

Minutes

FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

22 November 2023

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors John Riley (Chairman), Wayne Bridges (Vice-Chairman), Kishan Bhatt, Narinder Garg, Raju Sansarpuri, Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead) and Peter Smallwood (Reserve) (In place of Kaushik Banerjee)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Mark Braddock (Democratic Services)</p>
41.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Banerjee, with Councillor Smallwood substituting.</p>
42.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>
43.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 October were agreed as a correct record.</p>
44.	<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 all matters would be in public.</p>
45.	<p>FINAL REVIEW REPORT - PROCUREMENT IN HILLINGDON; SECURING VALUE FOR OUR RESIDENTS (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman, Councillor Riley, introduced the final report on the Committee's review into procurement; securing value for our residents. The Committee had spent a great deal of time on this and had many sessions, all of which were deemed informative. The report with the recommendations discussed in the previous meeting was presented.</p> <p>The Chairman expressed satisfaction with the report, stating that it fulfilled the initial goal of ensuring the reports were relevant, focused, and useful for future endeavours. He emphasised the importance of avoiding reports that might be interesting but do not contribute to moving things forward.</p> <p>The Chairman then opened the floor for comments. Councillor Mathers responded,</p>

appreciating the depth of the report and expressing the need for context in procurement due to its complexities. He suggested that, in long-term procurement contracts, there should be a pathway toward transitioning to carbon neutrality and how this can be monitored. The Senior Democratic Services Manager proposed including within the proposed registry the tracking of top-level contracts' commitment to being carbon neutral by 2035.

Councillor Mathers raised concerns about setting unrealistic expectations and suggested wording that reflects the Council's commitment to net-zero without creating unattainable goals and referenced the wording in the Council motion on this.

The Senior Democratic Services Manager proposed adding the Council motion reference to the report's introductory section and possibly including within its recommendations the tracking of contract progress toward carbon neutrality. The Chairman agreed to the reference to the Council motion but opted not to include the tracking.

The Chairman then addressed the issue of companies establishing satellite entities in the borough due to positive procurement practices. He proposed mentioning this in the report's conclusion and highlighting as final thoughts in the report, the connection between the procurement review and other council services supporting businesses.

The Committee agreed to these points and commended the achievements of the review. The Chairman expressed his gratitude, particularly acknowledging the Head of Procurement for his extraordinary efforts supporting the Committee's review.

The Committee agreed to delegate the final wording changes to their report, before submission to Cabinet, to the Chairman and Labour Lead.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee delegate the final wording changes to their report, before submission to Cabinet, to the Chairman and Opposition Lead.

46. **MEMBERS' ENQUIRIES & SERVICES REQUESTS - FOLLOW UP INFORMATION FROM LAST MEETING** (*Agenda Item 6*)

The Senior Democratic Services Manager presented an update on Member Enquiry figures, responding to requests from the Committee's previous meeting in October. The transition from an old to a new Members' Enquiry system was highlighted and the data given provided details of Members' Enquiries over the last five years, broken down by directorate and specific services. The report also covered service requests, emphasising the challenges in categorising inquiries under "other services" and the difficulty in addressing the issue of duplication within the current system.

The Chairman expressed uncertainty about the significance of certain reported issues, such as "Members' fly-tipping," and acknowledged that some matters might be repetitive due to various factors. Councillor Smallwood raised concerns about the accuracy of the system's categorisations, suggesting that education on proper use might be necessary for Members. Councillor Bridges inquired about the high number of issues under "other services" and expressed concerns about its impact on Freedom of Information requests.

	<p>The discussion also touched upon the challenges of comparing figures from different years, considering changes in the number of Councillors. Councillor Smallwood and Councillor Bridges suggested reviewing and clarifying the names of certain categories, such as waste and noise. The Chairman and Councillor Mathers emphasised the importance of understanding the system's methodology and data cleansing processes.</p> <p>Councillor Garg raised concerns about the disproportionate increase in certain service requests, prompting a discussion on possible reasons for the rise. The Chairman proposed that Committee Members email the Senior Democratic Services Manager with specific questions, allowing for a more detailed exploration of the data.</p> <p>Councillor Mathers highlighted the need to focus on improving the system's user experience and usability, expressing a preference for a system that is effective for both residents and Councillors.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the Committee note the information.</p>
47.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the Cabinet Forward Plan, and the Senior Democratic Services Manager presented the report. He mentioned that the Council would soon publish a December or January version of the plan, with some items expected to be confirmed or moved to later Cabinet meetings, especially contractual ones.</p> <p>The Senior Democratic Services Manager drew attention to items under the Committee's remit, with a particular emphasis on the upcoming budget discussion scheduled for January. The Chairman invited any comments or observations from the Committee members regarding the Forward Plan.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the Committee considered the Cabinet Forward Plan.</p>
48.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The Committee discussed their work program. The Senior Democratic Services Manager informed the Committee that the mini-consultation review, scheduled after the Council motion, would be moved to the January meeting due to officer commitments. The January meeting would also involve a witness session, and the Senior Democratic Services Manager encouraged Members to provide any additional information or data on consultations for inclusion in the report.</p> <p>The upcoming schedule was outlined, including the February 2024 meeting, which would cover Members' Enquiries / the Council's digital journey where the relevant senior officer would be invited. In March, the Committee aimed to keep track of transformation work, and the Senior Democratic Services Manager mentioned discussions on providing the committee with a high-level overview of transformation work. Additionally, the predecessor Committee's review into performance monitoring was also highlighted as an area to keep track on, with an update on the new regime expected to enhance the monitoring of council services.</p>

	<p>The Chairman acknowledged the importance of performance monitoring and congratulated colleagues in Children Services on their recent outstanding Ofsted Inspection rating. Councillor Mathers suggested including an information item on Communications on the work programme, covering both internal and external aspects, to understand the corporate communications strategy and the various channels used by the team. The Chairman agreed that it could be a valuable item, similar to the consultation session held previously.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the Committee considers the Multi-Year Work Programme attached and agrees any amendments.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.44 pm.</p>

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