

Minutes

FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

13 July 2022

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors John Riley (Chairman) Richard Lewis (Vice-Chairman) Kaushik Banerjee Kishan Bhatt Narinder Garg Gursharan Mand Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Tony Zaman, Interim Chief Executive Neil Fraser, Democratic Services Officer Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director of Central Services</p>
10.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
11.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
12.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting.</p> <p>Members advised that under minute 9: Work Programme, the suggested items on recruitment and procurement had been incorrectly listed as information items, when they had been suggested as potential reviews. It was requested that the minutes be amended to reflect this.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2022, inclusive of the amendments set out above, be approved as a correct record.</p>
13.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be considered in public.</p>

14. **COUNCIL STRATEGY 2022 - 2026** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Tony Zaman – Interim Chief Executive, and Dan Kennedy – Corporate Director of Resources, provided the Committee with detail on the Council’s Strategy for 2022 – 2026, as part of the consultation process before the Strategy’s adoption.

The Committee was advised that Hillingdon was embarking upon an ambitious new transformation programme to ensure the Council was well placed to manage the changing economic context and to ensure that services continued to be delivered effectively.

The Strategy’s stated vision statement, ambitions, and commitments to residents were highlighted as set out in the report. The consultation currently being undertaken, and proactively being advertised, would canvass a variety of stakeholders. Feedback and responses would then inform subsequent plans, including targets, actions, and accountability.

The Strategy was confirmed to be in its formative period, with the new corporate structure having been finalised in May 2022. This new structure included a renewed focus on integrated partnership working (e.g. with the NHS), and a matrixed structure combining service areas that had previously been separate, to ensure greater efficiency and strategic oversight from senior officers.

It was confirmed that the core of the strategy had been drafted to uphold the current administration’s manifesto, via partnership working between the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet, and relevant key officers.

Next steps included working up detailed service plans with Directors and Service Managers, (taking an outcomes-based approach), with a view to the strategy being adopted by Council later in the year.

Members requested further detail on the strategy for engaging residents who were less familiar with digitalisation. The officers advised that research undertaken had provided the Council with detail of those residents who may be resistant to digital transformation. Conversely, the Council also had data on those residents who were comfortable with, or who preferred, digital engagement. Future plans would seek to avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach, with a variety of engagement and contact methods in place to help residents. These included the use of artificial intelligence that could effectively resolve queries for residents or route them to an appropriate officer. Additionally, a communication strategy was in place to reach a large number of residents, including use of social media and PR platforms, together with officer visits from officers to local communities as part of pre-existing service delivery.

Responding to concerns over the effectiveness of the Council’s contact centre, the officers advised that the Strategy would be responsive to the needs of residents and their communities. It was accepted that digital engagement needed to be more efficient when dealing with issues or delivery of services, though it was confirmed that this was a national issue and not unique to Hillingdon.

Members were supportive of the strategy and its ambitions, and particularly its public nature, which was felt to provide a greater degree of accountability from Hillingdon residents and political opposition. Members suggested adding a greater emphasis on the Council’s aim of achieving excellence in customer services to achieve timely and

effective outcomes for residents. Additionally, while the Strategy's focus on securing value for money was understandable, it was felt that the strategy should also focus on delivering quality services to residents. The need for the strategy to retain sufficient flexibility to respond to changing pressures, such as rising inflation, was also highlighted.

Regarding the Strategy's aim of working with partners to address low pay, it was agreed that the clerk would request that officers advise whether this included amendments to the London living wage.

RESOLVED: That the Committee delegate the final wording of its comments to Cabinet on the Strategy to the Democratic Services Officer, in conjunction with the Chairman (and in consultation with the Opposition Lead).

15. **POLICY REVIEW DISCUSSION** (*Agenda Item 6*)

The Democratic Services Officer introduced a report which detailed how potential policy reviews were assessed for suitability, together with how reviews were carried out once selected, and requested that the Committee form a shortlist of review topics for further assessment.

The Chairman confirmed that he would hold discussions with the Chief Executive and relevant Cabinet Members to understand whether they had suggestions for potential review topics.

Members suggested:

- Procurement within Hillingdon, including:
 - How to maintain excellent of service through effective procurement;
 - How the Council secured value for money;
 - How the Council addressed external pressures such as rising inflation, etc;
 - Sharing of best practice/partnership working with other local authorities;
 - Management of subcontractors / standards as part of initial contracts, etc.
- Digitalisation and use of technology, including:
 - Alternatives to currently used technology;
 - How to reach/engage with people not familiar with digital tools;
 - How digitalisation could be used to improve service delivery.
- Human Resources within Hillingdon, including:
 - Recruitment and retention of officers;
 - Use of temporary or agency staff.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Democratic Services Officer review the shortlist of potential topic ideas for feasibility, before reporting back to the Committee;**
- 2. That the Committee delegate to the Democratic Services officer, in conjunction with the Chairman (and in consultation with the Opposition Lead), any further agreement on review topic selection as required.**

16.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Consideration was given to Cabinet’s Forward Plan, and it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.</p>
17.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Consideration was given to the Committee’s Work Programme.</p> <p>Further to an update on previously suggested items for inclusion on the Programme, provided to Members prior to the meeting, it was confirmed that an information item on Procurement had been scheduled for November 2022. However, this could be moved/removed, should the topic be selected as a full review.</p> <p>Suggestions for further items to be added to the Work Programme included feedback/information items on the new Member Call-In and Member’s Enquiries processes.</p> <p>The Opposition Lead requested that the forthcoming Budget item include detail on the financial implications to the Council as a result of the Dedicated School’s Grant ‘Safety Valve Agreement’. Other Members advised that it was their understanding that there were no financial implications, as all monies had been reimbursed to the Council by central Government. It was suggested that a question at Full Council could be the most appropriate manner of obtaining further information on the topic.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Work Programme, and the Committee’s suggestions for further inclusions, be noted; 2. That the Democratic Services Officer be delegated authority to update the Work Programme as required, in conjunction with the Chairman.
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.08 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Neil Fraser on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.