

**CORPORATE SERVICES, COMMERCE & COMMUNITIES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**
**The Voluntary Sector – Response to Covid-19 – Minutes from previous meetings**

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| 13/10/20 | <p><b>REVIEW: VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC</b></p> <p>Members considered a draft scoping report that put forward an initial plan for the Committee’s next review.</p> <p>The Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships introduced the scoping report and stated that it provided a brief overview of the voluntary sector’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Hillingdon, which would be expanded on in the future witness sessions.</p> <p>Members were informed that a review into the topic would not only look at the response to residents’ needs, but also consider the impact the pandemic had on the voluntary sector. The Committee noted that a lot happened over a very quick period of time in response to the pandemic, but overall the Council and voluntary sector worked well together and received good feedback from residents.</p> <p>The head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships confirmed that the response to the pandemic may continue to be a challenge over the coming months, but there were a number of different witnesses who could be asked to attend the meeting and give evidence for the Committee.</p> <p>The Committee stated that the scoping report encompassed the Council and voluntary sector’s response to the pandemic well and asked whether domestic violence charities would also be contacted as witnesses given the increase in domestic violence through lockdown. Officers confirmed that this could be considered to an extent, and it was agreed that the Committee would consider this concern and the response to it but may not require witnesses given the scope of the review.</p> <p>The Chairman noted that the Council’s own response to the pandemic was also still ongoing, but the performance of its response would be considered further down the line. Members agreed that the response was so wide ranging it would fall outside the Committee’s specific remit and the Council would likely be conducting a much larger review into this in the future.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the Committee agreed the scoping report and initiated a review into “The Voluntary Sector’s Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Hillingdon”.</b></p> |
| 04/11/20 | <p><b>REVIEW: VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Mr Lloyd noted that Age UK were one of the five larger charities in the Borough</p>  |

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.**

12/01/21

**REVIEW: VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Diane Faichney, Yiewsley and West Drayton Foodbank Chair and Manager / Centre Director of Bell Farm Christian Centre and Tunde Balogun, Senior Pastor – Kingsborough Family Church – representing Hillingdon Foodbank were in attendance.

Diane Faichney addressed the Committee outlining the work of the Bell Farm Christian Centre foodbank during the pandemic. Key points highlighted included:

- 1) Bell Farm Christian Centre was a Church and registered charity. In the early 1990s they had started working in the local community where there was a lot of

deprivation and unemployment. The Centre worked in partnership with the Council, the Police and other agencies to provide employment and training, toy libraries and children's work. The project had grown from there;

- 2) An advice centre called 'Doorway' had been set up approximately 20 years previously. This was similar to the Citizens Advice Bureau and provided advice on debt, housing etc;
- 3) The UB7 Foodbank had been launched in 2017 in conjunction with other churches in the area serving West Drayton, Yiewsley and Heathrow Villages;
- 4) An older person's dining centre provided weekly hot lunches for 80-100 elderly residents from the local area and organised events and holidays for them;
- 5) The Centre also ran parenting groups and holiday clubs;
- 6) During the pandemic, the Centre had adapted quickly to serve the local community. The foodbank and advice centre had remained open and were operating in a Covid secure manner. The foodbank operated at the door and telephone advice was offered to those in need of this service;
- 7) In terms of children's work, this had changed significantly during the pandemic as holiday clubs and toddler groups were no longer possible. The Centre had worked closely with Hasbro who had donated hundreds of toys and crafts. The Centre had organised Zoom classes and Zoom Christmas parties for children aged 5-11 and had arranged for packs of crafts to be sent to their homes. A toy library had been in operation when possible;
- 8) Throughout the pandemic, food parcels, treat and craft bags had been delivered to the elderly - the Centre had checked with the Council to ensure there was no duplication;
- 9) Craft boxes and food hampers had been sent to adults and families in need;
- 10) The local community had been hugely supportive of the Centre's efforts. Local businesses, caterers and residents had volunteered to help. A facebook page with hundreds of members had been set up to co-ordinate this activity. Those who had been furloughed had been keen to help with deliveries and befriending and local children had been involved in making cards for the elderly. The Council had also been very supportive – Grant Officers had allowed the Centre to use the funding flexibly as required;
- 11) A new member of staff had been recruited who had secured £45,000 in funding from London Community Foundation. This had helped to pay for PPE and some of the Centre's overall costs;
- 12) The foodbank continued to be very busy as people were being made redundant;
- 13) Up to 200 asylum seekers and their families had been visiting the Centre needing food, clothes and support –this had been a challenge but churches across Hillingdon had been helping out;

Tunde Balogun addressed the Committee representing Hillingdon Foodbank. Key points highlighted included:

- 1) The Hillingdon Foodbank had been in operation since 2009 and had been the first foodbank in London;

- 2) Although well prepared in many respects, it was clear at the outset of the pandemic that the project would need to adapt quickly to enable it to cope with the unprecedented demand; closure was a real possibility at that time as 80-90% of volunteers were over 70 and needed to shield. Fortunately, the response from the community had been fantastic and the foodbank had been able to continue its vital work. Within 2 weeks all premises including the main warehouse in Denham had been made Covid secure;
- 3) The Foodbank had initially worked closely with the Council Hub to facilitate food deliveries for those in need. Once Council staff had been obliged to return to their usual duties, the Foodbank had assumed responsibility for operations and had continued with the food delivery programme;
- 4) The Centre had been working in conjunction with about 30 churches across the Borough and some 35 schools. The Council had supported the Foodbank to buy food in bulk to supplement donations as demand had increased. In December, the Foodbank had prepared 'Buckets of Joy' – hampers for local families;
- 5) Drivers had volunteered to deliver food across the Borough and food deliveries were completed within a maximum of 48 hours of an email being received;
- 6) The Council's Grants Department had greatly helped with funding to assist with expenses.

Kevin Byrne addressed the Committee confirming that, at the outbreak of the pandemic, a new Hub had been set up. Members were informed that this in-house system had been set up initially to provide a bespoke shopping service and emergency supplies for those in need. It had been necessary to scale up very quickly and ensure the needs of the most vulnerable were met. Once Council staff had been redeployed back to their normal jobs, an exit plan was needed to set up a more sustainable system. In August 2020, conversations had been held with the two foodbanks and funding and support offered to enable them to purchase additional food supplies and to cover admin expenses. This was an entirely new model as previously the foodbanks had relied exclusively on donations. The Council had also helped Hillingdon Foodbank with purchasing fridges and with transportation costs. A grant application under the Council's core grant scheme was being considered to support them in the future. The advice centre at Bell Farm was also being supported by the Council through the core grant scheme and the possibility of a small grant for the older people's dining centre had been agreed.

In terms of the current situation, Committee Members were advised that people with an urgent need who contacted the community Hub were now being referred to the foodbanks. It was confirmed that the numbers of referrals were growing and some of the needs were more complex than previously. However, the partners were very good at working flexibly and adapting their working practices to meet these changing needs. The future model had yet to be confirmed but there was now some resilience in the system and an understanding of how to 'gear up' if faced with another crisis in the future.

In response to Members' requests for clarification, it was confirmed that, unfortunately, some children had been unable to access the Zoom activities as they did not have the equipment to do so. It was acknowledged that, even if the children could be provided with the equipment free of charge, parents did not

always have internet access in the home as this was costly. However, Members heard that, in some cases, families had internet access but were obliged to share equipment which was challenging; in these cases additional equipment would be welcomed.

Members noted that unfortunately there was significant disparity between the north and the south of the Borough in terms of the need. The delivery service was welcomed since some people felt ashamed to visit a foodbank and would travel quite a distance to do so rather than use one in their local area. Members heard that, at Bell Farm, foodbank vouchers were distributed by a variety of people / groups including Civic Centre staff, nurses, health visitors and other agencies such as P3. If people arrived at the foodbank without a voucher, they would not be turned away. If it transpired that there was an ongoing need, food vouchers would be provided for as long as they were needed. At Hillingdon Foodbank, vouchers were generally limited to three as the aim was to refer clients to other agencies for assistance and support if possible. However, if this was not possible within the timeframe, the system would be by-passed and clients transferred to the emergency food provision scheme.

It was noted that the Gurdwara in Hayes, the Muslim Centre and the Salvation Army had been offering hot meals during the crisis. In response to their enquiries, the Committee heard that foodbanks worked in partnership with a number of different agencies, schools, GPs and religious establishments including the Muslim Centre in Hayes to raise awareness and distribute food vouchers. The foodbanks also offered bulk supplies to soup kitchens around the Borough. It was confirmed that Hillingdon Foodbank's drivers covered 15-20 miles every day to reach out to those in need. Members heard that Hillingdon Foodbank had served 7672 clients in 2019 whereas, by the end of 2020, the numbers had climbed to 18,222.

In response to their enquiries, the Committee heard that all staff at the Bell Farm foodbank had been trained in mental health first aid as recommended by the Council. It was recognised that, in the future, their business plan would need to be re-examined and more resources would be required. It was a matter of concern that funding to local charities would reduce or disappear completely. It was confirmed that the support of the Council would be needed in some form; this would be clarified at a later stage. Tunde Balogun of Hillingdon Foodbank advised the Committee that a volunteer Life Coach had been recruited to support clients in the future. It was confirmed that the Foodbank had a robust team of volunteers; some of these were professionals with mental health experience who were willing to help those in the community who needed support.

Members suggested that the local community, the Council and charities should work together to help people through the next phase of the pandemic. In response to this, it was confirmed that a small grant had been made available by Central Government to support, through H4All, a package of training for volunteers in the community to help disseminate messaging around Covid, vaccinations etc. This would be rolled out by the end of March 2021. An article in Hillingdon People was proposed outlining the work of the charities and their future needs – it was hoped that this would assist in recruiting more volunteers.

Members were informed that, as part of the grants programme agreed by Cabinet in December 2020, a project funded through H4All had been approved to embark on this type of activity and assist in capacity building. ex

At the request of Councillors, it was agreed that Kevin Byrne would source further data regarding the increase in foodbank usage and would share this information with the Committee. It was also suggested that a representative of Hillingdon MIND be requested to attend a meeting of the Committee to provide further evidence.

The Committee thanked the charities for all their hard work noting that their business operations had improved and they had become more resilient and better able to cope with the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic.

**RESOLVED That:**

- 1) **Kevin Byrne, Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Services source further data regarding the increase in foodbank usage to share with the Committee; and**
- 2) **the verbal update regarding the foodbanks' response to the Covid-19 pandemic be noted.**

03/02/21

**REVIEW: VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Angela Stangoe MBACP - Director and Head of Psychotherapeutic Services, Hillingdon Mind, was in attendance to present information regarding Hillingdon Mind's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key points highlighted included:-

1. All Hillingdon Mind's Counselling services had rapidly moved online in March 2020 - about a week before lockdown;
2. The Mental Health Recovery Service had been particularly affected – all social activities and therapeutic group work had moved to telephone / online;
3. A Mental Health Care Calling and Crisis Response Calling Service had been introduced in March 2020 – approximately 160 clients had been identified as high risk so were called regularly;
4. A Food and Medicine Delivery Service had been introduced in March 2020;
5. All staff had been provided with equipment to enable them to work from home;
6. Over the last 9 months, demand for Counselling had increased by 157%, for Mental Health Support and Advice by 346% and requests for psychological support for Carers had increased by 150% - this had put huge pressure on the team which consisted of only 3.5 members of staff (including Angela). Approximately 100 volunteer counsellors had been assisting them;
7. Additional funding had been secured from the CCG to provide 40 additional free counselling spaces for a period of 3 months and from the Big Lottery to provide free Key Worker Counselling for 20 clients. An application had been made to the Big Lottery and Postcode Lottery to use existing grant funds to address IT poverty, Food Poverty and Emergency funding for vulnerable clients. Members heard that 20 tablets had been purchased for clients and shopping done for those who were struggling to get food bank vouchers;
8. Qualified bank staff had been recruited to run online activities;
9. The current Group Schedule was entirely online with the exception of the Wellbeing Walk – the Committee heard that the online activities were going well and clients had adapted better than expected;
10. The service had seen an increase in first time users for mild to moderate mental health issues. It had also witnessed an increase in suicide ideation within the Severe Mental Illness group and an increase in Safeguarding referrals to Social Services (from 1 or 2 per annum to 3 or 4 per quarter);



11. In terms of future pressures, it was likely that the problems would persist once the pandemic was over. A potential recession would negatively impact mental health and a tsunami of mental health cases was expected. It would be difficult to get clients to re-engage with GPs and encourage them to get vaccinated. It was anticipated that some clients would struggle with reconnection after lockdown. Projects were being considered to assist people with these challenges;
12. Hillingdon Mind was considering a number of avenues to build capacity to meet demand – these included speaking to current funders CCG and LBH, applying to Big Lottery and City Bridge Trust for grants, discussing with CNWL innovative ways to deliver mental health services e.g. the One Stop Shop and developing Webinars to provide mental health advice.

Given the difficulties in organising Wellbeing Walks during lockdown, Members suggested that Mind could potentially link up with Hillingdon litter pickers. The Committee heard that this would be difficult given the specific needs of the clients who needed to be monitored closely to ensure they were safe.

Members enquired how the Council could assist. It was confirmed that Hillingdon Mind had met with Carla Canter, Voluntary Sector Development Officer, to discuss possible collaboration with other voluntary sector and community groups. Mental Health first aid courses were planned to enable people to spot the early signs of mental health issues since early intervention was key.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that working virtually had been extremely challenging and staff were exhausted. Isolation tended to worsen mental health issues. It had been possible to successfully hold some events online such as quizzes but social groups worked much better in person. Members heard that 30 or 40 people could attend a social club whereas only 10 to 12 people could attend on Zoom. It was impossible to offer the same level of peer support online.

Councillors requested further clarification regarding the support offered to carers. It was confirmed that those caring for people with a mental health condition would often cope well but might seek support if the person went into crisis. Members heard that a Family Support Worker could offer practical help and a psychotherapist ran 1-2-1 sessions with the person in crisis and support groups for the carers. At present, Mind was not able to provide services for young people due to a lack of funding.

In response to further questions, Members were advised that there were currently two community projects funded by LBH – a Somali Outreach Project and an Asian Women's Project. It was acknowledged that there was often a stigma attached to mental health illness in some communities – it was particularly difficult to access the Somali community. The Committee heard that attempts had been made to reach out to imams who had been quite responsive initially but had failed to follow up on this.

Councillors enquired whether it would be possible for different Minds to work together. It was confirmed that this was not possible as each Mind worked independently within a geographical area as a separate franchise with a link to the Central one. In terms of funding, Members heard that Mind was funded through the CCG, the local authority or grant funding. No funding was received from the Central Mind. The Committee was informed that local Mind groups were currently collaborating in an attempt to encourage the CCG to fund services in an equitable way across boroughs rather than in a piecemeal fashion as previously.

Members suggested that an article in Hillingdon People would help to reach out to community groups and raise awareness of the services on offer. A recommendation regarding the promotion of the voluntary sector in relation to Covid was proposed.

Kevin Byrne, Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships, informed the Committee that Carla Canter was already working on this. A small grant from Central Government had been made available to develop community engagement. Carla was developing online forums and this was going well. There had been lots of activity to promote the voluntary sector. Members heard that Hillingdon Mind was an integral part of H4All. The Integrated Care Partnership in the Borough consisted of the CCG, hospitals, CNWL, H4All, the GP Federation and voluntary sector Health Care providers. It was confirmed that CCGs were moving to a NW London model from April 2021. Members were advised that it would be possible to prepare an article for Hillingdon People to promote the services on offer though some services were already stretched and might struggle to meet further demand. Cabinet had agreed that Mind's grant would be increased going forward.

Members enquired how staff and volunteers working for Hillingdon Mind were supported. It was confirmed that staff were under immense pressure and often had to work late into the evenings to keep on top of the workload. Staff were offered counselling when needed. It had not been possible to run the usual team retreat due to the Covid pandemic. It was hoped that funding would be received to enable Hillingdon Mind to recruit 4 new members of staff.

Members heard that the Government was making additional funds available to support the mental health of children and young people. Mind had expressed an interest in working with the young people category. At the request of the Committee, it was agreed that Kevin Byrne would forward to Democratic Services links to reports which had been sent to the Health & Wellbeing Board regarding child and adolescent mental health services and early intervention work with young people.

The Committee was advised that Hillingdon Mind's website was under construction. It would hopefully be up and running by April 2021.

Members thanked Angela and all the staff and volunteers at Hillingdon Mind for their hard work during the pandemic to support local residents in very challenging circumstances.

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Mike Talbot, Director – Corporate Resources and Services, introduced the report on the Voluntary Sector's Response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Hillingdon – from the Council's perspective.

Members heard that Mike had worked with Jean Palmer, the Deputy Chief Executive, and H4All to set up a Covid-19 Hub tasked with co-ordinating the delivery of food and medicine, arranging dog walking etc. Initially the plan had been for H4All to create a Hub with the support of the local authority. However, it had become clear that the charities lacked the infrastructure to enable them to do this effectively; H4All had 4 phone lines whereas the Council could commission a dedicated contact centre with 20 members of staff. The Council also had the IT

resources, purchasing cards and means of transportation readily available. It was therefore decided that the Council would run the Hub while the charities would co-ordinate volunteers and focus on their core charitable work. The situation had now changed and the work of the Hub had been referred in to voluntary partners – a partnership had been built with the local foodbanks.

Members enquired whether lessons had been learned and whether the voluntary sector was now better prepared. It was noted that the Council had increased its funding to voluntary organisations but this was not sustainable. The Committee heard that the Council had only been involved in the running of foodbanks but had not been involved in other services offered by the voluntary sector. Emergency grants had been distributed. It was confirmed that the Council had signed up to the London Funders' Pledge which had enabled partners to use their grant funding flexibly as they saw fit. It was also noted that H4All aspired to develop as an organisation that represented smaller local charities. A small grant had been made available to H4All to support this work. Councillors heard that this had been a challenging time for smaller charities in particular as the number of volunteers and donations had fallen dramatically during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was recognised that some charities needed to reinvent themselves and the Council and H4All were helping to facilitate that. The situation would be monitored going forward.

Members requested further clarification regarding the audit process. The Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships confirmed that, as part of the core grant process, the Council had the right of audit and insisted on having sight of annual accounts. It was confirmed that the financial situation of all grant applicants was reviewed before going to Cabinet in December. Grant applicants were checked to ascertain if they were viable and sustainable concerns and the Council ensured it got maximum value from each grant allocated.

The Committee enquired whether new charities had been identified to feed into H4All. It was confirmed that officers would attempt to gain a thorough understanding of the voluntary sector organisations available with a view to working with them to communicate essential messages. In response to their questions, Members heard that H4All would have to demonstrate that they could represent the smaller groups. They would need to develop their capacity building and ability to develop and manage volunteers. The Council would support them in this; it would be a matter of working together to meet the needs of all local residents.

**RESOLVED That the Committee:**

1. **Noted the information provided in relation to the work of Hillingdon Mind during the pandemic;**
2. **Agreed that Kevin Byrne would forward to Democratic Services links to reports which had been sent to the Health & Wellbeing Board regarding child and adolescent mental health services and early intervention work with young people; and**
3. **Noted the update regarding the Council's input in respect of the Voluntary Sector's response to the pandemic.**