

NOTICE OF MEETING

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 11th March, 2024, 7.00 pm - Woodside Room - George Meehan House, 294 High Road, N22 8JZ (watch the live meeting [here](#), watch the recording [here](#))

Councillors: Matt White (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Makbule Gunes, Alexandra Worrell and Simmons-Safo

Co-optees/Non-Voting Members: Yvonne Denny (Co-opted Member - Church Representative (CofE)) and Lourdes Keever (Co-opted Member - Church Representative (Catholic))

Quorum: 3

1. **FILMING AT MEETINGS**

Please note that this meeting may be filmed or recorded by the Council for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site or by anyone attending the meeting using any communication method. Although we ask members of the public recording, filming or reporting on the meeting not to include the public seating areas, members of the public attending the meeting should be aware that we cannot guarantee that they will not be filmed or recorded by others attending the meeting. Members of the public participating in the meeting (e.g. making deputations, asking questions, making oral protests) should be aware that they are likely to be filmed, recorded or reported on.

By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

The chair of the meeting has the discretion to terminate or suspend filming or recording, if in his or her opinion continuation of the filming, recording or reporting would disrupt or prejudice the proceedings, infringe the rights of any individual or may lead to the breach of a legal obligation by the Council.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive any apologies for absence.

3. **URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair will consider the admission of any late items of urgent business. (Late items will be considered under the agenda item where they appear. New items will be dealt with at item below).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a prejudicial interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered:

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, and
- (ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must withdraw from the meeting room.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Register of Members' Interests or the subject of a pending notification must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal interests and prejudicial interests are defined at Paragraphs 5-7 and Appendix A of the Members' Code of Conduct

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

To consider any requests received in accordance with Part 4, Section B, paragraph 29 of the Council's constitution.

6. MINUTES (PAGES 1 - 22)

To agree the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-In meeting held on 3rd of January 2024 and the minutes of the meeting held on 18th of January 2024 as a correct record.

7. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS (PAGES 23 - 60)

To receive and note the minutes of the following Scrutiny Panels and to approve any recommendations contained within:

- Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel – 12th December 2023
- Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel – 4th January 2024
- Climate, Community Safety & Culture Scrutiny Panel – 19th December 2023
- Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel – 18th December 2023

8. ANNUAL FEEDBACK AND RESOLUTIONS REPORT 2022-2023 (PAGES 61 - 84)

To receive an update on the Annual Feedback and Resolutions Report 2022 – 23.

This report provides an update on how Haringey Council is seeking to learn from the feedback we receive from residents and use this to shape and improve our services.

9. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - COUNCILLOR GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING, PLACEMAKING AND LOCAL ECONOMY

To undertake a verbal Q&A with the Cabinet Member for Council House Building, Placemaking and Local Economy on the areas of her portfolio that are relevant to the main committee, namely:

- Jobs and skills
- Local business
- Town centres and high streets.

10. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE (PAGES 85 - 90)

To receive an update on the Work Programme.

11. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Item 6 is likely to be subject to a motion to exclude the press and public from the meeting as it contains exempt information as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1985); Paragraph 3

13. EXEMPT MINUTES (PAGES 91 - 94)

To approve the exempt minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-In meeting held on 3 January 2024.

Philip Slawther, Principal Committee Co-ordinator
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Fiona Alderman
Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
George Meehan House, 294 High Road, Wood Green, N22 8JZ

Friday, 01 March 2024

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MINUTES OF MEETING Overview and Scrutiny Committee HELD ON Thursday, 18th January, 2024, 7.00 - 10.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Makbule Gunes, Matt White (Chair) and Alexandra Worrell

ATTENDING ONLINE: Lourdes Keever

12. 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'.

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr Simmons-Safo and Yvonne Denny.

14. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest

16. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

17. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25

The Committee received the draft Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25 for comments, before it was presented to Full Council for final approval. The report was introduced by Tim Mpofo, Head of Pensions and Treasury, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 1-24. The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Committee sought clarification about the approval process for the Strategy Statement and whether it should have in fact been considered by Audit Committee first. In response, officers clarified that the CIPFA code set out that it had to be monitored by a body that oversaw treasury activities. It was the Council's constitution that set out that it should also be considered by Scrutiny

- and that its comments be put forward to Audit Committee. The Strategy would be considered by Audit Committee at its meeting later that evening.
- b. The Committee sought clarification over what the key changes in the strategy were for next year. In response, officers advised that the strategy assumed that the cost of borrowing would increase significantly from 4.5% to 5.5%. The strategy also increased the limits of funds invested with counterparties from £5m to £10m. The short-term borrowing limits had reduced from £30m to £20m, in recognition that short-term borrowing had higher borrowing costs.
 - c. The Committee sought assurances about the forecast bank rate at 5.25% and the degree to which these forecasts had been accurate in the past. In response, officers advised that the Council's treasury management advisors provided the forecasts within an upper and lower limit and that the rates had stayed within those ranges in the past. The fact that the banking rate had peaked was widely agreed within the sector, but officers acknowledged that higher than expected inflation was still an issue.
 - d. In response to a question, officers acknowledged that the levels of existing borrowing reduced year-on-year as a result of some of that borrowing maturing.
 - e. In response to a question, the Members were advised that internal borrowing was the use of existing resources and cash balances that was used as part of the CFR but did not come from external sources of borrowing.
 - f. The Committee sought assurances about the audit process. In response, officers advised that the strategy was audited in line with the Council's annual external audit exercise, and that the Council also carried out internal audit exercises. Officers set out that the strategy made provision for what would happen if borrowing costs were reduced. In essence, the relative impact of cheaper borrowing would have to be considered against lower returns on investment.
 - g. In response to a question about the affordability of significantly increasing borrowing rates, the Director of Finance advised that this was something that was best addressed as part of the wider MTFS report. The Director of Finance advised that borrowing in the General Fund Capital Programme had been scaled down by around £400m in recognition that the authority wanted to do all it could to reduce its debt exposure.
 - h. In response to a question about short-term loans, officers advised that the authority had been actively reducing the amount of short-term borrowing and that the risk exposure from this was lower than it might have been as a result. Officers agreed to confirm in writing what the percentage of borrowing made up by short-term loan was. **(Action: Tim Mpofu).**
 - i. The Committee queried why there was a negative balance in the liability benchmark table in the 2025 column. Officers clarified that this was an error and would be corrected for the final report.
 - j. The Committee sought further assurances about what would happen in the eventuality of the borrowing costs increasing by more than the predicted range. It was suggested that even a relatively small change could have a significant impact on the affordability of such a large capital programme. In response, officers advised that that borrowing rates were considered as an average over the life of the MTFS, which provided some mitigation against short term borrowing increases. Officers also outlined that any increase in rates would only impact on new borrowing decisions as the Council did not hold any variable rate loans on its existing borrowing. The Director of Finance advised

that the final budget report to Council would include a high-level assessment of risks and the Council's ability to deal with them.

- k. The Committee recommended that future Treasury Management Strategy Statement reports include an assessment of the probabilities of unforeseen risks occurring and the likelihood of certain scenarios playing out, such as a 1% above expected increase in borrowing costs. It was suggested that something similar to this was done when reporting on the pension fund and Members would like that to be replicated for future TMSS reports.

RESOLVED

- I. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was requested to scrutinise and provide any comments on the proposed updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2024/25 prior to its presentation full Council for approval.
- II. To note that Audit Committee would be considering the draft TMSS at its meeting on 18 January.

18. SCRUTINY OF THE 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET / 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2024/25 - 2028/29)

Clerk's Note – As per Paragraph 9.2 of the Overview & Scrutiny Protocol – Cllr Connor chaired the Budget/MTFS item, as a member of the largest opposition group

The Committee received a report which set out the Council's 2024/25 Draft Budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/2029 proposals, for the Committee to consider and to make recommendations on the budget to Cabinet, for its meeting on 6th February. The report was introduced by John Warlow, Director of Finance as set out in the agenda pack at pages 25 – 100 and in the additional report pack at pages 3-58. Cllr Carlin, Cabinet Member for Finance and Local Investment and Josephine Lyseight, Assistant Director of Finance, were also present. Frances Palopoli, Head of Corporate Financial Strategy and Monitoring was present online.

The Director of Finance provided an introduction to the Committee. The key points are summarised below:

- a. The Committee was advised that it was a time of financial duress for local governments of all sizes and political compositions. The number of local authorities finding themselves either having to issue a Section 114 notice, or under pressure to do so, had increased markedly. The Director of Finance stressed that not being able to set a legal balanced budget was not a position that Haringey found itself in.
- b. The Director of Finance acknowledged the exceptional nature of the draft budget, given that there was a circa £16.3M gap and that the Council needed to effectively hold a second round of budget proposals in order to meet that budget gap.
- c. Since the publication of the draft MTFS report in December, Finance had been waiting for a number of developments that would influence the final budget position. One of which was the Autumn Statement. It was hoped that it might recognise the common challenges faced by local government in relation to adult social care demand and sector costs. However, the pressures faced in

this area were not reflected in the Autumn Statement. The second development was identified as the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. The Director of Finance advised that after initially reviewing this, there were concerns that the corporate resources position could be £3.7m worse off than had been budgeted for, however after further analysis it is hoped that the impact would be less. The final settlement figure will be incorporated into the final MTFS report in February.

- d. The Director Finance advised that ultimately any budget gap in the final MTFS would have to be addressed through use of reserves, and that work was underway to try and ensure that the gap was as narrow as possible. The Director Finance cautioned that use of reserves was a legitimate mechanism to balance the budget if you had them, but that they could only be used once.
- e. The key pressures within the budget were identified as care services, temporary accommodation and the paucity of supply, and an increase in the costs of the capital budget, particularly in relation to rising borrowing costs.
- f. The Director of Finance also advised members that it was important to address the legacy problems that existed in the 2023/24 budget, with a projected in-year overspend of around £20m. A number of areas of growth finding had been put into the draft budget in order to ensure that these pressures were mitigated going forwards. The Director of Finance advised that in addressing these issues, it was believed that the Council would not have the same in-year budget pressures next year. There had been £25.5M put into the budget for demand-led pressures.
- g. There were still a number of outstanding figures that the authority was waiting on for its final budget report. The examples given were the Final Local Government Finance Settlement, the Public Health grant and the Temporary Accommodation figures.
- h. The Committee was advised that there were discussions taking place nationally about the government reversing some of the decisions it had taken as part of the draft settlement, such as the ending of the household support fund, which Haringey was a recipient of funding from to the tune of £4.8m. However, the government had not agreed to reverse any of these measures at present.
- i. The Committee was advised that in relation to the capital budget that Members would see that a significant amount of effort had gone into reducing the spend and scale of the capital programme, which equated to around a reduction of around £400m. Part of this involved taking a much tighter approach to enabling budgets and it also reflected an acknowledgement that there was an affordability challenge in delivering the capital programme as previously agreed. The Director of Finance advised that it was difficult to see how further reductions in the capital programme could be made if the Council was still going to meet its policy objectives.
- j. In relation to the HRA, the budget placed a strong emphasis on the management and investment of existing properties as well as clarity on how the authority would deliver its new build programme. The Director of Finance advised that these two areas were not in competition with one another, given external grant funding from the GLA and that the additional rental income arising from new homes was enough to meet the costs associated with it.
- k. The Director of Finance advised that in years 4 and 5 of the HRA the annual operating surplus was below the ideal figure of £8m but that this surplus would

pick up again after year 5, once additional rents were generated from completion of new build homes.

- I. The Committee was advised that in relation to the schools funding, that the Council was 18 months into the Safety Valve programme and was on target for delivery.

The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Chair sought clarification about where the additional £25.5m growth funding for demand services had come from. The Chair also sought clarification about what the impact would be on future savings from increasing the base budget position in these demand-led areas. In response, officers advised that in effect, the budget was the composite of all of the expenditure forecasts set against the income forecasts, and that the difference between the two gave either the budget gap or a budget surplus. Officers gave assurances that in setting the budget, they had to ensure that the figures for the expenditure forecasts were credible and that they reflected the reality of cost pressures that the authority faced. The Director of Finance advised that the reality was that their expectation was that the Adults budget would need to be dramatically increased from the position set out in the previous MTFS, due to demand pressures and because of inflation. However, the income forecasts would not go up at anywhere near the same level. The authority had decided to put in £25.5M of demand led growth funding in response to these pressures and this was the main cause of the gap. The Director of Finance advised that any gap in the final MTFS report would need to be closed using reserves. It was commented that this was the first year that the government had specifically called on local authorities to use reserves to close their budget gaps.
- b. In response to a follow up question about how the £25.5m came from, the Committee was advised that the income the Council received had a number of contingent parts and that all of these were increasing, such as an increase in Council Tax rates. The sum total of these increases combined with the savings that have been implemented would offset the growth funding that had been put in to a degree. The budget gap was effectively the difference between the two.
- c. A member of the Committee commented that the additional growth budgets were demand-led and not discretionary and that whether or not the Council put it in the budget now or whether it was dealt with as future overspend, the money would be spent as the Council had no choice. In response, the Director of Finance acknowledged that this spend was dictated by circumstances but emphasised the fact that by recognising this pressure, the authority could better understand the consequences and consider how best to respond to it.
- d. The Committee sought assurances about use of reserves to fill the budget gap and the extent to which this was a sustainable approach. In response, the Director of Finance advised that the authority had a level of useable reserves that were adequate, in junction with other contingencies built into the budget, such as the £7m contingency reserve in the General Fund. The final MTFS report would set out the reserve position in more detail. The Director of Finance advised that he was confident that the authority had adequate reserves to meet the in-year overspend pressures and the budget gap for 2024/25. The reserve position would be significantly reduced as a result, and the extent to which it was reduced would be determined by how well the authority was able to implement its savings programme. It was suggested that 2025/26 would be a

- difficult year for local government and that Haringey position was no different to many other authorities.
- e. The Committee sought assurances around waste and inefficiencies within the service and the extent to which ameliorating any inefficiencies would be prioritised before cuts to services. In response, Cllr Carlin commented that the administration was looking to ensure that Haringey was a really lean and efficient authority. The Committee noted a number of examples of work taking place across the authority, these included; a much tighter control of procurement for contracts over £25k, work to remove duplication in IT contracts, and aggressively reducing spend on agency staff. The Cabinet Member highlighted that the authority also need to ensure that it did not implement changes that would ultimately cost the Council more in the long-run. The Council was trying to reorganise and look at how it delivered services, rather than just make cuts. The Cabinet Member set out that Haringey had seen £143m in real term cuts since 2010 and that the government had offered no assistance in the Autumn Statement.
 - f. In response to a question, the Cabinet Member clarified that the Council's housebuilding programme was funded through the HRA Capital budget rather than the General Fund Capital budget and consequently was not Impacted by the circa £400m reduction in the General Fund Capital programme. The Cabinet Member elaborated that the Council received significant external grant funding from the GLA for its Housebuilding programme and that the costs were also partially off-set by future rental income from those new homes.
 - g. The Committee sought assurances about how the reduction in the capital programme would impact the Council's overall priorities. In response, Cllr Carlin set out that the purpose of the MTFs was to support the priorities set out in the corporate plan. It was acknowledged that the scale of the capital programme had been reduced. Some of these schemes were front-loaded and the spend had been re-profiled so that they could be rolled-out later in the 5-year MTFs timeframe, when borrowing rates were hopefully lower. Other schemes had been removed completely. In response, to a follow-up, the Cabinet Member gave assurances that the impact would be reduced as much as possible, within finance that the Council could afford. The Committee enquired where in the MTFs papers, details of the capital schemes that had been scaled back or cancelled could be found. In response, the Director of Finance advised that this information was embedded in the report in a number of different ways. Members were directed to paragraph 8.5 of the report and the explanation of reduced spend in relation to Wards Corner and Gourlay Triangle and that these examples of land assembly and regeneration projects were typical of where reductions had been made. The Director of Finance advised Members that the narratives on the Capital programmes set out in each of the reports to the different scrutiny bodies should be read in conjunction with the figures set out in the capital programme appendix. The Director of Finance advised that the Capital programme contained a number of enabling budgets which created capacity to spend money on a particular area, in advance of when it was actually needed. Some of the reductions in the capital programme involved a reassessment of these schemes in light of external financial considerations. The Committee recommended that future budget scrutiny reports have a table which clearly sets out all of the schemes within the capital programme that

- have be paused, removed or re-profiled, so that these can be reviewed in one place. **(Action: Finance).**
- h. The Committee sought clarification in relation to recent press coverage of the Osbourne Grove scheme being cancelled. Members queried why it was still in the capital scheme. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there was considerable ambition to provide nursing care onsite when the scheme was agreed in 2019, however the scheme was no longer viable under current economic conditions. The scheme was being paused for a couple of years to see if the circumstances improved, but in the meantime, it was being used as meanwhile housing for single adults. The scheme was still in the programme whilst it's future viability was being explored. Members clarified that there was £1.7m spend profiled in the next two years and questioned whether that was the cost of its temporary provision as housing. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that just because it was in the budget didn't necessarily mean that the Council would spend all of it. Members highlighted that this would have revenue implications arising from the allocation of £1.7m capital spend.
 - i. The Director of Finance advised Members that there were two types of spend associated with Osbourne Grove. In the short to medium term, it was performing a useful function as short-term housing space and that those meanwhile capital ramifications were set out in years 1 and 2 of the capital programme. In the longer term, the assumption was that the scheme's revenue benefits will offset the capital costs, so it would not worsen the overall gaps being forecast in the programme.
 - j. In response to a question, officers advised that the recommendations from the independent governance review were being considered by the constitutional working group and that the non-governance aspects of the review would likely go through to Standards Committee and Full Council in March.

The Committee then considered the recommendations and responses to requests for further information from the five previous budget meetings held by the Committee and the four Scrutiny Panels.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Corporate, CS&E and E&RE)

Community Safety, Waste & Enforcement – Further details had been requested by the Committee on the underspend relating to “curtailing uncommitted maintenance and improvement works”. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

Culture, Strategy and Engagement – After considering the budget pressures relating to digital and IT services the Committee had made a recommendation at its previous meeting on the knock-on costs associated with insourcing. This recommendation was approved for referral to Cabinet with no amendments:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Noting the particular budget pressures relating to Digital and IT services and that this was exacerbated by the higher levels of insourced services in recent years, the Panel recommended that all knock-on costs associated with insourcing should be budgeted for over the longer-term at the time when that decision is made.

Further information about the specific budget pressures relating to digital and IT services had since been provided to the Committee. This was considered by the Committee and a further recommendation made for referral to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Committee noted the response to this but considered that this was a high spend area of the council and continued to request that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a report on the causes of increasing contract costs in a consolidated report.

Management actions (Table 7.2c) - Further details had been requested by the Committee on a projected overspend of £35k on this item. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

MTFS Savings Tracker - PL 20/9 (Full cost recovery of match day cleansing services) - The Committee had made a recommendation at its previous meeting on the costs to the Council of matchday cleansing services near Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. This recommendation was approved for referral to Cabinet with no amendments:

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Committee considered the use of Council taxpayers funds to meet the costs of matchday cleansing services to be unacceptable and recommended that the Council continues to urgent pursue negotiations with Tottenham Hotspur Football Club to secure full cost recovery of all matchday cleansing service, including recovery of funds retrospectively for costs incurred in previous years since the opening of the new stadium.

MTFS Savings Tracker (Digital Together) - The Committee had made a recommendation at its previous meeting on the significant amount of savings required on a cross-departmental basis. This recommendation was approved for referral to Cabinet with no amendments:

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Committee noted that this proposal involved a substantive sum of money but that over 90% of the savings in 2023/24 had not yet been achieved. The Committee further noted that the savings needed to be achieved on a cross-cutting basis with all service departments adopting more efficient systems and processes. The Committee recommended that the Cabinet explain how each service department will be engaging with this proposal in order to achieve the savings over the MTFS period.

MTFS Savings Tracker – EN_SAV_004 (Events income increases) - Further details had been requested by the Committee on how these savings would be achieved. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

New Revenue Growth Proposals (Delivery of the Leisure Management Service in-house) – The Committee had requested a breakdown of the expected extra costs of this proposal. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so

this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

New Revenue Savings Proposals – EN24_SAV_003 (Enhance enforcement on environmental crime) – Further details had been provided to the Committee on the estimated cost of hiring more permanent staff to enhance enforcement action compared to the proposed approach of entering into a partnership with a private contractor. Cllr White queried the details of the response which appeared to show that the income generated from fines under the in-house option would be outweighed by operational costs to the Council whereas a private contractor could generate far more income. Cllr Connor and Cllr Gunes requested further details on how the appeals process would work. It was agreed that a further response on these two points would be provided ahead of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

Capital proposal 336 (New River Sports & Fitness) – Further details had been requested by the Committee on the self-financing of this scheme. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

Capital proposal 401 (Tottenham Hale Green Space) – Further details had been requested by the Committee on the S106 funding for this scheme. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

Capital proposal 457 (Future High Street Project) – Further details had been requested by the Committee on the S106 funding for this scheme. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

Capital proposal 657 (Corporate Laptop Refresh) – Further details had been provided to the Committee as requested on the costs of the corporate laptop refresh scheme. The Committee was satisfied with this explanation and therefore no further action was required.

Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Gunes set out the Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel's broader discussion on the proposed budget for children and young people's services in context of the financial challenges faced by the Council and that, while statutory services were protected, it had sought assurances that key non-statutory services (such as Youth Space and youth centres) would be protected from further reductions. The Panel's recommendation on this was approved by the Committee for referral to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Panel was concerned about the budget gap of £16.4M reported in the draft MTFS and the fact that no further information is available at this stage on where further savings will be coming from. The Panel seeks assurances from Cabinet that it will seek to protect key non statutory services within Children's Services from any further cuts.

Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Connor explained that the Adult & Health Scrutiny Panel had discussed new service contracts that were being negotiated and that, given the financial pressures to make savings, the Panel had sought assurances that the new contract would not negatively impact on the quality of care. Further information on the way that inflation had been factored into these projected costs had also now been provided as requested. The Panel's recommendation on this issue was approved by the Committee for referral to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Panel seeks assurances from Cabinet that the pressures on the Adult Social Care budget would not impact negatively on the quality of care as new contracts were negotiated.

Service Growth – Existing (Connected Communities) - Cllr Connor noted that a response had been provided on the request for further information about this item but felt that it had not explained what the £1m budget growth for Connected Communities in 2024/25 would specifically be funding. The Committee requested that further details on this be provided ahead of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – AHC24_SAV_008 (0-19 years Public Nursing Services) - Cllr Connor noted that a response had been provided on this item which explained that outcomes would be monitored from the service and said that it would be useful to understand more about how this monitoring would be carried out.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – AHC24_SAV_010 (Continuing Healthcare) – Cllr Connor noted that a response had been provided on this item which explained that a project team had been set up to achieve savings in this area. Cllr Connor requested that, ahead of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February, further information be provided on how people could access continued healthcare funding for a loved one and how staff would carry out reviews.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – AHC24_SAV_012 (Strength Based Working) - Further details had been requested by the Committee on data to show how strength-based approaches would reduce costs and on the support groups available in each of the three locality areas in the Borough. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – AHC24_SAV_015 (Service Audit) - Further details had been requested by the Committee on how these savings would be achieved. It was noted that the response to this request was outstanding and so this was referred to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – AHC24_SAV_016 (Mental Health Service Review) – Cllr Connor commented that a detailed response had been provided on this item and proposed that, when the review had been finalised, that the recommendations be provided to the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel for further consideration.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – AHC24_SAV_017 (Grant Review BCF/S75) – Cllr Connor commented that the response on this item set out details of the review of the Better Care Fund and proposed that further details on this be provided to the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel for further consideration.

Format of budget scrutiny papers – Cllr Connor welcomed the updated format of the budget scrutiny papers for this year and noted that the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel had suggested a couple of further minor amendments for future years. Cllr Worrell commented that the entire Cabinet report was provided in the Panel agenda papers as an appendix and that, in the Housing Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel meeting, this required referring to this for some information while referring to the main report to the Panel for other information. Josephine Lyseight, Assistant Director for Finance, responded that the papers for all Panels had been approached in the same way with the aim of including the main information relevant to the Panel in the main report. It was agreed that this would be explored further in a discussion outside of the meeting.

Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Worrell informed the Committee that the Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel had discussed the implications of high capital costs balanced against the need for more social housing and an explanation on how some costs to tenants through service charges were covered by benefits.

A number of areas of clarification had also been explored:

Council Tax Uplift – It was noted that a response had been provided to the Panel's query about the maximum uplift in Council Tax from 2025/26 onwards. Frances Palopoli, Head of Finance, clarified that the assumptions on the uplift rates were prudent at this stage but would depend on future government policy.

Cllr Connor then moved to invoke Committee Standing Order 63 to allow Committee Standing Order 18 to be suspended and allow the meeting to continue after 10pm. This was to complete the business on the agenda. The Committee agreed this motion without dissent.

New Revenue Savings Proposals – AHC24_SAV_002 (Increasing the supply of Lodge accommodation), AHC24_SAV_003 (Use of social housing as temporary accommodation), AHC24_SAV_006 (Moving on from temporary accommodation) and AHC24_SAV_007 (Charging full LHA subsidy rates) – Following queries from the Panel it was established that the first of these (AHC_SAV_002) was a revision of last year's savings proposal AHC_SAV_006 which had not previously been achieved, while the other three were repeats of last year's savings proposals AHC_SAV_007, AHC_SAV_009 and AHC_SAV_010 and were not new savings. Cllr White requested clarification on why the Committee was being asked to approve these savings again and whether these savings were now being double-counted – both on the existing savings tracker (agreed the previous year) and as new proposed savings (proposed for this year). It was agreed that further explanation on this issue be provided at the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – ENV24_SAV_003 (Income generation from CPNs) – Cllr Worrell explained that the Panel had queried the low assumptions of the additional revenue achieved from this saving and said that, while she was satisfied with the response that had been provided, she would still like to see more revenue raised from these fines. She also noted that this issue had been well covered by the Panel's recent scrutiny review on this issue. No further action was therefore required.

Additional Investment (Landscaping and green space maintenance) – Cllr Worrell explained that a recommendation had been made by the Panel following a discussion on the maintenance works provided by the Parks Service on the communal areas of new housing developments. Cllr Connor queried whether CIL (Community Investment Levy) contributions could be used for this but it was clarified that the recommendation applied to new housing developments built on Council-owned land rather than private developments. Cllr Carlin said that a report had previously been produced on what CIL could be used for and suggested that the Committee could refer to this for further clarification.

The Panel's recommendation on this issue was approved by the Committee for referral to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Panel welcomes the standard of landscaping and green space provision that has been put in place for our new build housing developments.

The Panel would like to see additional investment put into maintaining the high standard of landscaping, so that it does not fall into disrepair or become overgrown. Given the amount of investment the Council has put into its housebuilding programme, maintaining the surrounding green spaces is an important part of their upkeep and ensuring those sites are attractive.

Consideration should be given to securing additional resources to undertake additional maintenance of communal green spaces on new developments, including cutting back overgrown foliage, weeding and maintaining flower beds.

Climate, Community Safety & Culture Scrutiny Panel

As the Chair of this Panel, Cllr Simmons-Safo, had given apologies for the meeting, Cllr Connor described each item as set out in the agenda pack.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – CSE24_SAV_003 (Newspapers & magazines in libraries) – Cllr Connor noted that a recommendation had been proposed by the Panel opposing the proposed saving of stopping the provision of hard copy newspapers and magazines and libraries. The Panel's recommendation was approved by the Committee for referral to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION 8: Given the impact the proposed savings would have on elderly citizens and citizens accessing papers in community languages together with the social benefits that this provision of hard copy newspapers provided, the Panel recommended that this saving not be taken forward.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – CSE24_SAV_001 (Library opening hours) –

Cllr Connor noted that a recommendation had been proposed by the Panel opposing the proposed review and reduction of library opening hours and to engage with the local community to explore options to keep library buildings at appropriate times for the users of the service.

Cllr White suggested that, if hours were reduced, then this could be coordinated with other libraries in a way that ensured that library services were always available within reasonable reach wherever one lived in the Borough. Cllr Connor commented that libraries were one of the last free public spaces and that it was a valuable resource for many residents so she would prefer this saving not to have been put forward. She added that this proposal had not gone out to full consultation which was also a concern. Cllr White added that this was a savings proposal that had a substantial impact on service delivery and so it was necessary to consider the impact of this against the need for the Council to use reserves to close the budget gap and the size of the savings expected from this proposal. He suggested that this should therefore be considered further at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on Feb 1st when there would be further information available on the final budget figures.

Cllr Carlin responded that the Council valued the Library service and that she agreed on how important libraries are. She added that the Council had invested considerable amounts of capital in the service, would be keeping all library buildings open and that Haringey had some of the longest library opening hours in London. The proposal was to work intensively with user groups and to look at each library individually and consider when footfall was particularly low in order to make the best use of that space in the context of the Council's current financial position and the difficult decisions that were necessary.

The Panel's recommendations on this issue was approved by the Committee for referral to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION 9: 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.

RECOMMENDATION 10: 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 'wrap around' services that could be provided in Library buildings from other council 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.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The Committee recognises the need to make savings to balance the budget and that there are not easy savings to make and not making this associated saving will have an impact on other areas of the budget. Assurance is sought from Cabinet on measures to mitigate impact of reduced library hours on service users including that, individually, the libraries remain

open at times of the highest usage and each library is assessed, on a case by case basis, to understand what this peak user time is. Also ensuring that the library opening times are compiled in a way that allows a user to use a library that is in reasonable close reach, if one local library is not open when they need to use it.

New Revenue Savings Proposal – CSE24_SAV_002 (Self-service technology in libraries) – Cllr Connor noted that a response had been provided to the Panel on the commitment to explore the feasibility of these proposals, including the capital investment required, and to engage and consult fully before any final decision was taken. It was noted that this was not a saving that was going to be realised in the coming year. Cllr Connor suggested that the additional future information on this item should be provided to the Climate, Community Safety & Culture Scrutiny Panel for further consideration.

Capital proposals 4014 (LTN delivery), 4015 (Strategic cycle route delivery) & 4016 (Cycle parking delivery) – Cllr Connor noted that the response to the query on these items had clarified that the schemes were wholly funded through external sources and so no further action was required.

Capital proposal 630 (Libraries IT & Buildings upgrade) – The Committee noted the response provided to the query on this item and determined that no further action was required.

Format of budget scrutiny papers – It was noted that the Panel had made a minor proposal on annotating items on the capital expenditure programme. When added to the other suggestions made throughout the budget scrutiny process on the format of the budget scrutiny papers, the Committee approved the following recommendation for referral to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION 12: The Committee welcomed the updated format of the budget scrutiny papers and requested the following updates for future years:

a) A short piece of introductory text for each table (in the main report) to explain how they related to one another.

b) Additional explanatory text on the capital budget appendix, including the impact on the revenue budget in terms of interest incurred.

c) Additional discussions between the Assistant Director for Finance and the Chair of the Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel on the format of appendices and reports for this Panel.

d) Concerning the agreed capital expenditure programme, where there are mixed sources of funding supporting a scheme, this should be set out more fully and in more detail.

e) Reductions in the Capital Programme should be set out separately in a tabular format, rather than being embedded in the MTFs report. The table should include brief information on the individual scheme and the impact it has

on the Council's aims and ambitions. The table should further indicate whether the decision involves a reduction in the scope of a particular program with figures included or whether this is a capital scheme that has been discontinued; making clear whether it was a particular line that was in the capital budget in the previous year and has now been deleted.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered the recommendations from each of the Panel and Committee budget scrutiny meetings held between 12 December 2023 and 9 January 2024 and compiled a set of final recommendations, to be shared with Cabinet, on the Council's 2024/25 Draft Budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/2029 proposals considered by Cabinet on 5th December 2023.

19. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

20. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee agreed to defer this item to a subsequent meeting.

21. FUTURE MEETINGS

1st Feb 2024 (7pm)
11th Mar 2024 (7pm)

CHAIR: Councillor Matt White

Signed by Chair

Date

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The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-In meeting 3rd of January 7.12pm – 10.45pm

Present: Cllr White, Cllr Worrell, Cllr Gunes, Cllr Simmons-Safo, Cllr Connor

Councillors In attendance – Cllr Cawley-Harrison

1.FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings and this information was noted.

The Chair outlined the process for the meeting and attendees noted this information.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Yvonne Denny.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business, the Chair noted the information provided in the supplementary pack.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

Gerard McGrath, Unison, attended the call in and made representations to the Committee on the insourcing option agreed by Cabinet. The following was noted:

- UNISON and the other recognised trade unions in Haringey Council welcomed the agreed clear plan to bring Leisure Services back under direct control. It would become more publicly accountable and transparent and inspire new confidence in residents, with meaningful leisure services they could rely on.
- The unions understood the inherent difficulties in privatising a critical service which should be delivered directly by the Council, along with the difficulties in allowing such an essential public service to be managed externally. Handing this to an external body, in this case, Fusion Lifestyle had been tried and had clearly failed spectacularly. Handing this contract to yet another private or external body would be a failure to learn from the original mistake. Accounts of ‘near misses’, particularly at Park Road, regarding the correct management of chlorine, had alarmed many members and residents living next to this centre and those using the facilities during the various evacuations.
- UNISON members were already relieved that they would, from October 2024, be TUPE transferred and directly employed by Haringey Council, who meaningfully engaged with staff through various fora, including regular structured meetings. UNISON's experience of Fusion in Haringey was of appalling management practices, divisive tactics, and a complete refusal to engage in any way whatsoever with Unions to help improve working conditions.
- UNISON were confident that the current administration was adhering to its manifesto commitment to insourcing public services. The manner in which Fusion Lifestyle had

run all the centres into the ground is reckless and contemptible for both its staff group and residents of Haringey, in particular, vulnerable people.

- UNISON looked forward, as always, to working with the Council in welcoming their members and other Fusion employees back to an employer who would treat them with respect, provide meaningful career progression opportunities and help members acquire additional skills to enable them to explore other options in planning their career paths. This could only lead to a better Leisure offer for all residents throughout the borough.

The following was noted in response to questions from members:

- Cllr Simmons-Safo thanked Unison for their deputation and concurred with the information shared.
- Cllr White sought clarification around Fusion and trade unions, and it was explained that Fusion did not recognise trade unions.
- At present, the difference between the Council and Fusion was Unison would only be allowed to come in at the investigation stage of a grievance process.
- There were wider benefits of insourcing, Unison had spoken to members in Fusion and there was an immense morale issue.

Councillor Arkell responded to the deputation; the following was noted:

By bringing leisure services inhouse, members would make sure that they were publicly accountable and democratically run. Councillor Arkell was concerned about the way Fusion had managed the leisure centres, the treatment of staff and vulnerable, elderly, and disabled residents. One of the key benefits of insourcing the leisure service was the enhanced salary that could be offered to staff through improved terms and conditions and pensions. The Council recognised the challenges of bringing in approximately 77 members of staff into Haringey Council. It would represent a significant cultural exercise to induct and train staff onto the Council's policies, procedures, and values. Communications with incoming staff would be critical to achieve a smooth transition. Staff engagement, including one to one support, would be offered.

Public questions:

Katie Ferguson, Park Road Lido Group asked the following questions and response included below of the later Cabinet member response in the discussion of the call-in report.

How much would it cost to run the Lido per annum?

The Council had costed up the operation at Park Road as a whole. The Lido had not been separated out as there likely would not be an eventuality where the Lido would operate as a separate entity from the rest of the operations at Park Road.

Do you know how much the energy saving measures reduced this cost?

There would be 15-20% reduction in energy consumption which was built into costs.

Have the Lido income generation figures been modelled?

Generation figures had been modelled based on the information gained from Fusion. Officers would continue to model that and project income streams between now and October 2024 when the contract with Fusion finishes. It was an iterative process into the future, and it would look into both profit and loss management at the centre.

If there was a funding gap, do you have a plan for how this would be financed?

Due to the high running costs, pools across the country required subsidising through other income streams; usually generated through different sales or different products and services. Officers were committed to improving the standard of the operation at the Lido. The scenario modelled was the most likely in respect of risk to income and to pipeline customer base, but there was also a contingency available in event of financial impacts that materialise outside of expectations or unplanned events.

6. CALL IN LEISURE MANAGEMENT CABINET DECISION

Cllr Cawley-Harrison presented his call-in and the following was noted in his presentation:

- The reason for the call-in was that there was insufficient information provided to the Cabinet to make an informed decision. The decision was taken without evidence that insourcing provided value for money and providing value for money was a core part of the policy framework.
- He contended that the Cabinet report provided no effort to quantify the costs and benefits of the different options. Cabinet was not provided with information about the comparative costs of a new leisure management contract in the immediate term. As details of the finances were not provided even under an exempt report, the external advice was not included. There was no consideration of a joint contract with another authority and residents had not been consulted about who should run the service. Given the poor financial position of the Council, Cabinet needed to consider not only whether the higher cost of insourcing could be justified, but whether this model of leisure delivery was more important than other services that it may sacrifice because the additional cost of insourcing would mean cuts to other services. Councillor Cawley-Harrison hoped that this would be sent back to Cabinet for them to make the decision again with all the information available.

There were questions from the Committee on the call-in and Cllr Cawley-Harrison responded as follows:

- The information provided in the original Cabinet report did not provide sufficient levels of detail to evidence the fact of whether this was offering value for money. As the report indicated, value for money was not necessarily the only reason for decision making. It was believed that it fell outside of policy framework.
- There would be an expectation that all information would be in a written report and listed as exempt if it contained commercially sensitive information. There was reference to a third-party analysis that considered all the options, but this analysis was not included in the report. There was also no evidence in the report that the Cabinet Members were given that information. It was imperative that all key information had been given to Cabinet Members.
- Transparency was a key factor in this call-in. There was a weighted comparison between the options with a scoring system which had not been provided in the Cabinet report but had been provided in the response to the call in. The scoring system indicated that there was less risk to performance from the Council, insourcing versus using an external provider. Other than New River, the Council did not have leisure service experience. New River did not have a pool or a Lido, and the Council still did not have the experience of directly running those services, whereas an external provider would provide this expertise.

- All decisions would carry risk, and one of the requests in the call-in would be to complete a 5-year risk analysis.

Cllr Arkell responded to the call-in, and the following was noted:

Cllr Arkell believed that Cabinet's decision fitted within both the policy and budgetary framework. The provision of leisure services was key to helping residents in the future to enable them to lead active and healthy lives, whilst also tackling the wider determinants of ill health such as social exclusion and loneliness. This insourcing would be an opportunity to collaborate with communities to provide better services. It was a decision which would give residents more control. Insourcing this service was in line with the manifesto commitment made by Haringey Labour in 2022. New River, which was insourced in 2021, had shown what the Council could do when it collaborated and listened to its residents, responding directly to their views, and making services inclusive to the diverse communities in our borough. Assessment of what option would provide best value should not be solely limited to cost but would also consider the environmental and social value benefits. Given the Council's Net Zero carbon aspirations and the importance of the wellbeing model referenced in the Cabinet report in December 2023, members had chosen to take a balanced and holistic approach in assessing the pros and cons of the options available in the future. She confirmed that nothing raised in the call-in changed her view.

The following was noted in response to questions from the Committee on the call-in response.

- Officers had attempted to show the matchup between the descriptive text that was within the Cabinet paper, the itemisation, and how it would appear if it was put through the enabling framework criteria. Officers were in an unusual position, effectively and would have had to dissect an operator's cost model. In terms of where best value would come from as an organisation and what the capital investment and revenue might be, there were sensitivities around how that information could be displayed, even in a confidential environment.
- In terms of the scale and size of the background report, there were around 264 single spreadsheet tabs, all of which contained multiple layers of itemised information and data, assembling that wouldn't be accessible for readers. The Cabinet paper was a product of that third party analysis. The Cabinet paper set out the rationale for the recommended option, in terms of the financial implications and in terms of the wider best value, benefits, and opportunities around insourcing. The intention was that the Cabinet paper itself offered a significant enough summary that there was not a need to go further into those 264 spreadsheets.
- On the options review summary, effectively this was a snapshot summary of the evaluation work at a point in time. This exemplified that the award of a new contract was anticipated to cost roughly £200,000 revenue increase on top of what the Council was paying for Fusion. There was also still a need to invest in updating the properties in the Leisure portfolio and this needed capital investment even if a contracted service.
- Referring to section 9.5 of the call-in report and the weightings applied, this was a pictorial reflection of the options 2, 3 and 4 included in the Cabinet report. The weightings applied replicated the New River Sport and Fitness approach taken.

- There were some clear commercial sensitivities that were still ongoing with Fusion. The Council was respecting that confidentiality as the two parties move towards the end point in October 2024.
- There was assurance given that the Park Road Lido would be kept open and the Council would invest in this provision and there would be detailed conversations with all residents. This would be completed in several stages; the first stage would be a broad-brush approach. This would ensure that as many residents as possible were engaged with. Once this level of engagement was complete, the next stage would be having internal conversations around how the Council could then shape services going forward.
- The Haringey Development Vehicle call-in was a different exercise. Officers were not doing an options appraisal regarding what would be done to leisure services in the same way as assessing the HDV which was a full-scale procurement exercise. This was an evaluation conducted by an external organisation for the Council to consider a range of aspects. This was in terms of what represented best value, not just financials, but also the wider social impacts, the wider environmental impacts, and the operational determinations of each of those five options. There had been a range of sessions internally that had looked at the information coming back from FMG, which had been iterative.
- There had been briefing sessions to the wider Cabinet at different points within the process. Within that, officers had given a snapshot from a financial perspective on each of the options available.
- Concerns about the status of the wellbeing model referred to as this was not located as Council policy and the web links referenced in the Cabinet report were not accessible. In response noted, that the services were geared to working on the wellbeing model and this was a justified model that would provide a better service for residents.
- The predominant reason for that increased cost was because of staff salaries and terms and conditions being better with the Council as an employer than they were in the private sector. Also need to consider that having a cheaper cost did not mean a better service.

Deputy Monitoring Officer:

The Committee noted the report from Deputy Monitoring Officer which advised that the Cabinet decision fell within the Budget and Policy Framework. In response to a question from Cllr Cawley- Harrison, the requirement for Council to produce the best value performance plan fell away eight years ago. There was a piece of work to update the Constitution in which there would likely be removal of the reference to the best value performance plan.

Representative of the Director of Finance:

The Cabinet decision to insource leisure services on the 5th of December 2023 did not commit the Council to revenue or capital expenditure in future expenditure as this was subject to Full Council decision in March 2024. Therefore, the decision for the next financial year had not yet been made for it to be outside the Budget Framework. Finance officers concluded it was within the within the Budget Framework.

At 9.37pm, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee AGREED to exclude the press and public to consider the exempt background information and further deliberate on the call-in decision. They further AGREED to invoke CSO 63 and suspend CSO 18 to allow the meeting to go beyond 10pm and to conclude the call-in decision making.

The Committee returned after consideration of the exempt information and deliberations and

RESOLVED

1. To agree that the 5th of December Cabinet decision on Leisure Services was inside the Budget and Policy Framework.
2. That no further action is to be taken, meaning that the key decision could be implemented immediately. This was following a vote of 4 members in favour of this resolution and 1 against.

The reasons provided for resolution 2, were that, following consideration of the deputations, attached reports, exempt information and information shared at the meeting, the Committee was confident that the Cabinet had all information it needed to make its decision. Value for money had been dealt with by information provided by the officer report. Also, the Committee focused on the fact that the decision was not just about financial value but the other benefits that were provided by the various options in the papers.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ADULTS & HEALTH
SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY 12TH DECEMBER 2023,
6.35 - 9.40pm**

PRESENT:

**Councillors: Pippa Connor (Chair), Cathy Brennan, Thayahlan Iyngkaran,
Mason and Sean O'Donovan**

34. 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'.

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Felicia Opoku, Cllr Sheila Peacock, Ali Amasyali and Helena Kania.

36. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Pippa Connor declared an interest by virtue of her membership of the Royal College of Nursing.

Cllr Pippa Connor declared an interest by virtue of her sister working as a GP in Tottenham.

Cllr Mary Mason declared an interest as a Trustee of the Bridge Renewal Trust.

38. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS

None.

39. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

40. SCRUTINY OF THE 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET / 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2024/25 - 2028/29)

Neil Sinclair, Head of Finance (People), introduced the report for this item, reminding the Panel that some of the finance tables illustrated details for the whole of the Adults, Health and Communities service but that, where possible, the information provided focused on details relating only to the Panel's remit which was mainly adult social care and health services.

Neil Sinclair explained that significant financial pressures were ongoing across the service and that an overspend of around £20m was forecast in the current financial year. This position would not be sustainable going forward and so planning to deal with these pressures was required, including addressing the rising costs of delivering services across adult social care. Significant savings had been identified to reduce the financial gap and the budget papers reflected the position so far, but further work would need to be undertaken to deliver a balanced budget. A review of the capital programme had also been undertaken but no new capital schemes for Adults and Health were put forward in the papers.

Cllr Lucia das Neves, Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing, noted that she had recently attended a national care conference and that it was clear that pressures were being felt across the country in terms of delivering more services for more people, higher interest rates and the cost of living crisis but without the required reform or financial support from the government. In this context, an injection of funds had been provided in the Haringey budget to help stabilise the budget while being realistic about the challenges faced.

The Cabinet Member and officers then responded to questions from the Panel:

- Asked by Cllr Brennan for clarification on the new growth figures in the table on page 19 of the agenda pack and the wide variation in the figures for each year, Neil Sinclair explained that the 2024/25 adjustment represented the upfront rebalancing of the budget as previously described and would remain in place in subsequent years but the challenge in the years beyond 2024/25 would be to manage ongoing rising demand and cost pressures. This position could change over the medium term but represented their current best estimate of the funding required to manage future costs. The Panel noted that, as set out in paragraph 5.10 of the main report, a total of £25.5m of growth was being invested from 2024/25, including £20.4m for adult social care but that further savings were also required going forward.
- Cllr Mason expressed concerns about the possible impact of future cost pressures on the quality of care as contracts were negotiated, also noting that

many care sector staff were already underpaid. Neil Sinclair responded that, for example, domiciliary care contracts with providers would need to include uplifts to take into account national/London-wide requirements on the National/Living Wage. There was therefore a balance required between managing the market effectively and addressing the Council's financial challenges. Cllr Mason accepted this but suggested that further information was required to reassure residents that the quality of care would not be reduced. **(ACTION)** Cllr das Neves commented that the specific proposals had been based on what was realistic and reasonable, including improvement projects, and did not directly impact on quality of care (e.g. staff reductions) but would be happy to discuss any individual proposals that there were concerns about. She also noted that the Council had spent over £5m in the current financial year on paying provider uplifts. Beverley Tarka added that the Care Quality Commission inspected and regulated safety and quality and that the Council only placed residents with providers that had a good or outstanding rating. The quality assurance team also made interventions when an existing provider experienced a decline in their rating, as had been discussed at the Panel's previous meeting. She also added that much of the savings were based on being able to do things more efficiently and effectively, as assessed through benchmarking data and learning/sharing with other local authorities, so this would not impact negatively on the quality of care.

- Asked by Cllr Connor about the Council's policy on providers paying the London Living Wage, Beverley Tarka said that the London Living Wage was paid to all home care providers but not to care homes. Care homes were commissioned to provide care based on the assessed needs of individuals and the appropriate support package was agreed.
- Noting the £20.8m in-year forecast overspend set out in paragraph 5.9 of the report, Cllr Connor asked what more could be done to balance the budget if additional funds were not provided by the government. Neil Sinclair said that there was an ongoing process of working closely with other services in the Council to ensure that other savings opportunities and approaches to managing revenue were identified ahead of final budget proposals.
- Asked by Cllr Connor about the possible use of reserves to balance the budget, Neil Sinclair said that the current intention was to find new savings and to maintain reserves at a level appropriate for a local authority of Haringey's size.
- Cllr Lyngkaran noted that some proposed savings related to commissioning efficiencies but that, according to the savings tracker, previous efficiencies had not yet been fully achieved. Beverley Tarka explained that these were stretch targets and that the parts of these that had not been achievable had been wrapped into the MTFs going forward, either by being written off or mitigated by newly identified savings. An example of the work in this area so far had included coming together with commissioners across NCL to agree pricing for

placements in residential homes to reduce long-standing competitiveness for placements between local authorities.

- Cllr Mason requested further details about the removal or deferment of capital schemes as described in paragraph 5.13 of the report. Beverley Tarka explained that there had been a pause on all capital projects to have an effective review. There had been higher figures projected for the Osborne Grove Nursing Home development compared to the previous analysis and the business case had not stacked up in terms of the outcomes the Council was looking for. This project had not been removed from the programme but a new business case had been developed. Cllr das Neves added that the Bourgoyne Road scheme had been deferred and that it was dependent on a GLA grant which would need to be made available before this could proceed. She added that there was also a plan to look at supported living capital work in partnership with the housing team. However, the impact of higher inflation and interest rates was that it was necessary to manage capital projects in a different way and that some projects may take longer to develop.
- Cllr Connor requested further details about the Minimum Revenue Position (MRP) and Capital Financing Requirements. Neil Sinclair explained that the MRP was the estimated cost of repaying debt and interest to support the existing capital programme. The Capital Financing Requirement was an assumption about how much future borrowing needs were expected to be. Asked for clarification about the current estimated Capital Financing Requirement for 2023/24, Neil Sinclair confirmed that this was just over £1.3bn as set out in Table 8.5 of the Cabinet report and that the MRP for 2023/24 was just over £18.6m as set out in Table 8.8 of the Cabinet report.
- Cllr Brennan expressed concern that delaying capital projects could end up costing more money due to the delay to the resulting service improvements. Beverley Tarka said that careful consideration had been given about what to defer and that, with the accommodation-based options, they had been working closely with housing colleagues to meet the needs of clients with specific needs.
- Asked by Cllr lyngkaran what assumptions had been made on the budget in terms of future interest rates and inflation, Neil Sinclair said that the assumptions were made based on the projections for these going forward, that interest rates were widely expected to fall in the medium term and this was used to as part of the calculation for the MRP and Capital Financing Requirement. For adult social care, an inflation factor of 4% had been used to calculate future costs. Employee cost inflation was based on future pay awards and general price inflation (CPI/RPI). Cllr lyngkaran requested that further details on the specifics on this calculation be provided to the Panel. **(ACTION)** Asked by Cllr Mason asked about the variation in interest rates between individual loans, Neil Sinclair acknowledged that borrowing and refinancing of loans would vary depending on when this took place and would typically

depend on the rate set by the Public Works Loan Board. Cllr das Neves added that the recent changes to inflation and interest rates could impact on existing business cases as they had raised costs to the Council in some areas and also raised costs for partners involved with projects.

- Cllr Connor noted that, according to paragraph 6.1 of the report, adults aged 18-64 now accounted for 55% of total forecast spend and asked about plans to deal with this increased need for support. Beverley Tarka responded that there had been a particular focus on joint work with Children's Services to improve transitions with Adult Services working with individuals even before the age of 14 to respond to their needs and so this was part of the plans in development to manage these costs.
- Asked by Cllr Connor about sources of external funding referred to in the report that would not necessarily recur in future years (including Lottery funding and ICB support for hospital discharge), Beverley Tarka said that conversations were continuing on health funding across the NCL area as a particularly challenging winter was expected but no new government funding was currently expected.
- Referring to Table 7.2a on page 19 of the agenda pack, Cllr Connor noted that £19.257m of new growth was allocated for Adults, Health & Communities in 2023/24, £12.7m of which was attributed to future inflationary pressures and transitions and £3m of which was allocated to Temporary Accommodation but that this left around £3.56m unaccounted for. Neil Sinclair explained that the £19.257m comprised of a combination of the various adjustments that had been applied including growth as well as adjustments to savings. Also, the total figure included Adults, Health & Communities as a whole while the appendices provided to the Panel only contained details related to the Panel's Adults & Health remit.
- Referring to Table 7.1a on page 18 of the agenda pack, Cllr lyngkaran queried the variations in the levels of service growth between the different financial years in the table. Neil Sinclair explained that this related to what had been approved in February 2023 based on service pressures at that time but that Table 7.2a on page 19 then provided significant additional funding through the new growth proposals to further address the overall budget gap. Table 7.2c on page 19 then set out the total planned growth for 2024/25 to 2028/29.
- Asked by Cllr lyngkaran why there was no further projected growth from 2027/28 onwards, Neil Sinclair said that it was challenging to make accurate projections that far in advance so the focus was on the next three financial years.
- Referring to the savings tables on pages 20 and 21, Cllr Connor queried whether the proposed savings were achievable and the potential risk of needing to write some of these off in future years. Neil Sinclair said that there had been a robust approach to the identification of savings across the Council and that the targets had been challenged and reviewed, but acknowledged that

any savings target included the risk of not being fully delivered which could create in-year pressures. Current in-year savings which could not be delivered had been accounted for in terms of the planning and forecasting going forward, as previously discussed.

- Asked by Cllr Brennan for clarification on the Council's Cash Limit, Neil Sinclair explained that this was based on assumptions about the current cost of services including planning assumptions such as inflation and growth.
- Referring to Table 7.3 of the Cabinet report, Cllr Connor noted that the figures in the 'Future Savings to be Identified' line grew significantly in future years and asked about the potential impact of this on Adults & Health services. Neil Sinclair acknowledged that, in order to write a balanced budget, further savings would need to be identified across the Council including from Adults & Health.
- Cllr Mason referred to the Edwards Drive capital scheme which, according to page 24 of the agenda pack, would now be delivered via the housing delivery programme and asked whether the impact of housing benefit would have an impact on the scheme, but Beverley Tarka said that this level of detail was not currently available.
- Asked by Cllr Connor for clarification on the terms used in Table 8.3 on page 23 of the agenda pack, Neil Sinclair explained that, if a business case was based on generating reductions to revenue costs then this was referred to as self-financing.

The Panel then asked questions about the specific proposed included in Appendices 3 to 6.

APPENDIX 3 – MTFS Savings Tracker (2022/23 – 2025/26)

- Asked by Cllr Iyngkaran for clarification on the whether savings were new or existing, Beverley Tarka explained that some were ongoing over a period of time and Cllr das Neves added that some savings may be marked as red or amber because they were taking longer than anticipated and that some might continue for longer because it was going well and could be stretched further.
- Cllr O'Donovan requested further details on the progress of proposal AHC_SAV_003. Beverley Tarka explained that this related to aged client debt where processes hadn't previously been as efficient as they could be. However, this had started late in the year and so it wasn't anticipated that the intended level of savings for this year would be reached but this would continue in future years where the anticipated levels of savings were outlined in Appendix 3.

APPENDIX 4 – New Revenue Growth Proposals

- Asked by Cllr O'Donovan for clarification on the line that read "Connected Comms – mainstream?", Neil Sinclair clarified that this related to previously approved growth to support the Connected Communities programme. It was

agreed that further details about this funding would be provided to the Panel in writing. **(ACTION)**

APPENDIX 5 – New Revenue Savings Proposals

AHC24 SAV 008 - (0-19 years Public Health Nursing Services efficiencies)

- Asked by Cllr Mason how many people were expected to be impacted by proposal Will Maimaris, Director for Public Health explained that this referred to health visiting and school nursing. He added that health visiting was a universal service and that there were 3,376 children born in Haringey in 2021 which was nearly 800 fewer than five years previously. The total value of the contract was over £5m and the savings around £300k which, at around 5% of the contract was a smaller proportion than the downward trend in the population change. However, the levels of need for some children may be higher in some parts of the Borough and therefore require more input from a health visitor. Cllr das Neves added that it was important for the Council to apply the same rules to providers when commissioning a service as the Council would apply to itself around managing the budget to ensure best value for public money.
- Cllr O'Donovan requested clarification about the 2-year period for the savings. Will Maimaris explained that discussions would be beginning with the provider and a notice period required for changes to the contract so the full amount could not be applied in the first year.
- Asked by Cllr Connor about the monitoring of the contract, Will Maimaris said that there were a number of performance indicators, for example on the proportion of families visited, and these were moving in the right direction. There was also dialogue with the provider on how to mitigate any changes in the contract.
- Cllr Iyngkaran queried whether the birth rate was expected to stabilise or continue to fall. Will Maimaris said that the general trend was downwards though it had flattened in the previous 12 months. He added that these trends tended to be monitored by Children's Services but modelling could also be useful in this context, but that need was an important element for consideration and not just the numbers.
- Cllr Mason expressed concern about the possible impact on children where the mother was particularly vulnerable as there would be an overall decrease in the number of health visiting hours and sought reassurance that all children and mothers who needed support would still receive the same level of support that they would have received before this change. Will Maimaris commented that, while it was never possible to fully mitigate a risk, they would be working with providers on efficiencies and performance on all contracts and had also invested in a vulnerable parent programme which was being expanded. After further discussion it was agreed that further details should be provided to the Panel on how these risks would be mitigated. **(ACTION)**

AHC24 SAV 009 - (Sexual Health MTFS)

- Cllr Connor noted that this saving related to greater use of local pharmacies to access services but expressed concern that local pharmacies were often very busy with long queues and that capacity was being stretched with pharmacies pushed to provide more services. Will Maimaris responded that the local Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment had recently been updated and had concluded that the pharmacy provision in Haringey was adequate and appropriate for the needs of the population. He added that the feedback from residents was that they generally found pharmacies to be a good way of accessing sexual health services but acknowledged that it was important to keep monitoring this.
- Cllr Mason expressed concerns about the potential impact on more vulnerable people, including younger women who may be deterred from accessing services such as this in a public setting and sought reassurance that they would still be able to access services in other ways. Will Maimaris explained that there was a Sexual Health Strategy and a Needs Assessment in which young people were identified as one of the risk groups. There was also some young person specific service provision in the borough which was not pharmacy based. In addition, there were sexual health services in London that anyone could access, including at Archway and North Middlesex Hospital. Finally, there was specific community-based outreach services aimed at BAME communities which were innovative and offered services such as HIV testing in a culturally appropriate way. However, there was an overall trend towards accessing services via pharmacies. Cllr das Neves added that, while some people might feel reticent about using local services, they had the option of going elsewhere in London which they may feel was more confidential and Haringey would then pay for that service.

AHC24 SAV 010 - (Continuing Healthcare)

- Asked by Cllr Brennan about the evidence to support this proposals, Vicky Murphy, Service Director for Adult Social Services explained that Haringey had a low number of Continuing Healthcare cases compared to other areas and that the proposal to embed Continuing Healthcare into Adult Social Care was a large piece of work supported by specialists with experience in this area so she was optimistic that this could be achieved. Data on this was available if required. **(ACTION)**
- Cllr Connor commented that residents often found it difficult to access Continuing Healthcare (which was NHS funded) and asked whether this was likely to change in future. Vicky Murphy responded that a training company had recently been brought in to support social workers and social care assistants to be part of the assessment process and that the offer to support residents in this area if they met the criteria had been strengthened internally.

AHC24 SAV 011 - (Direct Payments)

- Cllr Mason observed that a key issue about direct payments was about people having the confidence and support to use them and also ensuring coordination between the different services being accessed. Vicky Murphy said that the

support offer that was previously in place through Disability Action Haringey had been strengthened to enable people to be better supported through the process.

- Asked by Cllr O'Donovan whether people would still have the option of being referred directly to a provider, Beverley Tarka confirmed that there was always a choice.

AHC24 SAV 012 - (Strength Based Working)

- Cllr Brennan requested further details on how the savings would be made. Beverley Tarka explained that there was some client level data and trends which reflected that, despite the context with increased demand, the cost of care with older people was being maintained. This could be correlated with a shift in the way that practitioners support individuals, including through an increased use of assistive technology and strength-based approaches. Data on this was available if required. **(ACTION)** Cllr Mason welcomed this but observed that there was a deficit in the number of support groups in certain areas on the Borough. Beverley Tarka said that the department had a lead officer who had been doing consultative work on co-producing outcomes in the West, East and Central areas of the Borough as part of the shift towards localities working which included research on informal carers and support. This would enable a response as part of a refreshed carers strategy. Vicky Murphy added that there would be a carers section based with the localities team in each area, improved responses to the carer surveys and a new Co-Production Board with carers attending. Cllr Mason requested that further information be provided on what was being offered and in which areas. **(ACTION)** Cllr Connor emphasised the need to keep in mind that the local voluntary sector needed to be properly supported if the Council was looking to make savings but also expected the voluntary sector to support those who need care. Cllr Connor requested that further information be provided to the Panel to ensure that the local voluntary sector was not being put under excessive strain. **(ACTION)** Beverley Tarka said that Jess Crowe, Director of Culture, Strategy and Engagement, led on voluntary sector issues, but added that Reach & Connect had been a successful programme in coordinating with the voluntary sector to jointly support people in need of support. Cllr das Neves added that there was now a Community Chest fund in Haringey supported by the Borough Partnership and health partners to fund voluntary and community based initiatives in a range of areas.

AHC24 SAV 013 - (Use of public health growth)

- Asked by Cllr Iyngkaran for clarification on the figures for this item, Will Maimaris explained that the figures were specific because they represented a rise of £292k in the amount received from central government in 2024/25 which would go towards improving public health outcomes for residents.

AHC24 SAV 014 - (Supported Living Review)

- Cllr Connor commented that, while she supported the aim of the proposal, she queried whether it would be possible to increase the level of provision for sufficient one-to-one care in order to make the savings. Vicky Murphy responded that the work earlier this year on the reablement service and only supporting pathways relevant to adult social care had freed up significant capacity in the market for domiciliary care and so this would enable the right level of provision.
- Asked by Cllr Mason about the suitability and quality of housing, Vicky Murphy said that supported living housing was a different market from Council housing and was not the same as getting support from a Council service but that they were working with housing colleagues on how the offer could be strengthened. Some vulnerable residents had been successfully brought into supporting housing, including some who were previously being supported outside of the Borough.
- Cllr Connor concluded that no further information was required on this proposal but that the Panel would keep a watching brief on how it progressed.

AHC24 SAV 015 - (Service Audit)

- In response to a query from Cllr Mason about the potential impact of the savings on the local voluntary sector, Beverley Tarka explained that residents receiving services were entitled to a statutory review annually which could sometimes reduce costs by identifying more suitable alternative services. The review could also maximise the income for a particular individual or family by ensuring that they receive the current benefits. The savings were based on trends of the net output of these annual reviews. Vicky Murphy added that the review would check on services available and what was in the individual's support plan. It was also an opportunity to think about the use of technology to meet the needs of individuals, including the use of tablets or online shopping.
- Asked by Cllr Lyngkaran how this approach would be different from what was already being done, Vicky Murphy responded that they were on a journey to support practitioners to work with the strength-based approach in an in-depth way that may not previously have been done. Beverley Tarka added that there had been considerable investment in training staff to do things differently.
- In response to a query from Cllr O'Donovan about ensuring that people received the benefits to which they were entitled, Beverley Tarka said that there had been a particular initiative in recent years to help more people to receive Pension Credit and Cllr das Neves added this was an ongoing issue as there were new eligible people in the Borough each year.
- Cllr Connor commented that she had thought that a lot of these efficiencies had already been implemented in previous years. Beverley Tarka said that previous initiatives had related to carrying out initial financial assessments earlier, while this initiative was about more efficient annual reviews.
- Cllr Connor suggested that the Panel should continue to monitor the progress of this initiative as part of its work programme, including how this would be embedded with the usual turnover of staff and what the hidden costs might be such as the costs of more training or longer assessment processes. Cllr Mason

added that there remained question marks over the large estimated size of the saving and Cllr Connor suggested that further evidence was required on how this would be achieved. **(ACTION)**

AHC24 SAV 016 - (Mental Health Service Review)

- Cllr O'Donovan noted that when this item had previously been discussed, he had seen an executive summary of the review and suggested that this be shared with the Panel. **(ACTION)**
- Cllr Brennan requested further details on what steps were being taken to focus on the locality model. Cllr das Neves responded that this was an extensive area of work with three locality hubs across the Borough bringing together staff to deliver services with a different kind of model. While it was acknowledged that the Panel had previously discussed locality working, Vicky Murphy said that she would be happy to provide a future update report to the Panel for review as there had been considerable recent progress and collaboration with partners, Connected Communities and the local voluntary sector. Sara Sutton, Assistant Director for Partnerships and Communities, added that recent developments included collaboration with primary care providers, the Community Chest initiative, healthy neighbourhoods programmes and NHS talking therapies in more community settings. These collaborations took a much more localised approach to the needs of the area and enabled more preventative work.
- Asked by Cllr Connor about the work to address high-cost cases, Vicky Murphy said that this was a continuation of work that had started last year with a number of residents with mental health issues brought back into supported living in-Borough. One strand involved working with housing colleagues to find suitable accommodation with some one-to-one support for people with lower levels of need and the other strand involved using a provider for both accommodation and wrap-around care.

AHC24 SAV 017 - (Grant Review BCF/S75)

- Cllr das Neves informed the Panel that the Better Care Fund was a national funding stream to support health and social care integration and was being redesigned following an external review. Haringey had around £7.8m in the plan and were looking at opportunities to redirect some of the spend from the wider system back into adult social care.
- Cllr Connor asked about the possible risk of not being able to achieve this as it was dependent on a review undertaken with the ICB. Cllr das Neves responded that the Better Care Fund had defined purposes but that there was a possibility on the table to think about how that was used together. Neil Sinclair clarified that the £7.8m in the plan was the local authority's share of the Better Care Fund so did not rely on the ICB directly to repurpose these funds. Beverley Tarka suggested that it would be useful to send the Panel some further written information about the ongoing review and how the funding was used. **(ACTION)**

The Panel then briefly discussed the format of the agenda papers that had been received. Cllr Mason suggested that a short piece of introductory text for each table to explain how they related to one another would be useful in future reports. **(ACTION)** Cllr Connor suggested that some additional explanation on the capital budget should be included in future, including the impact on the revenue budget in terms of interest being paid. **(ACTION)**

Summarising the discussion, Cllr Connor commented that the financial situation was clearly very difficult with a substantive amount of savings required to achieve a balanced budget and that the risks associated with this situation had been highlighted. She informed the Panel that the recommendations proposed by the Panel would be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for approval.

RESOLVED:

The recommendations to be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were agreed as follows:

- The Panel seeks assurances from Cabinet that the pressures on the Adult Social Care budget would not impact negatively on the quality of care as new contracts were negotiated.
- The Panel seeks assurances from Cabinet that the local voluntary sector would be properly supported in their provision of services to support those who need care and not put under excessive strain as a consequence of budget savings. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_012 - Strength Based Working)
- The Panel welcomed the updated format of the budget scrutiny papers and suggested a couple of further minor amendments for future years:
 - a) A short piece of introductory text for each table (in the main report) to explain how they related to one another.
 - b) Additional explanatory text on the capital budget appendix, including the impact on the revenue budget in terms of interest incurred.

The requests for additional information were agreed as follows:

- The Panel requested further details on how inflation (including employee cost inflation) had been factored into the projected costs for adult social care.
- In relation to the proposal on funding for Connected Communities in Appendix 4, the Panel noted that the information provided was limited and requested that more substantive details be provided.
- Further details to be provided to reassure the Panel that vulnerable parents and children would not experience a decrease in level of support following the overall reduction in the number of Health Visiting hours. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_008 - 0-19 years Public Health Nursing Services efficiencies)

- Further evidence to be provided to demonstrate that these savings could be achieved. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_010 - Continuing Healthcare)
- The Panel was informed that costs were being reduced through assistive technology and strength-based approaches and that data was available to support this. Relevant data to be provided. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_012 - Strength Based Working)
- On the issue of locality working, the Panel requested details of support groups available in each of the three locality areas in the Borough. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_012 - Strength Based Working)
- The Panel suggested that question marks remained over the large, estimated size of the proposed saving and requested more detailed information about how these would be achieved. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_015 - Service Audit)
- Executive summary of the Mental Health Service Review to be shared with the Panel. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_016 - Mental Health Service Review)
- The Panel was informed that there was an ongoing review being undertaken with the ICB on the Better Care Fund which included £7.8m of Haringey Council funds. Further details to be provided about the ongoing review and how the funded would be used. (New Revenue Savings Proposal - AHC24_SAV_017 - Grant Review BCF/S75)

41. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Dominic O'Brien, Scrutiny Officer, informed the Panel that the items scheduled for the next meeting on 22nd February 2024 included an update on aids and adaptations and a Cabinet Member Questions session with room for one more item to be determined.

It was noted that modern slavery was an item to be scheduled for a future meeting and Cllr Mason proposed that Police training as this issue should be considered as part of this item. **(ACTION)**

42. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 22nd February 2024

CHAIR: Councillor Pippa Connor

Signed by Chair

Date

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MINUTES OF MEETING Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Thursday, 4th January, 2024, 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Makbule Gunes (Chair), Sue Jameson and Matt White

Attending Online: Lourdes Kever

25. 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'.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors; Abela, Adamou, Grosskopf, Lawton and Isilar-Gosling.

Cllr White attended the meeting a substitute for Cllr Abela.

27. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

It was agreed to vary the order of the agenda. Item 9 – Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report, was taken before Items 7 and 8. The Minutes reflect the order the items were considered, rather than the order set out on the published agenda.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

29. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 13 November were agreed as a correct record.

31. HARINGEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Panel received the Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23, as set out in the published agenda papers at pages 111 to 160, along with an accompanying sets of slides which were published as tabled papers. The annual report and presentation were introduced by David Archibald, Chair of HSCP. The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families was also present for this item, along with the AD for Safeguarding and Social Care. The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around the confidence levels felt by the independent chair in terms of how Haringey was performing. In response, the independent chair set out that he was confident with respect of the improvements made in delivery of services and how well the Council and its partners worked in relation to safeguarding. It was commented that the Council and its partners needed to continually learn and to get better. There were a number of audits and other opportunities in this regard which would allow them to reflect on how well the Partnership worked and to improve further.
- b. The Panel commented that information sharing was often a key issue when different partners were working together and assurances were sort around how well information sharing was working. In response, Mr Archibald acknowledged that this was a key issue and that it was something that was often highlighted in case file reviews. The Partnership shared information well but that they were continuing to work on how to improve this.
- c. The Panel sought clarification about how the Partnership operated. In response, the Panel was advised that it was a partnership body that worked across borough and had three statutory partners – Police, Health and the Council. The Partnership was not externally based and all partners had to work together to achieve effective safeguarding. In response to a follow up, Mr Archibald advised that the Partnership undertook a huge amount of activity to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding in the borough. These included: Multi-agency training, including training on working together as different agencies; improved performance data collection and monitoring; and learning from the different reviews that the Partnership had to undertake.
- d. A co-opted member of the Panel raised concerns about the lack of accessibility in reports and highlighted the fact that a high proportion of parents in the borough did not speak English as first language. The co-opted member also questioned the extent to which schools had access to the Partnership and was engaged by them. In response, officers set out that it was the responsibility of the Partnership to ensure that the Annual Report was accessible and that the Partnership Executive Board would be working to ensure that it was more accessible in future. In relation to ensuring that schools were involved in decision making, the Partnership had recently recruited a former head teacher to sit on the Board and that they would also be seeking further opportunities to engage with other head teachers. Safeguarding partners met every six weeks and there was a regular newsletter that went out. Officers advised that school governors should raise any safeguarding issues to the LADO and the safeguarding leads for their respective schools. Officers advised that they would take these comments on board when preparing the next local authority quarterly briefing for school governors.

- e. The Panel queried what some of the key difficulties were that the Partnership faced in relation to multi-agency working. In response, Mr Archibald advised that whilst the three statutory partners had very different roles, their agendas in relation to safeguarding overlapped to a significant degree. The partners worked well together and there was little conflict when it came to safeguarding, any challenges in terms of working across different agencies were rapidly overcome. The Cabinet Member added that the Partnership had been going for two years and that it had made a real difference in that time. The Cabinet Member emphasised that safeguarding was everyone's business, not just the Council's and that Partners had taken seriously their roles in safeguarding. It was commented that the Board sat within the Council's structure and the Council provided most of the funding, however it was important to emphasise that this was multi-agency partnership and it had an independent chair.

RESOLVED

Noted

32. SCRUTINY OF THE 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET & 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/2029

The Panel received the Council's Draft Budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial strategy (MTFS) 2024-2029 proposals, relating to the Panel's remit. The Panel was asked to consider the proposals and to provide recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on these proposals. The report was introduced by Neil Sinclair, Head of Finance (People) as set out in the agenda pack at pages 7-92. The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families was present for this item. The Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care was also present for this item, along with the Assistant Director for Schools and Learning.

By way of introduction, the Panel was advised that the December Cabinet report set out that there was an overall budget gap of around £16.4m. This budget gap was largely due to demand pressures, particularly in Adult Social Services. Finance would be working with the Directorates between now and February to close this budget gap and to present a balanced budget to Cabinet in February. It was noted that nationally, a lot of councils were struggling to set a balanced budget and that it was a very challenging picture across the board.

It was noted that within Children's there were a number of challenges arising from the demand pressures created from more people needing those services and from the increasing costs of those services. These included the reorganisation of SEND transport. Appendix 5 of the report set out that there were new savings around the transition of young people into adulthood. This was effectively a new investment in the Adult Social Care and was reflected as a new growth proposal in that budget area, but it sat as a saving within the Children's budget. There were also around £3m of growth proposals in Children's over the next three years, which reflected additional investment in recognition of the high cost of children's social care placements and inflationary pressures within that market. The capital programme in Children's showed £64m of new capital investment, mainly in schools infrastructure which included the costs of dealing with RAAC and other maintenance challenges.

The Cabinet Member commented that the draft budget position in Children's was a C. £600k overspend, which had come down from the Q1 position. The Cabinet Member commented that the fact the service had got to a position where it was presenting an almost balanced budget was very impressive and reflected a huge improvement from previous years. The Cabinet Member set out that the growth in transition services was something that had been in discussion for a long time, and was a key development. It was anticipated that having a dedicated focus on transitioning children with SEND, rather than doing so on an ad-hoc basis would be transformative for the lives of the young people involved and would also provide cost savings to the Council. The Cabinet Member set out that a lot of the pressures faced by Children's were national pressures and were not down to the service. The increasing prevalence of private equity in the Children social care market was seen as a worrying trend and one that would inevitably extract money out of the system. The Panel was advised that a lot of the schools budget was reflected in the Dedicated Schools Grant, which was not reflected in these budget papers as it went straight to the schools themselves.

The following arose as part of the discussion of this report:

- a. The Panel welcomed the fact that last year's savings were achieved and that the overall budget position in Children's was close to being a balanced position. The Panel also commented that this was the only opportunity that it would have to scrutinise the budget and in that context it sought assurances about the extent to which further savings would be extracted from Children's services in order to meet the budget gap. In response, the Cabinet Member set out that in the past the service had not put up savings that it couldn't achieve. The Cabinet Member set out that the service knew where the hotspots were and it was around residential accommodation, which was very costly and even a small number of additional cases where secure accommodation was needed, could have a detrimental impact on the budget. The AD Safeguarding and Social Care echoed the Cabinet Member's comments, reiterating that the service only put forward savings that achieved the balance between efficiencies and safety of the children affected. The Panel was advised that the service recognised the inherent pressures within the residential placement market and that it was aggressively pursuing an insourcing model, with a proposal for a new mother and baby residential unit. The Head of Finance set out that a collaborative approach had been taken to the budget setting process and that Finance had worked closely with services. The budget included a growth budget so that additional investment was provided around demand led growth. Work to present a final balanced budget was ongoing, but it had been a challenging budget setting process in the context of comparing it to recent years.
- b. In response to a follow up, officers advised that at present, there were no additional savings proposals expected from Children's Services.
- c. The Panel sought further assurances about the possibility of further savings being made in Children's Services, given the draft budget position of a £16.4M gap. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there weren't many areas that could be cut in Children's Services, given the statutory responsibilities and the need to ensure the safety of the children involved. The Cabinet Member elaborated that the Service had recently achieved a Good Ofsted inspection rating and that the Council could not risk jeopardising this with cuts to social workers. The Cabinet Member suggested that there was no political will to make savings in youth centres. Similarly, there was no desire to make savings

- in Early Year's provision, particularly as the government provided a lot of funding for this. The Council was already engaged in a DfE led savings programme around SEND, the Safety Valve programme. It was commented that there was very little room for manoeuvre within the Children's budget and there were no obvious areas where additional savings could be made.
- d. The Panel sought assurances around RAAC and schools infrastructure and the extent to which the Government had committed to covering the costs of this. In response, the officers advised that discussions with the DfE were ongoing and that in essence, they had committed to covering the capital costs of these works, but that the Council had not received any money to date. Officers set out that the budget papers highlighted a risk that there were also revenue costs incurred by schools arising from RAAC and that the government had not agreed to cover all of these costs. Examples of these costs included; provision of temporary classrooms, additional IT costs and catering costs. Any costs incurred that were not directly related to the construction costs in repairing defective school buildings, could have an impact on the General Fund revenue budget if the government did not provide funding.
 - e. The Panel sought assurances that the allocated budget was enough to meet demands. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the budget was the budget, and that the reality was that there was no more money. Growth Funding for 2022/23 & 2023/24 allowed the service to eradicate the historical overspends that had previously existed and that this had made a big difference. In relation to a follow up in relation to non-statutory services, the Cabinet Member advised that she did not want to see any cuts to non-statutory services, but that she was unable to give any firmer assurances at this stage.
 - f. The Panel sought clarification about whether the new round of budget savings proposals would go out to consultation. In response, officers advised that the draft budget went out to consultation and the responses to it would help formulate the final budget. However, there was no scope for a further consultation process, given the need to agree a budget for February Cabinet. The Cabinet Member emphasised that all councils were facing similar challenges around their budgets and that this was a national issue.
 - g. The Panel sought clarification around the new revenue saving proposal in relation to development of a new transition service. The Panel requested more information on how this would work and why it was profiled so that £673k would be saved in the first year from a total saving of £4.5m. In response, officers advised that this was a dedicated service to provide support to young people with SEND as they transitioned in to adulthood. Officers advised that young people with a high level of care and intersectional needs attracted the highest fees and that this occurred within a broken market. The proposal would establish a programme of work to bring these young people in borough. The profiling reflected the amount of work that needed to be done across a number of different teams and the profiling reflected the number of cases that existed at a particular age and the knowledge that they would need support at key age points of 18, 21 & 25. Officers advised that bring forward the savings was not something that management could recommend to Members due to the work that needed to be done in the background and the potential negative impact on young people. Part of this related to trying to ensure that Children in Care could benefit from the high calibre of schools in the borough, and who continued to generate the highest amounts of spending (rather than being sent out of

borough). The capacity to accelerate these savings was limited by the details of the work required in the background from a range of areas, such as schools, Safety Valve, HEP. The whole system had to work together to achieve this. The Cabinet Member set out that by the time a child received an EHCP, it could often be too late to change outcomes. This saving was a recognition that spending money on young people to support them would generate savings in future from adult social care. The saving did not just relate to educational needs, it also supported their health, relationships, independent living and employment opportunities.

- h. In relation to a follow-up, Finance advised that the savings profile was based on the numbers of children that were known would transition to adulthood in the next six years and the same number of young people were used to profile the corresponding growth proposal for Adult Social Care. The savings were shown in the Children's budget and the investment was reflected in the Adults budget as growth.
- i. In light of the need to make further savings and the significant revenue costs accruing from the capital programme, the Members queried whether there were any proposals to review the capital programme. In response, the Head of Finance advised that following an extensive review of the capital programme, there were no plans at this stage to undertake any further amendments to it as part of the final budget setting process.
- j. The Panel determined that it would make a recommendation to Cabinet on these budget proposals around the fact that it did not want to see any further savings being extracted from the Children's service, particularly in light of recent successes such as the positive Ofsted inspection.

RESOLVED

That the Panel considered and provided recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the Council's draft budget and 5 year MTFs 2024-2029, relating to its remit.

33. HARINGEY EDUCATION RESULTS 2023

The Panel received a report which provided an update on Haringey's educational attainment for the school year 2022/23 at all ages from Early Years through to A-Levels. The report was introduced by Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families as set out in the published agenda pack at pages 93 – 110. Jane Edwards, AD for Schools and Learning as well as James Page, Chief Executive and Haringey Education Partnership were also present for this item.

By way of introduction, the Cabinet Member advised the Panel that the report set out the good work that was done by HEP around going into schools and working with Head Teachers to improve standards. The Cabinet Member thanked James and his team, as well as Jane and her team for the incredibly positive results achieved. The Panel was advised that in almost every single area, Haringey was performing above the national average. The Cabinet Member set out that she would like to see the work on racial equity expanded into other ethnic groups so that the learning from the work

could be expanded. The Panel was advised that Haringey had largely bucked the trend, following the resumption of the inspection regime after Covid, in that it had 98% of its schools achieving either good or outstanding.

James Page advised Members that this was the best set of results for our young people that Haringey had ever achieved, with every single primary measure scoring above the national average. The KS2 results had met the London average for the first time ever. Haringey was the fourth most deprived borough in London but its results did not reflect that. The Panel was advised that at KS4 & KS5, mathematical inflation due to Covid had been reversed and so 2023 results were directly comparable to 2019. KS4 & KS5 results had improved against 2019 in absolute terms. It was contended that given Covid and all the lost learning, that this should be seen as an astonishing achievement.

The following arose in discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Chair welcomed the report and the positive narrative that it painted about progress in educational achievement. The Chair queried how HEP had managed to achieve such a positive set of results. In response, officers advised that HEP was able to glue Haringey's schools together and form a collaborative network of schools. As a result, the schools were open to sharing and open to being challenged critically. The schools were also incredible aspirational for their pupils and they worked hard to remove barriers for challenged or challenging pupils. Officers emphasised the importance of the collaborative and collegiate work and the fact that the school leadership was also very strong, both in terms of governors and head teachers. Mr Page emphasised the fact that the support and the challenge was there and that the schools accepted being challenged. It was suggested that crucial to this was having the trust of Head Teachers, so that they were prepared to be honest about areas of concern. It was also suggested that having a real focus on practice was also important, to improve learning in the classrooms.
- b. The Panel welcomed the report and the level of educational attainment that had been achieved in Haringey. A Panel member emphasised the role that schools played in socialising children as they grew up and questioned whether there were any data that showed how well schools did in creating well rounded human beings. In response, the Cabinet Member commented that the journey began with Early Years which gave huge support to children in terms of their socialisation. The Panel was advised that Early Years provision in Haringey had achieved 98-99% of providers achieving a rating of either outstanding or good across the entire sector. Mr Page advised that the nearest thing that they had to outcomes data on this was the personal development judgment by Ofsted as part of their framework. It was acknowledged by Ofsted that it couldn't measure outcomes due to the length of time needed to measure something like this in children, but it did measure how well the schools were doing to support personal development. The Panel was advised that every school had achieved a good or outstanding rating on this metric. Mr Page also emphasised the key role that Pendarren played in personal development for some of Haringey's young people.
- c. The Panel enquired whether there was any way that the authority could capitalise on the success it had in this area, particularly given the pressure on budgets. In response, Mr Page advised that HEP was a not-for-profit and was

funded by the Council, but that it was bringing money in to subsidise the work it did with schools and to not raise prices as well as offer additional support. Officers advised that grant funding had been under significant pressure and that HEP were able to absorb funding pressures through its trading arm. It was also noted that providing support to schools helped mitigate the risk of failing schools being made academies and the local authority having to absorb any deficits.

- d. The Panel raised concerns about schools’ ability to recruit and retain school governors given the workloads involved, and financial pressures schools were under. A co-opted member of the Panel suggested that there was a risk of schools having to close because of the financial pressures they faced. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that attracting school governors was difficult for the reasons outlined, but that HEP was providing support to school governors. The Cabinet Member suggested that she would like to see partners collectively invigorate school governors and making it more attractive for people to take it on. Mr Page advised that that National Governors Association acknowledged that the situation was worsening and that representation and diversity had regressed among school governing bodies. It was suggested that it was important to ensure that governing bodies felt connected to each other and that governors had the support and ability to ask questions from other governors. It was important that networks be connected up and that aspiring leaders within schools were encouraged to become school governors.

RESOLVED

That the update was noted.

34. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

That the work programme was noted.

35. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

36. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

20th February 2024

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair

Date

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: MTFS Savings Tracker 2022/23 and 2025/26:

Appendix 3 sets out the MTFS 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

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MINUTES OF MEETING Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Monday, 18th December, 2023, 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Holly Harrison-Mullane, Tammy Hymas, John Bevan and Alexandra Worrell (Chair)

ALSO ATTENDING: Ian Sygrave

146. 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'.

147. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Barnes and Cllr Moyeed. Apologies were also received from Cllr Gordon

148. URGENT BUSINESS

None

149. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

150. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None

151. MINUTES

In relation to the previous minutes, Cllr Bevan asked to be notified when 105 Waverley Road was let. **(Action)**.

Cllr Bevan also requested that the location of the stopcock be provided to new tenants as part of the tenant checklist. **(Action)**.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of 14th November were agreed as a correct record.

152. BED AND BREAKFAST ELIMINATION PLAN

The Panel received an update on the Bed & Breakfast (B&B) Elimination Plan. The plan is a requirement of the Homelessness Prevention Grant funding from DLUUHC and details plans to reduce and then end our use of B&B accommodation for residents who are homeless. The report was introduced by Denise Gandy, Assistant Director of Housing Demand, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 11-36. Cllr Sarah Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing Services, Planning and Private Renters was also present for this item. The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around the accountability mechanism with DLUHC. In response, Members were advised that there was a specialist advisor who worked with the team on developing their B&B Elimination plan and that they met monthly. Officers compiled a detailed return to the government around the numbers of B&B placements. Officers advised that the funding for 2024/25 had already been allocated so that was secure, funding for 2025 onwards was unsure.
- b. The Panel sought assurances around domestic violence victims and how the Council protected them from having to be moved out of their accommodation. In response, officers advised that the main pressure related to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which broadened the Council's responsibility around homelessness and domestic abuse, so that the Council had to treat all people as an emergency case where they were made homeless through domestic abuse. Officers advised that there were blockages in the market in terms of moving people out of refuges and into the private sector. The Council did not place domestic abuse victims in accommodation with shared facilities.
- c. The Panel sought clarification about whether the voids figures in the report reflected HCBS properties. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the report set out that there were 272 general void properties, 77 HCBS voids and 74 sheltered accommodation void properties.
- d. In response to a question, officers advised that 1% inspection figure in the report referred to the estimated number of illegally occupied properties, rather than the percentage of properties that received an inspection.
- e. A panel member raised concerns about the demolition of Love Lane and the impact this would have on available housing units. In response, it was acknowledged that there could be pinch points in the system but that there were new properties coming into the system to replace those being demolished and that the goal was to get flow into the system to free up units.
- f. In relation to a question around whether the new build properties should be put into the HCBS in order to achieve higher rental income, the Cabinet Member advised that this wasn't possible as the grant funding for the new build properties was allocated on the basis that they would be secure lets.
- g. In response to a question, the officers advised that the Homelessness Reduction Act placed three duties on local authorities. The authority had 56 days to prevent homelessness, then 56 days to relieve homelessness and after that threshold was passed, then the main housing duty kicked in.
- h. The Panel sought clarification about what the other barriers were to being moved on. In response, officers set out that typically it was ordinary practical

- issues such as moving costs, the logistics of moving home and things like rent arrears.
- i. In reference to the reasons people have exited B&B accommodation in paragraph 6.4.6 of the report, officers agreed to provide a more detailed breakdown in writing about the 21 cases where the housing duty was ended for another reason. **(Action: Denise).**
 - j. Officers provide assurances that at each stage of the process an applicant would have an opportunity to make a representation on a proposed course of action, including where a negative decision was being proposed.
 - k. The Panel sought assurances that the government targets were not having a negative effect on vulnerable people. In response, the members were advised that the key driver for getting people out of B&Bs is that it was the least suitable type of accommodation for families, rather than the government putting pressure on councils to do so. Officers were working to increase supply in order to reduce the need for B&B placements.
 - l. The Panel sought clarification around the Multi Agency Reduction Board. In response the Cabinet Member advised that it had its first meeting last week and that it would meet every three weeks. The membership was made up from key internal and external partners and reflected the fact that it was much broader than just a council wide issue.
 - m. Officers agreed to come back with a response on what was meant in the action plan by reducing prohibition notices. **(Action: Denise).**
 - n. A Panel Member queried whether, in light of the reduction in the capital programme, that the framework procurement agreement should be reduced from four companies to three. In response, officers advised that they were still receiving a positive response from the market to this and were hopeful of getting this in place. Officers also set out that part of the reason for having the four companies was that they would be based in a particular geographic area.
 - o. In response to a question, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the industrial action being taken by repairs staff was having a negative impact on voids work.

RESOLVED

Noted

153. SCRUTINY OF THE 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET AND 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/2029

The Panel received the Council's Draft Budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial strategy (MTFS) 2024-2029 proposals, relating to the Panel's remit. The Panel was asked to consider the proposals and to provide recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on these proposals. The report was introduced by John O'Keefe, Head of Finance (Capital, Place & Property) and Kaycee Ikegwu, Head of Finance (Housing & Chief Accountant) as set out in the agenda pack at pages 37-123. The Cabinet Member for Housing Services, Private Renters and Planning was present for this item. Sheela Thakrar, Finance Business Partner, was present for this item. The

Director of Housing and Placemaking was also present for this item, along with a number of other officers from the Housing and Placemaking directorate.

By way of introduction, the Panel was advised that the December Cabinet report set out that there was an overall budget gap of around £16.4m. This budget gap was largely due to demand pressures, particularly in Adult Social Services. Finance would be working with the Directorates between now and February to close this budget gap and to present a balanced budget to Cabinet in February. It was noted that within Housing and Placemaking there was a balanced budget being presented. There were pressures within the budget such as business rates, repairs, hard FM and planning fee income, but that they were being contained by the wider Housing and Placemaking budget. Finance advised that the report differentiated management actions from policy changes and that management actions referred to actions taken by the Director to reduce budget pressures that were carried out in the normal day-to-day management of the service, such as a restructure. Table 7.2C highlighted that there were around £1m of management actions in the area of Housing and Placemaking.

Officers set out that there had been a £396m reduction in the capital programme from March 2023 to November 2023. This was due to rising costs associated with construction, and the increased scrutiny of debt levels within local authorities. By way of context, officers were advised that every additional £1m spend in the capital programme generated a debt cost to the revenue account of circa £72k. The Housing Revenue Account at period 6 reported a forecast adverse variance of £1.686M. The forecast year-end HRA surplus was £6.554m compared to a HRA budgeted surplus of £8.238 M. This position had improved from the Quarter 1 position, this was largely due to a drawdown of reserves. In relation to the HRA, officers highlighted two key actions. The first was a proposal to charge formula rent plus 5% on new builds. The second was to charge the full September CPI inflation rate increase to service charges (last year these had been capped at 10%).

The following arose as part of the discussion of this report:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around legal disrepair claims being a budget pressure within the HRA and questioned what actions were being taken to minimise their impact. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there was a new process in place to try and prevent these cases from escalating to external lawyers. The Director emphasised the use of the pre-action protocol to try and resolve claims before they escalated to legal action. There had also been additional management resources put in place to tackle the underlying disrepair issues. The Director advised that this was a national and London-wide trend and that the service was working hard to get on top of it. The Cabinet Member set out that a lot of tenants were being targeted with leaflets and that some of these leaflets were quite misleading and basically encouraged tenants not to report disrepair issues in the usual way. In relation to a follow-up question around the improvements seen as a result of additional management resources, officers advised that this was an issue that was being monitored by the Housing Improvement Board and that future updates could be provided to the Panel if the Panel wanted them.
- b. A member of the Panel advised that they were fully supportive of the proposals to charge an additional 5% to formula rents on new build properties as well as the proposal to increase service charges in line with inflation.

- c. The Panel questioned why the Council was setting up a £20m hardship fund for tenants, when those tenants would be on housing benefit and any increase in rent costs should be met by central government through increased housing benefit payments. In response, it was clarified that the fund was not £20m, the exact figure was still to be agreed, but that it would be around £300k. The report identified that the fund would be paid for through the £20m HRA working balance. Officers advised that the fund was to offer targeted support to those who may find themselves in rent arrears. It was expected that there were two groups of people who would not have the additional costs covered through housing benefits. The first was those who had reached the benefit cap and the second was those who paid their own rent in full. Many of these people may be on low incomes and it was expected that the fund would help ease some of the pressure on these people from increased housing costs.
- d. The Panel noted with a degree of concern that the reliance on external lawyers for legal disrepair claims actually seemed to be going up. In response, officers emphasised that the intention was to stop cases escalating to the point in which they became legal cases through the pre-action protocol. It was acknowledged that due to the demand on solicitors in this area, it had been difficult to recruit internally as people with this skillset were in high demand.
- e. The Panel queried whether additional savings were expected in the area of Housing and Placemaking to plug the overall budget gap. In response, finance officers advised that all services would be asked to contribute to closing the budget gap in the final MTFs proposals in February.
- f. The Panel sought clarification that the pressures in the HRA were separate and that these did not have any impact on the £16.4M budget gap. Officers acknowledged that the two areas were separate and that it was not expected that the HRA position would change significantly in February.
- g. The Panel sought clarification around why the existing £100k saving on head leases was no longer considered deliverable. In response, officers advised that the Council was seen as a very low risk source of income to landlords and that many were simply unwilling to sell their lease. Those that did offer to sell asked for a high selling price. In essence the landlords did not believe it was in their interests to sell and the saving had been written out as unachievable.
- h. The Panel sought further information about the High Road West scheme and how much risk this exposed the Council to. In response, officers advised that the scheme was governed by a Development Agreement which was agreed in 2017. The expenditure captured in the capital programme relating to the scheme, was where the Council had used its compulsory purchase powers to acquire properties for Lendlease. When a development phase progressed the Council would be fully reimbursed for these costs and this would pay down the Council's debt obligations. In relation to the level of risk exposure, officers advised that no scheme was risk free, but that the Council had secured a number safeguards such as a parent company guarantee and step-in rights to acquire the properties themselves if Lendlease was unable to fulfil its obligations. The Panel was also provided assurances that each phase of the development was subject to a viability assessment being undertaken. The Director of Housing and Placemaking emphasised the fact that it was a phased development and that Phase 1 was a relatively small scheme relating to 61 homes. The Council's risk exposure was limited to these 61 homes in Phase 1.

- i. The Panel sought clarification about the restructure in regeneration referred to in the report. In response, the Panel was advised that this was one of the few areas that was not externally funded and so restructuring offered savings to the Council. Officers advised that the main area of saving related to a reduction in management costs and also from moving to more of an enabling model for economic development.
- j. The Panel sought assurances around the 6% uplift announced by government for the coming financial year and what impact that would have. In response, officers set out that it was not expected to make a material difference as it was broadly in line with what was forecast. The methodology of how these payments were made, could conceivably have an impact on the Council.
- k. In relation to a questions about why Council Tax was only due to increase by 1.99% in Years Two onwards, officers agreed to come back with a written response on this. **(Action: John O’Keefe).**
- l. The Panel sought clarification around capital financing costs and why these were so high. In response, officers advised that these costs related to the cost of financing our borrowing. The HRA included £1.4B of borrowing over the MTFS, which largely related to the housebuilding programme. The assumption was that interest rates would be 5.1% in the first year and rising to 5.5% in the second year. These assumptions would be revised on a quarterly basis in conjunction with the Council’s external Treasury Management advisor. Officers added that from Year 6 onwards the Housing Delivery Programme would start to generate significant income from new housing units, which would offset some of the borrowing costs. By Year 10 it was anticipated that the HRA would generate a £20m surplus.
- m. The Chair sought clarification around whether it was fair to say that borrowing costs were the primary driver for the 5% increase in formula rents and the other actions outlined in the report. In response, officers advised that it was a driver but that it was not the main driver. The below inflation rent increase last year was a major factor as was the fact that the revenue cost base had increased dramatically over the last year. Officers emphasised the importance of generating additional income through the Housing Delivery Programme in order to be able invest in the Council’s existing housing stock.
- n. The Panel sought assurances around the major repairs reserve and whether enough funding had been allocated to this to ensure existing stock was adequately looked after. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there had been a massive investment in the major works programme, totalling around £500M. The ten-year plan better reflected this investment, rather than the five-year MTFS being considered by Members. The Panel noted that new build properties were self-financing.
- o. The Panel sought clarification about the ongoing existence of Homes for Haringey as an entity, given that the service had been insourced. In response, officers advise that it had been retained as a legal entity for the purposes of keeping the leases, and so that the full LHA rent cap rates could be charged. The Panel was advised that HfH did not have any staff but had a Board of Directors appointed by the Council.
- p. The Chair queried the fact that a number of the new savings proposals seemed to be repeat savings from last year. The Cabinet Member advised that these were additional savings from what had been agreed previously and likely

- reflected where it was thought that further savings could be derived from doing more of the same. Officers agreed to clarify the new revenue savings numbers ACH24_SAV_003,006 & 007 in terms of how they related to similar savings that had been agreed previously and whether the similar savings from last year had been delivered. **(Action: David Joyce/Denise Gandy).**
- q. Officers agreed to provide clarity in relation to the new revenue saving of £13k deriving from additional enforcement income. The Chair commented that this did not seem like much money, given that CPN's could generate fines of up to £30k. Officers would provide a written response on how the £13k saving was calculated. **(Action: John O'Keefe).**
 - r. The Panel sought clarification as to whether there was scope to raise additional revenue from undertaking more planning enforcement. Officers advised that this was something that was being looked at as part of the final MTFS report and that they were also examining whether the service could be more commercially focused and charge to guide people through the planning process.
 - s. The Panel sought clarification on the new modular lodge proposed for TA, and the extent to which this would be a permanent structure. In response, the Panel was advised that its life would be assured for 60 years but that crucially, it would be moveable and able to be relocated if needed, for a fraction of the original cost. A site had been chosen and this would be announced in the coming months.
 - t. In relation to the new revenue growth proposal for Temporary Accommodation, officers clarified that this investment took into account the raft of other actions being undertaken by the Council to build additional capacity. The need for this growth proposals was largely driven by the market cost of acquiring new properties.
 - u. A Panel Member commented that it seemed as though the Council was shouldering most of the risk in relation to High Road West, whilst Lendlease would get the profits. In response, officers advised that what the Capital Programme didn't show was that the scheme was subject to £70m grant funding from the GLA. The Council's expenditure level on the scheme was capped at £36m, and expenditure above this level would require Lendlease to pay the Council back to a level below the cap.
 - v. In relation to the Wood Green regeneration project in the capital programme, officers advised that this comprised of a number of interventions in Wood Green, including provision of workspace, public realm works and the master plan for Station Road and the library site. Some of these schemes would be match funded.
 - w. In response to a question, officers acknowledged that the Civic Centre Works was a significant investment but highlighted the fact that there would also be a significant cost arising from accommodation needs for staff if the Council did nothing. Finance commented that around half of the budgeted cost reflected the fact that the scheme involved the restoration of a listed building.
 - x. The Panel raised concerns about the upkeep of the landscaping works that had been done to the new build properties. The current budget allowed for the

Parks department to undertake some landscaping works twice a year. The Panel were concerned that this was not sufficient and that the appearance would quickly become overgrown. The Panel sought further information from Cabinet around whether there was scope for additional investment into maintaining the green areas around out new build estates, including the possibility of using a private landscaping contractor. The Panel would also like some clarity as to whether this can be paid from service charges out of the HRA, rather than the revenue budget. **(Action: Finance/Philip).**

RESOLVED

That the Panel considered the Draft Budget 2024/25 and the Five Year MTFS proposals relevant to its remit, and considered recommendations to put forward to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

154. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

Noted

155. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

156. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

26 February

CHAIR: Councillor Alexandra Worrell

Signed by Chair

Date

Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 11th March 2024

Item number: 8

Title: Annual Feedback and Resolutions Report 2022-2023

Report

authorised by : Claire McCarthy, Assistant Director for Strategy, Communications and Collaboration

Lead Officer: Elaine Prado: Elaine.Prado@Haringey.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report for Key/

Non Key Decision: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This report provides an update on how Haringey Council is seeking to learn from the feedback we receive from residents and use this to shape and improve our services. It also sets out some of the key actions we are undertaking to improve our complaints, FOI and Members Enquiry handling processes to ensure the system provides both a positive resident experience but also the strongest possible platform for us to utilise the feedback – both positive and negative – that we receive.

Appendix one provides the annual data for staff compliments, complaints, Members Enquiries, Freedom of Information requests and Ombudsman cases.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A

3. Recommendations

That the contents of the attached report be noted

4. Reasons for decision

N/A

5. Background information

In November 2022 Haringey Council launched the Haringey Deal which made a set of commitments around how we wanted to change and improve our relationship with residents and communities. This included commitments to getting the basics right, sharing power, listening and learning from our mistakes.

We are in the process of embedding the Haringey Deal in the way we work across the council. Over the last 12 months there has been a significant step change in the way in which residents and communities have been proactively

engaged and involved in shaping policy, service design and priority setting. Some recent examples include the Wood Green Voices and Tottenham Voices programmes, co-design of improvements at Down Lane Park and the transformation of the parking arrangements for disabled residents. This is part of a fundamental shift in our culture to becoming a truly resident centric organisation.

In addition to these proactive collaborations, we also recognise that a key part of this journey is learning from the vast array of reactive feedback we receive from residents and businesses every day including – though not confined to – via our formal complaints process.

Learning from feedback

The following are examples from services throughout the council where we can demonstrate learning from complaints and/or service changes that have taken place because of feedback from residents. Changes captured below range from matters flagged to us by a single resident that has led to change, through to more general learning taken from complaints and feedback and includes changes where the council has proactively sought the opinion of residents on a variety of topics.

Currently the information on how we are specifically learning from feedback is being gathered manually from services, but in future we are looking to systematise this by capturing this through a new case management system. We also intend the new system to provide more detailed management information identifying trends and emerging issues so that they can be addressed more quickly by services.

Housing services:

Housing Improvement Plan

Following significant feedback from tenants and leaseholders, the Housing Ombudsman and external evaluation of our services; the council introduced a Housing Improvement Plan. The plan was agreed in April 2023, after the council brought the management of its housing service back in house.

It sets out a number of key objectives and actions for improving services for tenants and leaseholders and increase satisfaction. In summary, these are to:

- improve tenant involvement and satisfaction to provide a resident-focused housing service.
- improve ways of working and performance.
- maximise opportunities to improve the customer experience through

information and communication technology (ICT)

- improve compliance and make resident safety our highest priority.
- improve complaint handling.
- deliver value for money.
- invest in the quality of our homes through our planned maintenance programme.
- provide more visible and locality-based teams on estates more frequently.
- upskill staff and provide better, more attractive jobs.

The Plan is overseen by a Housing Improvement Board chaired by the Chief Executive.

Improved data capture of resident vulnerabilities:

Following feedback from the Housing Ombudsman, work has taken place to improve oversight of the vulnerabilities and communication needs of our tenants. Flags to indicate vulnerability and needs were already available in the housing management system (NEC). As a result of the feedback received, further work has been carried out to implement a link between that system and the Total Mobile system to improve information provision to our operatives and contractors. The flags ensure officers are aware of the needs of residents so that they can adapt the way they deliver their services.

Staff are also able to raise safeguarding and vulnerability concerns from the Total Mobile system while delivering services to residents, which enables housing officers to process and action them accordingly.

Housing repairs – Follow on Calls:

Customer Services handle calls relating to housing repairs, however, only have access to book an initial repair job. Any subsequent work or changes of appointment must be done by Property Services, as this is a more complex activity due to the collaboration required with multiple teams.

Previously, all residents with an existing repair would call Customer Services, and an officer there would capture the request then pass it to the Property Services team. This was not very efficient and led to delays and was unsatisfactory from a resident perspective.

As a result of resident feedback showing dissatisfaction with follow on calls about housing repairs, a secondary phone line has now been initiated so that residents can discuss existing repairs with officers within Property Services who can arrange subsequent repair appointments, removing the 'hand-off' and delays from the process.

We will be monitoring this to see if residents are more satisfied as a result.

Children's Services:

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs):

In the last 6 months there had been 7 x ECHPs, for which an increasing

number of letters, document packages, emails and general communication was being received. While investigating the complaints, it became evident that there were high levels of confusion about eligibility and thresholds which were heightening resident anxieties. With parents' permission, SENDIASS professionals (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service) were invited to participate in discussions about the content of EHCP reports. This demonstrated our desire for residents to feel supported and have an advocate present, if required.

With the presence of a respected and independent partner agency expert, communication with the residents involved was much smoother. The meeting allowed us to ensure there was clarity in the matters covered in the report and any unrealistic expectations were addressed, leading to the outcome of the report becoming acceptable to parents.

What the Council has learned and implemented is the proposal of a face to face or virtual 'resolution meeting' with a relevant external professional to offer support to a parent/carer. It also provided a more effective opportunity to offer empathy and progress the matter.

Adults services:

Placement Communication Policy:

Mrs X complained about a lack of communication from the social worker regarding the care arrangements for her uncle.

As a result of this complaint a clear communication policy regarding placements is being developed so communication with clients and families is clear and not confusing.

Payment issues in Liquid Logic:

Mr B contacted the Council to complain about the delay he was experiencing in receiving his carer's allowance payment. After an initial investigation, it was recognised that the recently implemented system (Liquid Logic) was failing to pay a small number of seemingly unrelated accounts.

The payment failures had been noted and were thought to predominantly affect a small number of businesses. Each payment failure was being rectified on a case-by-case basis. Mr B's complaint led to a more detailed investigation of the system failures and helped to identify and rectify the payment issue, so that all future payments could be processed without any delay.

Without the complaint, the service area would not have been aware of a wider payment issue that needed to be resolved.

Environment and Resident Experience:

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) implementation:

A significant number of complaints, as well as other forms of feedback, were received by the council in relation to the implementation of three LTNs in Haringey. Some of these complaints were about the principles and objectives of LTNs. However, others raised concerns about the implementation of including specific impacts on particular groups or issues arising on individual streets. As a result of this feedback changes were made to the

implementation of the LTNs including providing LTN exemptions for all Blue Badge holders in Haringey – not just those residing in LTN areas. Other measures were taken to amend filters and parking arrangements to improve traffic flow.

Waste services:

Through the Council's waste engagement project and Recycling Ideas form, we became aware that residents would like a kerbside textile collection. Subsequently, in partnership with TRAIID we introduced a new kerbside collection of textiles borough-wide from Sept 2023. We also received feedback that residents would like a kerbside small electronics recycling collection. Subsequently, we successfully applied for grant funding from Materials Focus in 2023 and are introducing a new collection service this year.

Shaping Wood Green Voices engagement, as well as feedback through our waste and recycling engagement project have also led to the following service improvements:

- New bins on Wood Green High Rd that have facilities for recyclable and non-recyclable litter.
- New electric cleansing vehicle to remove sacks off the street improving overall cleanliness of pavements.
- New x3 electric barrows with pressure washers for street sweepers improving overall cleanliness of pavements.
- Turnpike Lane jet washing Feb 2022 and Sept 2023, to improve cleanliness of the pavement.
- Chewing Gum Task Force/street scrubbing, Sept 22-Mar 23, to improve cleanliness of pavements.

Other feedback received will be used to improve future communication to residents, for example including clear dates for Christmas tree collection and clearer graphics to emphasise that we need residents to cut up their trees.

Phone boxes:

Following concerns from residents and Elected Members in the past about phone boxes, the Council consulted with residents to establish their experiences with phone boxes across the borough that may be in poor condition. Residents assisted us to pinpoint the locations of run down phone boxes using an interactive map. We received just under 1,500 responses.

93% of people that responded said they wanted problem phone boxes removed. The main reasons people gave was that they didn't feel safe around dilapidated phone boxes, and raised issues such as dumped rubbish, fly posting, graffiti, being used as a toilet, used for drugs and being a focus for other ASB and crime.

The Council are issuing Planning Contravention Notices to the owners of the run-down phone boxes. The notices require the owners to prove that the phone boxes are being used. If they are not, the Council will start to order their removal.

Improvements to disabled parking:

Residents told the Council that they found it difficult to access disabled

parking provision. This was due to complexities in the blue badge application process, a lack of disabled parking provision, in particular dedicated spaces near their home or place of work; and displacement by those fraudulently using the available provision. Their blue badges were also being stolen, resulting in stress and inconvenience when applying for replacement badges.

Taking on board this feedback the Council has since:

- Introduced dedicated disabled parking bays, ensuring that those with entitlement have a reserved space near their home or workplace.
- Introduced a free resident blue badge holder permit. This replaces the blue badge when used to park in Haringey and avoids the need to display the blue badge and risk having it stolen.
- Introduced measures to reduce blue badge misuse. This includes a blue badge enforcement policy, new IT solution to identify stolen / misused badges and a blue badge fraud hotline to report abuse of blue badges – a reduction in the fraudulent use of badges can now be evidenced.
- Increased the length of disabled parking bays making it easier for those with wheelchairs and other mobility aids to access those bays and nearby kerb space.
- Improved the blue badge application process – allowing those with ‘hidden disabilities’ to access the scheme, introducing an appeal process for unsuccessful applications, implemented a new blue badge case management system making it easier to apply for and manage the blue badge.
- Removed administration fees for the replacement of badges that have been stolen, reducing the financial burden on disabled drivers and passengers.

Improvements to carers parking:

Residents and Care Providers told us that carers found it difficult to find parking when caring for those in their own homes. The Council has since introduced a free care at home parking permit to ease this burden.

Parking permits:

Residents told us that they wanted easier access to parking permits.

The Council introduced a new online parking permit system that allowed instant access to electronic parking permits. Some residents found this system difficult to use, so the service worked with the IT supplier to develop and implement improvements that residents had asked for. This resulted in an updated permit module being implemented in November 2023, which addressed the majority of issues identified by residents.

Parking enforcement:

Residents complained about antisocial / illegal parking and the associated noise and general disturbance that it caused. The Council extended its parking enforcement until 1am in response to this. Positive resident feedback

has been received.

Culture, Strategy and Engagement:

Improved complaint handling process

Mr S complained about issues to do with his windows. When works to remedy the issue were not completed in a timely manner Mr S complained again. Due to administrative errors this subsequent contact was registered as new case creating confusion both internally and for Mr S.

Following a stage 2 investigation significant learning was identified and a new procedure was put in place to ensure a thorough search of records for open cases before the logging of a new case. This will ensure that new cases are not opened inappropriately for complaints which are on-going.

Feedback Improvement Plan

We recognise that an efficient and effective Feedback system is critical. Such a system must support us to meet our statutory duties for instance around responding to FOI requests. It must also provide a positive resident experience and be the strongest possible platform for us to utilise the feedback – both positive and negative – that we receive.

Over the last year significant actions have been taken to improve our Feedback performance including the timeliness and quality of responses to provided to elected Members and residents. To date these actions have not delivered the improvements in key metrics that we would have wanted to see. Therefore, we have refreshed our Feedback improvement plans with the aim of improving performance including a reduction in complaints upheld at Stage 2 and Ombudsman; compliance with statutory requirements for responding to FOIs in a timely fashion and an improved experience for elected Members.

Some of the key activities identified for action over the next few months are:

Service priority outcome	Key activities	Target delivery date
Reduce the number of contacts to Corporate Feedback & Resolutions Team (>emails per case)	<p>Improve webpages to reduce the number of service requests that are logged as complaints.</p> <p>Improve intranet pages to provide better support for responding officers including good practise.</p> <p>Review FOI webpage and search function.</p>	By April 2024
Improve timeliness of responses (meeting response times)	Reduce single points of failure through shared mailboxes.	<p>August 2024</p> <p>By December 2024</p>

	<p>Address system/process failures through new casework system.</p> <p>Actively manage overdue cases.</p> <p>Stronger focus on senior level accountability.</p>	<p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>Improve quality of responses (reduce escalations)</p>	<p>Build on learning from Senior-Sign-Off pilot</p> <p>Use staff forum as a community of practise.</p> <p>Staff training.</p> <p>Move from a culture of response to resolve.</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>Improve Members Enquiries experience</p>	<p>ME feedback form to recognise quality responses and best practise.</p> <p>Support administration through retaining email chains.</p> <p>Reducing need for MEs through improved information flow.</p> <p>Actively manage overdue cases.</p> <p>Improved communication when delays occur.</p> <p>Review of Urgent ME process to refine/improve.</p> <p>Replace case management system (at end of contract) to include portal for managing casework.</p>	<p>February 2024</p> <p>February 2024</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>April 2024</p> <p>System delivery by end of November 2024</p>

Maximise value of Corporate Feedback & Resolutions Team	<p>Actively manage overdue cases.</p> <p>Replace case management system (at end of contract)</p> <p>Additional resource to support learning, chasing, co-ordinating.</p> <p>Continued training and development.</p>	<p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>System delivery by end of November 2024</p> <p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>On-going</p>
Implement new Complaint Handling Codes from Housing Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman	<p>New codes were published in February 2024.</p> <p>Requirements being reviewed and implementation plan developed.</p>	<p>Ombudsman guidance comes into force on 1st April 2024.</p>

In line with the Haringey Deal improving our Feedback processes and outcomes are a key part of becoming truly resident centric as an organisation. In addition to these actions, we recognise that this requires not just changes in policy or procedure but a change in culture. This is being developed through our work on embedding the Deal and our new corporate values.

6. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High level Strategic outcomes

Theme 1 – Resident experience, participation and collaboration.

High level outcome 1 - All residents, businesses and other stakeholders can easily access services which are designed and operated in a resident-centric way. Co-production puts resident voice and experience at the heart of everything we do. Positive interactions with the council will support better relationships with the community, increasing mutual trust and confidence.

7. Carbon and Climate Change

N/A

8. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

Finance

N/A

Procurement

N/A

Head of Legal & Governance [Name and title of Officer completing these comments]

N/A

Equality

N/A

9. **Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Feedback and Resolutions data 2022-2023

10. **Background papers**

N/A

Appendix 1: Feedback and Resolutions data 2022-2023

1. Introduction

This is the analysis of Complaints, Ombudsman Cases, Member Enquiries, Freedom of Information Requests and Compliments data for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

As a council we recognise the value of all the feedback we receive on a daily basis from our residents, businesses, elected Members and partners. This feedback comes in many forms and via a growing number of channels. Drawing on the feedback we receive from complaints and Members Enquiries is a really important part of improving our residents' experience – as detailed in the main report.

As part of the Haringey Deal we have made commitments to be a learning organisation, and this is particularly important when we get things wrong. We also want to learn from what we do well and so we are doing more collate and reflect on the positive feedback we receive about the work our staff do day in and day out.

It would be easy to focus only on the volumes in this report – particularly when it comes to Stage 1 complaints. However, the overall number of initial complaints we receive as an organisation reflects a number of factors – not least how easy we make it for residents to find out how to complain.

“High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain” - Housing Ombudsman, Complaint Handling Code 2024

In addition, we recognise that not all complaints are about service failures. Some, very legitimately, are complaints about policy decisions taken by the Council with which some residents may disagree for instance the implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. Therefore, it is important not just to focus on the number of Stage 1 complaints but on the number of those complaints are that are upheld and in particular the number that are upheld where those are escalated to Stage 2 or to the Ombudsman. It is these numbers that tend to highlight not only where a service failure has taken place but also that we did not take the opportunity to rectify the problem at the earliest available opportunity.

It is also important to see complaints in the context of other data and validation processes which together provide us with a rounded picture of our performance. This includes performance data and inspections regimes such as Ofsted.

2. Context

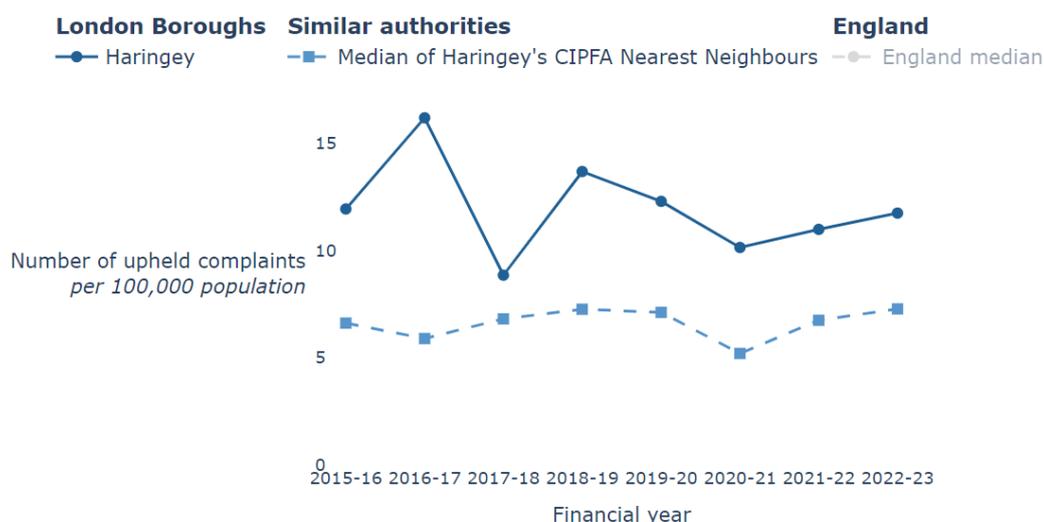
To provide some context to the volumes set out in this report, it is estimated that we now receive in excess of 1 million interactions with, or enquiries from, residents and businesses in any given year.

Below is a breakdown of the volume of some of the resident contacts received by services, where our residents interacted with us the most in 2022/23:

Service area	Volume of contacts	Volume of complaints	% of complaints vs contacts
Revenues & Benefits	501,825	189	0.04%
Customer Services	637,572	126	>0.01%
Environment & Neighbourhoods – Direct Services	220,543	1306	0.6%
Adults Social Care	17,354	61	0.4%

These numbers demonstrate that, as a proportion of all the interactions residents have with the Council over a year, those resulting in formal complaints are very low (less than 1% overall).

We recognise the value of benchmarking. The new Office for Local Government (Oflog) have begun publishing data on number of complaints which are upheld partially or wholly by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman per 100,000 of the population. Oflog data shows that on this measure Haringey tends to trend above other London Boroughs (see diagram below). This is something that we are looking to address through our Feedback improvement plan which is set out in this report.



More positively, our work with our contracted Waste partners (Veolia) to improve their service delivery have been recognised with Haringey Waste Services receiving the second lowest number of complaints nationally and

had the least complaints across London. [Source: [Waste Collection - Which Councils are the Least Rubbish? | Direct365 Blog](#)].

3. Staff Compliments

We record staff compliments from residents by email, letter, online or directly via a manager. In 2022-23 we received 466 staff compliments. This is a 309% increase on the previous year (114 received in 2021-22).

The majority of the compliments received were for Corporate and Customer Services (203 compliments). This was the most complimented service as in previous years and is perhaps reflective of the volume of contacts those services have with residents.

Similarly positive increases were also seen in Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services with 99 compliments (+ 312% on last year) and Adults Social Services with 85 compliments (+ 215% on last year).

We recognise that not all staff compliments are registered via the formal process and that is something that we are addressing with services to ensure the great work of their staff, and the appreciation shown by residents, is captured and acknowledged. The volume of compliments received by Service area are shown in **Table A**.

Below are just a few examples of the compliments received in 2022-23:

Childrens Services

'He is very impressed by the current efficiency of your team. We are both very happy that something has drastically changed over the past few weeks!'

'It's really useful having the [MASH] advice line, I have found it really helpful. I have to also say that compared to another 2 local boroughs I am currently dealing with; I have found Haringey to be extremely efficient and professional every time I have liaised with them in the last couple of years.'

Corporate & Customer

'I got the pleasure of having this officer to help me with my council tax queries. M was patient, kind, warm and very understanding. What he helped with today I have been trying for years for the council to explain to me. He helped me understand my council tax properly and he help me to be able to do all my council tax and housing benefits problems online so I don't need to ring the council every month I can check and see everything online without stress and headache. I just wanted to say this man save me so much stress for a lifetime I'm so happy with is service I have never got such good service from any officer before M is one in a million thank you M.'

'I wanted to say big thank you to I, P and O. They have helped me so much with my housing benefit and council tax reductions and other services. These people need to be recognised for the professionalism and hard work they give, highly empathetic and warm people, so friendly I look forward coming to Haringey council just to see those friendly faces. Many thanks for making me

feel comfortable to ask for help. This is a place where you get help with filling in forms, interpreting and being comfortable not knowing what to do, you get high level of customer services, I hope the above people recognise the services that customers are getting in Marcus Garvey customers' services centre.'

'Just to let you know I ordered my new laminated Blue Badge last week. From date of order to receiving my badge took 3 days!! I would say that's an excellent service. Please pass on my thanks to all those involved for a first-class service.'

Libraries

'Thank you for your customer service. It was a good experience and I really appreciate your help. You showed me how to use 'self-scan' as a supervisor of a hotel, what you did today, we call 'Going the extra mile for great customer service.'

Adult Social Services

'A big thank you to re Haringey reablement team who helped my mother after a fall at home and short hospital stay. They were kind and helpful – and helped rebuild her confidence at home. They communicated with us all well through this time. Thank you for your care – I am sure she may need you again one day.'

Environment and Resident Experience

'I have been so impressed by the various environmental improvements made in my area. Some time ago, I noticed the intriguing work on diverting rainfall, and the lovely variety of plants being used in the scheme. More recently, on my walk from Wood Green tube to my home in Arcadian Gardens, I was delighted to see the wonderful variety of trees planted along the main High Road. It was great to be able to read the labels to identify those I didn't know and confirm or correct those I'd guessed. Thanks to all concerned!'

'Thank you so much for making the lighting so much better on the way home from turnpike lane to lordship lane. It's so noticeable different and as a single woman walking home late at night is really appreciated.'

'I would just like to thank the council for all your hard work you do for the borough. I often use the love clean streets and the response is swift! So, thank you to the whole council team for all that you do. It's most appreciated.'

Planning, Building & Safety Standards

I would like to compliment the Land Charges department for their professional, concise, and swift response in handling my search requests. They turned round the results the quickest I have ever experienced over the 15 years of being in the industry! I hope over time, other councils look to adopt and implement their proactive approach to search responses.'

4. Other Feedback data for 2022-23

The data used to inform this report was collected from reports generated in the Feedback case management system (Respond) for the financial year 2022-23.

Source of Complaints

The majority of complaints received continues to be by electronic methods (62% email and 36% online form) as in previous years.

A data table showing the percentage split of communication by channel is shown in **Table B**.

Stage 1 complaints

In 2022-23, the total number of Stage 1 complaints received by Haringey Council was 4,127, as compared to 1,980 in 2021-22. It should be recognised that the data now includes all Housing related Stage 1 complaints, which were previously recorded against Homes for Haringey (1,949 cases in 2021-22).

The services that received the most complaints in 2022-23 were Housing Services & Building Safety, and Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services. Within those Highways and Parking received 29% (1,180) of the council's complaints, followed by Housing Services with 26% (1,067).

Of the 4,127 complaints received, 79% were replied to within the target of 10 working days. This compares to 78% of complaints responded to on time in 2021-22.

As well as capturing the timeliness of responses, we also measure the percentage of complaints that are upheld at Stage 1 of the process. We have seen an increase in the number of complaints being upheld at Stage 1, with 50% of complaints upheld in 2022-23 compared to 31% of complaints in 2021-22.

In 2022-23, 58% of the Housing & Building Safety complaints were upheld at Stage 1 of the process and was the service with the highest level of upheld cases across the year. This was followed by Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services with 16% of upheld cases at Stage 1, as shown in **Table C**.

We received 25 Statutory Children's Social Care complaints in 2022-23, which is the same amount as in 2021-22, however in 2022-2 28% of cases were responded to in 10 working days compared to 16% in the year before. This falls short of our target of 95% responded to in time but shows an overall improvement in timeliness.

There was an increase in Statutory Adults Social Care complaints in 2022-23 (85 cases) compared to the previous year (60 cases) and performance within that area decreased with only 29% of cases being responded to in 10 working days. This is versus 58% responded to in target in 2021-22.

Data showing year on year comparisons of Stage 1, Statutory Children's Social Care and Statutory Adult Social Care complaints and volumes with the percentage of those that were responded to within target are shown in **Table D**.

Types of Stage 1 Complaints

The highest number of complaints were made in relation to a Poor Standard of Service (47%), followed by Dissatisfaction with Policy or Decision (22%) and Failure to Provide a Service (21%).

It should be noted that in previous years, Employee Behaviour was consistently amongst the highest reasons for residents making a complaint, however this has reduced significantly and is now approximately 2% of all issues raised in complaint cases.

The table showing the top five reasons for making a complaint are shown in **Table E**.

Stage 2 complaints

All first stage responses give the complainant details on how to escalate their complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

A total of 19% of Stage 1 complainants took their complaints to the next stage in 2022-23, compared to 17% in the previous year.

Of the 374 escalated cases that were investigated, a total of 45% were upheld or partially upheld. In 2021/22, 230 cases were escalated to stage 2 with 5% upheld. This is an increase of 40% on the previous year and is an indication that an insufficient number of Stage 1 complaint responses are effectively resolving complaints.

The increase in Stage 2 complaints cannot be attributed to the insourcing of Homes for Haringey because their escalation process was to a Council-led second stage investigation and all escalated complaints have historically been included in this report.

However, the highest volume of Stage 2 complaints was received for Housing Services and Building Safety 55% (272 cases) and of those, 74% of the complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

Since this reporting period, a Housing Improvement Plan has been developed. The Plan has put significant focus on and investment into improving the Housing service including the repairs service and complaint handling. We would expect to see this reflected in the figures in future annual reports.

A breakdown of the services that received Stage 2 complaints is shown in **Table F**, with the volume of cases and the percentage of those that were upheld or partly upheld.

5. Ombudsman cases

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) website contains the following statement in relation to comparing statistics:

“In 2022-23 we changed our investigation processes, contributing towards an increase in the average uphold rate across all complaints. Consider comparing individual council uphold rates against the average rate rather than against previous years.

In 2020-21 we received and decided fewer complaints than normal because we stopped accepting new complaints for three months due to Covid-19.”

In 2022-23, 79% of the complaints about Haringey Council received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) were upheld (31 of 39 investigations). This was slightly above the average of 77% of complaints received about similar authorities.

In 96% of cases the LGSCO were satisfied that Haringey had successfully implemented their recommendations (compared to an average of 99% in similar authorities)

In 10% of upheld cases, the Ombudsman found the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy in the previous complaint stages before the complaint had reached the Ombudsman (compared to an average of 15% in similar authorities).

The majority of the upheld cases (11) were for Housing Demand; predominantly in relation to temporary accommodation, followed by Children’s Services Early Help & Prevention (7) that had a high number of ECHP cases upheld.

We have been working closely with the LGSCO, to better manage cases and outcomes for our residents, and seeing through our commitments which has led to an improved overall position for the Council. We are committed to continue with this work.

Positively, there were no public interest reports published about Haringey Council for 2022-23.

Information about the complaints upheld by the LGSCO, Haringey’s compliance with Ombudsman recommendations and the satisfactory remedies provided by the Council, can be seen on the [LGSCO website](#).

Housing Ombudsman

In 2022-23, 98 Orders were made against Haringey (41 Orders in 2021-22) with an 81.4% maladministration rate (54% in 2021-22) and was therefore a significant drop in performance. This is compared to 55% national

maladministration rate, and a 62% average for Local Authorities/ALMOs

Property Condition was cited as the category with the highest volume of findings (29) followed by Complaint Handling (15)

The Housing Ombudsman Landlord Performance Report 2022/23 can be seen on the [Housing Ombudsman website](#).

At the point of insourcing Homes for Haringey in 2022, Senior Officers from the Council met with the Housing Ombudsman to discuss our improvement plan for complaint handling and discuss the Ombudsman's notice of their investigation into damp and mould issues.

In December 2022, the Council also commissioned a Property Compliance Health Check to assess the approach to managing six compliance areas, which found a number of areas of non-compliance. Following the findings of the external health check, the Council made a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing ('the Regulator') in January 2023.

At around the same time, the Council implemented wider plans to improve the complaints handling process and introduced a Housing Improvement Plan; one objective of which was to improve complaint handling.

As with the LGSCO, we have been working closely with the HO, to better manage cases and outcomes for our residents. Additional officers were added to the team to assist with responding to the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and oversee the completion of commitments made to the residents as a result of their case. The officers also contribute to ensuring that the HO responses are fully considered and sent on time.

With the additional resources, we would expect to see a reduction in the number of Complaint Handling Failure Orders that are issued to the Council, and an increased percentage of compliance with HO orders.

Officers from both Housing and Feedback have completed training sessions held by the HO to improve their understanding and treatment of responses, which was well received by our staff. Our willingness to commit time of staff to attend has been publicly acknowledged by the HO.

Monthly meetings with the HO have been held to collaboratively work through the improvement action plan, the last items of which were signed off in February 2024.

6. Member Enquiries

In 2022-23, 5,920 Member Enquiries were processed. This is broken down as 4,690 raised by Councillors (79%) and 1,226 raised by MPs (21%). As with Stage 1 complaints, these figures now include all cases relating to housing matters that were previously reported separately by Homes for Haringey.

The 5,920 case figure is higher however than the overall number of ME cases logged for the year, which was 4,679 cases in total. This is the result of multiple contacts from both Councillors and Members of Parliament on the

same matter.

Of the 4,679 cases, 83% were replied to within the target time scale of 10 working days. The case volume and percentage response data are shown in **Table G**.

In a similar vein to the Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, Housing Services & Building Safety and Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services received the highest number of Member Enquiries, with 1,453 and 1,150 respectively, which therefore represents 56% of all MEs received in 2022-23.

A breakdown of the Directorates that received Member Enquiries with the percentage of cases is shown in **Table H**.

Of the 4,679 ME cases raised, 49% were service requests submitted on behalf of a resident, and 40% were information requests. The enquiry types are listed in **Table I**.

7. Freedom of Information Enquiries

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act was introduced in 2005 with its purpose being to make authorities and public bodies more open and transparent with the information they hold. The FOI Act and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) are very similar and are dealt with through the same process. The figures given below are for both FOI and EIR requests.

Public Authorities should respond to FOI / EIR requests within 20 working days from the date the request was received.

All requests must be received in writing and Haringey has a dedicated online form and email address for this. In line with best practice, Haringey has been proactively publishing more data and information online and has a disclosure log, which shows all requests received and responses issued. In addition, a full performance report is published online.

Between April 2022 and March 2023 Haringey responded to a total of 1,553 requests, a 218 (16%) increase on the previous year. 78% of responses were sent within 20 days. A table showing the performance across the past 5 years is at **Table J**.

There is provision under the FOI Act, for not providing information in instances where either the information is not held, or we are unable to gather the information due to the cost associated. In 2022-23, 203 requests were not provided for these reasons. The breakdown of volumes and percentages relating to these requests is shown in **Table K**.

In addition to these requests there were a further 116 cases (7% of the total received) where an exemption was applied. Both the FOI and EIR Acts contain exemptions that allow Public Authorities to withhold information where there are specific circumstances, and are detailed in **Table L**. The most frequently applied exemption (46%) was under Section 40 of the Act and relates to protecting personal information.

Of the 1,553 FOI requests that were submitted to the council in 2022-23, E&N – Direct Services received the majority for a single service area with 203

requests (13% of all FOIs). The requests were predominantly related to the implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and the subsequent enforcement/fines collected.

All other council services received comparatively lower volumes across the year. The highest volume received by each service area is show in **Table M**.

9. Appendices:

1. Data Tables.

Appendix 1 - Data tables

Table A - Staff compliments

Service	No. of Compliments
Corporate and Customer Services	203
E&N Direct Services	99
Adult Social Services	85
E&N Stronger & Safer Communities	15
Children's Services Safeguarding and Social Care	14
Children's Services Early Help and Prevention	12
Other services	38
Total	466

Table B - Communication by channel

Method	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Email	58%	40%	39%	62%
Online form	38%	58%	59%	36%
Letter	3%	1%	1%	1%
Phone Call	1%	1%	1%	<1%

Table C – highest volume of Stage 1 complaints by Service area

Service	No. of Complaints	% of St 1 Complaints Received	% of all Complaints Upheld
Housing Services & Building Safety	1,672	41%	58%
E&N - Direct Services	1,306	32%	15%
Corporate and Customer Services	374	9%	8%
E&N – Stronger & Safer Communities	278	7%	6%
Housing Demand	154	4%	4%

Table D – Cases responded to within target

	No. of Complaints	% of Complaints Received	% of all Complaints Upheld	% responded within target
Stage 1 Complaints	4,127	97%	50%	79%
Children's Social Care Complaints	25	1%	36%	28%
Adults Social Care Complaints	85	2%	52%	29%

Table E - Top reasons for making a complaint (S1)

Complaint Reason	%
Poor standard of service	47%
Dissatisfaction with Policy or Decision	22%
Failure to Provide a Service	21%
Inadequate or Inaccurate Communication	7%
Employee Behaviour	2%

Table F - Volume of Stage 2 cases and the percentage upheld/partly upheld

Service	S2 complaints received	No. upheld or partly upheld	% upheld / partly upheld for each service
Housing Services and Building Safety	281	168	60%
E&N - Direct Services	60	15	25%
Corporate & Customer Services	52	17	33%
E&N - Stronger & Safer Communities	25	10	40%
Planning, Building Standards & Sustainability	13	0	0%

Table G – Volume of Member Enquiry cases logged and % responded to on time

Year	Number of MEs	% Replied to on-time
2022/ 23	4,679	83%
2021/22	2,535	83%
2020/21	2,532	87%
2019/20	2,460	88%

Table H – Member Enquiries top service areas

Service	No. of MEs	% of MEs
Housing Services & Building Safety	1,453	31%
E & N – Direct Services	1,150	25%
E&N - Stronger & Safer Communities	712	15%
Corporate & Customer services	289	6%
Housing Demand	274	6%
<i>All Other Services</i>	762	17%

Table I – Member Enquiries by issue type

Nature of Enquiry	% of total
Service Request	49%
Information Request	40%
Poor Standard of Service	6%
Dissatisfaction with Policy / decision	2%
Failure to Provide a Service	2%
Inadequate or Inaccurate Communications	1%

Table J – FOI/EIR annual performance

Year	No. of requests	% on time
2022 - 2023	1,553	78%
2021-2022	1,335	83%
2020-2021	1,094	82%
2019-2020	1,384	86%
2018-2019	1,434	82%

Table K – FOI information not provided

Information not Provided	Total	% of Total requests
Information not held	179	12%
Information not given due to cost	24	2%

Table L – FOI/EIR exemptions applied

FOI - Exemption Applied	Total	% of Total Exemptions
Section 40 – Personal Information	53	46%
Section 31 – Law Enforcement	21	18%
Section 43 – Commercial Interests	15	13%
Section 21 - Info accessible by some other means	6	5%
Section 22 - Intended for future publication	5	4%

Section 24 – Safeguarding of National Security	3	3%
Section 41 – Confidential Information	3	3%
Section 42 – Legal professional Privilege	2	2%
Section 36 - Effective Conduct of Public Affairs	1	1%
Section 38 - safety of any individual	1	1%
EIR - Exemption Applied	Total	% of Total Exemptions
Regulation 12 5 (f)	2	2%
Regulation 12 (4) b) – Manifestly Unreasonable	2	2%
Regulation 12 (4) (a) – Information not held	2	2%

Table M – Top 5 FOI requests received by Service

Service	No. of FOI	% of total
E&N - Direct Services	299	19%
E&N - Stronger & Safer Communities	211	14%
Planning, Building Standards & Sustainability	173	11%
Corporate & Customer Services	137	9%
Housing Services and Building Safety	101	7%

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Work Plan 2022-24

<p>1. Scrutiny review projects; These are dealt with through a combination of specific evidence gathering meetings that will be arranged as and when required and other activities, such as visits. Should there not be sufficient capacity to cover all these issues through in-depth pieces of work, they could instead be addressed through a “one-off” item at a scheduled meeting of the Panel. These issues will be subject to further development and scoping. It is proposed that the Committee consider issues that are “cross cutting” in nature for review by itself i.e. ones that cover the terms of reference of more than one of the panels.</p>		
Project	Comments	Priority
Prevention of Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)	<p>Terms of reference: To review the current arrangements for specific areas of VAWG prevention in Haringey under the remit of the Council’s VAWG Strategy 2016-26 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council’s approach to schools-based engagement on VAWG, including the progress of recent pilot projects, the likely future resource requirements, national policy/guidance and approaches to school-based engagement elsewhere in London and the UK that Haringey could potentially learn from. • the Council’s approach to community engagement on VAWG, including the progress of recent work in this area, the likely future resource requirements, national policy/guidance and approaches to community engagement elsewhere in London and the UK that Haringey could potentially learn from. 	<p>1</p> <p>Evidence sessions commenced in December 2022.</p>

2. “One-off” Items; These will be dealt with at scheduled meetings of the Committee. The following are suggestions for when particular items may be scheduled.		
Date	Potential Items	Lead Officer/Witnesses
20 June 2022	Performance update; To monitor performance against priority targets	Performance Manager
	Terms of Reference	Principal Scrutiny Officer
	Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan	Principal Scrutiny Officer
25 July 2022	Cabinet Member Questions - Leader of the Council	Leader and Chief Executive
	Haringey Health Hub	Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs – Whittington Health
13 October 2022	Cabinet Member Questions – Housing Services, Private Renters and Planning	Cabinet Member and officers

	2021/22 Provisional Outturn report	Director of Finance
	Finance update – Q1	Director of Finance
	Fairness Commission – Update on recommendations	
	Fire Safety Scrutiny Review - Update on recommendations	
28 November 2022	Cabinet Member Questions; Tackling Inequality and Resident Services	Cabinet Member and officers
	Intrusive fire risk assessments – Update	Assistant Director – Property Services
	Pilot building safety case – Update	Assistant Director – Property Services
12 January 2023	Cabinet Member Questions; Communities & Civic Life	Cabinet Member and officers
	Budget Scrutiny – Your Council	Cabinet Member and officers

19 January 2023 (Budget)	Budget Scrutiny; Panel feedback and recommendations. To consider panel's draft recommendations and agree input into Cabinet's final budget proposal discussions (Deputy Chair in the Chair)	Deputy Chair (in the Chair)
	Cabinet Member Questions; Finance	Cabinet Member and officers
	Treasury Management Statement	Assistant Director - Finance
30 March 2023	Cabinet Member Questions; Economic Development, Jobs & Community Cohesion	Cabinet Member and officers
	Pilot building safety case – Update on resident engagement	Assistant Director – Property Services
	Complaints Annual Report	Head of Customer Experience & Operations
2023/24		
8 June 2023	Cabinet Member Questions - Leader of the Council	Leader and Chief Executive
	Performance Framework update	Performance Manager

	Membership & Terms of Reference.	Scrutiny Officer
	OSC Work Programme	Scrutiny Officer
24 July 2023	Cabinet Member Questions – Cabinet Member for Finance	Cllr Carlin
	Provisional Outturn Report 2022-23	AD Finance
12 October 2023	Participatory Budgeting in Haringey	Cabinet Member and officers
	Finance Update Q1	Frances Palopoli
	Performance Update Q1	Performance Manager
	Scrutiny Review: Physical Activity & Sport	Chair of CYP Scrutiny Panel
27 November 2023	Leisure services update	Cabinet Member and officers (Director of Environment & Resident Experience)
	Voter ID – Elections	Cabinet Member and officers (Head of Electoral Services)

	Finsbury Park events	Cabinet Member and officers (Director of Environment & Resident Experience)
9 January 2024	Budget Scrutiny – Culture, Strategy & Engagement	Cabinet Member and officers
18 January 2024 (Budget)	Budget Scrutiny; Panel feedback and recommendations. To consider panel’s draft recommendations and agree input into Cabinet’s final budget proposal discussions (Deputy Chair in the Chair)	Deputy Chair (in the Chair)
	Cabinet Member Questions; Finance	Cabinet Member and officers
	Treasury Management Statement	AD Finance
1 February 2024 (Budget)	Budget Scrutiny – Any outstanding budget issues to be considered.	Cabinet Member and officers
11 March 2024	Cabinet Member Questions; Cabinet Member for Council House Building, Placemaking and Local Economy	Cabinet Member and officers
	Complaints Annual Report	Cabinet Member and officers

To be allocated:

- Update - Effectiveness of Council communications with residents about housing repairs.
- Co-production and the Haringey Deal
- Participatory budgeting

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is exempt

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