

MINUTES OF MEETING Overview and Scrutiny Committee HELD ON Monday, 11th March, 2024, 19:00.

PRESENT:

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

ALSO ATTENDING:

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to item one on the agenda in respect of filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Yvonne Denny.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

None

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Yvonne Denny.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED

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

7. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS

RESOLVED

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

8. ANNUAL FEEDBACK AND RESOLUTIONS REPORT 2022-2023

The report was introduced by Elaine Prado, Head of Feedback and Resolutions Strategy Comms and Collaboration, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 61 – 84.

This report provided an update on how Haringey Council was seeking to learn from the feedback received from residents and used this to shape and improve services.

This report also sets out some of the key actions the service was undertaking to improve the complaints, FOI and Members Enquiry handling processes to ensure the system provided both a positive resident experience but also the strongest possible platform to utilise the feedback both positive and negative.

The meeting heard that:

- Feedback and complaints were utilised in a way of designing changes to the systems that contributed to running services.
- Currently, information on how services were specifically learning from feedback was being gathered manually from services.
- The feedback received indicated that not all complaints were about service failures. Some of the complaints was on policy decisions taken by the Council which some residents disagreed to, for instance the implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.
- The Committee noted that there may be an increase in complaints on standards and services as the Council was having to make considerable amount of service cuts and services would need to be prepared to see people not being happy with Council policies.
- Officers advised that it was important to focus on reasons why residents complained rather than focusing on the number of complaints and the reporting process. It was essential to ensure that proper measures were in place to deliver the needs of the residents.
- The Committee noted that from the 1st of April, every local authority in England would need to use a standard definition of what a complaint was. The standard definition highlighted that a complaint would be an expression of dissatisfaction made about the standard of service actions or lack of action by the organization, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.
- There was a real emphasis on reducing the number of complaints being escalated or upheld. If the service was living the values mentioned around really learning from complaints, then services should hopefully be resolving matters quickly.
- In response to a question from the Committee regarding the Haringey deal and involving residents in designing services, officers provided an example of how residents were involved in improving services. Officers explained that residents who complained that there was a lot of pavement parking, especially in the evening, in areas like Wood Green, Muswell Hill and Green Lanes and that

Civil Enforcement Officers only operate till 10:00pm. This response would not be sufficient for residents as it did not resolve the problem. The service then had to look at services available and assess the way the service was designed to see if it was meeting the needs of the issues that the residents were raising. The service then made improvements by having Traffic Wardens operating until 2:00am on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night in the specified hotspot areas. This was an example provided by how the service had responded to complaint by involving residents.

- In response to a question regarding whether parking complaints had dropped overall, Officers advised that there was not a drop overall as there had been a complaint on a policy relating to the implementation of double yellow lines at junctions and it was also useful to note that new issues may arise.
- In relation to Housing repair follow-on calls, a result of resident feedback showing dissatisfaction with follow-on calls about housing repairs, a secondary phone line had been initiated so that residents could discuss existing repairs with officers within Property Services who could arrange subsequent repair appointments, removing the 'hand-off' and delays from the process.
- In response to a question regarding improvements in Children's Services made as a result feedback from parents, Officers advised that parents complained because they were in a position of not trusting the professionals within the Council to deliver the messages about what their children were eligible for. Having a trusted partner in the room like an advocate helped to have the message to become more acceptable.
- In response to a question from the Committee regarding reporting on complaints next year or on an annual basis, Officers advised that there had been a few challenges in the complaints processes and systems. The issues included delays in information handling and timeliness around responses, and these were the big theme of the improvement plan. One of the things that would make a difference in relation to delays would be the new system the service was developing which was a software through which all of complaints Members, enquiries have Freedom of Information requests would be managed. The current system is outdated and would be replaced with a new system which was being developed internally by Digital Services.
- In response to a question from the Committee, Officers confirmed that the independent partner agency experts that the Council were using was SENDIASS professionals (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service).
- The Committee was advised that in terms of failure through shared mailboxes, this occurred when emails in the mailbox were not being handled in a timely manner. An example provided was if a member of the team were away on holiday or off sick, the email queries could take longer to be process or forwarded on to the correct officers. To tackle this issue the service had been exploring ways where they could work together as a team and manage workload accordingly.
- In terms of the difference between poor standard of service versus failure to provide a service, Officers advised that a poor standard of service was where the service had done something for the resident but did not do it to a good standard. Failure to provide a services was when the service just did not do the task at all.

- Officers also advised that around 90% of Members Enquiries was mainly Casework. Casework was where things had gone wrong, and the case was then referred to the correct team who would investigate the matter further.

RESOLVED

To note the report

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

The Committee undertook a Q&A Session with the Cabinet Member for Council House Building, Placemaking and Local Economy.

The following arose as part of this session:

- Haringey had a diverse business base with a diverse population and independent businesses. Most businesses were small and medium sized enterprises.
- Haringey economy was boosted by its diverse food offers, diverse cultural and diverse entertainment.
- Around 36% of Haringey business owners were also Haringey residents.
- It was noted that during the pandemic, it was not an easy time for the business community and around 90% of Haringey business owners have said that cost of living crisis was having a negative impact on their business.
- Unemployment in the borough remained at 6.8%, which was one of the highest rates in London.
- It was noted that high levels of unemployment were mainly around the Tottenham side of the borough and the borough also had the highest number of jobs that pay below the London living wage.
- The Council launched “Opportunity Haringey” throughout the pandemic years.
- The Council had an economic strategy which was geared towards ensuring that businesses survived as best as they could through the pandemic, and ensured businesses received the support they needed.
- Since the pandemic the Council had created a new strategy which evolved around “Opportunity Haringey. This was done by going through extensive consultations and Co-produced the strategy with businesses. This was launched on the 22nd of February.
- The strategy focused on a few themes which included job creation, investment, good work and skills, high streets and industrial estates, workspaces and workplaces and spaces.
- There were also other support services like “Haringey works”, which is free at the point of access to help drive employment in the borough. The Committee noted that this initiative had been successful as around 599 of 1440 residents had found work through Haringey Works last year. Officers added that many of these residents found work in the Council.

- Another service was “Haringey learns,” which helped residents to rescale and upskill people who wanted new qualifications.
- There was a Market strategy in place which supported easy entry into businesses. There were a few markets across the borough and they all operated in different ways, so the service was looking to develop an overarching strategy for that to see whether there was capacity for expanding markets.
- Officers added that the vacancy rate in Haringey was relatively low. Haringey’s vacancy rate was 7.64%, across London it was 9.2% and nationally it was 11%.
- The Council had networks for each of the high streets and was keen to develop those networks further. This would contribute to bring businesses together and people would be able to network, work with each other, and would have the synergy of businesses that would develop and sell to other local businesses.
- In response to a question regarding how Haringey Works was being funded, Officers advised that the Council had lost the Europe funding but managed to replace that with funding from the UK Prosperity Fund. The Committee was informed that no funds were drawn down from the General Fund Budget.
- In terms of apprenticeships through Haringey Works, Officers advised the Committee that the Council had received an apprenticeship levy which go into 15 businesses. It was noted that around 29 residents had been helped through that fund.
- Schools had a statutory duty to provide advice on careers and apprenticeships. In order to promote the apprenticeship scheme to young school leavers, the Council had organised a national apprenticeship week at a local youth hub.

RESOLVED

Noted.

10. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered its work programme as set out at pages 85-90 of the agenda pack.

RESOLVED

To note the report

11. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee excluded the press and public for item 13 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); Paragraph 3.

13. EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the exempt minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-In meeting held on 3 January 2024.

CHAIR: Councillor Matt White

Signed by Chair

Date