

## Minutes

Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities  
Policy Overview Committee  
Wednesday, 4 November 2020  
Meeting held at VIRTUAL - Live on the Council's  
YouTube channel: Hillingdon London



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### **Members Present:**

Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman)  
Lindsay Bliss  
Nicola Brightman  
Alan Deville  
Jazz Dhillon  
Scott Farley  
Martin Goddard  
Wayne Bridges

### **Apologies:**

Vanessa Hurhangee

### **Officers Present:**

Kevin Byrne, Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships  
Mike Talbot, Director of Corporate Resources and Services  
Luke Taylor, Democratic Services Officer

### **Also Present:**

Mr Julian Lloyd, Chief Executive, Age UK, Hillingdon, Harrow & Brent  
Ms Sally Chandler, Chief Executive, Carers Trust Hillingdon

## **20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hurhangee.

## **21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2020**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

## **23. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was agreed that all Items were marked as Part I and would be considered in public.

#### **24. REVIEW: VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Committee heard evidence on its review into “The Voluntary Sector’s Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Hillingdon” from Julian Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer at Age UK, Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent, and Sally Chandler, Chief Executive at Carers Trust Hillingdon.

Mr Lloyd noted that Age UK were one of the five larger charities in the Borough that were part of Hillingdon 4 All (H4All), an organisation that expanded as a partnership to include a wider number of secondary partners and smaller charities. Nearly all of these individual charities found that their work was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and resulted in them suspending their work, which in turn had an impact on the most vulnerable residents within the Borough.

The Committee heard that H4All, the NHS and Council rallied together in response to the pandemic to deal with the immediate needs of these vulnerable residents. This led to a focus on giving vulnerable residents and those residents shielding at home access to food and medicine. Mr Lloyd conceded it did take some time to get organised, but began to work well to meet these needs with volunteers working non-stop to help.

Members were informed that food parcels and deliveries from the Middlesex Suite were organised very quickly, as were shopping services, and H4All were confirmed that people did not go without food. Since the lockdown in March, Mr Lloyd stated that this process had evolved and now calls from residents required more complex resolutions. Councillors heard that a lot of isolated or lonely residents had called, and there were concerns over older residents who were forced to stay at home, with limited human contact and, potentially, no internet access. This means that those residents could be considered more excluded from society than previously, and it could have a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing, with low levels of depression and anxiety manifesting, as well as a deterioration in physical health due to not being able to go out as much as pre-Covid. Mr Lloyd stated that there was a concern for charities’ client cohort over Christmas as we enter another lockdown period, and this would be a challenging time. There were concerns for the workforce too, as this would have an impact on the wellbeing of staff and volunteers, and while they were trying to support each other, it was not possible physically, which could lead to strains on the workforce.

Ms Chandler noted that larger charities drew-down a significant resource during the pandemic, not just on helping vulnerable residents, but also supporting youth education and from investing in their own IT to make working remotely a possibility. Members heard that charities were prepared for a second wave, but it would have an impact on funding in the sector, and smaller charities were at risk of disappearing without support.

The Committee was informed that charities had to ensure they coordinated their activity, and must look at the needs of the 13,000 residents who were shielding and

consider who is most at risk. Responding to Members' questioning, Ms Chandler noted that a central organisation at the Council that could help to find grants or offer help to local charities would have been very beneficial, and although they were able to mentor emerging charities, the demand of needs meant all the groups could not be supported.

Members agreed with Mr Lloyd that competition in the voluntary sector would not be helpful at this time, and so collaboration was needed to develop and help other charities. The Committee noted that charities needed as much funding as possible, and asked H4All to relay any ideas that they had on how the Council could help them.

Ahead of the second national lockdown, the Committee questioned what the major learning points from the previous lockdown were, and how the approach could be improved. Mr Lloyd noted that there were clear differences, and a range of scenario planning had taken place, with contingencies also in place. On this occasion, Mr Lloyd stated that H4All was not anticipating huge numbers of food parcel deliveries as the infrastructure was already in place to deal with this, although other issues, such as dog walking, would be helpful.

The Committee heard that charities were trying to increase the number of people online to prevent social isolation, and this was done through the provision of tablets and staff with PPE were able to help residents to use them.

Ms Chandler noted that staff morale was lower than the first lockdown, and volunteers and staff had to have difficult conversations with residents. Charities were providing training sessions for this, and also support on death counselling. It was noted that a lot of carers needed support, and charities were working to provide this to support their staff.

Responding to questioning from the Committee, Ms Chandler confirmed that charities were involved in looking at technology that could help monitor residents' health needs virtually, but noted that the infrastructure was not yet in place to provide this on a large scale and further information and support was required. It was noted that routine GP consultations were being considered as a remote meeting, but further technology was required for this. Ms Chandler stated there was considerable investment in health applications, and plans to find a way forward with the right systems in place.

With regards to combatting depression and social isolation over the Christmas period, Members heard that charities were delivering Christmas presents and hampers to help moods, and there were a range of social programmes in place to provide support for people in need. Mr Lloyd noted that roughly 5-6% of the population were digitally excluded, but this rose to 20-25% in older residents. Yearly, this figure decreases and will change over time, but the rollout of technology makes it easier to engage with residents, and it was important to find a hook for older residents that can be used to attract them to technology and help engage them.

Ms Chandler noted that, in addition to care calling, there had been some innovative ways to deal with social isolation, including pamper evenings that saw goods

delivered to residents, and then an online meeting to tell residents how to use them. Additionally, language lessons had proved a good way to bring people together.

The Council's Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships noted that the support was out there for residents, but it was important to re-engineer the approach due to what was happening, and the Council was looking to support capacity building to provide a certain level of governance.

Responding to the Committee, Ms Chandler noted that the organisation of the response to the pandemic with charities and the Council began with a call from the Leader of the Council, and continued with weekly calls with the Deputy Chief Executive and Lead Officers. Ms Chandler stated that the first couple of weeks were chaotic due to the volume of issues faced. One example was that staff were going to supermarkets to buy food for vulnerable residents, and then claiming the money back for these food parcels, but the Council was able to secure a relationship with local supermarkets to provide advanced deliveries of food.

Ms Chandler also stated that it was important to safeguard volunteers before using them, and this took some time to achieve. However, after the first couple of weeks, this process came together quickly and the hub was able to support those in need. The Council's Interim Director for Corporate Resources and Services noted that the Council and charities had different strengths, and the Council was able to redeploy staff quickly and build relationships.

The Committee heard that charities had a longstanding relationship with the Council and worked with the Council on a number of other projects, and that charities were pleased the Council turned to them immediately as it was the obvious partner to work with.

The Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships confirmed that work was ongoing and the Council worked daily with Mr Lloyd, Ms Chandler and recipients of core grants. It was noted that while the initial response to the lockdown was chaotic, as organisations had a better idea of what the Government expected from Local Authorities in response to the pandemic, things began to improve.

Ms Chandler confirmed that there were plans to expand coverage to additional charities through the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, which included 45 groups. While five organisations have large portfolios, they do not cover every concern, so there was the need for wider collaboration with other groups and plans to expand are in the making. The Committee was informed that a program of support and psychotherapy was necessary for carers, and this was being piloted. Charities were awaiting feedback from carers to understand how helpful this had been.

Work was also taking place to tackle complex family situations, work with schools, and provide pastoral staff to support young people with educational help or laptops to allow them to learn at home. CAMHS provided a longstanding relationship with many families in the Borough, and they drew on these relationships to provide the support needed. Many young people were also struggling with bereavement, and it was important to mentor and support them during this time.

The Committee thanked Mr Lloyd and Ms Chandler for taking the time to speak to the Committee, and thanked them and their charities for all the work that had been done with local residents to help tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown.

**RESOLVED: That the witness evidence be noted.**

**25. PAST REVIEW UPDATE: RECRUITMENT IN HILLINGDON**

The Interim Director for Corporate Resources and Services provided an update on the review regarding “Recruitment in Hillingdon”, and what actions were taken on previous recommendations contained within the report.

The report outlined the Council’s actions on individual recommendations, and the Committee heard that the organisation were much better at differentiating what it means to be working for Hillingdon, as opposed to another organisation, following the review. Following work with a focus group, it became clear that professional workers in the business believed Hillingdon offered five things: accomplishment and achievement, a collective impact, working for a resourceful and progressive Council, a sense of diversity, and, a support mechanism through management and an organisational culture that supported professional development.

Members heard that there was now a much better level of candidate response, and the recruitment process was quicker following the implementation of the recommendations. The Committee was also informed that the apprenticeship scheme had stood out in its success, and provided a pivotal talent pool with over 50% of apprentices staying and starting their professional careers at the Council. Members also noted that the recruitment process was a lot easier for line managers.

The Committee stated that the update was very encouraging, and it was clear that the recommendations were having a big impact on recruitment at Hillingdon.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the update on the actions taken with regards to the previous review on “Recruitment in Hillingdon”.**

**26. FORWARD PLAN**

**RESOLVED: That the forward plan be noted.**

**27. WORK PROGRAMME 2018-2022**

**RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.**