

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2023, 7:00PM - 8:15AM

PRESENT:

Councillors: Amin, Rossetti, Abela, Adje (In the Chair), Culverwell, Jameson and Mahbub

PRESENT ONLINE:

Councillor Diakides

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

Upon opening the meeting, the Committee noted that the Chair, Cllr Isodoris Diakides and Vice Chair Cllr Erdal Dogan had submitted their apologies and would not be attending the meeting. The Clerk then asked the Committee to nominate a Chair for the meeting.

It was MOVED by Councillor Kaushika Amin, SECONDED by Councillor Sue Jameson and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Charles Adje be elected Chair for the meeting.

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Isodoris Diakides, Councillor Erdal Dogan, Councillor Mark Blake and Councillor Michelle Simmons-Safo.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS

There were none.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the Corporate Committee meeting held on 15 November 2022 as a correct record.

The Committee felt that it was good practice to make sure that proper governance was applied to the procurement arrangements. Meetings had taken place between the Director of Finance, Head of Procurement and the Head of Audit and Risk Management to try to arrange

for the governance for the scrutiny of the actions brought to the Committee. The Committee would receive an update at the meeting on 28 March 2023. The Head of Procurement would be in attendance to answer any questions.

7. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW

Mr Mark Stevens, Assistant Director, Direct Services, presented the report.

The Committee heard that:

- There had been a substantial change from 19 wards to 21 wards for the May 2022 local elections. The new wards were set by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- The Council then took decisions, based on the practicalities of capturing the population distribution in the most balanced way possible, making sure all areas of the population had accessible properties to use as polling stations.
- Some of the polling places were no longer appropriate for the revised wards leading to the issue of residents attempting to vote in the incorrect location, out of habit. This had been exacerbated by having some polling stations just outside of the zones where people were supposed to be voting.
- A large quantity of pre-election communication work was done and there was an all-party member working group set up for the original review process. There was a total of 12 councillors in total to ensure that all formal processes had been met.
- A communications plan was put together to ensure that the messaging was delivered. Every single polling card had clear instructions regarding which polling stations electors should attend, but some individuals ended up going to the wrong station.
- Efforts were made to ensure that suitable buildings were used for people to go to.
- Efforts were made to reduce walking time for areas such as Muswell Hill which could be difficult for pedestrians to walk up.
- It would be very difficult to put a poster up on a previous polling station indicating the change to a new polling station as it was not always a direct and consistent change for all residents using a particular polling station.
- The items needed to be taken by residents attempting to vote would change as voter ID would be implemented in the future. This would result in further messaging that would need to be distributed to residents. An all-member briefing would be given and detailed information be distributed to all the relevant channels, including councillors.
- It was not yet clear how residents or voting habits would be affected by the new voter ID requirements.
- More resilient signage will be put in place for future elections to accommodate weather-based difficulties.

The Committee expressed that:

- There had been some voting issues in Alexandra Ward, possibly resulting in several voters who ended up not voting. An overreliance on polling cards was not a good idea as many voters did not bring them.
- It would be useful to ask residents how they felt about their polling stations particularly how far away they felt they were from their polling station.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the polling scheme describing the polling districts and the polling places for the London Borough of Haringey as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. To grant the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) and the Deputy (Acting) Returning Officers delegated authority to amend the polling scheme where the names of buildings change and for specific elections where strictly necessary for a particular election, including changing polling places.
3. To delegate to the Electoral Registration Officer (“ERO”) the authority to approve correction of any minor errors in allocating properties to districts on transferring the maps in Appendix 1 into the electoral registration software.

8. TREASURY STRATEGY

Mr Tim Mpofu, Head of Pensions and Treasury, presented the item. Members expressed concern regarding the amount of increase in the Council’s borrowing requirement, during a period of high interest rates.

The Committee heard that:

- The contents of the document were set by statutory requirements to what should be included in a treasury management strategy statement (TMSS). It was usually included as part of the Council’s budget setting process. It was noted that individual capital schemes are assessed and evaluated separately, with a summary included as part of the Council’s Capital Strategy document. As such, capital programme decisions did not form part of the TMSS.
- The TMSS considered the required levels of long-term borrowing to be undertaken by the Council over the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) period. It was noted that the MTFS would be agreed by Cabinet before being approved at a meeting of the full Council.
- It was noted that section 7 of the appendix set out the prudential indicators which were limits on how the treasury management decisions were made.
- It was noted that maturity structure of the Council’s borrowing was spread out over several years. This indicator was set to control the Council’s exposure to refinancing risks, reducing the need for the Council to replace all its maturing debt at the same time.
- The target limit for short term borrowing would be at a maximum of 30% of total borrowing.
- In theory, if the Council did not incur further capital expenditure, over time the total amount of debt would be expected to reduce as there would be no new debt issued by the Council. However, it was noted that the Council would still be required to undertake further capital expenditure to deliver on important projects such as schools buildings refurbishments or new housing development projects. This capital expenditure would need to be funded in part by undertaking additional new borrowing.

The Committee expressed that:

- Concerns raised by members regarding the significant increase in the borrowing requirement and the funding of projects needed to be carefully considered by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with relevant cabinet members.
- It was suggested that perhaps officers could consider including more information as part of the covering report.

- It would be useful for training on the subject matter be completed prior to the date of the meeting to enable members to fully consider the contents of the report.

RESOLVED:

1. To agree the proposed updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24 and recommend to the Full Council for approval.
2. To note that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet Member for Finance have been consulted in the preparation of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

9. 2020/21 AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Mr David Eagles, External Audit Partner and Engagement Lead for Haringey Audit presented the item.

The Committee heard that:

- Analysis on Council dwellings and Beacon properties was still to be completed fully.
- The way properties were valued was through the Beacon method. For example, for a large number of two-bedroom high rise flats, one would find a value for sales of similar types of properties and use that sale (discounted on the basis of it being a social housing asset) and multiply it by the number of different flats within that Beacon Group. Therefore, for 3000 flats classed as two-bedroom high rise flats, one would be valued followed by a mathematical calculation of the total value of the number of flats. If there was a small error in one of the valuations then this would multiply by the number of flats potentially leading to a mass valuation error.
- Recent or 'as recent as available' sales values for certain types of properties were used, but sometimes sales volumes were very small. This meant that sometimes estimated valuation would be taken from a property that was close but not quite the same property. When this occurred, adjustments in valuation needed to be made.
- It was important for the Council to have expected arrangements in place for adequate budgeting regardless of potentially expected government funding. A significant weakness issue could be raised if it was felt that the Council had managed its budget well but through fortuitous government funding rather than adequate financial planning.
- Financial sustainability used to be one of the considered areas of significant risk under the previous practice approach. There was already documentation regarding how arrangements had worked until 2019/20 financial year. BDO would simply update the understanding of the arrangements, fill in any gaps which the new requirements would need and examine the documentary evidence trail of assessments being made. This would include supporting working papers, financial plans, budgets and papers submitted to Members.
- Work was being done with colleagues in Finance to ensure that the parking management IT system generated all the reports required in the future to give assurance to Finance and to the Auditors that there was a clear audit trail in place for every single Penalty Charge Notice issue.

The Chair queried when the data migration issues would be resolved including the changing of IT software use and an update to this would be provided at a future meeting, including a firm date. The Committee also queried the report on page 170 of the agenda papers which

stated that the 'consultant will have to request access by filling in a form' and a response to this query would also be provided.

The Committee noted that the presentation was a progress report and the audit process had not yet been completed.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

10. DEPUTY ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICERS

Mr Mark Stevens, Assistant Director, Direct Services, presented the report.

The Committee heard that the only underlying difficulty regarding the matter was if the Council needed to issue a voter authority certificate within a matter of days and the Chief Executive was not available to approve it. It was therefore in the Council's best interest to have Deputy Electoral Registration Officers in place, putting the Council into a more robust position.

RESOLVED:

To approve the following postholders as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers:

Head of Electoral Services (Gareth Harrington), Deputy Head of Electoral Services (vacant post), Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Governance (Fiona Alderman) and Chief People Officer (Dan Paul).

11. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were none.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would be held on 28 March 2023.

13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Item 14 was subject to a motion to exclude the press and public from the meeting as it contained exempt information as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1985); para 3.

14. EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED:

To confirm and sign the exempt minutes of the Corporate Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023 as a correct record.

15. NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS

There were none.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date