

NOTICE OF MEETING

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 22nd June, 2020, 6.30 pm - Microsoft Teams Meeting:
Watch it [here](#)

Members: Councillors Lucia das Neves (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Erdal Dogan, Adam Jogee and Khaled Moyeed

Co-optees/Non Voting Members: Mark Chapman (Parent Governor representative), Luci Davin (Parent Governor representative), 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**

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. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Verbal Update

7. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS & HEALTH

Verbal Update.

8. SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO BLUE BADGES AND SUPPORTING BETTER ACCESS TO PARKING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE (PAGES 1 - 42)

9. MINUTES (PAGES 43 - 72)

To agree the minutes of the following meetings as a correct record.

- 14th January 2020
- 23rd January 2020
- 26th May 2020

10. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

11. FUTURE MEETINGS

20th July

Philip Slawther, Principal Committee Coordinator

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Bernie Ryan

Assistant Director – Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer

River Park House, 225 High Road, Wood Green, N22 8HQ

Friday, 12 June 2020

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Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 June 2020

Title: Scrutiny Review on Blue Badges

Report authorised by: Cllr Jogee, Chair of Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel

Lead Officer: Philip Slawther, 020 8489 2957 philip.slawther2@haringey.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:**

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 Under the agreed terms of reference, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) can assist the Council and the Cabinet in its budgetary and policy framework through conducting in-depth analysis of local policy issues and can make recommendations for service development or improvement. The Committee may:
- (a) Review the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
 - (b) Conduct research to assist in specific investigations. This may involve surveys, focus groups, public meetings and/or site visits;
 - (c) Make reports and recommendations, on issues affecting the authority's area, or its inhabitants, to Full Council, its Committees or Sub-Committees, the Executive, or to other appropriate external bodies.
- 1.2 In this context, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 April 2019 agreed to set up a review project to look at Blue Badges and how the Council could support better access to parking for people with disabilities.
- 1.3 This report was due to be agreed by OSC at its meeting on 12th March 2020. However, due to Covid-19, there were not enough Members available to form a quorum and the meeting was postponed.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Committee approve the report and its recommendations and that it be submitted to Cabinet for response.

4. Reasons for decision

4.1 The Committee is requested to approve the report and the recommendations within it so that it may be submitted to Cabinet for response.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The Committee could decide not to agree the report and its recommendations, which would mean that it could not be referred to Cabinet for response.

6. Background information

6.1 The rationale for the setting up of the review, including the scope and terms of reference, is outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.7 of the Scrutiny Review report.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

7.1 This review relates to Outcome 7 of the Borough Plan: All adults are able to live healthy and fulfilling lives, with dignity, staying active and connected in their communities.

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

Finance and Procurement

8.1 In September 2019 Cabinet approved the Blue Badge and Disabled Bay Operational Review, this enabled the introduction of dedicated disabled bays and change in eligibility criteria for disabled bays and to delegate authority in consultation with relevant cabinet member to make operational and policy changes.

8.2 Cabinet were also asked to note changes to the eligibility criteria for Blue Badges as set by the Department for Transport. this included Entitlement without further assessment (automatic entitlement) for the following individuals:-

- Receives the Higher Rate of the Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance; or
- Score 8 points or more under the “moving around” activity of awarded a lump the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP); or
- Receives the mobility component of PIP and has obtained 10 points specifically for Descriptor E under the “planning and following journeys” activity, on the grounds that they are unable to undertake any journey because it would cause them overwhelming psychological distress; or
- Is registered blind (severely sight impaired); or
- Receives a War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement (WPMS); or

- Has been both sum benefit at tariffs 1-8 of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and certified as having an enduring and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking.

Or

Entitlement subject to further assessment

- A person who drives a vehicle regularly, has a severe disability in both arms and is unable to operate, or has considerable difficulty in operating, all or some types of parking meter; or
 - A person who has been certified by an expert assessor as having an enduring and substantial disability which causes them, during the course of a journey, to:
 1. Be unable to walk;
 2. Experience very considerable difficulty whilst walking, which may include very considerable psychological distress; or
 3. Be at risk of serious harm when walking; or pose, when walking, a risk of serious harm to any other person.
- 8.3 This included recognising hidden disabilities' extending the concession to those with Dementia, Autism and ADHT.
- 8.4 Funds have been identified to implement these changes and the capital works are included in the Capital programme.
- 8.5 Paragraph 21 discusses the prospect of commissioning additional providers to carry out assessments, however the current arrangements are that Whittington Trust provide this service to the Council free of charge. Therefore any additional provision would have budgetary implications which would need to be considered

Legal

- 8.6 Under Section 9F Local Government Act 2000 ("The Act"), Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the powers to to make reports or recommendations to the executive – the Cabinet - with respect to the discharge of its functions, or on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of its area.
- 8.7 There is no specific statutory obligation on the Council to provide disabled parking bays (designated or otherwise). It has the discretion and the statutory power to do so however, through the making of Traffic Management Orders (TMOs) under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA).
- 8.8 This provision is an executive function.
- 8.9 In making such TMOs to introduce dedicated Disabled Parking Bays, the Council must follow statutory procedures including as to consultation. Eligibility criteria for applications for Disabled Parking Bays are set by the Council.
- 8.10 "Blue badge fraud" takes a number of forms, from outright forgery via theft to misuse by the person entitled to it or their associates.

8.11 Further legal implications appear in the body of the report.

Equality

8.9 Disabled people are protected under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Better access to disabled parking services can advance equality of opportunity. A equalities impact assessment would be carried out if the proposals proceeds to Cabinet

9. Use of Appendices

Appendix A: Scrutiny Review on Blue Badges and Supporting Better Access to Parking for People with Disabilities.

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A



Scrutiny Review: Blue Badges and Supporting Better Access to Parking for Disabled People

**A Scrutiny Review by the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel
2019/20**

Panel Membership	Cllr Adam Jogee (Chair)
	Cllr Eldridge Culverwell
	Cllr Barbara Blake
	Cllr Peray Ahmet
	Cllr Julie Davies
	Cllr Julia Ogiehor
	Cllr Scott Emery
	Ian Sygrave (Co-opted member)

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Contents:	page
Chairs Foreword	3
Recommendations	5
1. Background	8
2. Introduction	11
3. Dedicated Disabled Bays	15
4. Applying for and Renewing a Blue Badge	18
5. Enforcement and Blue Badge related crime.	24
6. Correspondence and Communication	29
7. Assessments for Discretionary Blue Badge Applications	33

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

The remit of the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel is such that the options for reviews to focus on, issues to unpick and policies to test are almost innumerable. As Chair, working with my colleagues, I wanted to ensure that we focused on issues of importance to the community, issues that affected the lives of our people and issues where we could deliver real change. That vision remains my priority and will do so every day I serve as a Councillor here in the London Borough of Haringey.

There are many responsibilities of the Council to the people who live, learn and work in our community. Among those important responsibilities to the people of Haringey is the fight to ensure that our Borough – east and west – is accessible, inclusive, safe and welcoming.

Those aims and objectives underpin why we chose to look at the issue of disabled bays and Blue Badges. The application process, used by many residents in our Borough, have long been inefficient, inaccessible and in some cases, not fit for purpose. A Cabinet level decision was made in early 2019 to review a range of parking related issues in line with the new Transport Strategy. Our panel wanted to play our part and engaged with the review in as open and reflective a way as possible. At a meeting of our panel in April 2019, we heard from members of the public, officers of the council, relevant stakeholders and many others that action was needed on disabled bays and blue badges.

Since then, we have met with and seen first hand the processes and structures in London Boroughs across our capital city. We have brought residents into the Council to share their experiences, to explain their thoughts and to work together to develop a set of recommendations that will deliver real and meaningful change. And we have met with representatives of community organisations, disability charities and other bodies relevant to this matter.

The Panel is grateful to the Cabinet Member for taking the time and effort to listen to our deliberations and work constructively with us over recent weeks and months. The progress made on dedicated disabled bays that went to Cabinet in September 2019 is the first step to delivering real change and we will continue to monitor this important area in the coming weeks and months.

The real change proposed in our review will lead to a better deal for disabled people, and those who require assistance with their mobility, so that they are able to go about their day-to-day life without obstruction or inconvenience. This is an important report that deserves to be taken seriously and we have put together a set of recommendations that I hope will receive full support from the Cabinet.

I would like to thank Philip Slawther, our Clerk, for his work and support. Those thanks are extended to all the officers here at the London Borough of Haringey who have assisted us from the start of the process to the publication of this review.

Lastly, I would like to thank my colleagues on the Panel. It has been a useful, interesting, challenging and motivating experience and I am grateful to Cllr Eldridge

Culverwell, Cllr Scott Emery, Cllr Barbara Blake, Cllr Peray Ahmet, Cllr Julie Davies, Cllr Julie Ogiehor and Ian Sygrave for their individual, and combined, contribution.

Councillor Adam Jogee

Labour Member for Hornsey

Chair, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Cabinet to give consideration as to how future Scrutiny Reviews could be best supported and common timelines agreed that allow Scrutiny to carry out its investigative work fully.

Disabled Bays and Provision of Dedicated Disabled Bays

2. That Cabinet undertake to monitor the implementation and conversion of dedicated disabled bays going forward, with particular focus on the impact on the overall availability and distribution of disabled parking bays.
3. That Cabinet reconsider the eligibility criteria for disabled bays and the use of automatic entitlement based upon whether the person is in receipt of higher rate/enhanced rate benefit payments.

Applying for and renewing a Blue Badge

4. That Cabinet undertake to explore ways of ensuring that online payments can be made for Blue Badges. At present the £10 administration fee can only be paid via cheque which causes unnecessary delays. This may require engaging with the DfT and seeking changes to the government website. It is suggested that Local Members of Parliament could be engaged on this issue and their influence sought.
5. That provision be put in place for Blue Badge applicants to be able to speak to the Concessionary Travel team directly.
6. That Cabinet explore ways in order to make the process of applying, renewing and being assessed for a Blue Badge more streamlined and less disjointed. Specifically, the Panel would like Cabinet to consider:
 - Whether regular updates could be provided to applicants on the status of their application?
 - Whether this could be automated?
 - Ensuring that applicants can upload documents online.
 - That provision of an automatic renewal reminder email/letter to Blue Badge holders at the appropriate point, be explored?
7. That the Cabinet Member should have a greater oversight of the overall process from start to finish. The Cabinet Member should receive regular performance monitoring updates from the different areas and an action plan should be developed to improve monitoring and ensure delays are minimised.
8. That the Cabinet Member undertake to arrange a quarterly strategic partnership forum with key stakeholders, including the Council, the Whittington, Police and DfT to ensure that the overall journey is streamlined and made more accessible. This

would also provide a partnership forum to address Blue Badge related crime as per Recommendation 11.

Enforcement and Blue Badge Related Crime.

9. That the Council should prioritise tougher enforcement of Blue Badge fraud in order to ensure that those with genuine mobility issues are able to use their vehicles. Training should be provided for Enforcement officers and processes put in place so that any Blue Badge identified by a CEO was inspected and the badge holders' details cross referenced with the back office for possible misuse. The Panel heard evidence from Bromley that this could take as little as 30 seconds.
10. Consideration should be given to how the Council, working with police and partners, could support the rollout of theft prevention devices for Blue Badges. The Panel received evidence that these were particularly effective and cost between £30 & £40. Cabinet should consider whether providing these was cheaper than the administration costs associated with replacing a stolen Blue Badge.
11. That the Council works closely with the police to reduce proliferation of Blue Badge related crime. The Panel received evidence that Blue Badge theft from vehicles has risen over 600% in the last three years. It is suggested that the Community Safety Partnership could examine this issue as part of its work programme for 2020/21.
12. That the Council explores the feasibility of issuing virtual permits instead of Companion Badges. Cabinet should also ensure that provision of paper applications is retained on some level in order to ensure residents without access to IT are not unduly disadvantaged.
13. The Cabinet Member should engage with other Boroughs that have implemented virtual permits to see what lessons can be learnt. Engagement should also be sought with the Mayor's Office and London Councils to encourage adoption at a pan-London level and explore the feasibility of having a more integrated system across London.

Correspondence and Communications

14. That a commitment is given that the Council will carry out a review of the letters and communications that it sends to residents to ensure that they are clear, courteous and without the use of intimidating language.
15. That the Council implement provision for residents to report disabled bays that were no longer in use and that processes are put in place for adequate monitoring of disabled bays and whether they were being used. Once a bay is identified as being unused there should be a clear timeline for its removal. A campaign should

be launched through Haringey People and our website to “report an unused disabled bay”.

16. That the Council should send out a booklet of key information to residents as soon as they are assessed as needing a Blue Badge.
17. That the Council explore ways in which an automatic reminder could be issued, along with the existing information given to the next of kin, to cancel a Blue Badge when a death is registered.
18. A communications campaign should be implemented across the Blue Badge agenda which clearly sets out the Council’s enforcement message. It is suggested that disability access representatives and the Council’s Equalities Steering Group should be involved in developing this campaign and that consideration should be given to highlighting awareness around the fact that not all disabilities are visible.

Health Assessments for Blue Badges

19. That consideration should be given on to how to minimise delays within the assessment process, including ensuring that assessment bundles can be transferred to Stuart Crescent electronically.
20. It is recommended that, the Council should work with Stuart Crescent Health Centre to ensure that the current 5 minute deadline for late arrivals was extended and a greater degree of flexibility afforded to applicants, given the mobility levels of the people being assessed and the lack of available parking facilities. Cabinet should work with the Whittington Trust to ensure that residents were provided with an alternative date when an appointment was missed.
21. That Cabinet ensures that monitoring of the current 23 day timescale for applications to be processed is undertaken. That Cabinet also explores recommissioning of the current contract to provide assessments for discretionary Blue Badge applications as it was last done over 10 years ago. The Panel recommends that consideration is given to commissioning additional providers for the assessment process for greater flexibility and distribution across the borough. The Council should explore ways of ensuring that that residents have a choice of which centre they attend and that there is some provision in the west of the Borough as well as in Tottenham. The Panel suggests that recommissioning this service could potentially provide an opportunity to speed up the assessment process and minimise delays.

1. Background

Introduction

- 1.1 The Panel were approached by the then Cabinet Member for Environment and the Interim AD for Environment and Neighbourhoods, who outlined proposals for the service to review a range of parking related issues in line with the Transport Strategy. The Parking Service were looking at updating a range of policies and operational practices as part of this. The impetus was a combination of a widening of existing Blue Badge eligibility criteria and opportunities arising from a scheduled upgrade to the Council's Civica IT system for parking, which would support additional online payment opportunities and maximise recovery of income from Parking Control Notices (PCNs). As part of this programme of work, it was felt that there were a number of opportunities for Scrutiny to be involved in a policy development role. Most Scrutiny Reviews are retrospective in nature and the Panel welcomed the opportunity to feed into an emerging policy area.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 30th April 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a review that looked into how the Council could provide better access to disabled parking services, with a particular focus on Blue Badge provision. During the Scrutiny Panel meeting on the 8th April 2019 the Panel undertook a discussion around parking services and some of the barriers faced by disabled people in accessing these services. The Panel heard from members of the public, majority and minority group Councillors and the Cabinet Member on this issue. The Panel received evidence that the process of getting a Blue Badge could be long and involve dealing a number of different agencies. This evidence reinforced some of the concerns that the Panel Members had come across through their individual surgeries and case work. Following the discussion at the April meeting of the Environment and Community Safety Panel, it was felt that there was a real need for a review of current processes and scope to make recommendations on how these could be improved.
- 1.3 One of the key issues that was highlighted at this stage was around the problems that some residents had experienced with getting a replacement Blue Badge in the eventuality that it was either lost or stolen. The Panel were keen to understand what could be done to speed this process up. Throughout the evidence gathering process for this review it was made clear that for many residents, having a Blue Badge, and the improved accessibility it afforded, could be life changing. The Panel were keen to hear from a range of stakeholders to better understand the problems that existed and evaluate where improvements could be made.

Scrutiny and Cabinet

- 1.4 Following Annual Council in May 2019, the portfolio holder for parking services changed and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods became responsible for this area. The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods had given evidence to the Scrutiny Review and was engaged with the issue from the outset. The Panel would like to thank the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods for her contribution to this review, both as a backbencher and as the Cabinet Member and the level of support and enthusiasm that she has showed towards the issues raised.

- 1.5 Following a number of the evidence gathering sessions, the Cabinet Member made clear that she was keen to progress some of the issues that had been identified and was concerned that the scrutiny process was taking longer than she would have ideally liked. At this juncture the Cabinet Member took a decision that, rather than wait for the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review, she would seek to bring an initial phase of service improvements through the Council's Cabinet and that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review would help inform subsequent stages of the wider operational review. The initial phase of changes to existing service provision were focused on the introduction of a dedicated disabled bay scheme and an upgrade to the Civica Parking Management IT System to underpin further improvements to the parking infrastructure in the future.
- 1.6 The Panel are aware that some of the proposals were time sensitive, particularly in respect of the expiry of the existing Civica contract. The Panel also recognise that this is a long-term process and that the reports that went to Cabinet in September 2019 set out the wider strategy and vision for the years ahead. The Panel understands the Cabinet Member's desire to bring about improvements and do so within a defined time period, but believe that the introduction of dedicated disabled bays was done without the Scrutiny Panel having completed its review of this scheme and without adequate opportunity to speak to other boroughs that had introduced similar schemes. The scheme has a cost implication to the Council and the Panel would have liked further opportunity to assure itself of the merits of introducing a dedicated disabled bay scheme and to understand how and where this has been successful.
- 1.7 The Panel would like to see a close working relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny and that both elements continue to explore opportunities to work in conjunction with one another and that there is a continued role for, and involvement in, policy development for Scrutiny.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet give consideration as to how future Scrutiny Reviews could be best supported and common timelines agreed that allow Scrutiny to carry out its investigative work fully.

Aims of the Review

- 1.8 The Panel was mindful that that parking is a complex and wide ranging policy area. It was felt that the review was most likely to be effective if it focussed on Blue Badges as this was a vital area of parking policy for those with disabilities and could be a life line for vulnerable residents who relied on the independence and ability to undertake day-to-day tasks that it affords. The Scrutiny Review also looked into the issue of dedicated disabled parking bays and whether these should be offered to residents.

1.9 The review aimed to establish:

- What are residents' experiences of accessing and using a Blue Badge?
- How can the process of issuing Blue Badges and replacement Blue Badges be improved? What, if any, are the delays involved in the process?
- What is the current process around issuing of companion Blue Badges and the barriers involved;
- Should the Council offer designated disabled parking bays;
- How Haringey compares with other local authorities and what can be learned from their experiences;
- How could improvements be made to the written correspondence received by residents in relation to disabled parking services and Blue Badges;

Scope/Terms of Reference

1.10 The terms of reference for the review were as follows:

“To consider and make recommendations to Cabinet on what barriers exist in getting and using a Blue Badge? What are the experiences of disabled service users in accessing parking services, particularly Blue Badges and how and where improvements can be made?”

Sources of Evidence:

1.11 Sources of evidence were:

- Experience of residents and service users.
- Relevant data sources, including information on current Council processes and procedures.
- Research information.
- Performance information.
- Interviews with relevant key Council officers
- Disability access groups and voluntary sector organisations such as Disabled Motoring UK and Transport for All.¹
- Best practice within the sector

1.12 A full list of all those who provided evidence is attached as Appendix A.

Membership

1.13 The membership of the Panel is as follows:

Councillors: Adam Jogee (Chair), Peray Ahmet, Julie Davies, Eldridge Culverwell, Barbara Blake, Scott Emery & Julia Ogiehor.
Co-opted Members: Ian Sygrave (Chair of Haringey Association of Neighbourhood Watches).

¹ Transport for All were initially keen to be involved in the process but subsequently declined our invitation to give evidence.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 There are around 2500 Blue Badge applications and renewals a year in Haringey and approximately 2800 disabled bays. There are around 250 applications received a year and Parking Services introduce 50 new bays and remove 20 redundant bays every 3 months. Haringey offers a Companion Badge that can be used instead of the Blue Badge and was brought in to reduce Blue Badge theft. Disabled drivers are able to park using a Blue Badge or a Companion Badge. However, the Blue Badge is valid for use across the UK, whilst the Companion Badge is only valid within Haringey. Blue Badge holders and Companion badge holders are permitted to park in all permit and shared use bays and on yellow lines for up three hours and free of charge. A Blue Badge is issued for three years before a renewal is required.
- 2.2 The process of applying for a Blue Badge is done through a government website. In Haringey residents can also make a paper based application through the Customer Service Centres. Haringey Customer Services also offer Digital Assistance for residents at its Customer Service Centre, which was originally set up to assist with Universal Credit applications but is being extended to all online transactions in support of the FOBO programme.
- 2.3 Applications for Blue Badges, either online or via a paper application, are assessed by Haringey Customer Services staff. Applicants are deemed to be eligible for automatic entitlement based on set criteria which, if met and payment is received, will result in a Blue Badge being processed on that day and the DfT usually issuing the badge within 7 working days. Including postage and delivery, this process can take up to 10 working days. If the applicant does not meet the automatic criteria then their application is considered discretionary and further evidence is requested or a physical assessment of their mobility is undertaken.
- 2.4 The criteria for Blue Badge eligibility is set externally by the Department for Transport and is not something the Council has control over. All boroughs use this criteria for Blue Badge applications. Local authorities are, however, responsible for organising the assessment for discretionary applications, based on DfT criteria, as well as the day-to-day administration and enforcement of Blue Badge schemes.

Blue Badge eligibility as set by the DfT² is based on:

- a) Entitlement without further assessment if at least one of the following applies (automatic entitlement):

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blue-badge-can-i-get-one/can-i-get-a-blue-badge>

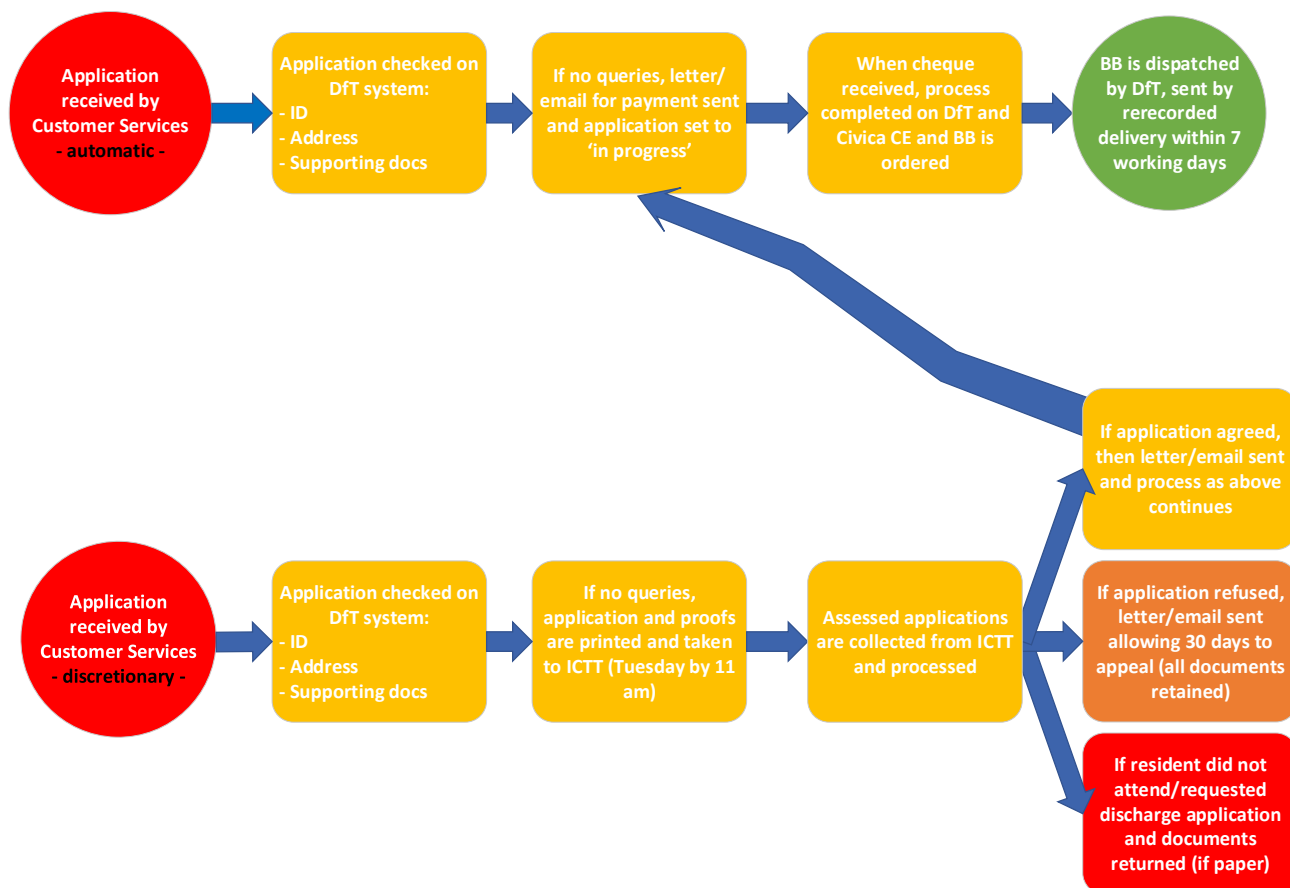
- In receipt of the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA).
- In receipt of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) because you can't walk more than 50 metres (a score of 8 points or more under the 'moving around' activity of the mobility component).
- Registered blind (severely sight impaired).
- In receipt of a War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement.
- Receives a lump sum benefit within tariff levels 1-8 of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces (Compensation) Scheme and have been certified as having a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking.
- In receipt of the mobility component of PIP and have obtained 10 points specifically for descriptor E under the 'planning and following journeys' activity, on the grounds that you are unable to undertake any journey because it would cause you overwhelming psychological distress.

Or

b) Entitlement subject to further assessment. This is determined based on evidence and assessment. The DfT set out the following criteria:

- A person is unable to walk at all.
- A person is unable to walk without help from someone else or using mobility aids.
- A person finds walking very difficult due to pain, breathlessness or the time it takes.
- Walking is dangerous to their health and safety.
- A person has a terminal illness, which means they are unable to walk or find walking very difficult and have a DS1500 form.
- A person has a severe disability in both arms and drives regularly, but cannot operate pay-and-display parking machines.
- A person with a child under the age of 3 with a medical condition that means the child always needs to be accompanied by bulky medical equipment.
- A person with a child under the age of 3 with a medical condition that means the child must always be kept near a vehicle in case they need emergency medical treatment.
- A person struggles severely to plan or follow a journey.
- A person finds it difficult or impossible to control their actions and lack awareness of the impact they could have on others.
- A person regularly experiences intense and overwhelming responses to situations causing temporary loss of behavioral control.

2.5 Table 1. Application Process in Haringey for a Blue Badge - Automatic versus Discretionary process.*



*Discretionary assessments are carried out by Integrated Community Therapy Team (ICTT), which is part of the Whittington Trust.

Changes to the Blue Badge Scheme in June 2019

2.6 On 15th June 2019 the government released new guidance on Blue Badges which included changes to the eligibility criteria. These changes then came into force from 30th August 2019. Blue Badge eligibility criteria was extended to include hidden disabilities and includes people who are unable to walk as part of a journey without considerable psychological distress or the risk of serious harm. The expanded scheme coincided with the launch of a new task force to toughen up enforcement of the scheme and prevent misuse. To date, very little progress seems to have been made in relation to this task force.

2.7 In announcing the new guidance, the government set out that this was the biggest change to the scheme since its creation in the 1970s. The Panel received evidence from DMUK that a significant uptake in Badges was anticipated as a result of these changes. A funding pot of £1.7m was set up by the government to help councils with the expected increase in applications.

However the funding is only available in the in the first year of the programme. If the expected uptake in applications is sustained over longer period, Cabinet may need to consider additional funding to support this.

3 Dedicated Disabled Bays

Dedicated Disabled Bays

- 3.1 Cabinet adopted dedicated disabled bays at its meeting on 10th September 2019. All new disabled parking bays that the Council installs, at the request of residents, as of January 2020 are for the sole use of the applicant. Each bay will be marked by an identifying number, which corresponds to the user's permit. If a non-permitted Blue Badge holder uses this bay then they will be liable to receive a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). Residents will also be able to submit an application to have their existing disabled bay converted into a dedicated bay. The Council's Disabled Parking Place Policy sets out that the Council will continue to install Disabled Parking Bays in town centres and other places of interest that can be used by any holder of a Blue Badge.³
- 3.2 The Panel received significant evidence from a range of contributors as to the importance that access to parking can make to people with disabilities in allowing them to park near their home or place of work. Access to disabled parking ensures that residents with disabilities are able to use their vehicle to undertake a range of day-to-day activities. Conversely, without access to parking many residents are fearful of going out and using their vehicle for fear that they will be unable to park upon their return. For those with significantly reduced mobility and a diminished capacity to walk even short distances unaided, this is a source of significant anxiety. The importance of a Blue Badge and access to parking on the health and wellbeing of users should not be underestimated and a number of those who gave evidence to panel characterised it as an essential part of their lives.
- 3.3 The evidence we received from Disability Motoring UK set out very clearly that one of the main concerns for disabled motorists was around a lack of enforcement and lack of available parking. The vast majority of Blue Badge holders respect the scheme and use their badges appropriately. However, with the introduction of more lenient eligibility criteria for Blue Badges by the DfT in August 2019, it is anticipated that the demand on existing disabled bays would increase significantly. This additional pressure is likely to be exacerbated in London by sustained population growth. The Panel also received evidence that when marking out disabled bays authorities needed to be mindful of the additional room required by vehicles with a disability ramp and that the of placing more than two bays in a line should be avoided for this reason.
- 3.4 Overall, the Panel broadly welcomes the introduction of dedicated disabled bays and is cognisant of the impact these may have on the quality of life for an individual Blue Badge user. However, the Panel is also concerned that the ongoing conversion of disabled bays to be used by a specific person at a specific location will have a significant effect on the overall availability of disabled bays across the borough. Given the increasing demand pressures expected on disabled bays and parking spaces in general, the Panel is concerned that the move to dedicated disabled bays will place additional strain on a limited resource. A Blue Badge

³ <https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/disabled-parking-place-policy.pdf>

holder may be able to park their car outside their residence but they will also need available parking at the other end of their journey. The Panel notes the adoption of an 'Opt-in' approach, partly in response to similar concerns, but feels that most users will seek to utilise this service once it becomes widely known.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet undertake to monitor the implementation and conversion of dedicated disabled bays going forward, with a particular focus on its impact on the overall availability and distribution of disabled parking bays.

Appeals Process

- 3.5 The Panel welcomes the adoption of an appeals process for rejected disabled bays and some of the evidence it received during this Scrutiny Review related to the lack of an appeals process and a perception that the process could feel arbitrary. There was also a general lack of understanding from residents on the rules and criteria behind disabled bays and why, if you had a Blue Badge, you we're automatically entitled to a disabled bay. The Panel noted concerns about a lack of joined-up thinking on Blue Badges and disabled bays. There was a feeling among some of the contributors to this review that the process for applying for a disabled bay should be made easier, given the amount of evidence required when applying for a Blue Badge.

Disabled Bay Eligibility Criteria

- 3.6 Eligibility criteria for disabled bays is set by the Council but is based on the automatic entitlement for a Blue Badge set out in Paragraph 2.3 of this report. The Panel is broadly supportive of the Cabinet's decision to introduce an assessment process for those who do not qualify automatically, in as much as it is felt that criteria for automatic entitlement is not a suitable determinant on its own. The Panel is keenly aware of the fact that mobility should be a determining factor when it comes to eligibility for a disabled bay however, it is concerned by the fact that this is largely determined on receipt of enhanced rate disability benefits. The Panel are concerned that many people who require a disabled bay will not be in receipt of benefits and are also concerned about the age restriction for eligibility for PIP and the potential disadvantage that causes to those over the state pension age.
- 3.7 It is not felt that that the introduction of an assessment process similar to the one used for Blue Badges adequately addresses these concerns. Particularly as going through an assessment process will create additional delays to the application process as well as the additional time and resource pressures on already stretched services. The Panel feel that that the eligibility criteria should be amended so as not to be based on the extent to which a person receives benefits. Significant concerns exist about the government's handling of benefit entitlement and the inherent unfairness of this system. The Panel does not feel sufficiently assured that the current arrangements provide the necessary safeguards to protect disabled residents who are not in receipt of benefits.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet reconsider the eligibility criteria for disabled bays and the use of automatic entitlement based upon whether the person is in receipt of higher rate/enhanced rate benefit payments.

4 Applying for and renewing a Blue Badge

Process/Online Applications

4.1 When a resident contacts the Council about a Blue Badge the applicant is signposted to a government website in order to fill out an online application. The specific section of the gov.uk website that relates to Blue Badges is run by Northgate, an external supplier that the DfT have commissioned to manage this. In order to undertake the application process the following information is required:

- A recent digital photo showing their head and shoulders.
- A photo or scanned copy their:
 - Proof of identity (such as a birth certificate, passport or driving licence).
 - Proof of address (such as a Council Tax bill or government letter).
 - Proof of benefits (if you get any).
- The applicant also needs to provide:
 - National Insurance number.
 - Details of their current Blue Badge (if they're reapplying for a Blue Badge).

4.2 The Panel were pleased to hear from officers that residents could still make a paper application and that digital support in undertaking the online application was offered to residents at Customer Service Centres. The Panel felt strongly that paper applications need to be retained for those without access to IT or those without the requisite knowledge and skills to undertake an online application process and welcomed the assurances they received to that effect. The Panel broadly endorses a digital default approach and recognises that this is part of a wider reshaping of Customer Services through the FOBO programme, provided that this comes with the continued safeguard of paper copies being available as well.

4.3 The Council are responsible for the administration process of assessing eligibility and processing the application. As part of the online application process, applicants are requested to pay a £10 administration fee which goes to the Council to cover the cost of Customer Services staff processing and administering the Blue Badge. The £10 administration fee is the maximum allowed in England as set out in statute and the Panel received evidence that it was debatable whether £10 was sufficient to meet all of the costs of administering the badge.

4.4 The Panel were surprised to hear that the £10 administration fee for the application could only be done via cheque, which was made payable to the Council. It was felt that cheques were becoming increasingly obsolete and that this was entirely out of sync with having an online application process. A number of Panel Members remarked that they were unsure whether they even owned a cheque book. The Panel also received evidence that the use of cheques to make the payments caused significant delays to the process.

- 4.5 The online system used for processing applications was commissioned by the DfT and the fact that applicants can't make online payments in support of their applications may be largely outside of the Council's control. The Panel heard evidence that the Council had previously used its own system for Blue Badge applications and that this had included the facility to make online payments. The decision to migrate to the DfT system was taken on the basis of greater functionality. Incidentally, the Panel was advised that, apart from the lack of online payments, the DfT system was a significant upgrade on the previous system and was much easier to use.
- 4.6 As part of the upgrade to Civica it is anticipated that there will be significant opportunity to improve the Council's service offer and make it more user-friendly. The Panel welcomes plans to improve systems to avoid duplication and allow IT systems to 'talk' to one another. It is hoped that this will reduce the number of times residents are asked to supply the same information to the Council and reduce costs. It is anticipated that this will make processing new badges and renewals quicker and much easier for residents. However, a fundamental part of this is developing online payments for Blue Badges. The Panel was advised that if the online application process took online payments, application that met the automatic criteria would take approximately 10 minutes to process and then 7 working days for the DfT to issue the badge.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet undertake to explore ways of ensuring that online payments can be made for Blue Badges. At present the £10 administration fee can only be paid via cheque which causes unnecessary delays.

This may require engaging with the DfT and seeking changes to the government website. It is suggested that Local Members of Parliament could be engaged on this issue and their influence sought.

Improvements

- 4.7 The Panel would like to see a process whereby Blue Badge applicants received regular updates on the status of their application and that this could be automated, so as to minimise the impact on staff resources. The application for a Blue Badge can take up to six weeks and it is anticipated that generating automatic updates on the status of applications would close the feedback loop to residents and also reduce pressure on the Council's Customer Services.
- 4.8 One of the recurring themes from the evidence that the Panel received was around a lack of joined up services when it came to applying for a Blue Badge. The fact that the process involves both Customer Services and the Concessionary Travel team within the Council, which in itself can involve multiple phone calls, emails and even visits to the Customer Service Centre, as well as dealing with a DfT managed IT system and NHS primary care services is identified as a source of significant frustration for service users. The fact that the process involves dealing with multiple agencies leads to delays and applicants having to relay the same

information several times. It also increases the likelihood of documents being lost in the system. The Panel feels that there is significant scope to improve joined-up working in this area and that in an ideal world this would all be managed by one agency.

- 4.9 The Panel received evidence that a number of residents had experienced a situation where a Blue Badge holder had reported their badge stolen and had applied for a replacement but had still received a PCN from a Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO). Residents also reported significant problems when it came to uploading documents as part of the online application process. Uploading photos was often straightforward, but attempts to upload documentary evidence were often unsuccessful. This could require phone calls to more than one department or agency to resolve. The applicant is usually directed to send the missing information to the local authority by post or in person. A further example of the disjointed nature of the process is the fact that the Haringey website states that the process takes up to six weeks whilst the gov.uk websites advised that this can take up to 12 weeks.
- 4.10 The Panel heard evidence from Brian Leveson, who is a local resident and the parent of a severely disabled child. Mr Leveson emphasised the importance to the quality of life for his family that the Blue Badge provided, as well as the fragmented nature of applying for the badge and a perception that each service/agency worked in silo. Mr Leveson set out that delays to the application process had a significant effect on his family, especially in the context of needing to attend regular hospital appointments. Mr Leveson was registered for Council Tax and with the SEND transport service, whilst his son was enrolled in a local school. Despite the authority holding all of the relevant information, Mr Leveson was still required to provide the information again when renewing the Blue Badge.
- 4.11 The Panel feels that the Council should be doing everything it can to remove obstacles for Blue Badge users but it was concerned that sometimes it seemed as though the Council was actually putting additional obstacles in the way. One example relayed to the Panel was of a resident having to attend the Customer Service Centre to deal with the a Blue Badge application in person only to be sent away as they did not have the full DLA letter from the DWP, despite the fact that it was only the first page that contained the relevant information.
- 4.12 The Panel heard evidence from Mr Leveson that in comparison to applying for other services, applying for a Blue Badge could be frustrating but that this was partly due to only having to do it every three years, so exposure to the process was limited. It also meant that the process could have changed since the last application. The Panel was advised that one of the main sources of frustration was not being able to speak to the concessionary travel team directly and having to go through Customer Services instead, as this caused delays and generated multiple contacts with the Council unnecessarily. The Panel feels that there should be some provision to speak to the Concessionary Travel team directly, given the vulnerable nature of some of the applicants for Blue Badges and the impact delays can have.

Recommendation:

That provision be put in place for Blue Badge applicants to be able to speak to the Concessionary Travel team directly.

4.13 *Badge Renewal*

The process for renewing a Blue Badge is largely the same as applying for the first time and the Panel notes that it is not necessary to resend the old badge away when applying for a replacement. During evidence gathering, a number of residents raised the issue of a lack of a reminder letter that a Blue Badge was due for renewal. The Panel heard evidence that there had not been a conscious decision to stop sending out reminder letters to residents. However, unlike the previous Bevis system, the system used by the DfT simply did not have the functionality to send out reminder letters automatically at present. The Panel were advised that the DfT system was still in development and had effectively been a beta site for some time. It was anticipated that the facility to generate reminder letters should be forthcoming. The Panel would like to see automatic reminder emails and letters sent out to Blue Badge holders.

Replacement Blue Badges

4.14 The Panel welcomed the fact that there was a specific process in place for reissuing Blue Badges that had been stolen. Badge holders were required to report the theft to the Police and provide a crime reference number. The badge would normally take 7 working days to issue. A number of people who spoke to the Panel as part of this review complained about the length of time that renewals and replacement Blue Badges took. The Panel advocates that the Council should look at ways to speed up the process and explore how lost or stolen Blue Badges could be turned around more quickly. The Panel hopes that the upgrade of the Parking Management IT system may facilitate this.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet explore ways in order to make the process of applying, renewing and being assessed for, a Blue Badge more streamlined and less disjointed. Specifically, the Panel would like Cabinet to consider:

- **Whether updates could be provided to applicants on the status of their application?**
- **Whether this could be automated?**
- **Ensuring that applicants can upload documents online.**
- **That provision of an automatic renewal reminder email/letter to Blue Badge holders at the appropriate point, be explored?**

- 4.15 Throughout the evidence gathering process, it was made clear to the Panel that one of the main concerns from Blue Badge users was around delays and the inherent difficulties involved in having to deal with more than one agency. It was also evident that the Council was the agency that bore the brunt of complaints and was largely held responsible when delays occurred. However, Customer Services process the vast majority of applications on the day they are received. In light of the perception and the fact that the authority has some leverage to try and improve the process, the Panel feel that the Council should take more of a hands-on approach to monitoring the overall journey of applications and ensure that there is a more integrated approach taken by all parties. It is felt that the Council is perhaps best placed to take a leading role on breaking down operational silos.
- 4.16 It is suggested that the Cabinet Member should undertake a piece of work to see what could be done around minimising delays and ensuring that the Council monitors the application process from start to finish. It is felt that bringing responsibility for the whole process under one person will facilitate improvements through a more robust monitoring process. The Panel would like to see the Cabinet Member receive regular performance monitoring updates as part of their portfolio. This will provide relevant data on where delays occur and allow us to better understand where further improvements could be made. Some of the data already exists such as that presented to the Panel by Customer Services. However, there are a number of stages in the process where performance is not collected. As an example, the Panel heard that Stuart Crescent did not collect data on missed appointments for the assessments visits. Missed appointments usually resulted in the application being sent back to the Council and delays occurring as a result.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member should have a greater oversight of the overall process from start to finish. The Cabinet Member should receive regular performance monitoring updates from the different areas and an action plan should be developed to improve monitoring and ensure delays are minimised.

- 4.17 It is felt that there is a gap at the partnership level around monitoring this issue and that it would benefit from the development of a more co-ordinated multi-agency response. As well as the Cabinet Member looking at how they can take a greater role in monitoring the process as a whole, it is evident that the Council can't resolve this issue on its own and needs to work with partners to improve outcomes for service users. To that end, the Panel would like to see the Cabinet Member meet with key stakeholders on a quarterly basis as part of strategic partnership forum to ensure that the overall application process is done in a way that is joined-up and made more accessible. The Council has a number of partnership forums that it uses to develop a multi-agency response and it is felt that this could build on that network. It is suggested that the forum outlined could even be established on a time-limited basis.
- 4.18 The forum would likely be made up of Council representatives, health colleagues, police and the DfT. This would provide an additional level of accountability as well as a dedicated body to ensure that a more integrated and considered approach is

taken. It is suggested that this would also provide an ideal forum for addressing Blue Badge related crime. The Panel feels that this is a major concern and one that requires a partnership level response.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member undertake to arrange a quarterly strategic partnership forum with key stakeholders, including the Council, the Whittington, Police and DfT to ensure that the overall journey is streamlined and made more accessible. This would also provide a partnership forum to address Blue Badge related crime as per recommendation 11.

5 Enforcement and Blue Badge Related Crime

5.1 The Panel received a significant amount of evidence around the rise of Blue Badge related crime as well as a rise in the misuse of Blue Badges. A stolen Blue Badge could be worth a reasonable amount of money given that Blue Badge holders can often park free of charge and free from parking restrictions, such as disabled bays or yellow lines. Nationally, Blue Badge theft from vehicles has risen over 600% in the last three years. As the perceived value of a Blue Badge has increased (especially with an ever increasing pressure on London's parking infrastructure), there has been a rise in the number of fraudulent Blue Badges in circulation. The Blue Badge scheme operates across 27 different EU states (plus the UK) and their design can vary from country to country. This provides significant scope for forgery, particularly in the context of the fact that the Badges could be in one of 20 plus languages.

Enforcement

5.2 Disabled Motoring UK advised the Panel that the largest amount of complaints they received from Blue Badge holders were around a lack of enforcement of the scheme and the consequent impact on availability of parking spaces and a fear of negative perceptions towards 'genuine' Blue Badge holders. Concerns were also noted that without a proactive enforcement approach, this could lead to members of the public taking it on themselves to police the system and the inherent risks of a rise in vigilantism.

5.3 The Panel considered that Blue Badge abuse and misuse is rising due to a number of factors:

- Lack of enforcement
- Lack of understanding of the rules for the scheme (such as Badge holders allowing family members to use their badge).
- Failure to return Badges, such as when a family member passes away.
- A rise in the number of Blue Badges being used from other EU countries fraudulently.

5.4 A number of Local Authorities have undertaken various schemes for tackling Blue Badge abuse, ranging from increased enforcement patrols, encouraging the reporting of misuse, communications campaigns and improvements to technology and IT systems. During this Review the Panel visited the London Borough of Bromley to hear from officers from their shared parking service (Bromley and Bexley) about the adoption of a zero tolerance approach to Blue Badge misuse. This came about as a result of concerns from local residents and Blue Badge holders about widespread misuse of Blue Badges in the Borough and it has been up and running for around two and a half years to date.

5.5 The scheme involves providing additional training for Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) and encouraging them to inspect any Blue Badge they come across during the course of their duties and cross referencing the numerical information on the Badge with information held on the badge holder, such as name and D.O.B. (as

well as the person who was observed using it).The CEO would call up the back office to check with the team for possible misuse and then if anything was considered out of place an investigation would be carried out by the back office. This would usually involve telephoning the registered Blue Badge holder and asking if they were using the badge at the time. Prosecution would depend on whether officers could prove misuse, through the CEO witnessing it or through CCTV footage, for example. We received evidence that the GLC General Powers Act 1972 provides Local Authorities with the ability to request disclosure of the drivers' details and if they failed to provide those, the Local Authority is able to prosecute the registered keeper.

- 5.6 Bromley estimates that around 90% of misuse is carried out by family members. One of the other issues identified was around the fact that it was relatively easy to get a replacement Blue Badge and the original could then often be found again, increasing the number in circulation. A replacement Blue Badge is not marked as a replacement and it is not possible to tell just by looking at the badge. In both instances, it was only when the CEO checked with the back-office that possible misuse could be identified. Bromley also outlined a number of examples of where Blue Badge fraud was symptomatic of wider fraudulent behaviour or criminality; including cases where the investigation also led to instances of housing benefit fraud and illegal sub-letting of a property being identified.
- 5.7 In addition to the enforcement element, a number of communications activities were undertaken as part of the zero-tolerance approach in Bromley, including press releases of successful prosecutions and newsletters to Blue Badge holders to publicise the zero tolerance approach. Bromley also introduced a poster campaign in car parks warning drivers of the risk of prosecution and the likely fines imposed. It was reported to the Panel that, overall the scheme had been overwhelmingly successful and had a positive effect on behaviour change as well as generating the Local Authority significant amount of goodwill and positive press coverage. The scheme was overwhelmingly popular with residents and Blue Badge holders. The naming and shaming of offenders was also well received. Bromley are in the process of expanding the scheme to include an anti-idling campaign, outside local schools.

Recommendation:

That the Council should prioritise tougher enforcement of Blue Badge fraud in order to ensure that those with genuine mobility issues are able to use their vehicles. Training should be provided for Enforcement officers and processes put in place so that any Blue Badge identified by a CEO was inspected and the badge holders' details cross referenced with the back office for possible misuse. The Panel heard evidence that this could take as little as 30 seconds.

Companion Blue Badges

- 5.8 Haringey currently operates a companion Blue Badge scheme which incorporates the vehicle registration number and can be used instead of the Blue Badge. The companion badge has no intrinsic value as it can only be used on the designated vehicle and is aimed at preventing theft of Blue Badges. As part of the application process for this, the resident has to be a Blue Badge holder and provide proof of address in Haringey. The vehicle registration document must be registered to that address and the Companion Badge is only valid for one vehicle. However, unlike the Blue Badge which is valid throughout the UK, the Companion Badge is only valid within Haringey. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the Companion Badge is also not valid for TfL managed roads within Haringey.
- 5.9 The Panel is supportive of the Companion Badge scheme and welcomes attempts to tackle Blue Badge related crime. The Panel notes that the Companion Badge costs £30, as opposed to the £10 fee for a Blue Badge. Some of the contributors to the review felt that this was an inconsistency. However, on balance, the Panel is sympathetic to the fact that the Council has to be able to cover the costs of producing and administering the badge. The Council has seen year-on-year budget cuts since 2010 and, the Council has to make difficult choices about which services it is able to subsidise.

Theft of Blue Badges

- 5.10 As outlined, theft of Blue Badges from motor vehicles is a growing concern for Blue Badge users. The Panel heard evidence from some residents that theirs had been stolen on multiple occasions. Aside from the obvious inconvenience of having your vehicle broken in to and the badge stolen, there were also concerns outlined above about length of time it took to get a replacement especially as the process could suffer from delays and there was no facility to track the progress of a Blue Badge application.
- 5.11 The Panel received evidence from Graham Day, secretary of St Ann's and Haringey joint Ward Panel on his experiences as a Blue Badge holder in the borough. Mr Day suggested that theft of Blue Badges was a recurring issue raised at Ward Panel meetings and he had suggested that based on the figures in Harringay ward, there was probably around 700 incidents a year borough wide. Mr Day advised the Panel that he had a device which attached to the steering wheel and locked the Blue Badge in place. The device cost between £30 & £40 and had prevented any further thefts of his Blue Badge taking place. The Panel considered the relative cost of theft prevention devices against the administration costs of renewing stolen badges, sometimes on multiple occasions. The Panel feels that there is a clear case for the Council looking at how it could provide these devices for Blue Badge users, perhaps on an 'invest to save' basis, given the administration costs of providing replacements. It is anticipated that the Council could be able to take advantage of being able to receive a reduced unit cost from buying in bulk. At the very least, the Council should be promoting these devices to its Blue Badge users as part of the application process.

- 5.12 Theft of Blue Badges and Blue Badge-related crime will require working with police colleagues and other key partners to resolve. There is ample evidence of the proliferation of this type of crime and the Panel feels that this needs to be higher up the political agenda. The Council already has a partnership body that looks into crime and community safety and it is suggested that the Community Safety Partnership could provide leadership on this issue and monitor efforts to tackle it going forwards.

Recommendation:

Consideration should be given to how the Council, working with police and partners, could support the rollout of theft prevention devices for Blue Badges. The Panel received evidence that these were particularly effective and cost between £30 & £40. Cabinet should consider whether providing these was cheaper than the administration costs associated with replacing a stolen Blue Badge.

Recommendation:

That the Council works closely with the police to reduce proliferation of Blue Badge related crime. The Panel received evidence that Blue Badge theft from vehicles has risen over 600% in the last three years. It is suggested that the Community Safety Partnership could examine this issue as part of its work programme for 2020/21.

Virtual Permits

- 5.13 The Panel would like to see the Council move to a position of issuing virtual permits instead of a physical Blue Badge and believe that this should be the long term aim of for Haringey. The Panel envisage that this would work in a similar way to car tax, in that all of the information is stored electronically and there is no longer any need to physically display a tax disc on a vehicle's windscreen. All of the necessary documentation is already supplied to the Council as part of the Companion Badge application process. It would simply be a case of the CEO scanning the vehicle registration into a device and an electronic database would hold all of the relevant information, including whether that person held a Blue Badge. The clear advantage of having a system of virtual permits is that there is nothing to steal and there is no risk of forgery. Consequently, it is anticipated that that this would have significant impact on the theft of Blue Badges overnight. It would also negate the need for separate Companion Badges to be issued.
- 5.14 Although a virtual Blue Badge permit would fulfil a similar role to the existing Companion Badge scheme, it is felt that there are a number of distinct advantages. Having a virtual permit system for Blue Badges would minimise any delays associated with processing and delivery and permits could presumably be issued instantly. Having an online database that allowed the CEO instant real-time access to whether or not that person held a valid Blue Badge would also eliminate mistakes and the risk of CEO's incorrectly issuing PCN's for failing to display a Blue Badge or Companion Badge. As has been outlined elsewhere in this report, this is an issue

especially when the holder has had their Blue Badge stolen. Virtual permits would assist with the Council's carbon reduction targets as there would be no need for a paper Companion Badge to be produced, as well as the associated reduction from not having to undertake postage and delivery. It is also expected that there would be savings available from moving to virtual permits through streamlining processes and reducing administration.

- 5.15 The Panel recognise that introducing a system of virtual permits is not something that can be done overnight and that this is a long term aspiration. It would take some time to develop our processes in support of this and there would likely be costs involved in upgrading the functionality of the IT systems and the hand held devices used by CEOs. It is hoped that the decision to upgrade the Parking Management IT System will provide opportunities to explore how this could be done and at what cost. Alongside virtual permits the Panel feel strongly that the Council should also retain some provision of a paper application process as there are significant equalities considerations when moving to an online application system only.

Recommendation:

That the Council explores the feasibility of issuing virtual permits instead of Companion Badges. Cabinet should also ensure that provision of paper applications is retained on some level in order to ensure residents without access to IT are not unduly disadvantaged.

- 5.16 The London Borough of Bromley have moved to a position of virtual permits and advised that they had achieved significant cost savings as a result. There are a number of examples of authorities that have transitioned to a similar system and the Panel would like to see the Cabinet Member engage with other boroughs that have implemented virtual permits to see what lessons could be learnt.
- 5.17 The Panel would also like to see virtual permits encouraged at a pan-London level and believe that the Mayor and London Councils should be engaged to promote this issue. Exploration of the feasibility of adopting a more integrated approach across London is encouraged, albeit it is recognised as a long term outcome. The Panel would like to see a situation where a virtual permit issued to a Haringey resident could be used across London. In order to achieve optimal results in tackling the theft of Blue Badges we need co-ordination at a London-wide level in order to ensure that the IT systems are joined up and that processes are integrated.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Member should engage with other boroughs that have implemented virtual permits to see what lessons can be learnt. Engagement should also be sought with the Mayor's Office and London Councils to encourage adoption at a Pan-London level and explore the feasibility of having a more integrated system across London.

6 Correspondence and Communication

Correspondence with Residents

- 6.1 The Panel received evidence around a variable quality in the letters and other forms of communication issued by the Council around Blue Badges and associated parking services. Residents were concerned about the tone of some of the communications especially in reference to where that person was required to do something or had failed to provide what was requested. It was felt that the language used could be quite intimidating and a disproportionate emphasis was placed upon the potential sanction or penalty, rather than simply providing the information requested. One example we received was around a straightforward request for information around a Blue Badge renewal, the response to which was unduly focused on highlighting the possible penalties to that person from continuing to use the badge after its expiry. The person was directed to the gov.uk website but no additional information was provided about how long the process could take or what documentation was required.
- 6.2 Other concerns highlighted to the Panel were around a lack of clear advice when it came to communications and concerns that letters and emails were not always set out in a way that made them easy to understand. We also received evidence of instances where the Council treated what was essential a recurring service request as a complaint. In one instance, a service user wanted to know if and when they would receive a disabled parking bay, but were instead directed through a complaints process. The resident in question also commented that, after receiving approval, they never received any contact from the Council telling them when the bay was going to be installed. Frustrations from residents at automated telephone messages advising people to go online were also relayed to the Panel. It is felt that for those with severe disabilities, it is not always as easy to access online services and that some consideration should be given as to how appropriate this message is in these circumstances.
- 6.3 It is felt that the issues raised in relation to the quality and tone of correspondence are likely to be broader than just Blue Badges and that the issues raised as part of this review will likely have a resonance across the organisation. It is therefore suggested that a review should be undertaken of the correspondence from across the organisation that Council sends out to its residents.

Recommendation:

That a commitment is given that the Council will carry out a review of the letters and communications that it sends to residents to ensure that they are clear, courteous and without the use of intimidating language.

Reporting a Disabled Bay that is no longer in use.

- 6.4 The Panel heard evidence from local residents and ward councillors that removing a disabled bay that was no longer in use could be quite a long and drawn out process. Many Disabled Bays have been in place for a number of years and in many instances the original applicant may well no longer living there. Given the decision to implement Dedicated Disabled Bays and the anticipated increase in demand for disabled parking spaces, it is felt that there is an imperative to monitor and remove obsolete disabled bays as promptly as possible. The Panel understands that notice has to be given for a removal of a bay and that this can take some time. However, the panel heard anecdotal evidence of the process taking over six months in some cases.
- 6.5 The Panel were keen to see some communications activity undertaken on this issue to engage with residents and encourage them to report bays that were no longer in use. The Panel suggest that there could be a dedicated web page on the Council's home website where residents could 'Report an Unused Disabled Bay.' This could be supported through press releases and other communications activity.

Recommendation:

That the Council implement provision for residents to report disabled bays that were no longer in use and that processes are put in place for adequate monitoring of disabled bays and whether they were being used. Once a bay is identified as being unused there should be a clear timeline for its removal. A campaign should be launched through Haringey People and our website to "report an unused disabled bay".

Communications Activity

- 6.6 In light of concerns from residents that applying for or renewing Blue Badge could be a complicated process and involve liaising with different services and agencies, the Panel would like to see the Council send out a booklet of key information to residents as soon as they are assessed as meeting either the automatic or discretionary criteria. It is anticipated that this booklet will provide a range of information, advice and guidance on the process and the anticipated timescales involved. It would also provide an opportunity for the Council to provide information on other services such as how to apply for a Dedicated Disabled Bay.

Recommendation:

That the Council should send out a booklet of key information to residents as soon as they are assessed as being eligible for a Blue Badge.

- 6.7 The Panel also feel that there is scope for the Council to take a more proactive approach in issuing reminders to cancel a Blue Badge when a death is registered. The Council's Register Office is responsible for the recording of a death. This is usually undertaken by a relative and should be done within 5 days (in England).

As part of this process, a raft of information is given to the next of kin about who to contact and what to do next, including information on pensions, taxes and benefits. The Panel suggests that a reminder around cancelling Blue Badges could be easily incorporated into that process. As has been highlighted elsewhere in this report, a significant amount of misuse of Blue Badges is done by family members including continuing to use the badge after that person is deceased. Cancelling a Blue Badge is unlikely to be at the forefront of a person's mind when registering a death. Providing a gentle reminder at this juncture is felt to be appropriate and in keeping with other forms of information provided.

Recommendation:

That the Council explore ways in which an automatic reminder could be issued to cancel a Blue Badge, along with the existing information given to the next of kin when a death is registered.

- 6.8 Following on from Recommendation 9 in respect of adopting a more proactive enforcement approach to Blue Badges, the Panel feels that a communications campaign should be implemented across the Blue Badge agenda which clearly sets out the Council's enforcement message. This would also provide an ideal opportunity to promote some of the other recommendations from this review such as use of anti-theft devices as well as other pertinent information in relation to parking.
- 6.9 During the course of this review the Panel heard from a representative of the Equalities Steering Group for Haringey staff. The representative advised that she had a non-visible disability and was reluctant to apply for a Blue Badge, due to the fact that she did not 'look' as though she had a disability. It was reported to the Panel that many staff members had encountered hostility from people who perceived that they didn't fit the stereotype of what a disabled person should be. Consequently, a number of staff in Haringey were reluctant to acknowledge their disability and didn't feel entitled to apply for a Blue Badge. The Panel also heard evidence that there were a number of cases disabilities where the symptoms and mobility levels a person has could vary significantly over a short timescale and that basing an assessment on mobility at a fixed point in time was flawed.
- 6.10 The Panel recommends that Cabinet seek to include disability access representatives and the Equalities Steering Group in developing a communications campaign. As part of the campaign, consideration should be given to awareness raising around disability and that staff can access advice and support in applying for a Blue Badge. The Panel suggests that one of the topics of the campaign should focus on raising awareness that not all disabilities are visible.

Recommendation:

A communications campaign should be implemented across the Blue Badge agenda which clearly sets out the Council's enforcement message. It is suggested that disability access representatives and the Council's Equalities Steering Group should be involved in developing this campaign and that consideration should be given highlighting awareness around the fact that not all disabilities are visible.

7 Assessments for Discretionary Blue Badge Applications

Discretionary Application Process

- 7.1 If the applicant does not meet the automatic eligibility criteria for a Blue Badge, Customer Services will refer the applicant for an assessment. In Haringey, Assessment for non-automatic or discretionary entitlement is carried out by a qualified assessor through the Integrated Community Therapy Team (ICTT), at the Whittington Trust, which is located at Stuart Crescent Health Centre. The Panel received evidence from Adeola Akano, Clinical Services Manager for ICTT that the clinic held slots on a Wednesday and Thursday to undertake the assessments, with six members of staff working on them (depending on the number of referrals received). Ultimately, it was the responsibility of the Senior Therapist to make a clinical judgement on whether someone was assessed as qualifying for a Blue Badge and this was done through reviewing the application bundle and consideration of the assessment score. The Panel were advised that the Senior Technician did not undertake the mobility assessment or have direct contact with the applicant (unless it was an appeal). The criteria used in determining eligibility for a discretionary entitlement is set out at Paragraph 2.4 of this report.
- 7.2 Applications for discretionary assessment are taken to Stuart Crescent once a week on a Tuesday by Customer Service staff. When the applications are dropped off, completed assessments are collected at the same time. If the application was approved, payment is requested by Customer Services in order to process the application. The Panel were advised by Customer Service that the application was processed on the day payment was received. Customer Services are not allowed to process Blue Badge applications without receiving payment and could not undertake any part of the process until they knew the applicant had been assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria. Once payment is received, the application is processed and it takes 7 working days for the DfT to issue the badge, as per applications that met the automatic eligibility criteria.
- 7.3 If the application is refused and the person is assessed as not meeting the criteria, Customer Services would then contact that person to advise that their application has been refused and that they have a 30 day window in which to appeal. All of the documents that have been received were retained during the 30 day window in order to support any potential appeal. During an appeal, the applicant could be asked to provide further evidence and could also be asked to repeat the mobility assessment. An appeal is undertaken by the Senior Therapist or the Team Leader at Stuart Crescent. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the application is withdrawn or applicant does not attend the assessment then the case is closed and Customer Services return all of the documents to the applicant.

Electronic Applications and Improving the Process.

- 7.4 The Panel considered the fact that applications were only sent to Stuart Crescent once a week and believes that this is source of delay. Further delays are then caused by the completed assessments also being collected once a week. The Panel were advised that Customer Services did not monitor the time between dropping off and collecting applications but applicants are advised that the process can take up to 6 weeks. The application bundles that are provided to Stuart Crescent are hard copies and the first task that staff at Stuart Crescent have to undertake is to manually key in all of the information from the bundle on to a spreadsheet. The feels like quite an antiquated approach and the Panel are surprised that printed hard copies of the application and documentary evidence are still used. One way to speed up the process and reduce the level of administration is to transfer the information to Stuart Crescent electronically. It is suggested that this would also have the advantage of being able to be undertaken at any time rather than waiting until a Tuesday morning. The Panel heard evidence that the issue revolved around the old IT system used at Stuart Crescent and concerns about information security. The Panel were advised that the Whittington Trust were in discussions to develop a secure system for document transfer.

Missed Appointments

- 7.5 The Panel noted with some concern that the window for late arrival to the assessment appointment was five minutes. If the appointment was missed Stuart Crescent advised that they would usually allow the applicant to reschedule the appointment once, but that after this the application was sent back to the Council. The Panel are clear in their view that an alternative slot has to be provided to applicants if they are unable to attend the appointment and that the Council should ensure that this takes place. The Panel feels that having an inflexible approach will contribute to further delays and that this should be reconsidered. The Panel received evidence from residents that a five minute was a very narrow threshold, particularly for people with limited mobility. Furthermore, this is exacerbated by a lack of parking facilities, including disabled bays, at the site and the fact that it is a walk to the nearest bus stop which involves crossing a very busy road.
- 7.6 The Panel received slightly conflicting evidence from Stuart Crescent as to the flexibility with which staff enforce the five minute window for late appointments. The Panel were initially informed that this was a necessity and that applicants were clearly advised that they could not be late and should arrive early for appointments. After some follow up questions, Ms Akano indicated that there was some degree of flexibility in this. However the experiences of residents that we heard from suggested that this contributed to delays and provided an added level of stress and anxiety for those attending the clinic. The Panel were interested to know what percentage of people had their appointments rescheduled and applications returned due to being late, but were advised that this information was not collected. The Panel feel that this is something that the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods may want to follow up on.
- 7.7 The Panel is sympathetic to the pressures that NHS services are under and the fact that delayed appointments have a knock-on effect, but emphasise the need

for common sense to be used. Especially in light the fact that a number of applicants that attend the assessments will have severe disabilities. The Panel would also like to highlight the fact that people attending GP appointments are afforded a 10 minute window. Overall, the Panel believes that there is scope for the Council to work with the ICTT team to improve the service and make it more responsive to residents' needs. It is suggested that the Cabinet Member having greater oversight of this process could be a key driver.

Recommendation:

That consideration should be given on to how to minimise delays within the assessment process, including ensuring that assessment bundles can be transferred to Stuart Crescent electronically.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that, the Council should work with Stuart Crescent Health Centre to ensure that the current 5 minute deadline for late arrivals was extended and a greater degree of flexibility afforded to applicants, given the mobility levels of the people being assessed and the lack of available parking facilities.

The Cabinet should work with the Whittington Trust to ensure that residents were provided with an alternative date when an appointment was missed.

Location of Assessment Site

- 7.8 The Panel raised concerns about the accessibility of the current site at Stuart Crescent given the limited parking available and considered whether alternative sites could be sought. In response, we were advised that there is an alternative site used at Gordon Road and that appointments alternated between Stuart Crescent and the Gordon Road site on a weekly basis. Residents are able to request the Gordon Road site that has more parking available, however this is not advertised and residents would have to call up the clinic to reschedule to then be offered a later appointment at Gordon Road. The Panel notes that the initial letter sent to applicants only refers to the Stuart Crescent site. It is felt that the fact there is a second location to undergo an assessment from could be better communicated to residents and that residents should be given more of a choice between the two.
- 7.9 The Panel would also like to see additional sites sourced across the borough, particularly as both current sites are fairly central and east-west transport links can be slow. It is suggested that commissioning more than one provider to undertake assessments would also provide an additional level of flexibility. Residents should be able to have a choice of location for their assessment. The panel would like to see a site in Tottenham as well as in the west of the borough. The Panel were advised by management at Stuart Crescent that there is not enough capacity at the Hornsey site at present to undertake assessments.

7.10 The Panel were advised that Customers Services were commissioned by Parking Services to undertake processing and administration of Blue Badge applications and that Parking also commissioned the Integrated Community Therapy Team to provide discretionary assessments at Stuart Crescent. The current 23 day time scale to undertake assessments was agreed when the contract was last commissioned. This contract was commissioned in 2009/10 and the Panel feel that this should be looked at and consideration be given to recommissioning it given the timescales involved and the fact that increased demand for Blue Badges is anticipated following the recent changes to the eligibility criteria.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet ensures that monitoring of the current 23 day timescale for applications to be processed is undertaken.

That Cabinet also explores recommissioning of the current contract to provide assessments for discretionary Blue Badge applications as it was last done over 10 years ago. The Panel recommends that consideration is given to commissioning additional providers for the assessment process for greater flexibility and distribution across the borough. The Council should explore ways of ensuring that that residents have a choice of which centre they attend and that there is some provision in the west of the Borough as well as in Tottenham. The Panel suggests that recommissioning this service could potentially provide an opportunity to speed up the assessment process and minimise delays.

Appendix A

Participants in the Review:

Adeola Akano, Integrated Community Therapy Team Clinical Service Manager from Stuart Crescent Health Centre

Gossica Anichebe, Interim Policy and Programme Manager – LB Hackney

Sofia Bouceddour, Transport Planner – LB Camden

Laura Berryman

Cllr Zena Brabazon

Andy Briggs, AD for Customer Services and Libraries

Cllr Dana Carlin

Cllr Seema Chandwani, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods

Cllr Pippa Connor

Ann Cunningham, Head of Operations

Graham Day, Secretary of the St Ann and Haringgay joint Ward Panel

Fred Fernandes, Parking Operations Manager

Graham Footer, Chief Executive – Disabled Motoring UK

Cllr Kirsten Hearn, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability

Dawn Hunter, Concessionary Travel Manager

Brian Leveson

Carly Norris, Project Manager – LB Hackney

Elaine Prado, Head of Business Change, Customer Services.

Shereen Tennant, Haringey Equalities Steering Group

Chloe Wenbourne, Interim Head of Service - Shared Parking Service (Bromley and Bexley)

David Wray, Blue Badge and Fraud Enforcement Officer - Shared Parking Service (Bromley and Bexley)

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MINUTES OF MEETING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 14TH JANUARY, 2020, 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

**Councillors: Lucia das Neves (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair),
Khaled Moyeed and Patrick Berryman.**

Also Present: Mark Chapman, Luci Davin, Yvonne Denny, Lourdes Keever

ALSO ATTENDING:

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 Cllr Dogan and Cllr Jogee.

Cllr Berryman attended as a substitute for Cllr Jogee.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 25th November were agreed as a correct record.

7. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS

The Chair of the Adults and Health Panel advised that the as part of the discussion around the Haringey Safeguarding Adults Board, Dr Cooper had been invited back to a subsequent Panel meeting to give a further update.

The Chair of the Housing and Regeneration Panel gave the Committee an update on Scrutiny Review of High Road West. The Committee noted that work had begun and that Panel members had undertaken site visits to the Peacock industrial estate and to the Love Lane estate.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the following Scrutiny Panels were received and noted and any recommendations contained within were approved:

- Housing and Regeneration – 4th November
- Environment and Community Safety – 5th November
- Children and Young People's - 7th November
- Adults and Health – 14th November

8. FAIRNESS COMMISSION

The Committee received an update report on the progress of the Fairness Commission as set out in pages 49 & 50 of the agenda pack. The report was introduced by Jean Taylor, Head of Policy. Cllr Amin was also present as the relevant Cabinet Member. It was noted that final report of the Fairness Commission was currently in draft form and was expected to be agreed by commissioners at the end of January. The report would then be launched on 20th February to coincide with UN World Day of Social Justice. At its meeting in March, the Council's Cabinet would agree its response to the report and this would include identification of who would take on responsibility for delivering the Commission's recommendations going forwards. The following arose from the discussion of the report:

- a. The Committee sought clarification about what happened to the issues raised as part of this process that did not fit within the five key areas/working groups agreed by the Commission. In response, officers acknowledged that a huge amount of responses were received and that this information was subject to a prioritisation process, which took account of the frequency of a particular issue being raised as well as focusing on issues that were closest to the Commission's key focus such as social justice and fairness. Officers also advised that the feedback received was also checked against existing data to determine key themes and trends. The Committee were assured that feedback and responses received had been shared with commissioners and senior officers across the Council as part of the reporting process.
- b. The Committee sought assurances around receiving sight of which groups and individuals had been engaged with as part of this process. In response, officers advised that a detailed list of those who had been engaged with would be included at the end of the report. Officers also reassured the Committee that there had been a conscious process of scheduling additional engagement activities for those that felt under represented.

- c. The Committee sought assurances around how officers would co-ordinate with existing activities taking place such as the Youth at Risk Strategy and Haringey Community Gold. In response officers acknowledged that there was some level of crossover and that they had worked to avoid duplication. The Youth at Risk Strategy had been revisited as part of the process for setting the recommendations of the Fairness Commission.
- d. In response to a question around whether the recommendations of the Commission would be implemented within the life time of the current administration, officers advised that the medium term goals should be easily achievable in this timeframe and also set out that the outcomes would be measurable.
- e. The Committee enquired about what contingencies were in place to ensure the ongoing delivery of its recommendations, if for instance, a new administration came in with different policy objectives. In response, officers set out that the Commission was made up of 22 people, most of whom were not Councillors and so there would likely be a level of institutional memory. Officers suggested that the breadth of representation on the Fairness Commission would hopefully lend itself to being supported by any future administration.
- f. The Committee sought reassurance about the extent to which children and young people, particularly in the east of the Borough, had been engaged with and how this information had been taken on board. In response, officers advised that significant engagement had been undertaken with schools to talk to children about the prioritisation of issues and fairness. This was done through a variety of forums including drawing exercises etcetera. Officers acknowledged that they spoke to both younger and older children and were conscious of the need to reflect the different experiences of the two.
- g. The Committee challenged the fact that a number of issues around adult social care had been omitted from the remit of the Fairness Commission as they were being dealt with through other forums and suggested that the reasons for this would need to be strongly reflected in the final report so that the community were aware and understood its remit and terms of reference. Officers acknowledged these concerns and advised that the final report would have a strong focus on frontline service delivery.
- h. In response to a question around the communications plan for the Commission's final recommendations, officers advised that this had not been finalised but officers committed to feeding this back to OSC once it was available. **(Action: Jean Taylor).**

RESOLVED

That the Commission's progress was noted.

9. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE AND CIVIC SERVICES

The Panel undertook a question and answer session with Cllr Amin, the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Civic Services on her portfolio. The Cabinet Member gave a short verbal update:

- The update and refit programme for Haringey's libraries was underway and works had begun at Hornsey Library.

- The Physical Activity and Sports Strategy was in the process of being implemented. This looked at how leisure facilities could be more accessible and included investment in green gyms in parks.
- The Committee was advised that Haringey had been shortlisted for the London Borough of Culture.
- Haringey was going through a redesign and restructure of its HR processes. This included a recruitment focus in supporting local people. Examples of this included the development of a local graduate trainee programme and working with local schools on apprenticeships.

The following arose from the discussion of this item:

- a. The Committee sought assurances around what meetings the Cabinet Member had with The Friends of Libraries groups, following the concerns raised about Marcus Garvey at OSC in July. In response the Cabinet Member advised that she met with the Friends of Marcus Garvey about every 2 months. The Cabinet Member commented that one of the issues raised at OSC was around staffing levels in the children's library. There was now a member of staff focused on the children's library. As part of a review of children's library provision, the service had introduced a libraries promise and were meeting with children and parents to talk about how to improve provision.
- b. The Committee enquired how access to leisure services and undertakings to improve physical activity levels, would be monitored. In response, the Committee was advised that there was significant monitoring and data available on this, particularly around take-up levels for the concessionary rate and engagement with the summer activity programme. Officers agreed to share a breakdown of the take-up for the concessionary rate for leisure facilities. **(Action: Zoe Robertson).**
- c. In response to a question around whether consideration had been given to bringing the Hays contract back in-house, officers advised that they were approaching the final year of this contract and discussions were ongoing around any potential future redesign of that service. However there were concerns around commercial sensitivity that prevented discussing this in a public forum.
- d. The Committee welcomed the previous use of autism-friendly colour-coding of library books in Marcus Garvey and enquired whether this could be brought back. In response, officers agreed to look into this and give further consideration about how to develop a consistent approach across Haringey libraries. **(Action: Charlotte Pomery).**
- e. The Committee raised concerns about the use of Wood Green and Marcus Garvey Libraries as customer service centres and sought clarification as whether Cabinet Member planned to continue with this policy. In response, the Committee was advised that significant capital resources had been invested into these sites to merge libraries and customer services. However, the Cabinet Member acknowledges some of the Committee's concerns and advised that they were looking at ways of how to ensure two distinct service areas and how the library space could be protected at Wood Green. However, it was acknowledged that this was not an easy task.
- f. The Committee also raised concerns about Fusion's management of Tottenham Green leisure centre. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that a report had been commissioned following a recent incident where the pool

was closed following service users reporting adverse effects from excessive chlorine exposure. In addition, there was also an extensive monitoring programme in place for this contract and officers advised that they were working hard to ensure that a good standard of service was provided. Cllr Amin advised that she was due to meet the UK-wide MD of Fusion soon to discuss some of the issues identified and remained committed to working with Fusion to improve the service.

- g. In response to some other concerns raised, the Committee was advised that the Tottenham Green leisure centre was incredibly popular, with around 40k visits per month, which created its own challenges. Participation at the centre had doubled since Fusion took over the contract. Officers also acknowledged further concerns around queues at peak times and advised that this was something that Fusion were working on and had recently improved their website to provide better signposting and online services.
- h. The Committee raised further concerns about the use of libraries and suggested that books had been removed from Marcus Garvey in order to make room for the customer service centre and study room. The Committee suggested that restoring libraries to their core function as a library should be included as part of the review of libraries.
- i. In response to concerns around the customer service centres, the Committee were advised that overall numbers of people using the customer service centres was declining due to improved online services and that further work was being undertaken to support this transition through workshops and digital help sessions. The Committee noted concern with plans to utilise parts of Wood Green library for a business centre and requested that space for students to use the library for studying be preserved, particularly during exam times. The Cabinet Member agreed to look at this as part of the next phase of work. **(Action: Cllr Amin).**
- j. In response to further concerns around Fusion, officers advised that additional contract monitoring was brought in following the incident in November. The Committee was advised that Fusion were meeting most of their KPIs and that overall contract satisfaction was around 78%.
- k. The Committee requested that an all Member briefing session be set up around leisure and the Fusion contract. Officers and the Cabinet Member agreed to do this and would give some consideration on when to schedule this. **(Action: Cllr Amin/Zoe Robertson).**

RESOLVED

That the update and responses to the Q&A session were noted.

10. PRIORITY X BUDGET SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the Council's 2020/21 Draft Budget / 5-year MTFS 2020/21 – 2024/25 proposals in relation to Your Council/Priority X. The report was introduced by Frances Palopoli, Head of Corporate Financial Strategy & Monitoring. Richard Grice, Director of Transformation and Resources was also present. The following points was raised during the discussion of this agenda item.

YC01- Reduction in Paper Usage

The Committee raised a general point about separating out income generation proposals from budget savings in future reports. In response, officers advised that the two were treated in terms of budget proposals but acknowledged that they could be separated out in future.

YC02- Income from joining the London Counter Fraud Hub

The Committee sought clarification on whether joining the hub was dependent upon 26 local authorities signing up to it and whether the prospects of this happening were looking good. Officers confirmed that a minimum of 26 local authorities were required to make the hub viable. Officers also advised that although they were not there yet, that discussions had been overwhelmingly positive and it was hoped that there would be 26 other local authorities willing to sign up to it.

The Committee also enquired whether £50k income was a conservative estimate given the potential amounts at stake through Right to Buy fraud etcetera. In response, officers advised that £50k was the best estimate of shared returns, based on pilot schemes in other authorities and evidence to date.

In response to a request for clarification, officers advised that the initial joining fee for the scheme was £75k and that the £705k set out at the bottom of page 68 of the pack was a typographical error.

YC03- Legal income from Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Committee suggested that this proposal seemed slightly theoretical. Officers assured the Committee that they were confident that this saving would take place and suggested that it may already have been implemented.

YC04- Finance Directorate Savings .

The Committee sought clarification about the suggested loss of posts and where these would take place. In response officers advised that of the total £540k saving, £340k was earmarked for the next financial year. Of that £340k, it was anticipated that this would include a loss of 2 FTE posts (£70k). The majority of the FTE posts lost would take place in the second tranche of the saving, which would take place in 2022/23. Committee Members were assured that the impact of the changes would be reviewed and assessed before the second tranche was implemented but that it was too early to accurately quantify the number of FTE reductions at this stage.

YC05- Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust (APPCT).

The Committee sought assurance around whether the proposed £195k reduction in revenue grant from the Council had been communicated to APPCT in the context of the huge savings that had been made from the Council's budget over the last ten year period. In response officers advised that they were confident that this was the case and that those conversations had taken place.

The Committee commented that there was a lack of detail in this proposal and requested further information about how the Palace would mitigate this budget gap in order to make an informed judgment on this saving proposal. The Committee sought assurance that the reduction would not impact some of the Trust's outreach work as well its ability to provide free access to community events and inclusive exhibitions. The Committee were also concerned about any reduction in events and exhibitions that were disability friendly.

Further information was requested in relation to how APPCT would meet the budget gap arising from YC05 for the 23rd January. **(Action: Frances Palopoli).**

YC06- Re-imagining Libraries.

The Committee sought clarification about the individual saving proposals and areas of income generation and raised concerns about any attempt to reduce the general service offer in libraries including opening times. Officers advised that the core service offer would remain the same and that there was no intention, for instance to reduce the number of libraries or the opening times. Instead they would be looking at developing a co-ordinated opening hour timetable across all of the libraries and co-ordinating joint services.

The Committee raised concerns around the proposal for developing work spaces for small businesses and start-ups in Wood Green and Marcus Garvey. In response to these concerns, officers advised that this would not entail any loss of books or book shelves as, Wood Green Library was a big building with a significant amount of vacant space that could be utilised. The intention was to maintain core library facilities but also ensuring that the space in each building is being used to its full potential and developing economy opportunities through job fairs, workspace, pop-up events and volunteering opportunities. In response to further discussion, the Committee felt that aspects of this proposal were nebulous and that they did not fully understand how the savings would be made and the degree to which this would enhance and improve the service offer.

Officers advised that a piece of work was underway to look at what activities could be undertaken and how library spaces could be better utilised. Officers added that part of this was also about seeing how libraries could be improved and the making the space work better. The Committee requested that work space be provided for third sector and community groups.

The Committee enquired whether officers were looking at involving a community interest company. Officers advised that this would continue to be run as a mainstream council service.

In response to a question, officers advised that no evaluation had been done as yet around likely take-up levels from small business to workspace facilities. However, there was a project currently run by the British Council at Wood Green Library on support for small business which had seen significant take-up. Officers set out that they felt there was a real market for these type of services and that the take-up was there.

YC07- Extending FOBO approach to across Council Services.

The Committee raised a general point around hearing different experiences from residents in terms of accessing Council services through Customer Services Centres or long waiting times on the telephone to the Council, than was perhaps given by officers in previous discussions around these issues. The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods acknowledged these concerns and emphasised that the driver of this proposal was around service improvement and widening the lessons learnt from FOBO to across all Council services. In response to a question, the Cabinet Member advised they she was confident of delivering this and that the FOBO programme had demonstrated that it could achieved up to 30% savings in areas of customer service and the back office.

The Chair emphasised the need for provision to be in place to deal with urgent situations and crisis management in response to urgent needs and outside of standard response times. Officers accepted that systems needed to be able to respond to a moment of crisis and that work was being undertaken to ensure that this was in place. Officers advised that they were working to categorize the nature of interactions with residents and where there was an urgent need or request in order to make sure that the Council was responding appropriately.

YC08- Part Capitalisation of CPMO.

In response to a question around the nature of capitalisation costs referred to, officers advised that the capitalisation would involve the cost of equipment but also the cost of staff brought in to specifically help deliver the project. The costs of existing project staff outside of the CPMO would not be capitalised under this proposal.

YC09- Income from filming and venue management.

The Committee had no comments in relation to this proposal.

YC10- Income from Outdoor Media.

The Committee raised concerns about how the Council would ensure that any advertising undertaken using Council infrastructure was not contrary to the Council's stated aims, such as fast food advertising or adverts for the betting industry. Officers responded that there was a standard of service that any company had to sign up to and uphold if they were to use Council assets for advertising. The Chair commented on some recent examples she had seen and officers advised that any concerns or infringements had should be reported to the relevant officers and would be investigated.

YC11- Review of Corporate Centre.

The Committee had no comments in relation to this proposal.

YC12- Capitalisation of IT infrastructure staff.

In response to a question about the nature of the savings put forward in this proposal, Officers advised that savings would be realised through the use of Capital and Capital Receipts to fund certain parts of staff work where it was shown that the work produced tangible assets or was transformational to the Council.

The Committee requested further information on the figures presented in relation to this proposal. In particular, the Committee sought clarification on the discrepancy between the estimated £416k staff cost savings from capitalisation and the £345k figure outlined in the financial benefits summary section of this saving. **(Action: Frances Palopoli/Richard Grice).**

Capital Programme

In response to a query around the nature of the term self-financing, officers confirmed that broadly speaking, it meant that the income generated would meet the cost of that proposal and that a clear business case was developed and signed off in each instance to demonstrate this.

The Committee sought clarification around the capital investment used in the proposal to re-imagine the Council's library offer and questioned where would the saving come from, if for example, opening times were being maintained at current provision. Officers set out that the savings would be made by reducing net costs through better utilisation of the whole library infrastructure. This was categorised as being about growth rather than savings or a reduction in service. The Committee also sought clarification about what the term co-ordinated opening hours meant and whether libraries would be unstaffed for example. Officers agreed to come back to the Committee with further information on this. **(Action: Charlotte Pomery).**

The Chair advised that she would co-ordinate the final budget recommendations in relation to Your Council with Committee Members via email. **(Action: Chair).**

RESOLVED

- I. That the Committee considered the 2020/21 Draft Budget/MTFS 2020/21-2024/25.

11. FACILITIES MANAGEMENT TRANSITION

The Committee received an update on the transfer of FM services back in house, which was identified as the Council's the first insource programme. The report was introduced by Andrew Meek, Head of Organisational Resilience & Joe McBride, Transition Manager as set out in the agenda pack at page 127. The following arose from the discussion of the report:

- a. In response to a question around who had overall control for FM services once in was brought back in house from 1st April, officers advised that soft FM services would be managed by Haringey Council and hard FM services would be managed by HfH. In response to concerns about governance, the

- Committee was assured that the Corporate Landlord would have overall control and would have a role in co-ordinating overall requests to HfH.
- b. The Committee noted concerns with HfH's current track record on issues of repairs and maintenance and complaints from residents in this regard. The Committee sought assurances that additional responsibilities around management of hard FM for the Council would not make their repairs and maintenance service worse. In response, officers acknowledged these concerns and advised that funding was the crucial issue. The Committee noted that there was a separate funding source for the two; repairs and maintenance was funded through the Housing Revenue Account, whilst Facilities Management was funded through the General Fund.
 - c. The Committee enquired about the future direction of the insourcing agenda and enquired whether consideration had been given to adult social care and school catering services being brought back in-house. In response, officers set out that the transfer of FM services was the first insourcing programme and that a report was going to Cabinet in March which would set out the timeline and the focus of the insourcing programme going forward.
 - d. The Committee requested that a further update on the insourcing programme be brought back to OSC. Officers acknowledged this request and agreed to come back to Members with some further thoughts on how best to accommodate this request and likely timescales. **(Action: Andrew Meek/Joe McBride).**

RESOLVED

That the Facilities Management Update report was noted.

12. SCRUTINY REVIEW ON SEND

This item was deferred to the next meeting as the Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel was unavailable.

13. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee received a copy of the work plans for OSC and the four Scrutiny Panels, along with a scoping document for a Scrutiny Review on Schools. The Report was introduced by Rob Mack.

The Committee was advised that work was underway to develop the work plan for 2020/21 so that it was in place and ready to go following Annual Council in May. The Committee noted that the survey for the proposed Scrutiny Café event in March was being developed and should be available on the website in February.

RESOLVED

- I. That the Committee noted the work programmes for the main Committee and Scrutiny Panels at Appendix A of the report and agreed any amendments;

- II. That the Committee approved the scope and terms of reference at Appendix B of the report for the review by the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Panel on Schools.

14. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

15. FUTURE MEETINGS

23rd January

12th March

CHAIR: Councillor Lucia das Neves

Signed by Chair

Date

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MINUTES OF MEETING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 2020, 19:00

PRESENT:

Councillors: Lucia das Neves (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Erdal Dogan, Adam Jogee, Khaled Moyeed

Also Present: Luci Davin, Yvonne Denny and Lourdes Keever

ALSO ATTENDING:

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 Mark Chapman.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Moyeed declared an interest in relation to the Scrutiny Review into Wards Corner as he provided legal advice to market stall traders at the site.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None

6. SCRUTINY REVIEW ON SEND

The Committee considered a Scrutiny Review into Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND). The report was introduced by the Chair of the Children's Panel, Cllr Dogan. Sue Leveson, a local parent carer representative who gave evidence to the review, was also in attendance. The Chair invited Sue to speak to the Committee. The following points were noted:

- a. Ms Leveson commended the report and advised that she welcomed the fact that the whole process was very inclusive and that it was clearly visible how the

- evidence had informed decision making. It was suggested that a similar approach would hopefully be undertaken in regards to co-production.
- b. Ms Leveson advocated that in the spirit of co-production, parents should be further involved with the monitoring of the review's recommendations.
 - c. It was suggested that 3 tranches were ear-marked for co-production but this always seemed to be something that would take place at an unspecific point in the future. Ms Leveson disputed that the 3 phases of co-production had taken place. Officers advised that the process had been completed and that co-production opportunities did take place. Ms Leveson suggested that parents had not been fully involved. The Chair of the Children's Panel advised that he would look into these concerns and the wider issue of co-production at an upcoming panel meeting. **(Action: Cllr Dogan).**

RESOLVED

That the Committee approved the report and its recommendations and that it be submitted to Cabinet for response.

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2020/21

The Committee scrutinised the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) 2020/21 prior to its submission to Corporate Committee and Full Council for approval. The TMSS and covering report were introduced by Thomas Skeen, Head of Pensions, Treasury & Chief Accountant. The following arose in discussion of this report:

- a. The Committee sought reassurance around whether the TMSS was benchmarked against other local authorities. In response, officers advised that quarterly updates were provided to Corporate Committee and that benchmarking was undertaken with Arlingclose as part of this. In general, Haringey tended to adopt a lower risk profile for its investments than many other local authorities. In response to a follow-up question, officers advised that borrowing levels of around £400m were broadly average whilst £34m in investments was relatively low.
- b. The Committee also sought assurance around what the main driver/s were for the growth in borrowing needs. In response, officers advised that the biggest factor was the increase in the HRA in order to fund investment in housing stock. However, other significant areas of capital spend included schools, highways and street lighting. The other significant issue driving higher borrowing costs was the end of the MRP holiday and the basis for calculating that cost.
- c. In response to a question around the revenue costs of the level of capital investments, officers advised that the gross position in the General Fund in 2023/24 was around £33.6m but that a number of these were self-financing savings, which reduced the net position to around £21m.
- d. The Committee enquired whether officers were comfortable with the interest and other additional borrowing costs brought about by a substantial increase in borrowing in order to fund these capital projects. In response, officers acknowledged the impact of borrowing on the revenue budget and advised that the implications of servicing that debt were factored into the MTFs as part of

- the budget setting process. Officers acknowledged the need to continue to monitor the costs of borrowing and ensure ongoing affordability.
- e. In relation to the HRA, it was noted that this was slightly different as the expansion of housing stock also created additional revenue through rent payments. Officers advised that a HRA business plan had been developed which clearly set out these implications and the fact that this was a sustainable investment. The HRA business plan was due to be considered by Cabinet in February.
 - f. OSC requested that it receive regular updates on the delivery of the capital programme. **(Action: Thomas Skeen)**

RESOLVED

That the proposed updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21 was scrutinised and comments made prior to its presentation to Corporate Committee and Council for approval.

8. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND STRATEGIC REGENERATION (FINANCE PORTFOLIO)

The Committee undertook a verbal question and answer session for noting with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategic Regeneration on his portfolio. The following arose as part of the discussion during the Q&A session.

- a. The Committee sought the Cabinet Member's insight into the High Streets agenda. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the administration was working with the local traders in Wood Green and Turnpike Lane to ensure that businesses were engaged with and there was a joined up approach to parking, for example, in order to encourage vibrant high streets. The Cabinet Member advised that this issue was within Cllr Bull's portfolio.
- b. In response to a follow up question around the two hour parking window in Muswell Hill and how the administration could offset the need to encourage business in the Borough with the declaration of a climate emergency and its active travel plans. The Cabinet Member acknowledged these concerns and commented that it was a complicated issue and suggested that elderly or infirm residents needed to be able to access shops and services. The Cabinet Member agreed that further encouragement of hybrid or electric vehicles was needed along with improving cycling provision in the Borough.
- c. The Committee sought assurances about what was being done as part of the Community Buildings review. In response, officers advised that this was part of Cllr Blake's agenda but that a report to Cabinet was being developed which would set out the administration's proposals in relation to this issue. In regards to the likely financial implications of this report, the Cabinet Member assured the Committee that the report would address the issue of circular funding as well as the likely budget implications. The Chair commented that Cllr Blake was due to attend the next OSC and suggested that these questions could be put to him then.
- d. The Committee enquired as to whether a review had been undertaken into the impact of removing the £10k ward budgets, particularly in terms of supporting community groups. The Clerk agreed to put this question in writing to Cllr Blake. **(Action: Clerk).**

- e. The Committee sought assurance around what level of engagement with businesses in Hornsey and other parts of the borough outside of Wood Green and Turnpike Lane had been undertaken in respect of the High Streets agenda. Cllr Adje agreed that he would come back to the Committee with details of how the west of the Borough was represented through the Haringey Business Alliance. It was noted that there was a Tottenham representative on this group. **(Action: Cllr Adje).**
- f. In response to a request for the Cabinet Members thoughts on Wards Corner, the Cabinet Member outlined that this was a complicated issue that had been going on for 20 years. The Cabinet Member advised that the site was owned by TfL and that there were a number of concerns around the building and Health and Safety at the site. Due to these concerns, the Management Company and TfL had agreed to close the market. The Committee was advised that the Council had a very limited role in the site and that its role was limited to regulatory oversight and agreeing licences etcetera. The Cabinet Member also highlighted that the Council had entered into a CPO with Grainger over the site and that the Council would be liable if it walked away from the agreement.
- g. In response to a question around the impact of rent increases on traders at Wards Corner for the proposed replacement market, the Cabinet Member acknowledged these concerns and advised that this was a concern for all business but advised there had been a guarantee that there would be limited rent rises over the next three to five years. The Committee also noted that Business Rates were set by the government.
- h. In relation to concerns about any potential disparity in parking regulations between Muswell Hill compared to Turnpike Lane, the Cabinet Member clarified that the restrictions for Muswell Hill did not include free parking, merely just a two hour time limit in order to encourage short duration trips.
- i. The Committee commented on the building next to Muswell Hill Library and its use as a hub for start-ups and small businesses, and questioned the potential conflict between supporting this and using the site for alternative uses such as housing. In response, the Cabinet Member agreed to come back to the Committee with options for the site and some thoughts on potential conflicts. **(Action: Cllr Adje).**
- j. In response to a question around the rising financial costs involved with Osbourne Grove, the Cabinet Member advised that this was due to the revised plans for capital investment at the centre.
- k. In response to a question around identifying some of the biggest risks within the budget, the Cabinet Member advised that the biggest risk was around non-delivery of savings.
- l. In relation to a question on whether the strategic priorities of the administration were reflected in the budget, the Cabinet Member confirmed that this was the case and highlighted the recruitment of key officers to deliver the Council's housing targets as an example.
- m. In relation to a question about equalities considerations within the budget setting process and how the most disadvantaged residents were protected, the Cabinet Member highlighted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as a relevant example. The Cabinet Member also set out that Cabinet were due to approve a 200-300% Council tax band for vacant properties. The Cabinet Member also set out that significant work had gone into closing a £4m+ budget gap down to £600k and that this had clear implications on being able to deliver services.

- n. The Committee sought further information around the administration's progress in relation to bringing vacant properties back into use. In response, the Cabinet Member suggested that around 1000 properties had been brought back in to use but he would check the exact figure and whether this related to privately-owned or Council properties. **(Action: Cllr Adje).**

RESOLVED

Noted

9. **SCRUTINY OF THE 2020/21 DRAFT BUDGET/5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2020/21-2024/25) - RECOMMENDATIONS**

** Clerk's note – Cllr Connor, as the Chair of Budget Scrutiny, Chaired the meeting for agenda item 9.**

The Committee received a copy of the draft 5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy (2020/21 – 2024/25) along with a covering report which set out how the budget proposals had been scrutinised and also included the draft recommendations that had been proposed by the individual Scrutiny Panels. Members of the Committee were asked to consider and agree recommendations contained within this report so that these could be considered by Cabinet on 11 February 2019, along with the final MTFS proposals that would be put to Council on 24 February.

The report was introduced by Frances Palopoli, Head of Corporate Financial Strategy and Monitoring and Jon Warlow the Director of Finance, as set out in the addendum reports pack at pages 1-304. The Committee also received a late paper which set out additional information received by the Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel on the budget reductions proposals. This report was included for information purposes. The following arose during the discussion of the draft Budget/MTFS:

- a. The Director of Finance set out the headline position for the General Fund and advised that this contained a lower amount of budget reductions than was envisaged a year ago. The Committee noted that the proposals included growth in budgets for key areas and that Adults in particular still required further budget growth to meet current demands.
- b. The budget contained the maximum 1.99% increase in Council Tax as well as 2% increase in the Adult Social Care Precept
- c. The Committee was advised that there was still a budget gap of £0.6m from the December report. The gap was characterised as being relatively small and the Director of Finance advised that the shortfall would be made by changes to corporate and technical services and the Committee was assured that there would be no impact on front line services. The Director of Finance highlighted that the budget gap of £600k compared favourably with the £7m shortfall in last year's budget position.
- d. The Director of Finance highlighted ongoing concerns around the recovery plans for the Dedicated Schools Grant and acknowledged that this was very challenging position that was being felt across local government.
- e. The Budget proposals for the HRA set out an increase in Council rents of the rate of CPI inflation plus 1%. The Committee was advised that further detail on the HRA business plan would be included in February budget paper to Cabinet.

- f. The Chair of Budget Scrutiny welcomed the overview given by officers on the budget and requested that further detail be provided in Section 5 of the report as part of future budget scrutiny reports, both to the Panel and the main Committee. The Chair of Budget scrutiny highlighted the information that was included in the late handout as a template of the type of information to include in future, including information on the current position on un-earmarked and earmarked reserves.
- g. The Committee sought further assurance around the DSG recovery plan and queried how important further engagement with OSC was on this issue. In response, officers reiterated that this was a particularly challenging area and welcomed the fact that local authorities were pushing back to the Government on education funding. Officers also acknowledged that this maybe something that OSC would like to receive further information on going forwards.
- h. In response to a question on what modelling had been done on the impact of rent increases, officers advised that previous decisions to freeze rent increases had a significant impact on the availability and quality of housing stock. Officers also set out that the Council was about to enter in to its third year of a pooled business rates arrangement across London and the amount available to retain by the Council had changed again for the third year.
- i. In response to a question around increased borrowing costs from the PLWB, officers advised that they were continuing to explore alternative sources of borrowing, including more loans from other local authorities. Officers advised that there was no immediate pressure to find alternative sources but that they would do so when it was considered prudent.
- j. In response to a question around the main driver for increased Council Tax Receipts, officers advised that this was calculated on the basis of increased numbers of residential and commercial properties being built and the corresponding increase in Council Tax and Business Rates being collected.
- k. In response to a question, officers advised that they were comfortable with the levels of borrowing set out and advised that the five-year time frame for the MTFS made it look more dramatic. However, this also provided a long term view and was beneficial in terms of budgeting for those increased borrowing costs.
- l. In relation to fees and charges and the level of income generated, officers advised that these provided an increasingly important contribution to the Council's budget of around £17/18m and the level of reliance on income from this was unlikely to change in the near future.
- m. The Committee sought assurances about the level of reserves and whether there was a budget resilience reserve in place for 2020/21. Officers advised that the £7m resilience reserve would remain in place for next year and advised that the setting of this was proportionate to the level of risk. Last year's budget assumption required a £5m draw down from reserves to balance the budget. Officers set out that the £15m earmarked reserves would remain the same and that they were confident in the overall level of reserves as well as the budget resilience reserve.
- n. The Chair of Budget Scrutiny requested that future budget scrutiny reports to both Panels and the main Committee include the following information (**Action: John Warlow**):
 - Comment by finance officer on MTFS savings over 5 years

- Pressure on the Councils budget – as per table produced by Adults under Late Business item 4th table, headed Policy Growth. Also Total growth (new grants etc.).
- Actual savings both new and ongoing for each of the five panel areas (so Children's, Adults, Environment etc.)
- Information on Budget reserves both Earmarked and Un-earmarked
- An account of the position of the Housing and Revenue Account
- Any particular pressures on the Councils position – for instance DSG
- Comment by finance officer on overall Capital budget over the five year MTFS
- Actual capital budget spend within each of the panel areas, both new and ongoing high level information (see revenue point 4)
- Include Capital budget (on page 46 at 3.3 and 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 within Treasury Management report item).
- Include Revenue Budget Implications already stated within TMR page 64 at section 12, 12.1 to 12.3 – include table.

The following comments and amendments to the draft Budget Scrutiny recommendations were put forward by the Committee:

- a. EC08 Outdoor Media – The Chair of the H&R Panel advised that the recommendation should be changed to reflect that adequate assurance had been received around the type of companies that could be permitted to use the advertising space.
- b. There were no changes proposed to the recommendations put forward by the Environment and Community Safety Panel in relation to Place.
- c. There were no changes proposed to the recommendations put forward by the Children and Young People's Panel.
- d. There were no changes proposed to the recommendations put forward by the Adults and Health Panel.
- e. There were no amendments proposed to the recommendations proposed to Your Council.

The Chair reiterated that during future Budget Scrutiny sessions, OSC should be provided with information on the year-on-year position for savings proposals across the current MTFS period as well as the year-on-year ongoing position of the implementation of capital projects across each of the priority areas, in order to allow OSC to track the rolling position rather than just the new proposals. The Committee also requested that they would like to receive the MTFS savings tracker that was submitted to Cabinet as part of future budget scrutiny papers. **(Action Jon Warlow).**

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- I. Agreed the final budget recommendations to be put to Cabinet on 11 February 2020, following consideration of recommendations arising out of the budget scrutiny process, as set out in Appendix A of the report.
- II. Considered the additional information, attached at Appendix B of the report, requested during the December/January round of budget scrutiny meetings;

- III. Noted the budget information and capital schemes proposals, attached at Appendix C of the report, considered by Scrutiny Panels and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2019/January 2020;

10. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

11. FUTURE MEETINGS

12th March 2020

CHAIR: Councillor Lucia das Neves

Signed by Chair

Date

MINUTES OF MEETING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 26TH MAY, 2020, 6.30 PM

PRESENT:

Councillors: Lucia das Neves (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Erdal Dogan, Adam Jogee, Khaled Moyeed

Co-optees: Mark Chapman, Luci Davin and 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 Yvonne Denny

14. URGENT BUSINESS

It being a special meeting under Part 4, Section B, Paragraph 17 of the Council's Constitution, no other business was considered at the meeting.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared that she was a governor of St Martin of Porres School.

Cllr Connor declared she was a governor of Tetherdown Primary School.

Lourdes Keever declared that she was the chair of the governing body of a school in south east Tottenham.

Mark Chapman declared that he was the chair of governors at both Bounds Green Primary and Fortis Green schools.

Cllr Ibrahim declared that she was a full time trade union representative for Unison at the London Borough of Redbridge. It was noted that Unison had agreed a national position on the reopening of schools.

Cllr Jogee declared that he sat on the governing body for the Greig City Academy.

Luci Davin declared that she was a parent-governor at Seven Sisters Primary School.

16. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS

None.

17. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr Ejiofor, the Leader of the Council gave a short verbal presentation to the Committee which set out some of the key actions taken by the administration in response to the current Covid-19 crisis as well as the next steps. The following key points were noted:

- A huge effort had been undertaken to transform the way that the Council worked and a number of services had to be reconfigured to fundamentally change how they operated. This was done almost overnight. The Leader characterised the scale of change being akin to implementing all of the emergency planning scenarios that the Council have conceived and tested, all at once.
- Operating remotely, limiting face-to-face contact to only when it was absolutely necessary, was crucial in changing the practical way the Council operated.
- The focus of the Council's response was to protect the most vulnerable residents. The Council also prioritised the need to support the Public Health England advice which was to 'Stay at Home' and 'Protect Lives'. The Council ensured that its staff were protected whilst also continuing to provide services to its residents.
- In addition to day-to-day services, the Council had a key role during the crisis to shield vulnerable people, to provide housing and ensure that parks and open spaces were used properly. The Council supported its NHS partners with seven-day discharge and in many cases this was being done within two-hours.
- A food distribution organisation was established which provided 300 deliveries a day.
- The entire Customer Services operation was reorganised to work remotely.
- A temporary mortuary was also established.
- Another key aspect of the Council's response was to work with our voluntary and community sector partners to create the Connected Communities programme.
- The five key issues identified for the next phase of the Covid response were identified as: a planned phased return to school; access to funding; local economic development; supporting walking and cycling and how the Council supported the delivery of services going forwards.
- The Council has received additional funding from government to support the Covid response but this had almost been spent already in providing shielding, additional housing, food supplies etcetera.
- The Committee was advised that there was a projected £45m of additional expenditure as a result of the crisis. The Council had received £15.5m from government, which left a £29.5m gap. In addition, it was anticipated that there would be a drop in income of around £8m from a loss of domestic and commercial rents and as well as £12m reduction in business rates for next year.
- The Leader set out that, combined, this left a £70m black hole in next year's budget which had been a balanced budget when it was agreed in February. The key task for the administration going forwards was to agree how it could balance the books and mitigate a £70m funding shortfall. The Leader advised

that it was crucial that Council's continued to engage with the government and kept the pressure up to ensure government promises around funding were kept.

The following points were raised in discussion of this agenda item:

- a. In response to a request for clarification on the extent to which further funding was expected from central government, the Leader advised that in addition to the 15.5m of funding already secured, the administration was anticipating another tranche of 'spend it now' money to cover immediate costs, but there was no indication yet of how much that would be or when. The Committee was advised that the government had committed to reimburse councils but it was anticipated that some of the spending would be more likely to be reimbursed than others. The Leader set out that they expected to receive all of the money spent on protecting the shielded cohort and most of the expenditure in areas such as housing, where there was some degree of discretion in how the money was spent. However, in areas where additional expenditure occurred such as food security, it was anticipated that councils would have to make an argument that this was Covid-related. The Leader set out that all councils, along with voluntary and community organisations would be lobbying government collectively to make sure that it kept its promises.
- b. The Chief Executive advised the Committee that, to date, the Council had received two tranches of initial funding. The Secretary of State had set out his approach in a number of speeches during the crisis and it was evident that the government's message had shifted from an initial commitment to do whatever it took to the need for council's to share some of the financial burden. There were concerns across local government that the government was seeking to row back on some of its commitments and would likely argue that some of the responses to the crisis entailed a level of discretion and councils effectively chose to do them.
- c. The Committee noted concerns around the extent to which the financial impact of the crisis had been shared with residents and questioned what pressure was being put on local big businesses to assist with funding. In response, the Leader advised that the Council was still working out what the financial impact was going to be and that a report would be coming to Cabinet in June which set this out in detail. The Leader confirmed that he wanted to have a conversation with residents about the cost of shielding and providing 300 meals a day etcetera but this needed to be done when all of the information was available and the Cabinet report would form part of this process. In respect of businesses, the Leader advised that he would like to see large businesses work with small businesses as part of the community wealth building programme to ensure that the local economy came out of the crisis in reasonable health. It was commented that a number of large businesses had also been dramatically affected by the crisis.
- d. The Committee sought clarification on whether there was a sense of the proportion around the expenditure that was in some way discretionary. In response, the Director of Finance set out that the authority had a major food need during the crisis and work was underway to assess how it could continue to address the level of need that existed. It was noted that addressing these financial pressures would be difficult going forward but that the authority was not unique in that respect.

- e. In response to the recent high profile child protection case, the Leader acknowledged that the most important duty for a council was safeguarding and keeping young people safe. Following an Ofsted inspection in 2018 significant changes were made with new resources and new management in the disabled children team. The Lead Member for Children and Families would be attending the next OSC meeting at which point the administration would have had time to reflect and possess a greater understanding of the issues raised in the case. The Leader noted that OSC would be undertaking a Scrutiny Review in to this issue and that the Chair would be meeting with the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member next week to discuss this.
- f. In relation to concerns about the reopening of the borough's schools, the Leader commented that Haringey had a disproportionate number of BAME school children and that Covid-19 had a disproportionate impact on the BAME community, therefore the impact of reopening schools in Haringey would not be the same as in some other local authorities. The Leader emphasised that when schools reopened the key priority was to ensure that it was safe. It shouldn't be a one size-fits-all approach or done to a set timetable. Some of the key issues were anticipated to be around class sizes, access/egress points and deep cleaning. The Leader emphasised the need for school governors to be ultimately responsible and the need for governors to sign off risk assessments before any individual schools were reopened.
- g. In response to a question, the Leader confirmed that Cabinet were meeting regularly to discuss the financial impact on the authority as well as the specific impacts on individual portfolios.
- h. In relation to concerns that the authority had performed poorly in relation to distributing the first tranche of small business grants and what lessons were being learnt, the Leader acknowledged that the authority had encountered some challenges and that there was scope for improvement. In mitigation, the Leader set out that Haringey had a much higher number of small and single trader businesses than many other authorities. There was also an issue with the database that was issued containing inaccurate and old data. As a result the Council would not be able to achieve a 100% score on the percentage of grants distributed.
- i. The Committee sought clarification around the potential consequences to the Council's strategic priorities as a result of the financial impact from Covid-19. In response the Leader acknowledged that there would be some impact on the Council's ability to undertake some of the activities planned, especially at the pace that it wanted. As the country came out of lockdown, the administration would be examining what its key priorities would be but its main goal would be keeping the recession at bay locally, particularly through community wealth building. The Council signed pledges with residents, businesses and the voluntary sector at the start of the crisis and assurance was given that the Council would be working closely with these groups to deliver its priorities going forwards.
- j. In response to a question around what actions the local authority was taking to ensure consistency with the reopening of schools, the Leader set out that school governance was fragmented and that school governors were ultimately responsible for what went on in schools. The local authority's role was to provide advice and guidance. The Council was talking to governing bodies to ensure consistency and putting forward key areas for consideration, such as

- PPE and the flow of buildings. Both the government and the unions had set 5 tests for schools to reopen. The Leader reiterated the importance of school governors ensuring that their respective schools were properly risk assessed before reopening.
- k. In response to a further concerns expressed around safeguarding, the Leader advised that the administration was reviewing the effectiveness of the changes made to the disabled children team and that this would be completed by the time the Cabinet Member attended the next OSC meeting.
 - l. In relation to consultation with parents, the Leader set out that the administration was committed to work closely with stakeholders as set out in the three pledges made at the start of the lockdown.
 - m. In response to concerns around the need for clear messaging, the Leader set out that if Members had any particular examples or areas where they thought messaging could be improved they should let pass this on to the Leader's Office. **(Action: All)**.
 - n. In light of the role played by care workers, the Committee sought assurances that all new care contracts would provide the London Living Wage and sick pay as a minimum. In response, the Leader advised that the administration had made a commitment that all council contracted care workers would receive the London Living Wage and they were sticking to this commitment. The Leader advised the administration was not able to move all care workers on to the new contracts before the outbreak of the Covid pandemic but the Council was paying those staff a bonus in lieu of this and as soon as it was possible to do so, all council contracted care staff would be moved to a new contract that paid the London Living Wage. The Committee was advised that there were also a number of small providers in the market in Haringey and therefore not all care workers in the borough were Council contracted.
 - o. In relation to the provision of sick pay to care workers, the Leader agreed to come back to the Committee with a response on sick pay. **(Action: Cllr Ejiiofor)**.
 - p. In response to a question around whether Haringey was looking at how it could participate locally with test, track and trace, the Leader acknowledged that this was being looked at. The Leader agreed that he would come back to the Committee with a written response on this and further assurances about access for those who needed to be regularly tested. **(Action: Cllr Ejiiofor)**.
 - q. The Committee sought assurances around what was being done to make cycling safer in the Borough, particularly in light of an anticipated increase in demand following the end of the lockdown. In response, the Leader advised that a meeting was taking place later in the week to look at a number of proposals in this area and pull together a deliverable programme. It was hoped that Covid crisis might afford the Council with opportunities to deliver a safer and more cycle friendly borough.
 - r. In response to concerns about opportunities for residents to have a chance to feed into these proposals, the Leader acknowledged the need for a strategic piece of engagement on the broader long term outputs but also advised that there were some actions that needed to be done quickly, such as supporting social distancing on pavements. The Leader advised that the administration was committed to undertaking engagement with stakeholders on the longer-term strategy at a suitable juncture.

18. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & ESTATE RENEWAL

Cllr Ibrahim, Cabinet Member for Housing and Estate Renewal gave a short update to the Committee around her portfolio. Sean McLaughlin, MD Homes for Haringey and Alan Benson, AD for Housing were also present. The following key points were noted:

- a. In relation to the Housing Delivery Programme; 350 Council homes had received Planning Permission and 331 of those homes had started on site. Of the £62.8m grant from the GLA's Building Council Homes for Londoners programme, the Council has drawn down £11.9m for the homes started.
- b. Cabinet had agreed 27 sites of Council-owned land to put into the programme. It was anticipated that by the autumn, a site would be identified in every ward in the borough. Cabinet will be asked to approve seven new sites at its upcoming meeting in June, which included Kerswell Close.
- c. The Cabinet Member advised that there had been an inevitable impact on the Housing Delivery Programme caused by Covid-19 as work on six active sites as well as procurement, consultation and planning decisions had all effectively ceased due to Covid. Work ceased entirely on four of the six sites, whilst Melbourne and Ashley Road remained open but with limited work taking place. The Cabinet Member advised that work had subsequently resumed on five of the six sites but with reduced on-site capacity. It was anticipated that work on the Red House would not resume until September at the earliest, due to the existing building being used for Temporary Accommodation.
- d. External capacity remained a significant challenge, tender deadlines had to be extended as firms had furloughed staff and disruptions to supply chains prevented them from costing bids. Delays had also occurred with undertaking site surveys.
- e. In response to the Covid crisis, a number of sites had been opened as temporary homeless hostels. These included the Travelodge on the border with Islington which had 104 rooms, 24/7 staff on site, all units were self-contained and residents were receiving daily food deliveries. All residents and staff had been tested at the Travelodge and there was also a mobile library and arts initiative on site. At Pramwood there were 30 residents living in self-contained rooms and all residents had been tested. The Red House had 40 self-contained rooms and Covid-19 testing was booked to take place this week. Other sites included the Shelton hotel and the Green Rooms.
- f. The Cabinet Member advised that due to the huge demand on Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation, there were still some people being housed out of borough, such as 30 people at the Ramada in Barnet.
- g. The Committee was advised that current level of families presenting as homeless was lower due to the stopping of evictions but new cases were still happening due to domestic violence and temporary arrangements with friends or family coming to an end, for example. In response to an increase in calls related to domestic abuse, the Cabinet Member set out that additional capacity had been put into Hearthstone.

The following was noted in discussion of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Estate renewal's verbal update:

- a. The Chair sought assurances around the Firs House fire and what was being done in relation to concerns around the roof design and impact on the spread

of fire. The Chair also requested assurance around what was being done to assure residents who lived in buildings with a similar roof design. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged these concerns and advised that the building in question was scheduled to be part of an existing fire safety investigation programme, which would have involved intrusive inspections due to the need to inspect roof spaces. The building in question had a pitched roof added to it in 2002.

- b. Sean McLaughlin advised the Committee that the cause of the fire was still being investigated by the emergency services. The MD HfH advised that in relation to the fire, it was contained within one dwelling and from that point of view the structural integrity of the building held up. The MD HfH reassured the Committee that they were aware of the potential fire risk from fire travelling between roof spaces and as a landlord they were carrying out a programme of fire safety inspections. The programme was due to complete at the end of this calendar year to identify those roof spaces where fire breaks needed to be installed. This programme had been delayed due to the intrusive nature of those inspections, as well as a shortage of qualified people able to carry out inspections. The MD HfH advised that an assessment would need to be made when lockdown measures were eased to examine how quickly HfH could get back on track with completing the programme of fire safety inspections.
- c. The Committee sought further clarification on how the timetable for the delivery of 1000 new Council homes would be effected. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that there would inevitably be a delay due to Covid-19. The Council was on target to achieve delivery of a certain number of homes by the end of the administration, but Covid had resulted in a number of Housing Delivery Programme changes. The Cabinet Member set out that the administration was hoping to get the programme up and running again as soon as possible. The AD for Housing commented that work on the six schemes that were underway had stopped and were in the process of being resumed, however due to ongoing social distancing the delivery of these sites would be slower than they would have been. The AD for Housing advised that it was difficult to know the impact on delivery and overall the number of houses that would be delivered at this stage. It was hoped that another 25 sites would be started this year, however this could be undermined if there was a second spike in Covid infections.
- d. The AD for Housing advised the Committee that it was not envisaged that there would be an impact on GLA funding as no other housing association or local authority were able to meet delivery timetables either so everyone was in the same situation. The GLA were speaking to the government about revising the timescales/dates that organisations could draw down the money.
- e. In response to a query about the number of completed housing units delivered, the Cabinet Member advised that no new builds had been completed, but clarified that the whole process took around 18-24 months and that the Council had to build up its entire housing building capacity from scratch. The Council had however purchased 92 units from IBSA that were in place and being used for housing but these were not new builds. The Cabinet Member reiterated that 350 homes had started on site but none of those homes were ever projected to have been completed by now. Most of the new homes built as part of the housing delivery programme were due to be completed within the last six months of the four-year term of the administration because of effectively

- starting from scratch and the fact that there was a long process involved in designing, acquiring planning permission and building new homes.
- f. In response to a follow-up question, officers advised that a number of new homes should be delivered by the end of the administration, but that it would not be 1000 as per the manifesto commitment.
 - g. In response to questions around the ongoing housing of rough sleepers, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the government's decision to house all rough sleepers had resulted in significant improvements in relation to the welfare of rough sleepers and their individual health and wellbeing. The Cabinet Member reassured the Committee some form of housing would need to continue especially until there was a vaccine in place. The Council was working closely with other boroughs on how to move this forward. There was a pan-London steering group to deal with rough sleepers which was responsible for organising health checks etcetera. The group was led by the London boroughs collectively and there was agreement that that homelessness provision could not go back to how it was before the crisis.
 - h. In relation to funding, the Committee was advised that the government had announced £160m in funding for housing rough sleepers but there was no information yet on how to bid for the funding. Similarly, there was a lack of clarity about how this would affect those with no recourse to public funds. The Chair commented that she would like to follow up on this issue going forwards.
(Action: Clerk).
 - i. In relation to further questions around fire safety inspections and how much progress had been made with the programme, the MD HfH advised that 9 packages of capital works were issued in 2018 on fire safety works and a good deal of those did involve compartmentation issues both in roof spaces and in-between buildings. The MD HfH advised that with compartmentation issues it was much easier to identify the problem than it was to fix and for timber framed buildings this involved a three stage process. HfH had recently had a report on 28 blocks which would be brought forward for Cabinet approval to release capital funding for improvement works. The Committee was advised that the fire brigade were particular keen to prosecute compartmentation breeches of regulations and had a specific team to do this. It was noted that the fire regulations were that a building was legal as long as it met the fire regulations in place at the time of construction. HfH advised that they were proceeding on the basis that they wanted to identify any gaps in compartmentation and would be producing a plan to rectify any fire risks that existed in those properties.
 - j. In response to a question around the number of people still sleeping on the streets in Haringey, the Cabinet Member advised that there were 13 people currently on the streets and each one had an active offer of accommodation and they were informed of this offer on a daily basis.

19. FUTURE MEETINGS

22nd June 2020

20th July 2020

CHAIR: Councillor Lucia das Neves

Signed by Chair

Date

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