

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

20 July 2022

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Heena Makwana (Chairman), Roy Chamdal (Vice-Chairman), Kishan Bhatt, Rita Judge Dhot, Peter Smallwood, Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead) and Raju Sansarpuri</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Daniel Kennedy (Corporate Director of Resources), Julie Kelly (Executive Director of Children's Services) and Anisha Teji (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
11.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tony Gill with Councillor Raju Sansarpuri substituting.</p>
12.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
13.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes from the meeting on 28 June 2022 be agreed and the following points be noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Democratic Services would explore the recruitment of two Co-opted Members on the Select Committee.2. Residents were at the centre and heart of the Committee's decision making/scrutiny role.3. The report on Youth Services had been added to the work programme for January 2023.4. The matter of Ukrainian children in Hillingdon schools would be added to the work programme.
14.	<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 heard in Part I.</p>
15.	<p>COUNCIL STRATEGY 2022 - 2026 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Resources provided the Committee with detail on the</p>

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.

The Committee considered that the Strategy provided a refresh on collaborative and integrated working that would lead to positive outcomes.

In response to Member questions around the use of digital technology and the impact on residents, it was recognised that there was the customer facing aspect and internal workings of the Council aspect. Using digital technology in internal processes such as cross-checking information over different technology programmes could drive a faster, cheaper and more effective response to residents. In terms of resident engagement and accessing services, it was acknowledged that increasingly residents wanted to engage digitally through their phones and more choices needed to be provided. Whilst there was a drive to move services digitally, it was recognised that not all services worked well this way and contact still needed to be accessible via telephone in areas such as social care.

In terms of ensuring that the Council remained resourceful without being detrimental to the services provided, it was explained that responding to needs in different ways through collaborative working and being outcome focussed allowed coordinated responses to be achieved better.

Members welcomed the report as it had aspiration and commitment to deliver quality services and improvements. In terms of regular performance monitoring with both Hillingdon maintained schools and academies, it was explained that there was an annual action plan that would complement the Strategy, and this would identify key actions and targets that would be reported to Cabinet Members. This would also ensure accountability and transparency about what progress was being made on the

Strategy. Once information was obtained from school such as test results, these results were analysed and discussions on how to improve outcomes took place. This had led to increased partnership working that identified clear interventions to address gaps.

During Member discussions, it was highlighted that some residents were resistant to digital technology. 70 % of households had 'My accounts' that allowed residents to report incidents digitally using a simple form. An area to be explored further included how the Council measured resident values and how this differed across different parts of the Borough

The Committee recognised that digital poverty was still a problem although starting to affect a smaller amount of people. It was suggested that point 5 of the commitment, 'A Digital- Enabled, Modern, Well-Run Council' included access to skills and training.

It was noted that the Strategy was going to be delivered locally and buildings would be utilised more effectively to meet resident needs. The term affordable housing was a broad definition that included social rented and social purchased housing.

RESOLVED: That the Committee delegated to the Chairman, in conjunction with the Democratic Services Officer (and in consultation with the Opposition Lead) to agree comments to submit to Cabinet on the Council Strategy.

16. **POLICY REVIEW DISCUSSION & GUIDANCE** (*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 Executive Director of Children's Services was also in attendance to answer any Member questions regarding review topics.

It was noted that at Full Council on 14 July 2022, the Cabinet Member of Children, Families and Education invited Select Committee Members to visit the Stronger Families Hub.

It was agreed that the previous reports on Children Centres and Sports and Physical Activity would be circulated to Members for information purposes. Democratic Services would liaise with officers to add updates from previous reviews into 'Making the Council Autism Friendly' and 'Combating the homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying of young people in Hillingdon' to the work programme.

The following review topics were suggested:

- Stronger Families, including:
 - opportunity to scrutinise a service that had been launched almost a year ago and review its effectiveness.
 - reviewing the Hub's digital process with one number one address and how this was working in practice.
 - reviewing partnership working.
 - considering the allocation of information to children and families and access to community support functions.

- exploring children and families in participation in sport which could tackle issues of obesity.
- reviewing youth centres that were underutilised and whether these could be explored as a part of the stronger families initiative.
- reviewing the support in place for parents and children that were born during lockdown and the impacts of Covid.
- Recognising that families came in all shapes, sizes and circumstances and how better support could be provided to parents.
- measures in place for child protection and safeguarding.

Although childrens centres and early years was suggested, it was explained that the structure had changed and nationally there was a focus on family hubs. Notwithstanding this, support was provided by the Stronger Families Hub for all children and young people.

- Practical learning, including:
 - the availability of apprenticeships.
 - measures in places for encouraging people to explore these routes rather than the traditional university route.
 - the availability of information and signposting people in the right direction.
- Youth Justice Service.
- Tackling the rise in domestic violence post Covid 10.
- Tackling mental health post pandemic.
- How disability can prevent people from accessing education.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- 1. Noted the guidance on undertaking policy reviews in Appendix 1;**
- 2. Made use of the scorecard attached in Appendix 1 (Annex A) to assess any policy review topic ideas;**
- 3. Developed a single or shortlist of potential topic ideas over the coming months or year for officers to scope further and report back to the Committee on feasibility.**
- 4. Delegated 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.**

17. FORWARD PLANNER (*Agenda Item 7*)

Further information was requested on the deferral of the Families Hub report that was due to go to Cabinet on 7 July 2022. It was agreed that Democratic Services would look into this and provide an update.

	RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan.
18.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that the Children Safeguarding Annual report had been deferred to the meeting in September 2022 to allow a full report to be heard in public. Democratic Services would liaise with officers about adding a report on funding from Central Government and how this had been delivered with regards to Ukrainian children and schools.</p> <p>The Committee had been invited to observe a Hillingdon Youth Council meeting and it was confirmed that Councillors Bhatt, Smallwood, Gill and Sweeting would attend.</p> <p>It was also noted that at Full Council on 14 July 2022 an update was provided on the safety valve arrangements, and it was agreed that an update for the Select Committee would be requested in the near future.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the updates and work programme be noted.</p>
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.07 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Anisha Teji on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.