

MINUTES OF MEETING Climate, Community Safety & Culture Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Tuesday, 19th December, 2023, 6.30pm

PRESENT:

**Councillors: Sygrave (Co-Optee), Culverwell, George Dunstall,
Gina Adamou, Luke Cawley-Harrison, Simmons-Safo (Chair) and Carroll**

Co-Optee Members: Ian Sygrave

**ALSO ATTENDING: Boshra Begum (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Ayshe
Simsek (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager)**

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein’.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ali. Cllr Adamou joined online.

3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair informed the Panel of the item of urgent business in relation to item 8, Community Safety and Hate Crime Strategy. The Cabinet Member Community Safety and Cohesion had advised on the need for further engagement with members on the final strategy. The Panel were informed that an all-member briefing session would be arranged for early January 2024 to allow all members to consider and comment on the Strategy. As this was a budget and policy framework document, the Chair had been advised by Democratic services that the strategy can go to Scrutiny in February to still reach full council in March.

RESOLVED:

To defer the Community Safety and Hate Crime Strategy to the 27th of February meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Climate, Community Safety and Culture Panel held on the 6th of November 2023 were agreed subject to amendment of the term 'Doctor Bike' to 'Dockless Bikes' on the item work programme update.

7. SCRUTINY OF THE 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET AND 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Chair informed the Panel that in this item they would be compiling recommendations on the budget concerning Climate and Community areas of the budget, in line with the terms of reference of the Panel and Scrutiny protocol.

The Chair highlighted the process for considering the budget papers and compiling recommendations which was as follows:

- John O'Keefe, Head of Finance (Capital, Place and Economy) to provide a short overview of the main budget and key considerations.
- The Chair would then take any questions from the Panel on the introductory information. The Chair would then take the Panel through each appendix separately, with Cabinet members and officers introducing and commenting on the information contained in the appendices, then there would be Panel questions, leading to recommendations from the Panel.

The following points were noted in the discussion:

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Role:

Appendix 1 set out the key lines of enquiry that have been compiled to help members identify areas to make recommendations.

- The Chair advised that the Panel members refer to Appendix 1 page 25 to 26 which set out the key lines of enquiry for budget setting, when making recommendations and asking questions.

Appendix 2 – 2024/25 Draft Budget and 2024/2029 Medium Term Financial Strategy Report:

NOTED that Appendix 2 set out the details of the 2024/25 Draft Budget and the 2024/2029 MTFs, the draft HRA Budget 2024/25 and its draft Business Plan including estimated income (funding) and expenditure adjustments, as well as the draft capital programme for both funds.

John O'Keefe gave a brief introduction, advising that in Quarter 2 the overall the General Fund was forecasted to overspend £20.8 Million. The overspend had been predominantly in Adult Care Services and Childrens services and Temporary Accommodation. These pressures have been incorporated into the 2024/25 budget. Additional growth had been built into the 2024/25 budget to deal with these demands. The following was noted in discussion

- Small overspend in Q2 in areas that concern the Panel, these were Libraries and Facilities Management. In the context of the overall budget, this was not a significant overspend.
- As of the 5th of December, budget gap of £16.3m, despite significant saving against the backdrop of an unprecedented situation of inflation, interest rates, demand for services. Officers and the Cabinet continued to work on options to

reduce the budget gap ahead of February 2024 budget approval. Panel members were informed that a budget gap of this size had not been unusual. Though formal benchmarking exercise had not been undertaken however informally it was believed that other local authorities were facing challenges, and the Council were not an outlier.

- March 2023 – December 2023: Capital Programme had been reduced by £396m.
- Mixture of savings and income generation in this area, predominantly income generation sits in the review of fees and charges in parking. Operational changes in Library services with £0.67m savings and other savings which total to £2.1m savings.
- Overspend on Facilities Management for the current year: due to transfer of staff in-house, backdated unbudgeted charges from previous accounting year. Extensive plans to bring next year in line, through review of recharges (security, catering and cleaning services) and review of external costs (e.g. NLWA).

Appendix 3: MTF5 Savings Tracker 2022/23 and 2025/26:

Appendix 3 sets out the MTF5 Savings Tracker 2022/23 and 2025/26 which listed the savings on existing programmes.

The following was noted in discussion

- The Chair highlighted the description for PL20/22: Visitors, Vouchers would be updated.

John O'Keefe advised that Appendix 3, indicated the savings have been agreed in the previous financial year but not on target and were marked in red.

- EN SAV 001 New 4-5 area HGV restriction zones: Enforcement sites: delayed implementation due to managing the camera LTN vandalism. The budgeted saving at 2024/25 of £50k would now not be made. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality explained to the Panel that more HGV cameras and zones had started, however there is a difference between a budget and service proposal, so although this had been re-accounted for next year it will not be achieved in this reporting period.
- PL20/22: description indicated loss of income. Noted that there was a reduction in income for parking permits as the previous paper visitor parking permits were likely being sold on. The digitisation of the cards limited the number of vouchers that can be brought at one time and reduced income.
- PL20/38: It was noted that there was a transcription error and this should have read 'original assumptions have changed e.g. number of cameras in zones, high number of expected exemptions that had increased the number of cancellations and a higher volume of challenge representations as well as sustained vandalism'.
- PL20/25 Night-time enforcement –There was a zero figure for this year as a cost-neutral service, and running costs are the similar the money made from the service.
- EN SAV 001: The Director of Environment and Resident Experience clarified to the Panel that the vacancy referred to was for a vacant Data Analyst post that would not be recruited to.
- Going forward Councillor Cawley-Harrison recommended that the tracker spreadsheet, update to include descriptions for all the items. In response it was noted that this information had been provided to Finance but had not made its way through into the final papers to the Panel.

Appendix 4 new revenue growth bids:

- The Chair clarified that there were no new revenue growth proposals connected to the Panel's terms of reference and therefore no Appendix 4 brought to the Panel for consideration.

Appendix 5: New Revenue Savings Proposals:

NOTED that Appendix 5 set out the New Revenue Savings Proposals and the actions underway to address the budget gap and presented an initial set of savings proposals.

John O'Keefe introduced Appendix highlighting these key points

- 2024/25 had £2.175m proposed savings/income.
- Largest saving had been the changes to operational arrangements in libraries.
- Minor £30k saving from proposal to stop providing hard copy newspapers and magazines in libraries.
- £1.3m income from review of fees and charges. This year fees and charges had been benchmarked across other London Boroughs.
- Clarified that the £1.3m and the £170k were not revenue generation, more a financial function of policy decisions on these areas within the borough.
- Enforcement on blue badge fraud, investment into technology around this.
- The Council made £35m a year from parking therefore the £1.3m proposed would need to be considered in this context that it is not there for revenue generation but rather as a financial function of the policy decisions that are being made around managing parking and traffic infrastructure within the borough. The cost of running the service considerably less than the money it makes, however once other costs associated have been paid it runs at a loss.

The following was noted in discussion of Appendix 5:

- The Chair, questioned the need to reduce hours for some Libraries as it remained a vital resource for marginalised communities within the borough. The Chair suggested that savings be found elsewhere.
- Councillor Arkell clarified to the Panel that the use of libraries varied from one branch to another at different time of the day. Currently footfall analysis had indicated that that library use is typically lowest in mornings. It was noted that young people in particular have a need for study space in the evenings and libraries were ideal as a free and safe community space. Further analysis of the varying the opening hours of libraries to times when they are most heavily used would be looked at, which could include later in the evenings, allowing to allocation of resources in a more targeted way. Library buildings and facilities could be made available to other services even when the library service itself is not operating e.g., Community Hub teams and VCS organisations. The proposed saving was based on reviewing hours at the six branch libraries with a mixture of mornings and afternoons opening times based on demand and demographics, to ensure libraries remained accessible to all. The service was currently carrying some vacancies and agency cover which would reduce the need for any proposed redundancies. No library building would be closed.
- Work was underway in collaboration with a range departments/services on the different ways in which people use the libraries. The Council would be holding onto the buildings and consideration would be given to the other services that can be provided around the library opening times so there had been a wrap around services from a Council building.
- Further queries were raised on how achievable the savings proposed for libraries were in 2024/25 given it involved staff reductions and would mean, union consultation,

redundancy . In response it had been noted that account was being given to the number of vacant posts and those that were on fixed term contracts that would be drawing to an end avoiding redundancies.

- In response to a question on Library usage , the service were collating data on usage of the library in the morning and late afternoons and consideration would be given to the school calendar and consultation with the friends of library groups. Also considering trends such as increase usage of audio books, community activities in libraries and having space for reading groups.
- Concern had been raised by Panel Members on the withdrawal of hard copy newspapers from libraries and the introduction of press reader. The key issues were the impact that this would have on elderly citizens that visited the library to read newspapers as a social experience. There were also elderly residents that read newspapers in other community languages and this provision also provided a key social activity for them.
- Comparing the large social and demographic impact that this saving would have to the small saving figure of £30k, this saving was requested for reconsideration.
- There were also questions concerning the underusage of library spaces and where there were options to increase income by hiring spaces.
- The self-service technology had also already been in place and the introduction of new technology was questioned as an area of budget growth.
- In response to the savings associated with increasing parking income, it was noted that comparative neighbouring boroughs charged considerably higher for parking e.g. Haringey charges 97p an hour, neighbouring boroughs charge around £1.50 per hour. A comparison exercise had been conducted for all like-for-like products, some of the Haringey offer such as daily permits aren't offered in other boroughs therefore harder to compare.

ACTIONS:

- CSE24_SAV_001: The Panel requested further information on the use of Libraries within the borough, other than the data on footfall data collected. Further information around peak times of use, weather, and seasonal changes should be included for the OSC meeting on the 18th of January
- Further information on whether revenue raising for Libraries had been explored as an option.
- CSE24_SAV_002: Further information had been requested on the how the savings in the proposal would be costed, particularly with staffing,
- The Panel requested an outline on the savings from self-service technology and the costs of introducing self-service technology. It appeared that the Capital Investment with this savings had not been costed and further information to clarify this should be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Budget meeting on the 18th of January.

Appendix 6: 2024/25 – 28/29 Draft Capital expenditure programme:

Appendix 6 sets out the 2024/25 – 28/29 Draft Capital Expenditure Programme that sets out the draft investment areas in approved schemes.

The following was noted in discussion. In addition to the existing MTFs programme that have been included in previous years, the new additional investments included: additional investment in Borough Roads, Public Protection to replace life expired IT system, Libraries IT and buildings upgrade, Bruce Castel condition works. There were also investments to ensure Alexandra Palace could implement statutory measures to counter terrorism, health and safety works, compliance works and investment to allow Alexandra Palace to undertake investment to generate additional income.

- Libraries IT and Buildings Upgrade: the drastic change in spend from £600k in 2024/25 to £350k in the 25/26 budget due to initial one-off capital investment in IT, running cost which would be lower.
- Alexandra Park Palace: The Council paid a £1.755m grant and £470k of recurrent capital investment to maintain the Alexandra Park Palace building. The current investment proposal was subject to a business case which would need to indicate that there were sufficient monies left to pay back debt, the money left over would be used to offset running costs of the APPCT.
- Delayed implementation due to LTN's.
- In relation to the School Streets scheme it had been emphasised that the objective had not been to generate an income from this and improve the air quality and environment for all residents.

ACTIONS:

- In relation to 4014: Walking and Cycling Action Plan (WCAP) LTN delivery, 4015: Walking and Cycling Action Plan (WCAP) Strategic cycle route delivery and 4016: Walking and Cycling Action Plan (WCAP) Cycle Parking (Hangers) delivery, the Panel requested further information on the funding of these proposals. These proposals borrow within the first year with external funding for the following years. The Panel sought clarification if the external funding was reliant on Haringey Council's investment in the first year and whether the external funding is committed.
- The Panel requested that rather than using terms like 'external funding' the budget reports to scrutiny should clarify when that this is 'mixed funding' as there is combination of Council and external grant funding.
- The scrutiny finance reports should also indicate in the Council funded element whether there has been or will be borrowing, and the rates of borrowing so the different implications on the revenue account are apparent.
- Further information was needed on the Libraries IT and Buildings upgrade (scheme 630 new Bid). Not enough information had been provided in the meeting to understand what this investment would be used for and it would be helpful to understand sources of investment relied upon and the potential impact on the revenue budget, in turn impacting on the savings proposed for Libraries,

The Panel agreed the recommendations:

- CSE24 SAV 001: The Panel would like Cabinet to reconsider this saving. The Panel would not like to see any reduction in Library opening hours and the net saving found from elsewhere.
- If library opening hours were reduced, the Cabinet should give assurance that it intended to engage robustly with schools, early years users, and local groups to explore options on how to keep Library buildings open at the appropriate times for these users. Also to provide more information on the wrap around services that could be provided from other services outside of the Library opening times.
- The Cabinet response should also indicate if the service had considered other ways to generate income into libraries by potentially looking at hiring out spaces before putting this saving forward.
- CSE24 SAV 003: Given the impact the proposed savings would have on elderly citizens and citizens accessing papers in community languages and the social

benefits that this provision of hard copy newspapers provided the Panel recommended that this saving not be taken forward.

- A Scrutiny budget process recommendation, concerning the capital expenditure programme that where there had been mixed sources of funding those that could potentially be impacted by the Council's Treasury Management income and investment should be marked with a simple Asterix.

The Chair informed the Panel that Democratic Services Officers would compile and circulate the questions on savings as well as recommendations to the Panel following this meeting. This would be revised with any comments and changes, and this would go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 18th of January 2024.

RESOLVED:

- That the panel considers and provides recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on the Council's 2024/2025 Draft Budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/2029 proposals relating to the Scrutiny Panels' remit.

8. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The work programme was noted.

9. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

No new items of urgent business.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting is 27th February 2023.

CHAIR: Councillor Michelle Simmons-Safo

Signed by Chair

Date