

# **MINUTES OF MEETING CORPORATE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 30TH JULY, 2020, 6.30 - 10.15 PM**

## **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Isidoros Diakides (Chair), Mike Hakata (Vice-Chair),  
Peray Ahmet, Dawn Barnes, Patrick Berryman, Mahir Demir,  
Makbule Gunes, Alessandra Rossetti, Daniel Stone and Noah Tucker**

## **ALSO ATTENDING:**

### **138. 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.

### **139. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)**

Apologies for absence were received Cllr Morris.

### **140. URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

### **141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **142. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS**

None.

### **143. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 as a correct record.

### **144. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON DISPOSAL OF ASSETS OCTOBER 2019**

The Committee considered a report which provided a summary of the audit recommendations, as well the management action taken to date in implementing the

recommendations from the Internal Audit report on the Disposal of Assets, from October 2019. The report was introduced by Christine Addison, Interim Director of Capital Projects & Property and Bill Ogden, Head of Strategic Property as set out in the agenda pack at pages 11-14. Cllr Adje was also present, as the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategic Regeneration. The following was noted in discussion of this report:

- a. The Committee sought assurance around the monitoring arrangements for the implementation of the recommendations and whether it had been discussed at the Property Management Board. In response, officers advised that the report had been discussed at Corporate Board, as this was an officer level function and that Cllr Adje, as Cabinet Member, was responsible at a political level for ensuring that the recommendations from the audit were implemented. The Chair set out that he would like all audit reports to be sent to the relevant Cabinet Member as a matter of course.
- b. In response to questions around the extent to which the Strategic Property Unit was made up of interim staff or consultants, officers acknowledged that there were a lot of interim staff in the team and that this was not the ideal situation. It was commented that a number of the permanent staff had left the organisation due to plans for this function to be absorbed into the now defunct Haringey Development Vehicle. The Interim Director of Capital Projects & Property advised that work was continuing on recruitment of full-time permanent members of staff. The Director also assured the Committee that the staff in Strategic Property had extensive experience, irrespective of them being interim staff and that she had no concerns about their ability to perform their role competently.
- c. In response to a question around considerations of value for money when undertaking asset disposals, officers advised that there was a process in place for checking the basis for any disposal and that disposals were done on the basis of best consideration. Officers clarified that no significant disposals had taken place in the past 18 months.
- d. Members of the Committee broadly welcomed the fact there had been no significant disposal of assets in that past 18 months. The Committee sought assurance that any significant disposal would be discussed at Corporate Committee before it took place. In response, the Cabinet Member stressed that the nature of disposals could be time-sensitive and that discussing this with the Committee may not be practicable or desirable, particularly as the Committee only meets five times a year. The Cabinet Member assured the Committee that any disposal that was undertaken in future would have proper audit trail.
- e. The Committee suggested that, in light of the sensitivity of asset disposals and concerns about what may have happened in the past, that there was a need for an extra layer of scrutiny around this issue and that Corporate Committee should perhaps be the most suitable forum for that extra scrutiny to take place.
- f. The Committee enquired about the disposal of the Red House site, suggesting that this had taken place in the last 18 months and had not been sold on the open market. In light of the fact that this was part of the Council's Housing Delivery Strategy, it was put to officers that this constituted a significant site. In response, the Interim Director of Capital Projects & Property advised that she would come back to the Committee with the details of this as she did not have the information to hand. **(Action: Christine Addison).**

- g. The Director assured the Committee that any future decision would be done through a proper process and through the proper channels. In respect of asset disposals, it was noted that Cabinet was responsible for agreeing and monitoring any asset disposal.
- h. In response to a question, officers advised that following a specific audit recommendation, all voids, acquisitions and disposals would be recoded on the new Estate Management Database. The database would hold data in real time to ensure that management reports were continuously up to date. However, this had been delayed due to the new SAP provider going live on 1st June, and as a result the Estates Management Database was expected to be implemented by 1st September. Officers advised that, until the database was up and running, the disposals tracker would be updated manually on a monthly basis. In response to a follow-up question, the Director advised that strong processes were in place to monitor the tracking of voids, acquisitions and disposals and that the database would provide an additional level of assurance. The Interim Director of Capital Projects & Property provided assurance to the Committee that she was confident that the monitoring processes in place were robust.
- i. The Committee also sought clarification as to whether usage of an asset was considered when a disposal was made. In particular, whether its use as a community building could be part of the consideration process. In response the Cabinet Member advised that the administration had a policy in place that any disposal would go through a review process and that usage could be one of the factors considered. It was noted that the Council's Asset Management Plan was agreed by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- j. The Cabinet Member agreed to bring back a further update on asset disposals back to the next meeting of Corporate Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> September, which would address the points raised by the Committee at this meeting. The Chair requested that this update also include some further reassurance around the method used when disposing of assets and considerations around community buildings. **(Action: Cllr Adje/Christine Addison).**

## **RESOLVED**

That Corporate Committee noted the report.

### **145. UPDATE ON THE AUDIT OF THE HOUSING DELIVERY PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on progress to implement the recommendations of the audit of the Council House Delivery Programme, undertaken by Mazars between October and November 2019 and which received an overall audit score of limited assurance. The report was introduced by Robbie Erbmman, Assistant Director of Housing and Anna Blandford, Senior Housing Project Delivery Manager as set out in the agenda pack at pages 15-36. Cllr Ibrahim was also present, as the Cabinet Member for Housing and Estate Renewal. The following was noted in discussion of this report:

- a. The Cabinet Member assured the Committee that all of the issues identified in the audit report were being addressed.

- b. The Chair enquired as to the availability of the minutes from the Housing Delivery Board and whether all Members had access to them. In response, officers advised that the Board was not Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council and that Members would therefore have to demonstrate a 'need to know' to access them.
- c. The Committee noted concerns about the scheme being over budget, particularly as it was a £400m scheme. The Committee sought some further assurance around this considering the tight financial margins involved in successfully delivering Council homes and concerns that any significant increase in costs could blow a hole in the HRA budget. In response, the AD for Housing advised that the biggest single change that had been made was investing in the database, which allowed officers to track every single item of spend in real time and provide an accurate reporting picture. The AD for Housing advised that in comparison to his previous role at TfL, Haringey had introduced this type of software at a much earlier stage in the programme and he set out that he was impressed with the rapid progress that the team had made in implementing the financial governance arrangements.
- d. The AD for Housing advised that the team was now looking at having 72 sites in the programme. It was suggested that the Council was, in effect, a start-up as it hadn't delivered any new housing for over 40 years. The AD for Housing suggested that, what was effectively a start-up, delivering a very ambitious target of 1000 homes in a short period of time, required the programme to run parallel work streams. Such as at the same time as getting planning applications submitted and feasibility assessments underway, officers were also having to set-up all of the governance systems. It was suggested that the pace of progress should not be underestimated. Officers also set out that the development procedures were set up a few months ago and that these were now being reviewed, following an initial bedding-in period, and that the governance arrangements for how projects would be dealt with at each gateway stage formed part of that evaluation process, including the monitoring of any overspends in pre-contract budgets. This was in addition to the wider budget-monitoring framework for the programme.
- e. The Committee enquired how much the investment cost was into the sequel database was and why this was not in place earlier. Officers advised that they did not have that information to hand but commented that it was usually used in conjunction with financial viability software, called ProVal which would usually be used in determining the initial viability assessments. Officers advised that it was usual for organisations not to have a software programme like Sequel in place until projects began onsite, where it would be used to manage the cash flow of projects etcetera. It was suggested that the Council had begun using the software at an earlier stage than many other organisations.
- f. The Chair sought assurance around how soon it would be before officers were in a position to be able to report an accurate picture of any delays or costs to the scheme. In response, officers advised that the systems were in place as of now and that the first round of reporting would be going to the Housing Delivery Board in September (as there was no meeting of the board in August).
- g. A Member of the Committee emphasised that, in addition to having not built any new homes for 40 years, Haringey was setting up a pioneering and ambitious programme of 1000 new homes at social rents and welcomed the progress made to date in spite of the impact of coronavirus.

- h. The Committee sought assurances around whether it was foreseen that any further delays would occur to the Housing Delivery Programme due to COVID-19. In response officers advised that COVID-19 had created ongoing delays to the programme, with reduced capacity within the contractor market due to the government furlough scheme and, where schemes were on-site, capacity was typically running at two-thirds of pre-COVID levels. It was also anticipated that there was a risk to housing acquisitions occurring from an overall market slow-down. The AD for Housing advised the Committee that he was confident that 1000 plus homes would be started on-site by March 2022, but that it could be a year or two later before those schemes were completed, due to market constraints.
- i. The Committee sought assurances around why the original manifesto pledge to establish a wholly owned company to deliver 1000 homes was not implemented. In response the Cabinet Member advised that part of the reason for a wholly owned company was the borrowing cap on the HRA, which was subsequently lifted by the government in 2018 and allowed the Council to borrow significantly higher amounts of capital in order to build the homes itself. The Cabinet Member emphasised that by delivering homes through the HRA the Council were able to deliver the 1000 plus homes at social rents. This was much harder to do through a wholly-owned company, not least due to limitations around state-aid.
- j. The Committee suggested that one of the advantages of the wholly-owned company, as set out in the Cabinet report of July 2018, was that they would not be subject to Right-to-Buy provisions whereas any new homes built by the Council would be. In response, the Cabinet Member suggested that this was a bit of a red herring, as the discounts available under Right-to-Buy were relatively small and that it was very unlikely that the people who would be placed in the new Council houses would be able to exercise their Right-to-Buy; particularly as they would have been living in Temporary Accommodation for, on average, a period of eleven years. It was also set out that there were protections in place for local authorities and that Councils could not sell the properties for less than their cost.
- k. The Committee sought assurances around the governance structure for the strategic risk register for the Council Homes Delivery programme and questioned whether Corporate Committee could have sight of this document. In response, officers advised that the strategic risk register was updated quarterly due to the market-based nature of many of the risk involved. However, monthly highlight reports by exception would be produced for the Council Housing Delivery Board and there was also monthly project review meetings within the Housing Delivery service. The AD for Housing suggested that it would be an issue for Legal and Democratic Service to determine whether it was appropriate for the Committee to review the strategic risk register.
- l. In response to a further request for assurance, officers advised that all of the actions identified in the audit would be in place for the Housing Delivery Board in September.
- m. In relation to assurance around the estimated delivery of 200 Council-owned homes by 2022, the AD for Housing suggested that this was probably a conservative estimate, but that provided there were no further periods of lockdown, he was confident that the Council would be in a position to achieve 200 completions by 2022.

- n. The Committee requested that a further update on the audit of the Housing Delivery Programme be brought back to the Committee at its next meeting if that was feasible, or failing that to the December meeting. **(Action: Robbie Erbmam/Clerk).**

## **RESOLVED**

That Corporate Committee:

- I. Noted that whilst the original deadline for actions set out in the audit was April 2020, and actions were initially going to be delivered slightly later than this, COVID-19 had significantly delayed the timescales for completing the work for the reasons set out in paragraph 6.10 of the report; and
- II. noted the progress made to date on actions following the audit and the further work required to comply with the recommendations in the audit, as set out in paragraphs 7.14, 7.16, 8.8, and 9.5 of the report.

## **146. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO SCHOOLS AUDIT**

This report provided an update on audits in schools, following a report earlier this year (March 2020) to Corporate Committee, which set out the finance and audit training available to schools. The briefing in March also outlined that any school that had a nil-assurance outcome for two consecutive audits would trigger a call from the Assistant Director for Schools and Learning and the Head of Audit to the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors to support the school to move to a more positive outcome without delay. The report was introduced by Head of Audit and Risk Management, along with the AD for Schools and Learning, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 33-36.

Nineteen schools were audited in the financial year 2019/20 and thirteen schools were assigned either substantial or adequate assurance scores and six were assigned limited or nil assurance. Two schools received nil-assurance during 2019-20. The AD for Schools and Learning advised that for one of the schools the issue seemed to be around the loss of the business manager, and a new business manager had now been put in place. It was anticipated that when the school was re-audited in 2020/21, significant improvement would be secured.

The Committee was advised that the other school that received nil-assurance was a primary school with an OFSTED rating of "good". The reasons for the nil assurance were related to the fact that the school has been through a period of turbulence that included falling rolls and a change in leadership, including an interim head for a period of one term from September 2020. With a new Head Teacher and a new business manager in place, a much more positive outcome was anticipated when the school was next audited.

The following was noted in discussion of this report:

- a. In response to a request for further assurance from the Chair, the Head of Audit advised that he was broadly happy overall with the direction of travel but

- acknowledged that it was important to continue to work with schools to secure ongoing improvements. The Head of Audit commented that there were some concerns about the impact COVID-19 on schools and the impact this could have in terms of ongoing engagement on audit training etcetera.
- b. The Committee sought clarification around whether the sum of money available to schools for a local authority led SLA was separate from the finance and audit training on offer. In response, the Committee was advised that these were two separate processes. The Head of Schools and Learning confirmed to the Committee that schools were taking up the offer for audit training and that the overall response had been positive.
  - c. The Committee raised concerns with the example of Stamford Hill School, which had seen a rapid decline in its governance standards and had subsequently closed, following a nil-assurance audit score. The Committee enquired whether a similar set of circumstances could befall either of the two schools that had received nil-assurance in 2019/20. In response, the Head of Schools and Learning advised that she was confident that both schools were making significant improvements and that there was no cause for concern around either school becoming 'the next Stamford Hill'.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Committee noted the report

### **147. ANNUAL SCHOOLS AUDIT REPORT - 2019/20**

*\*Clerk's note – The Chair agreed to take agenda item 14 on the Annual Schools Audit Report 2019/20 immediately following item 9. The minutes reflect the order in which the items were considered rather than the order on the published agenda.\**

The Committee received a report which provided information on the outcomes of the 2019/20 school audit programme and of the follow-up of the 2018/19 audits carried out in 2019/20 by Mazars. The report was introduced by Minesh Jani as set out in the agenda pack at pages 147-156.

## **RESOLVED**

That Corporate Committee noted the report.

### **148. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2019/20**

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the Council's treasury management activities and performance in the year to 31st March 2020, in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The report was also due to be submitted to Full Council. The report was introduced by the Head of Pensions, Treasury and Chief Accountant. The following was noted in discussion of the report:

- a. The Committee sought assurances around contrasting figures in the report on the rate of return on investments. In response, officers advised that the average rate of return on investments across the year was 0.7% and that other figures may refer to a snapshot at a particular period. The Committee was advised that

- the rate of return was lower than the cost of inflation and that this had been the case for a number of years. Officers advised that it was the same for most authorities, as well as individual investors during this period.
- b. In response to a question, officers advised that any chance of developing a saving to the Council by increasing the income on investments had effectively been wiped out by decreasing interest rates. Officers advised that it was hoped that the Council would meet its income target for the year for investments, but there very little chance of exceeding it.
  - c. In response to a question around loans to third parties including local charities, officers advised that the balances in the report were largely historical and that any loan that was not repaid would become a cost to the General Fund.
  - d. In response to a question around a loan to a leisure contractor, officers advised that this was a historic loan rather than one taken out in 2019/20 and that the name of the company in question was exempt for commercial reasons. Thomas agreed to follow this up with Legal. **(Action: Thomas Skeen).**

## **RESOLVED**

- I. That Members noted the Treasury Management activity undertaken during the year to 31st March 2020 and the performance achieved.
- II. That Members noted that all treasury activities were undertaken in line with the approved Treasury Management Strategy.

## **149. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019/20**

The Committee received a report which provided and update on the Council's Statement of Accounts 2019/20 and the plan for the audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20. The report was introduced by Thomas Skeen and Kerry Barnes from the external auditor BDO, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 55-94 of the agenda pack. The following was noted in discussion of this item:

- a. The audit plan was originally scheduled to come to the 18<sup>th</sup> March Corporate Committee, which was cancelled due to COVID-19 and the audit plan was being brought back for discussion at a public meeting.
- b. The timescales that the Council was working towards had been pushed back due to COVID-19. The draft and unaudited accounts were published on 29<sup>th</sup> June and the audit process began on 29<sup>th</sup> June. The Committee was advised that officers were working to have the final accounts ready for the 17<sup>th</sup> September, however this was a very challenging deadline.
- c. The Committee was also advised that the regulators, the FRC, randomly chose a selection of auditors to audit every year and last year BDO's audit of Haringey was chosen. This report was included at agenda item 23 in the exempt section of the agenda pack.
- d. In response to a question, the Committee was advised that there was a six-week public inspection period from the point in which the draft accounts were published and that this gave interested parties an opportunity to inspect the accounts and make a representation.
- e. BDO advised that the FRC had been issued with new guidance in light of COVID-19, and that BDO had amended the risks in the audit report in light of



this additional guidance. The three key areas where amendments had been made were: A reassessment of property valuations due to RICS guidance that had been issued around market conditions; increasing risks around the impediment of the non-collection of receivables and 'going concern' disclosures.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Committee noted the contents of the report and any further oral updates given at the meeting by BDO LLP, particularly in relation to the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) report at appendix 2 of the report (Exempt).

### **150. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Committee received a report which set out the impact of coronavirus on the Council's treasury management activities since the Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 was approved by Full Council in February. The report was introduced by Thomas Skeen, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 95-100. The following was noted in discussion of this agenda item:

- a. In response to a question, officers assured the Committee that there was no reason to amend the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 at present. However, the Council had maintained higher than usual liquid cash balances in response to ongoing uncertainty as a result of COVID-19.
- b. The Committee sought assurances around whether the Council should be looking to amend its reserves policy due to the exceptional circumstances around coronavirus and the likely impact on budget overspends. In response, officers advised that this was a political decision but acknowledged that any overspends would reduce the amount of usable reserves.

## **RESOLVED**

That the report was noted.

### **151. DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/20**

The Committee received a report which informed the Corporate Committee of the statutory requirements to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and provide a draft statement relating to the 2019/20 financial year for review and approval and maintain the Local Code of Corporate Governance. The report was introduced by the Head of Audit and Risk Management, Minesh Jani as set out in the agenda pack at pages 101-142.

The Committee sought clarification around the fact that the report set out that the target for anti-fraud work was to contribute £11m in savings. In response, officers clarified that quantifying the role of the fraud team was always difficult and the value was not always accurately reflected by money alone. The Committee was advised that that the £11m should be seen as the output rather than a target and that further elaboration of financial outcomes would be given as part of item 15.

The Committee sought clarification around the risks highlighted in the report around HfH. Officers advised that there was an initial piece of work undertaken around the arrangements for contracting out repairs work within HfH and that, as a result of that piece of work, a number of areas where management controls needed to be strengthened came to light. This led to a broader piece of work being undertaken.

The Chair commented that the use of the term 'target' for the anti-fraud work was confusing and reiterated that he felt this should be rephrased in future reports to the Committee.

## **RESOLVED**

- I. The Corporate Committee reviewed and approved the draft 2019/20 AGS attached at Appendix A of the report.
- II. That the Corporate Committee noted the approval timescale and processes for the draft 2019/20 AGS.
- III. That the Corporate Committee noted and approved the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance attached at Appendix B of the report.

## **152. ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2019-20**

The Committee received a report which set out the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal control and risk management operating throughout 2019/20 and presented a summary of the audit work undertaken to formulate the opinion, including reliance placed on work by other bodies. The report was introduced by the Head of Audit and Risk Management, Minesh Jani as set out in the agenda pack at pages 153-178. The following was noted in discussion of the report:

- a. The Head of Audit and Risk Management advised that there were 64 planned internal audit assignments in 2019/20 and 68 were carried out. Of that 64, 13 new audits were added to the plan, 6 were cancelled and 3 were deferred to the following year. Some of the key areas for audit were identified as contract management and school audits. The audit team performed a crucial role in ensuring that the recommendations raised in the areas identified through the audit process were being implemented so that the risks to the organisation could be better managed.
- b. The Head of Audit and Risk Management advised the Committee that of the 795 anti-fraud investigations that were carried out by the team in 2019/20 and that the majority of those related to Right-to-Buy applications, tenancy fraud and pro-active tenancy checks as these were the key areas that fraud had been identified both locally and nationally.
- c. In relation to a previous question around quantifying the value of the work that the fraud team did, the Head of Audit and Risk Management advised that following the release of a CIPFA report, the team had undertaken a number of fraud investigations around single person discount for Council Tax and that this had saved the Council £46k. The Head of Audit and Risk Management assured the committee that a proportionate and reasonable approach was taken around

- this and that a review process had also been set up for people who thought they had been wrongly penalised and had the single person discount taken away from them.
- d. The Committee sought clarification as to how many cases the £46k related to as it was suggested that this was perhaps lower than might have been anticipated. In response, the Head of Audit and Risk Management agreed to provide a written response to Members on how many people and cases the £46k related to. **(Action: Minesh Jani)**.
  - e. In response to a follow-up, the Head of Audit and Risk Management acknowledged that there was further work that could be done and some lessons learnt about increasing the figure of £46k in future.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Corporate Committee noted the content of the Head of Audit and Risk Management's annual audit report and assurance statement for 2019/20.

### **153. AUDIT AND RISK UPDATE**

The Committee received a report which detailed the work undertaken by the in-house Audit and Fraud Resources team for the quarter ending 30 June 2020. A combined report was produced to update the Committee as during quarter one the team faced the unprecedented circumstances of all working remotely from the Council offices due to COVID-19. In addition, the resources usually working in partnership to deliver the internal audit plan were furloughed by Mazars. The report was introduced by Vanessa Bateman, Deputy Head of Audit and Risk Management as set out in agenda pack at pages 179-186.

In response to a question, officers acknowledged that some degree of prioritisation had taken place within the team in order to meet the challenges faced by COVID-19 and that extra work had been done around the grant payments received. It was noted that referrals around tenancy fraud had remained fairly constant over the period.

## **RESOLVED**

The Corporate Committee noted the activities of the team audit and risk management team during quarter one 2020/21.

### **154. UPDATED ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN - 2020/21**

The Committee received an updated annual audit plan for 2020/21, following a number of amendments made since the last meeting. The audit plan was introduced by the Head of Audit and Risk Management Minesh Jani, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 187-200. The following was noted in discussion of the report:

- a. The Head of Audit and Risk Management advised that a lessons learnt approach was being adopted in relation to contracts and that all contracts entered into as part of the response to coronavirus would be risk assessed and the concerns raised by Cllr Berryman via email would be captured as part of this.

- b. The Committee was advised that the audit of HR had been put back in order to give the new head of HR some time to bed-in. The Committee enquired whether an interim report could be produced in the meantime. The Head of Audit and Risk Management agreed to pick this up with Cllr Gunes outside of the meeting. **(Action: Minesh Jani)**.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Corporate Committee reviewed and approved the updated Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 (Appendix B of the report) and the proposed changes to the plan (Appendix A of the report).

### **155. RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY FOR HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION CLAIMS**

The Committee received a report which provided an update on Risk Based Verification (RBV) for Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction claims. The report was introduced by Amelia Hadjimichael, Head of Benefits, as set out. It was noted that RBV related to the level of checks that were undertaken on a claim before benefit was awarded. Its primary purpose was to target resources to where fraud and error were more likely to occur and thus help minimise fraud and error.

Ordinarily, there was a requirement for an annual review of the RBV policy to take place. However, given the impact of COVID-19, the Government issued advice which suspended the need for a review to take place. The report provided a briefing note on changes to the need for a review in 2020/21, in light of COVID-19.

In response to a question, officers advised that the scheme was meeting its targets and that since the introduction of the policy in November 2019, the Council had sent out around 6000 fewer letters to claimants which created less delays and allowed the team to focus on more serious cases of fraud and error. Officers advised that so far RBV was considered to be a success.

## **RESOLVED**

That Corporate Committee:

- I. Noted and agreed that the Council's RBV policy should continue;
- II. Noted and agreed the officer view that there was no need to review the RBV policy for the year 2020/21;
- III. That the Committee recommended to Cabinet for it to the above recommendations.

### **156. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HEALTH AND SAFETY FUNCTIONS**

The Committee received a report which provided an update to the Corporate Committee on the impact that Covid-19 has had on health and safety functions. The

report was introduced by Alexis Correa, Deputy Head of Service for Health and Safety as set out at pages 205-210 of the agenda pack.

*\*Clerks Note at 21:50 hours: The Committee agreed to suspend Committee Standing Orders in order to continue past ten o'clock. There were eight members present at this point and so the Committee met the stipulation that at least half of its members be present in order to do this.\**

*\*\* Additional Clerk's note: The Chair of the meeting had some problems with his IT equipment and left the meeting at this point to restart his laptop. The Deputy Chair of the Committee, Cllr Hakata chaired the remainder of the meeting\*\*.*

## **RESOLVED**

That the Committee noted the report.

### **157. UPDATE ON RENAMING OF BLACK BOY LANE**

The Committee received a report which set out the Council's proposed approach to the potential renaming of Black Boy Lane. The report sought to inform the Committee of the process and the timetable involved. The report was introduced by Rob Krzyszowski, Head of Policy, Transport & Infrastructure Planning and Jonathan Unger, Local Land Charges & Property Gazetteer Manager as set out at pages 211-222 of the agenda pack. The following was noted in discussion of the report:

- a. The Committee sought clarification around the level of potential costs involved in this scheme, in response officers advised that no decision had yet been taken in relation to costs but that the administration did feel that it was appropriate to make a voluntary payment to residents to cover the costs of having to change their address.
- b. The Committee welcomed the proposal to change the street name and suggested that this sent a strong message about what type of borough this was and what type of borough the authority wanted to create. In response to some ongoing discussion within the community about the exact meaning of the name, the Committee suggested that what was important was what that name meant today and the racist connotations therein.
- c. The Committee also felt that in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, it was an auspicious moment to change the name and that a similar moment was unlikely to come around again. The Committee emphasized the fact that symbolism was important and that the borough's street names had to represent of the views of its residents.
- d. The Deputy Chair of the Committee also endorsed the proposal but cautioned that what was needed was lasting structural change, to tackle the inequalities faced by many of the borough's residents and that it was important that the Council worked to tackle this structural inequality, as well as making largely symbolic changes to the names of streets.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Committee noted and endorsed the proposed approach to the renaming of Black Boy Lane.

**158. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

N/A

**159. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED**

That the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting as the rest of the agenda items contain exempt information, as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended); Paragraph 3.

**160. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019/20**

As per Item 149.

**161. RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY FOR HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION CLAIMS**

As per item 155.

**162. ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS**

N/A

**163. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of other business.

**164. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

17<sup>th</sup> September 2020

CHAIR: Councillor Isidoros Diakides

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....