

LHC JOINT COMMITTEE - Friday 29 November 2019

Held at LHC Offices, 4th Floor, 2 Vine St, Uxbridge UB8 1QE

Representative	Borough
In Attendance	
Councillor John Bevan (Chairman)	Haringey
Councillor Philip Corthorne (Vice Chairman)	Hillingdon
Councillor David Martin	Bucks
Councillor Jane Palmer	Hillingdon
Councillor Jackie Meldrum	Lambeth
Councillor Mick O'Sullivan	Islington
Councillor Gideon Bull	Haringey
Councillor Eleanor Southwood	Brent
Officers and Advisors	
Neil Fraser – Honorary Clerk (Deputy)	Hillingdon
Zak Muneer – Director of Corporate Services,	LHC
John Skivington – LHC Group Director	LHC
Neil Barker – Director	WPA
Clive Feeney – Director	SPA
Mary Bennell – Director	SWPA
Gary Cawley – Director	CPC
Mij Rahman – Director of Procurement	LHC
Debbie Larner – Head of Knowledge & Products	CIH (Guest)
David Ahlquist – Development Manager (London)	Locality (Guest)
Apologies	
Councillor John Chilver	Bucks
Councillor Paul Gadsby	Lambeth

Councillor Peter Mason	Ealing
Councillor Shama Tatler	Brent
Councillor Susan Fajana-Thomas	Hackney
Councillor Kevin Brady	Tower Hamlets
Councillor Gina Needs	Enfield
Councillor Matthew Bennett	Lambeth

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received as set out above.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 **RESOLVED: That the minutes of the LHC Members' meeting held on 28 June 2019 be agreed as a true record.**

3. REPORT FROM THE GROUP DIRECTOR

- 3.1 Consideration was given to a report by the LHC Group Director, which provided Members with an overview of the organisation's performance.
- 3.2 The Joint Committee was informed that, due to the slow pace of new build social housing programmes, LHC was downgrading its growth targets.
- 3.3 Client feedback showed that client satisfaction had dipped below 90% as resources were stretched regionally. New and imminent appointments were expected to address this. Ratings for appointed companies were holding at 80%. A project group to identify and implement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been formed.
- 3.4 Costs continued to be managed well, which had resulted in a growth in net surplus.
- 3.5 Regarding dignity and respect amongst LHC staff, two complaints had been received in the past six months; and it was confirmed that LHC was working with the London Borough of Hillingdon's HR department to reduce this to zero. An interim HR Manager was in place through secondment from LB Hillingdon, and recruitment for a permanent LHC HR Manager was now underway.
- 3.6 Approximately two thirds of staff had received some form of training, with more planned. The target of 100% of staff receiving training would be achieved by the end of March 2019.
- 3.7 Interest from clients continued to be generated. By the end of the year it was expected that LHC would have generated over 1000 new leads for LHC frameworks, from over 300 clients.
- 3.8 Two important frameworks relating to fire safety had launched in the past year, with six further frameworks to be launched in the next six months.

- 3.9 IT systems continued to be developed. Yammer had been installed as the main platform for staff communication, which was working well. Sysaid was due to be launched, which would help track performance.
- 3.10 Staff continued to grow, with two ex-employees returning to LHC after an absence of several years. Regional teams were maintaining focus on sustaining team cohesion and performance, and to aid this, staff met as a group three times each year. In September, the first Staff Wellbeing Conference was held, and a project group had been formed to design and implement the LHC Workplace Wellbeing Charter. The Charter aimed to help LHC to achieve Health Workplace 'Excellence' accreditation within three years, in accordance with the guidance of Public Health England.
- 3.11 Appointed Community Benefit Agencies continued to work with local authority officers on how to invest funds in community benefit schemes.
- 3.12 There was no change to the Risk Register since the previous meeting.
- 3.13 Committee Members sought clarity on how LHC provided training and development to its staff. It was confirmed that Line Managers met with staff on a regular basis to provide an appraisal of staff competence and performance to objectives. At this stage, training needs and opportunities were identified. An allocation of £1,000 was set aside for staff training towards further career progression. If training required investment over £1,000, then staff were required to sign a post-training agreement which mandated that they would repay training costs, should they leave LHC within a set time.
- 3.14 In response to a request made at the previous meeting, the Group Director confirmed that he had not yet spoken to LB Hillingdon's procurement team. It was agreed that the Group Director would take this as an action to be completed ahead of the next meeting.
- 3.15 The Committee felt that the Group's aim of achieving zero grievances was unhelpful, as it was felt that staff could be deterred from raising issues. In response, it was confirmed that, while the Group's preference was for issues to be dealt with at an early, informal stage, staff were aware that LB Hillingdon was available to confidentially discuss issues and provide guidance on whether those issues warranted instigation of a formal grievance process. Line Managers were trained and were expected to regularly hold open discussions with staff, and issues were ordinarily dealt with through the regular appraisal and performance management process. The Health and Happiness surveys also monitored staff feedback, which senior management reviewed. It was agreed that the Group's target of zero grievances, and the grievance process, would be discussed with LB Hillingdon in more detail.
- 3.16 Members requested that a full HR report be brought to a future meeting. The Group Director advised that a permanent LHC HR Manager would be appointed in the first quarter of 2020, and a full report could then follow at the June meeting.
- 3.17 Members sought further information on how LHC was addressing climate change through its frameworks. It was confirmed that technical experts at LHC engaged with the industry on the latest developments, which were then built into frameworks based on client need (which could vary regionally). Measures built into frameworks included electric vehicle charging points, electric heaters, and the like.

- 3.18 Members requested detail on the PAS 2035 standard for improvements to dwellings. The Group Director advised that further information could be circulated following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the information contained in the report be noted.

4. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KPIS WITHIN LHC

- 4.1 Members were advised that a project team had been set up in May 2019 to deliver the Performance Measurement and Key Performance Indicator Project, which aimed to drive improvement and efficiency in delivering products through analysis of internal and external performance. The pilot phase of data collection had started on 1 October, and would run for six months.
- 4.2 Findings to date included the fact that frameworks for new build / construction projects had the longest timelines before income was received, with traditional Housing projects averaging at 436 days before receipt of income.
- 4.3 Next steps included a review of data from the pilot projects and adjustments to collection methods and reports, if required.

RESOLVED: That the information contained in the report be noted.

5. UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE LHC COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUNDS

- 5.1 David Ahlquist – Development Manager for Locality (London), presented Members with an update on how Locality was managing the funds for community benefits. To aid Members, the Group Director summarised how the funds were allocated to each authority.
- 5.2 In summary, it was confirmed that two projects totalling £20,000 had been submitted and approved, with ten more in the pipeline totalling £52,500. 100 young people and 60 families were expected to benefit. Match funding so far totalled £20,000.
- 5.3 It was suggested that LHC staff should be involved in any opening ceremonies for projects launched, where possible. In addition, LHC's involvement in the projects should be included in any marketing materials or website bulletins.
- 5.4 At the suggestion that Councillors could take a more active role in determining how the funds were used, it was confirmed that Councillors could suggest potential projects for consideration and assessment to their nominated community benefit officer.

RESOLVED: That the information presented in the report be noted.

6. REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

- 6.1 Consideration was given to the Director's report, which confirmed that, following an invitation to tender for LHC's annual audit, two auditing firms had expressed an interest, of which two were invited to interview; Moore Kingston Smith and the

current incumbent, Crowe. Following interviews, it was recommended that Crowe be retained as LHC auditor.

- 6.2 The Sysaid project had been launched in September 2019, which provided the organisation with a company-wide ticketing system. Progress to date was positive, and staff were currently being trained to use the system.
- 6.3 The renewal of the Uxbridge office lease was progressing, with each party preparing documents for engrossment and signing.
- 6.4 As previously referenced, recruitment was underway for a new permanent HR Manager, who was expected to be in post by April 2020. HR projects being worked on included LHC's performance management system, wellbeing charter and flexible working policy.
- 6.5 LHC continued to sign more associate members, with a further nine organisations joining since April 2019.
- 6.6 Members sought confirmation that the proposed retention of Crowe as auditor for LHC would provide quality as well as value for money. The Director confirmed that this was the case, with Crowe demonstrating expertise in the field. In addition, their fees had only marginally increased, in line with inflation.
- 6.7 Members requested further information on the flexible working policy. It was confirmed that the existing IT infrastructure allowed staff to access LHC systems and data from anywhere, thereby facilitating remote working. Actions resulting from feedback received at the May 2019 staff event continued to be worked on, and further detail would be brought to the June 2020 meeting.
- 6.8 Upon a request for further information, Members were advised that sickness rates were low, at 1 day of absence per employee per year. This excluded long-term sickness absence. To help support staff, LHC promoted health, happiness and wellbeing initiatives, including exercise and mental health services.

RESOLVED: That the information contained within the report be noted.

7. REVIEW OF REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS

- 7.1 Members requested that future reports include the monetary value of registered gifts received above the £25 threshold.

RESOLVED: That the register of gifts and hospitality, and the register of interests, be noted.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 The Group Director advised that a recent issue had come to light regarding the sharing of information as part of witness statements relating to the Grenfell Tower fire.

- 8.2 As standard, LHC deleted the email inbox of any employee who left the organisation, and once deleted, these emails were not usually accessible. A recent request to access the email inbox of a previous employee had been made, and LHC's IT team was attempting to facilitate the request by obtaining access to the deleted inbox. However, LHC were required to consider GDPR and data protection implications that resulted from the request.
- 8.3 The matter had therefore been added to the risk register, and LHC would review its policies regarding the deletion of email inboxes and the access to staff communication, in line with guidance.

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- 9.1 It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Joint Committee of the LHC would take place at 10am on Friday 26 June 2020.

10. PRESENTATION ON FIRE SAFETY POST-GRENFELL

- 10.1 Debbie Lerner, Head of Knowledge & Products at the Chartered Institute of Housing, presented Members with an update on implementing building safety following the Grenfell building fire and the subsequent Hackitt inquiry.
- 10.2 The presentation included a number of recommended and required actions following Dame Hackitt's inquiry, relating to both remedial works to existing buildings and measures for new builds.
- 10.3 Members noted that changing the behaviours of residents, including the mandating of proper adherence to fire evacuation procedures, was important but difficult. The need for sprinklers to be installed as a fire control measure was felt to be of paramount importance, though it was conceded that installation in older buildings could be challenging.
- 10.4 Members sought clarity on whether buildings over a certain size and capacity would be required to provide a risk register / site information to the emergency services. This was unknown, though information for buildings was published and made available by building regulators.
- 10.5 Upon further questioning, Members were advised that anyone could register as a fire safety officer, without qualifications. However, it would be the responsibility of Building Safety Managers to properly recruit qualified safety officers who held the proper certifications.

RESOLVED: That the information provided in the presentation be noted.

PART II - MEMBERS ONLY

11. FINANCIAL UPDATE BY THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

11.1 Consideration was given to the Director of Corporate Service's financial update, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the information contained in the report be noted.

This item is included in Part II as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it (exempt information under paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government [Access to Information] Act 1985 as amended

The meeting which began at 10:00am, closed at 12:52pm.

THESE DECISIONS WILL COME INTO EFFECT AND BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS UNLESS CALLED-IN.

THE DEADLINE FOR ANY CALL-IN BY THE EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, TO BE NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, IS 5PM ON 10 DECEMBER 2019