

FOLLOW-UP: MATTERS FOR CLARIFICATION FROM THE LAST MEETING

Contact: Mark Braddock
Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Telephone: 01895 250470

REASON FOR REPORT

To follow-up any clarifications and information requests agreed by the Committee undertaking their role scrutinising the decisions and reports from the last Cabinet meeting. These matters are for noting only and not for call-in. If a particular Member wishes for further clarification on the information provided below, this will be for the Committee to determine.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

That the Committee note the information provided.

CABINET – 25 JUNE 2020

The Committee gave consideration to the reports and the decisions made by Cabinet at this meeting and sought further information or clarifications in the reports as set out below.

Item 5: Budget Outturn 2019/20

Committee Clarification	Officer response
<p>Page 16, para 35, the report talks of housing services incurred significant legal costs around the Housing Allocations Policy:</p> <p><i>“During 2019-20 the Housing Service has incurred significant legal costs defending challenges against the Housing Allocation Policy. Expenditure above budgeted levels is reported against General Contingency. The Allocation Policy has since been updated and this should mitigate the risk of further legal challenges.”</i></p> <p>Question - have other policy areas across the Council been reviewed around groups that may potentially be discriminated against - and to ensure no further legal challenges?</p>	<p>Council officers advise that it would be impossible to review every policy area within the Council for the purpose of trying to avoid legal challenges.</p> <p>However, when a new policy arises, a change to an existing policy is made, or the Council is forced to review a policy as a result of a Court decision [this happened with the social housing allocation policy], then equality considerations will be carefully looked and the Council’s Equalities Lead Officer will support officers across the Council in preparing an Equalities Impact Assessment, where one is considered necessary.</p> <p>Officers advise it would be impossible for the Council, considering the breadth of its services, to anticipate every possible legal challenge. However, the Council is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and the Council has a good record of complying with it.</p>

	<p>It should also be noted that individuals often threaten the Council with legal action, on the grounds of discrimination or otherwise, which are devoid of merit.</p>
<p>Para 88, refers to an overspend on the SEND budget due to additional agency staff:</p> <p><i>“The outturn position for the SEND service is an overspend of £312k, an adverse movement of £119k on the Month 11 position. The overspend is due to the service having to employ agency staff to cover a number of critical roles in the SEND Team, as the service is coming to the end of recruitment to the new staffing structure. The adverse movement represents the requirement to fund additional agency staffing costs covering vacant posts and clearing backlogs of work.”</i></p> <p>Question - is the extra spending because the recruitment campaign was not successful?</p>	<p>Officers advise that this is partially the case. There is a national challenge to recruit permanent SEND officers due to the growth in SEND over the past 5 years. Longer term, sustainable measures are currently being reviewed to enable any future recruitment drive, including the recruitment of recent graduates in education and psychology.</p>
<p>Table 11 in the report shows the latest Housing Needs Performance Data.</p> <p>Question 1 - is the Council falling foul of the 6 week Bed and Breakfast rule as per the Homelessness Order 2003? - or is it moving families around B&Bs to avoid this?</p> <p>Question 2 - are there any statistics on neighbouring boroughs to compare our performance?</p>	<p>Hillingdon Council has a strong track record in preventing and reducing levels of homelessness, with a clear plan of action in place approved by Cabinet in December 2019 (Homeless prevention and Rough Sleepers Strategy). On those occasions when the use of emergency housing is unavoidable for a homeless household with children, officers always seek to find self-contained accommodation.</p> <p>The majority of B&B accommodation provided by the Council is self-contained and, therefore, not subject to the 6 week rule.</p> <p>The last published Government figures of shared B&B use for families (where a household shares a bathroom and/or kitchen facilities with other households)(published 31/12/2019) confirms the following –</p>

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Bed and breakfast hotels (including shared annexes) - Total with children and resident more than 6 weeks</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brent</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ealing</td> <td>47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hammersmith & Fulham</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Harrow</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hillingdon</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hounslow</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>K&C</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </table>	Bed and breakfast hotels (including shared annexes) - Total with children and resident more than 6 weeks		Brent	3	Ealing	47	Hammersmith & Fulham	0	Harrow	3	Hillingdon	0	Hounslow	0	K&C	0
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<p>The programme of Works 2019/20 outturn shows £5k spend on youth provision.</p> <p>Question - can it be clarified why only £5k was spent out of the proposed £1,125m?</p>	<p>Officers advise that the unspent Youth provision programme budget of £1,120k has been rephased into 2020/21.</p> <p>Feasibility work is being undertaken on a range of projects that could qualify for funding from this budget. The nature of these works means that they can have significant lead-in times and alongside this consideration is being given to ensure that the funds are allocated across a number of eligible projects and achieve value for money.</p> <p>During 2019/20 other budgets provided for £967k of capital investment in leisure facilities, sports clubs and meeting facilities that also support the Council's Youth offer and the design and feasibility stages were completed for the Yiewsley & West Drayton Leisure Centre scheme.</p>																