the UK - including 64% of trans pupils - are bullied for bring LGBT at school; this figure falls to 40% in Greater London.
- Just 29% of bullied LGBT pupils say that teachers intervened when they were present during bullying.
- 68% of LGBT pupils report that their schools say that homophobic and biphobic bullying is wrong, while that figure falls to 41% with regards to transphobic bullying.
- 40% of pupils are never taught anything about LGBT issues in school.
- 52% of LGBT pupils feel that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying has had a negative effect on their plans for future education.
- 40% of LGBT pupils have skipped school because of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.
- 61% of LGB young people who aren't trans have self-harmed. The figure rises to 84% among trans young people.
- 22% of LGB young people, who aren't trans, have tried to take their own life, with 70% of them having thought about suicide.
- 45% of trans young people have attempted to take their life, with 92% of them having thought about suicide.

Stonewall's 2014 Teachers' Report included data from a survey of 2,200 teaching staff, and figures published included:

- 89% of secondary school teachers said young people regardless of their sexual orientation experience homophobic bullying.
- 29% of teachers didn't know if they were allowed to teach about LGBT issues.

Ofsted has a strong focus on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying in its current inspection framework, and Ofsted judgments can be affected if inspectors identify HBT bullying. Many Councils offer schools guidance and systems for schools record prejudice-related incidents in schools by type.

Members were informed of some of the work that Councils were doing to combat HBT bullying, and questioned what could be done if a council believed it was an issue for schools to counter. Ms Rose commented that Councils have a statutory requirement for the health and wellbeing of all children and young people in the Borough, in schools that fall under the council's remit, such as primary education, as well as other schools such as academies. The Committee heard that LGBT issues were taught to pupils in PSHE, as well as in Relationship and Sex Education, which will be now a statutory requirement within schools in 2019. However, Stonewall encourage LGBT-inclusion throughout the curriculum.

Councillors commented on the concerning figures regarding self-harm and suicide, and asked what action was being taken to prevent loneliness among LGBT youths, and whether role models were used to help with these issues. Ms Rose confirmed that Stonewall do use role models who often high performing staff in industries such as the civil service, police, or army, to talk to schools. Furthermore, poster campaigns in schools have led to teachers changing lesson plans or language used in their lessons, and this messaging, alongside visual messaging, has led to improved results in tackling LGBT bullying. Ms Rose commented that it was important to tackle the language that was used in school. She also mentioned that local LGBT youth groups provide essential support for LGBT young people.

Members questioned how HBT language could be tackled among parents, as this could easily be passed onto children. Ms Rose confirmed that Stonewall trains schools to engage with parents, for example through talks at parents' evenings. Other methods were used in regard to this, but it was also vital to teach children to behave according to school rules, and tackling HBT language within schools is an important focal point of this.

The Committee questioned whether cyberbullying was included in the figures. Ms Rose commented that 40% of LGBT young people have been the target of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic abuse online. Cyberbullying means that children and young people may not be able to escape bullying and could be bullied at any time, including at home alone via the internet or by text message.

Using the statistics provided by Stonewall, Councillors concluded that several thousand young people within the Borough, and that this was an issue worthy of further investigation. Therefore, Members commented that it would be helpful for officers to look into arranging a minor review on the issue of LGBT bullying within schools, and asked if officers could contact the relevant departments to discuss the possibility of this. The Chairman requested that Stonewall also remain involved in any potential review.

RESOLVED: That the report on Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying in Schools was noted, and it was agreed that the issue be investigated further as a topic for a minor review in the future.

20. BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE DIRECTORATES

Iain Watters, Financial Planning Manager, Strategic Finance, was in attendance at the meeting to introduce the 2018/19 Budget Planning Report for services within the remit of the Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee.

The budget report provided the first of two opportunities within the planning cycle for the Policy Overview Committee to consider issues relating to budget planning for 2018/19. A further report is to be considered in January 2018, and will set out the detailed budget proposals, once the proposals have been included in the report to Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial Forecast in December.

The Financial Planning Manager noted that in February 2017, the budget report to Council identified the savings requirement for 2018/19 as £22.2m, with £5m planned drawdown from balances and £1.1m previously developed and approved savings initiatives reducing the budget gap to £16.1m. Further social care funding announcements and a release from the Council's Collection Fund further reduced the gap to be managed to roughly £11.6m.

Members heard that the Council remains strongly placed to deal with the challenges ahead, and with the £3m of 2017/18 savings across the Chief Executive's Officer and Finance, and Corporate Services within Residents Services, reported to be on track to be fully delivered.

The Committee was informed that a contingency provision of £559k is held to fund payment of the Apprenticeship Levy, with actual levy payments expected to total £381k. However, as this is a new levy, the Financial Planning Manager confirmed that the £178k underspend allows for any unexpected increase in costs.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the financial context, in which the 2018/19 budget setting process will take place, in advance of detailed savings proposals being developed and approved at Cabinet in December 2017.

21. MINOR REVIEW - STAFF INDUCTION AND RETENTION AT HILLINGDON COUNCIL

The HR and Organisational Development Manager introduced the next stage of the Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee review into Employee Retention and Induction. It was confirmed that unfortunately the internal witness for the review was unable to attend the meeting and that the witness session would now be re-arranged for the next Committee meeting.

Members were informed that this meeting would now focus on what happens when a new employee joins the Council.

The HR and Organisational Development Manager commented that an induction checklist is used to help ensure that all the induction actions are taken consistently across the organisation, some of which take place before the employee's start date.

In addition to the hard copy of the checklist, there are a number of eLearning modules which the employee must also complete.

The Committee heard that the eLearning system has recently been updated and were shown a series of the pages used in the new system, which included Hillingdon-specific information and facts regarding the Council and its vision, as well as the residents it represents. It was confirmed that the sessions to meet both the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive require staff to book a place, and that there were currently plans for a specific "Meet the Leader" session for a number of apprenticeships who have recently joined the Council. Further links to Google Training and online Google sessions were also included in the new eLearning system, as well as a number of eLearning modules and short tests to ensure employees had suitable levels of understanding for relevant subjects.

Members agreed that the new system was visually much more appealing and engaging than the previous eLearning system, and the HR and Organisational Development Manager confirmed that the site can still be edited and improved internally where required, as it has been over the past two years.

Councillors believed that the system was moving in the right direction, and asked whether there was a possibility to keep a record of feedback for the system to ensure the eLearning modules continues to improve. The Committee also commented that a number of the eLearning modules provided for staff members were not provided for Members, and questioned whether there should be content available for Councillors as well, to ensure that their training was in keeping with Council employees.

Responding to questioning, the HR and Organisational Development Manager confirmed that some modules could only be completed once employees had answers questions related to the topic. One example of this was the Data Protection Training. Should employees fail to correctly answer 80% of the questions following the eLearning module, they would get a second chance. If they did not reach the pass mark on the second occasion, then a further training session would be arranged on the subject. It was also confirmed that the "buddy system" remains in use, as it gives a new employee the opportunity to build a relationship with a peer, and also means the new starter can ask for help from a colleague that is not a manager.

The Committee thanked the HR and Organisational Development Manager for his time, and the Chairman commented that the witness sessions would take place at the September meeting. Potential witnesses were suggested at the previous meeting, but Members reiterated that they would like a new employee of the Council, in addition to another Civil Servant and a private sector employee.

RESOLVED: That the information on the Council's eLearning module was noted.

22. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED: That the forward plan was noted.

23. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018

RESOLVED: That the work programme was noted, subject to the following changes:

- 1. "Minor Review I: Witness Session" will now take place at the meeting on 21 September 2017.**
- 2. "Minor Review I: Recommendations" will now take place at the meeting on 10 October 2017.**
- 3. "Minor Review I: Final Report" will now take place at the meeting on 7 November 2017.**