

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 8TH APRIL 2025, 7.00 - 9.20pm

PRESENT:

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

34. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to Agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda front sheet, in respect of filming at meetings, and Members noted the information therein.

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Alexandra Worrell, who joined the meeting from 7.17pm until the end of the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sarah Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning.

36. URGENT BUSINESS

Cllr Matt White reported that, although there were no new agenda items, a supplementary agenda pack had been circulated which included an updated version of the report on the Community Safety Scrutiny Review. This replaced the version of the report which had been included in the original agenda pack and would be considered by the Committee under Item 8 on the agenda.

Cllr White explained that the revisions to the original report had been required because there was a need to update and clarify of the recommendations and fully reflect the decision-making routes of the Council and the Police to ensure that there were no issues with the response and actions to be taken to take the recommendations forward. This had been agreed with the Chair of the Climate, Community Safety & Environment Scrutiny Panel and was accepted as a late item of business.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

38. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

39. 2024/25 FINANCE UPDATE QUARTER 3 (PERIOD 9)

Cllr Dana Carlin, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, introduced the report on the finance update for Quarter 3 noting that there wasn't a substantial difference to the situation for Quarter 2, although there had been a slight deterioration in terms of the demand for and the cost of adult social care services and temporary accommodation. The Council was continuing with the measures previously put in place to reduce non-essential spending. Additional funds had been added to the Adult Social Care budget for 2024/25 but, due to the increase in demand, this money had not been sufficient. In addition, some savings had not been achieved over the course of the year and the detail of this was set out in the agenda papers.

Cllr Carlin, Taryn Eves, Director of Finance, other Council officers and Cabinet Members then responded to questions from the Committee:

- Cllr White commented that there appeared to have been some success in a number of areas but that the efforts to improve the financial situation had been more than offset by further deterioration in the adult social care position. Cllr Carlin responded that almost all local authorities had experienced increased pressures in Adult services, Children's services and temporary accommodation. Taryn Eves explained that the position in the report was from December 2024 and that the impact of some of the spending controls might not be seen until Quarter 4 and would then have the biggest impact in the 2025/26 financial year as they became fully embedded. However, she added that there were still some areas of risk, including a rise in the figures for some demand-led services and for bad debt provision. The position set out in the report was before the use of corporate contingency and it was highly likely that it would be necessary to use Exceptional Financial Support from the government to balance the position for 2024/25.
- Cllr White commented that there could be further pressures caused by the increased global financial instability. Taryn Eves responded that the rates of inflation, interest rates and the cost of services were particularly relevant, particularly in relation to construction costs which could impact on the capital programme.
- Asked by Cllr White how much of the Exceptional Financial Support was likely to be needed, Taryn Eves said that it was not possible to put a precise figure on this until the outturn report had been produced, but acknowledged that it was highly likely that some Exceptional Financial Support would be required for 2024/25.
- Cllr Gunes requested an explanation of why a younger cohort of people required support from adult social care services. Cllr Lucia das Neves, Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing, explained that a higher incidence of conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders had been seen in the Borough for some time and that some service development, such as the

Autism Hub, had been in response to this trend. Other associated health conditions could add to complexity with recent estimates that there were 20% more people with two or more long-term health conditions in the Borough. She added that poverty and social exclusion could also impact on health and well-being. Sara Sutton, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing & Health, added that there had been an unprecedented increase in one or two areas, including physical disabilities in the lower age cohort, with a spike over the past three quarters. However, it was not currently anticipated that this would be a long-term trend.

- Cllr Gunes expressed concerns about the long-term impact of using Exceptional Financial Support, which would incur £72k of borrowing costs per year for every £1m of funds drawn down according to the report. Taryn Eves explained that Exceptional Financial Support could be funded by capital receipts or borrowing with an allocation in the revenue budget for a “minimum revenue provision”. The additional borrowing costs would therefore add to the budget gap for future years which was why it was important to limit the drawdown for 2024/25 and 2025/26 as much as possible.
- Cllr Connor asked whether figures could be provided on the additional borrowing costs of Exceptional Financial Support drawdown over 20 years. Taryn Eves responded that she could not provide a precise figure but that, with around £72k of borrowing costs per year for every £1m of funds, this would increase the budget gap in subsequent years. The working assumption for 2025/26 was that £27m would be funded through borrowing and £10m from capital receipts and this was factored into the five-year forecast in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- Asked by Cllr Connor for clarification on the reserve balance, Taryn Eves explained that this would be set out in the outturn report and that it involved reserves held for risks and uncertainties. These included the Services Reserve and the Unspent Grants Reserve which totalled £22m and would be reviewed to establish whether older balances were no longer required and could be released to reduce the 2024/25 overspend.
- Referring to paragraph 1.4 of the report, Cllr Connor noted the increased demand for services from clients aged 50 to 64 presenting with physical disability and mental health needs. She queried the reasons for this and how their needs were being met prior to that. Cllr das Neves commented that there was growth in demand and complexity in various age groups, so it was possible that the Council may not have been supporting some of these people prior to that. There were also challenges around healthy life expectancy which could mean that people were presenting in earlier age brackets than expected.
- Cllr Connor requested further details on the reasons for the increased acquisition costs for the capital schemes relating to Wards Corner and High Road West. Taryn Eves responded that there had been a pragmatic consideration of which capital schemes could continue and the changes from 2025/26 onwards reflected what was felt to be the most realistic timescale for delivery. This would be reviewed again for 2026/27 and there was a new capital board in place to review this work.

- Cllr Buxton queried the changes made to the budget, such as through in-year savings, without the approval of Full Council or Scrutiny. Taryn Eves responded that savings proposals were agreed each year when setting the Budget, but that spending could be reduced in-year in relation to non-essential spends that did not impact on service delivery. This could include, for example, printing costs or agency spend, and were referred to in the papers as management actions.
- Cllr Worrell queried the implications of using Exceptional Financial Support in 2024/25 for the Budget in 2025/26 and what options would remain in circumstances where even Exceptional Financial Support was not sufficient to balance the Budget. Cllr Carlin commented that there was some discussion nationally about what Exceptional Financial Support was originally intended to be used for and that a large number of local authorities now required this support due to the current financial pressures. It was recognised that Haringey was in this situation due to demand-led pressures and not because it had been profligate with spending. She added that the Leader of the Council had been in correspondence with the Minister of State for Local Government who had responded to reassure the Council that funding from central Government would be based on factors including deprivation and ability to raise income through Council Tax. Taryn Eves explained that the 'in-principle' agreement with the Government on Exceptional Financial Support was for £28m in 2024/25 and £37m in 2025/26 but that the amount of this that would be needed for drawdown would not be finalised until the final outturn position had been established. In circumstances where this was not sufficient to balance the Budget, there would need to be a further conversation with the Government. The Council aimed to improve forecasting which would assist with the ongoing conversations with the Government.
- Cllr Worrell requested clarification on how the savings delivery for 2024/25 impacted on savings targets for 2025/26. Taryn Eves clarified that the 2025/26 Budget did include some write-off of undelivered savings from 2024/25 which had been clearly documented in the Budget report. An assumption had been made in relation to the Amber savings of £3.2m set out in Table 2 of the report that these would be delivered in full in 2025/26 so it would be necessary to keep on close eye on this. It was recognised that a significant level of risk was being carried and so the corporate contingency for 2025/26 had been increased to manage this.
- Cllr White queried whether any further improvements to the position for Children's Services and Housing was anticipated in Quarter 4. Cllr Zena Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Families, said that figures for Quarter 4 were not yet available. However, she added that the number of children in care was down at 316, but the market costs from private providers were rising and the complexity of cases was also increasing. She added that rising costs in this area was a national issue. Ann Graham, Corporate Director of Children's Services, commented that she was not anticipating the financial position to worsen in Quarter 4, although there would be an overall overspend as set out in the report. On Housing Demand, Sara Sutton reported that the

position had been relatively stable in Quarter 3 and it was anticipated that it would remain stable in Quarter 4. However, the market remained volatile in terms of costs temporary accommodation. Jahedur Rahman, Director of Housing, added that the housing demand acquisition programme was expected to deliver a saving but, while properties had been acquired, there was a slight lag between doing so and people moving in. Therefore, a significant proportion of the savings would be delivered in 2025/26 rather than 2024/25.

- Asked by Cllr White about bad debt provision and Housing Benefit overpayments, Taryn Eves said that the forecast had been fairly consistent throughout the year and there remained an overspend for 2024/25. There had been some detailed work on this, including the recovery of overpayments.
- Cllr Connor referred to the savings for Adults, Health & Communities set out from page 48 of the agenda pack and noted that resource constraints within the commissioning teams appeared to be causing delays to these savings. Sara Sutton explained that, on transitions, additional budget had been approved for the commissioning team for 2025/26 and recruitment would follow which would provide a significant increase in resources to deliver savings profiled over the next few years. She also clarified that the savings for Adults, Health & Communities also now included housing demand due to the recent reorganisation of Directorates in the Council. On transitions, Cllr Brabazon added that the red rating could be slightly misleading because this was a new service and the staff team had needed to be assembled in the first year so there had been an enormous amount of work to get this underway. Ann Graham added that, with hindsight, the business case could have been structured differently with more lead-in time before the savings could be achieved. She noted that the project and the recruitment did not begin until April 2024 but that around half the projected savings had still been achieved. The reprofiled targets would take into account the unachieved savings.
- Cllr Connor requested clarification on the source of funding for the new capital scheme "Tottenham Parks", referred to in paragraph 3.8 of the report. Cllr Carlin explained that, through a reorganisation of costs, it had been possible to find around £1.8m from the Down Lane Park budget to put into other Tottenham parks that hadn't received investment for some considerable time. She emphasised that there would still be substantial investment in Down Lane Park.
- Cllr Connor referred to Strategic Procurement, which involved £600m spent on contracts according to paragraph 11.5 of the report, and requested further details of how efficiency was being achieved in this area. Taryn Eves explained that the majority of Council spending was on contracts and staffing so it was necessary to tighten contract spend. The £600m figure was approximately £450m on revenue and £150 on capital and the aim from 2025/26 onwards was to save £3m per year. A new Procurement Board was in place to support this process by examining all contracts at an early stage. Cllr Connor suggested that it would be useful for key papers, for example from Audit Committee on significant items on procurement, to be flagged to the Committee in future.

(ACTION)

- Cllr Connor proposed that the Adults section of the finance information in the report should be added as an agenda item to the next meeting of the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel in order to scrutinise this in greater detail. **(ACTION)**

40. 2024-26 CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN: Q3 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Margaret Gallagher, Head of Performance & Business Intelligence, introduced the report for this item, which covered the Quarter 3 period from October to December 2024, and had previously been submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 18th March 2025. She highlighted Appendix 3 to the report which provided full details of progress against the 188 activity lines in the Corporate Delivery Plan with 70% of the milestones being achieved and delivered on time. A summary KPI dashboard was also included in the papers to track the trends and the direction of travel from quarter to quarter with 92% of activities currently rated as Green or Amber. This was an improved position since Quarter 2 and there had been some notable achievements including delivering on new Council homes and bringing leisure services in-house. The 8% of Red ratings totalled 15 individual lines across the 8 themes.

Given the large number of individual lines, Cllr White proposed that the Committee should focus mainly on the Red rated lines.

Margaret Gallagher, other officers and Cabinet Members responded to questions from the Committee:

- Referring to paragraph 1.6 of the report, Cllr Connor noted that the first Young People Extraordinary Council had taken place in October 2024 and asked about the impact achieved so far. Jess Crowe, Corporate Director of Culture, Strategy & Communities, said that an example of impact had been a follow-up engagement event with the whole Cabinet which had taken place with the young people from the Council meeting and others from local schools. This had focused on developing the programme for the London Borough of Culture and exploring the kind of things that they would be interested in seeing. There was some specific funding to support the children & young people strand of the Borough of Culture programme, so the Council meeting had been timely in helping to shape the programme. She added that there would also be other examples of impact on issues such as climate change and SEND.
- Referring to paragraph 1.15 of the report, Cllr Connor requested further details on the review of internal governance processes including on timescales and oversight. Taryn Eves reported that she chaired the new Procurement Board which had met twice so far and was officer-led with representation from Legal, Procurement and each of the Directorates. It also had strong links to the Capital Board. Lead officers would be brought in as required for the different contracts being considered. The Board would test the value for money of the contracts, check compliance of the procurement processes and have an understanding of the pipeline of procurements expected in the coming years.

- Referring to paragraph 4.2 of the report, Cllr Connor noted that the point on the preparation for the CQC Assurance inspection, with the aim of achieving an outcome of 'Good', had been rated as Green although the outcome of the inspection had actually been 'Requires Improvement'. Cllr das Neves emphasised that the Green rating reflected the preparation for the inspection which had included holding a mock inspection and to anticipate the issues likely to be raised. While she acknowledged that the rating was not what the Council wanted to receive, the CQC had expressed confidence that the Council understood the positive areas and the challenging areas that it was working to improve.
- Cllr Worrell queried the reasons for the Red ratings under Theme Two (Climate Emergency), particularly on the Borough Idling Plan which was being paused. Cllr Mike Hakata, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Environment & Transport, clarified that the Red items, such as the action plan to electrify the Council's fleet, were not being taken off the agenda in any way but that it was not possible to continue with them at present because of funding issues. He added the Cabinet had decided to remove these lines from the Corporate Development Plan for the time being until there was a prospect of funding for them as it was not possible to move forward until that happened. However, he emphasised that the Cabinet remained committed to progressing these projects when it was able to do so. Jess Crowe clarified that this decision had been made through the recent Cabinet which had considered the same Quarter 3 report. Asked by Cllr Worrell how public accountability for the delivery of these projects could be maintained if they had been removed from the Corporate Development Plan, Cllr Hakata said that they remained as manifesto commitments and that Cabinet Members were also held to account by Scrutiny on progress.
- Asked by Cllr White specifically which lines had been removed from the Corporate Development Plan, Margaret Gallagher clarified that these were the lines on the Decentralised Energy Network, the Borough Idling plan and the Healthy Schools Network. It was also clarified that the details of this were set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report.
- Cllr White referred to item 8 of Theme One (page 157 of agenda pack) on the digital skills and inclusion strategy, noting that the delay was due to the new Digital Inclusion Manager not beginning the role until March 2025. Margaret Gallagher confirmed that the digital restructure was in place and clarified that the report related to Quarter 3 ending in December 2024 so described the position at that time.
- Cllr White referred to item 13 of Theme One (page 158 of agenda pack) on the Community Assemblies model and noted that there was currently no resource to progress this. Jess Crowe explained that the Policy and Strategy team had been stretched and had therefore focused on more time critical activities. Vacancies had also been held in the team to contribute to improving the

financial position. However, it was not proposed that the item be removed from the plan and there could be an opportunity to explore it through one of the calls to action in the Borough Vision which would be formally launched soon. There would also be a minor restructure within the Policy and Strategy team to focus more resources on resident participation and engagement.

- Cllr White referred to item 27 of Theme One (page 160 of agenda pack) on reducing demand to Customer Services in core service areas, which was Red rated due to capacity challenges. Cllr Seema Chandwani, Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality, said that this should be a number one priority because it was the 'front door' for contacting the Council but that it required a holistic whole Council approach. It also required updating the digital offer with resources through the digital transformation programme. She added that it was unaffordable to continue with expensive phone-based and face-to-face customer services and that, in her view, there needed to be a major strategic overview and investment programme. This would help to deal more quickly with the demand in areas such as parking, housing repairs and council tax. Asked by Cllr White whether additional capacity was being provided to help progress this, Cllr Chandwani said that she would follow up with further details.

(ACTION)

- Cllr White referred to item 92 of Theme Four (page 168 of agenda pack) on greater alignment with Young Carers activity which was Red rated. Cllr das Neves explained that there was a wider piece of work on the Council's approach to carers that encompassed a range of needs that carers had, including digital approaches to help them access services. This included a survey and engagement sessions but, as noted in the text, there was a need for some specific work with young people. Sara Sutton concurred with this, noting that it was part of the next evolution of the carers work and that there was currently an aim to bring the new Carers Strategy to Cabinet in the summer.
- Cllr Connor referred to item 90 of Theme Four (page 168 of agenda pack) on the review and update to the Carers Strategy, querying why this item was marked as unchanged given that this was a significant issue in the recent CQC inspection. Margaret Gallagher clarified that the 'unchanged' note was intended to measure the direction of travel between quarters and was a way of assessing trends.
- Cllr Connor proposed that the Adults items in the report could also be included in the discussion (along with the Finance report) at the next meeting of the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel in order to scrutinise these in greater detail.

(ACTION)

- On temporary accommodation (TA), Cllr Worrell queried why it hadn't been possible to get more alternative forms of accommodation in place. Sara Sutton replied that there had been a reduction in the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation over the quarter and that the number of families in TA remained relatively stable. This was mainly due to the management of

outflow and through the acquisitions process which had enabled the delivery of properties through the Haringey Community Benefit Society (HCBS) to provide more social housing. However, this remained a challenging area and increased demand was anticipated. She added that there was an ambition to deliver modular accommodation units for TA, including a project in Wood Green that had been slightly delayed from its original timescale but was on track to be delivered in 2025/26.

- Cllr Worrell highlighted the quality of TA and inspections which was rated as Amber and asked if this could be delivered this year. Sara Sutton explained that the Council was part of a programme called Setting the Standards and there had been an increase in the number of visits and tenancy checks. There would continue to be increased activity in this area.

41. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CLIMATE, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL- ONE OFF SCRUTINY REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SAFETY.

Cllr White noted that, as explained at the beginning of the meeting, a supplementary agenda pack had been circulated which included an updated version of the report on the Community Safety Scrutiny Review. Cllr Buxton, Chair of the Climate, Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel, reported that the Panel had held a one-off Scrutiny Review meeting on 11th March 2025. Two members of the Youth Panel had been invited to attend the meeting which had also been attended by the Borough Commander, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Council officers. Discussions topics had included ward panel meetings, antisocial behaviour, stop and search and youth issues in the Borough. Recommendations from the report included:

- Closer working and better and more frequent communication between the Youth Panel representatives and Community Safety Panels.
- To review and strengthen the Ward Panel Meeting Structure as a main tool of communication between residents, local organisations and the Police.
- For the Community Safety Team to assist in communications and support residents finding venues.
- For Ward performance figures to be reported on a quarterly basis to the Ward Panel meetings.
- For antisocial behaviour reporting to be more prominent and user friendly.

Cllr Gunes requested further details on the recommendation for quarterly reporting to the Ward Panel meetings. Cllr Buxton explained that the Panel considered that it was not explained to Ward Panels how frequently Police officers were taken out of wards for various reasons.

Asked by Cllr Worrell for clarification about paragraph 3.9 in the supplementary report about the short-term nature of projects, Cllr Buxton explained that this was in

response to issue about funding for Council projects being set for three years or less and the need for projects to have longer-term visions than this.

Asked by Cllr Connor about the links between the Police and schools, Cllr Buxton referred to the links with the Community Safety Partnership, co-chaired by the Borough Commander, as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the revised report. He added that this was on an infrequent basis, but that more frequent meetings could be pushed for. Cllr White informed the Committee that some of the recommendations concerned specific actions for the Police and the Borough Commander who had been sent the report to consider. Although the recommendations were agreed at a meeting of the Climate, Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel on 11th March 2025, it was possible that minor technical amendments would be required following feedback from the Borough Commander. Cllr White therefore proposed that the report on the Scrutiny Review to be agreed subject to these minor amendments and that authority to approve the minor amendments be delegated to the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Climate, Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED – That the report of the Scrutiny Review on Community Safety be approved subject to minor technical amendments following feedback from the Borough Commander.

RESOLVED – That the authority to agree these minor technical amendments be delegated to the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Climate, Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel.

42. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Cllr Buxton introduced a draft scoping document for a Scrutiny Review on the prioritisation of cyclists within the Walking and Cycling Action Plan. He noted that this had emerged following a discussion on cycling at the Scrutiny Café consultation event and other feedback from residents to Councillors regarding cycling infrastructure, particularly with regards to the increased use of e-bikes. There were plans for three scrutiny sessions, with residents, outside experts and focus groups as detailed in the draft scoping document. The Review would look at ways of improving cycling within the Borough and improve safety for cyclists and vulnerable road users.

Asked by Cllr Connor how the perspective of pedestrians would be captured in the Review, Cllr Buxton said that the Panel would reach out to local groups and that, while there was not a dedicated pedestrian groups, there were disabled groups and other organisations that represented vulnerable road users.

Cllr White observed that there were significant differences in terms of vulnerability and potential conflict between different types of bicycles such as e-bikes compared to

pedal bikes. Cllr Buxton confirmed that these differences would be considered as part of the Review.

RESOLVED – That the draft scoping document for a Scrutiny Review on the prioritisation of cyclists within the Walking and Cycling Action Plan be approved.

CHAIR: Councillor Matt White

Signed by Chair

Date

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