

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY, 22ND JULY, 2019, 7:00.

PRESENT:

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

Also Present: Luci Chapman, Luci Davin and Yvonne Denny

36. 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.

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

38. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

40. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

41. MINUTES

The Chair of the Adults and Health Panel advised that in relation to Item 25 in the minutes, the key point was that client information from the social care system was aligned other medical information held by the NHS to ensure continuity and that access to all information was available in one location, through the patient portal.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings on 3rd June and 4th July were agreed as a correct record.

42. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS

The Chair of the Housing and Regen Panel set out that the Panel minutes from 10th June were still draft.

RESOLVED

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

- Children and Young People – 13th June 2019
- Environment and Community Safety – 11th June 2019
- Housing and Regeneration – 10th June 2019
- Adults and Health – 20th June 2019

43. UNIVERSAL CREDIT

The Committee received a report on Universal Credit, which provided an update from the verbal briefing received in January. The report was introduced by Jim Brady, Service Manager for SSC – Benefits, Training & Quality as set out in the report pack at pages 37-54. Also in attendance at the meeting were Daniel Blake - CEO at Haringey CAB, Phylis Fealy from the DWP and Julie Stevens, also from the DWP, and who was the overall manager for the Tottenham Job Centre. Cllr Amin, the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Civic Services was also present, along with Andy Briggs the AD For Customer Services and Libraries. The following was noted in discussion of the report:

- a. Haringey CAB advised that Universal Credit required a lot more interactions and engagement from his organisation with members of the public than any of the previous benefits that it was designed to replace, resulting in significant resource implications. The DWP set out that that relationships were a key factor in administering Universal Credit and that it required the development of clear pathways for support.
- b. In relation to a question around the number of landlords that had asked for rent payments to be made to them directly, officers advised that the introduction of Universal Credit had increased overall rent arrears and that it was likely to be a significant number of landlords. Officers agreed to come back to the Committee with the number of landlords in Haringey that had asked for rent payments to be made to them directly, following rent arrears. **(Action: Jim Brady).**
- c. In response to a question around the training and support offered to staff to help them assist claimants, officers advised that DWP staff had been sent into libraries to talk to staff and to go through all of the information that staff members needed to know. Officers acknowledged that the library staff were not experts and that their role was largely to assist those people to make a claim.
- d. In response to a request for feedback from frontline staff, officers advised that there had been very few problem claims or significant issues so far and that on the odd occasion were a problem had arisen, they had been able to speak to the Job Centre quickly and get the problem resolved. Haringey CAB advised that the biggest issue they had come across was that it required much more access to IT and online services. The DWP had provided public access computers to CAB for this purpose. The Committee noted that Haringey CAB

- staff provided a dedicated advice service in Marcus Garvey Library on a Monday.
- e. In relation to staff resources available, Haringey CAB advised that they had a dedicated service to support people up to the point of their first successful claim. The service comprised of six staff and any queries outside of this would be picked up by generalist help and advice staff. Daniel Blake advised that since the introduction of Help to Claim, the number of queries had gone down. The DWP advised that they had around 58 staff working on claims in Tottenham, with 48 working on Universal Credit and 10 on legacy benefits. There were 45 staff in Wood Green, with a similar split in relation to Universal Credit and legacy benefits.
 - f. In response to a question, respondees advised that there were no major language barrier issues and that both libraries and CAB had adequate existing resources in place to deal with language and translation issues that arose.
 - g. The Committee sought further information in relation to the national timeframe. Officers responded that Haringey would be subject to the national rollout and could well see further drift in relation to the implementation date. Phylis Fealy advised that the rollout was heavily dependent upon the outcome of a pilot scheme and that they were hoping to have 100 people migrate across to the system by December. Further rollout was dependent upon whether any issues were identified as part of the pilot.
 - h. The Committee sought assurance about whether there was an IT system in place that was able to track people throughout the benefits process and that could be used to flag up residents who got in trouble when they migrated to Universal Credit. In response, officers advised that there was no dedicated benefits IT system that fulfilled that role, however the team did do some work to pull together a number of different data sources to try and identify people who were likely to have problems and try to proactively engage with them. The Committee also noted that the Community First programme was in place and was set up to track those people at risk of falling into debt. Officers agreed to bring back some further information around the Community First programme. **(Action: Andy Briggs).**
 - i. The Committee raised concerns about the impact of delays causing rent arrears to HfH and questioned what mechanisms were in place to coordinate this. The Chair sought details of how the impact of Universal Credit was being monitored across the Council, including its impact across Council services. In response, officers suggested that HfH were on top of Universal Credit and closely monitored cases internally. It was suggested that the majority of issues and arrears occurred due to the 5 week delay in receiving the first payment. Officers advised that there was no coordinated approach across the Council and that main access point for information for people who were financially vulnerable was likely to be Community First. The Committee highlighted information that set out that there was around £636k worth of arrears to HfH as a result of Universal Credit. The Chair agreed to follow up the issue of arrears with HfH directly. **(Action: Chair).**
 - j. In response to a request for further information about some of the key issues from a CAB perspective, the Committee was advised that the service had multiple points of entry and could occur as a result of walk-in or a referral by Job Centre Plus. Overall, CAB advised that the system tended to work quite well once the claimant had been in touch with, and supported by, CAB. One of

- the main advantages in relation to using CAB, was that it offered other wraparound services and could signpost claimants to a variety of other services. The key concerns from CAB related to IT access and the level of engagement required to complete a claim. CAB also highlighted issues around being able to satisfactorily evidence child care costs.
- k. In response to a question about whether the process was online only, the DWP advised that although people were encouraged to use the online system, there was also telephone system available.
 - l. The Committee questioned whether the deferred payment system had led to an increase in evictions. In response, it was noted that although advance payments were available to people, officers advised that they were not aware of many cases of people being evicted as a result. The DWP advised that they prioritised first claims, which had a five week delay, specifically to prevent evictions. In response to a further question the DWP advised that although a 100% advance was available, they dissuaded people from taking the full amount due to the risk of falling into debt.
 - m. The Committee requested some further information in relation to ward level mapping data for Universal Credit claimants. **(Action: Phylis Fealy).**
 - n. The Committee sought clarification around the 10-14% of claims that were not paid in full, as set out in the report. In response, the Committee was advised that the majority of cases was as a result of not having enough information to verify the claim. The DWP assured the Committee that if the payment was not made in full, they would at least process the personal allowance payment and would then seek to resolve the rest of the claim as quickly as possible. In response to a further question, the Committee noted that the amount of the personal allowance payment would depend on the household in question.
 - o. The Committee sought clarification around whether the different partners met regularly to resolve issues and develop a coordinated approach. In response, officers advised that there was a Haringey welfare reform forum that met to discuss a range of issues, including Universal Credit. The Committee commented that this forum needed to meet more regularly than at its current frequency of every four to six months.
 - p. In summary, the Chair commented that two of the main issues that had arisen were: The need for coordination and visibility within the Council, so that the impact, over time, on a variety of Council services was better understood; as well as the need for connectivity between different IT systems to help identify and coordinate responses better over the medium to long term.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the report.

44. PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2018/19

Jon Warlow, Director of Finance, introduced the report which set out the Council's provisional budget outturn for the last financial year of 2018/19. It was noted that there were some service overspends, which totalled about £9 million. The Director of Finance highlighted that the reserves position of the authority had improved slightly, as evident in the reserve statement section of Appendix 1 of the report.

The following was noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- a. Regarding a query around capital underspend and whether there was a missed opportunity to get going earlier on some issues, the Director of Finance mentioned that while everybody wanted the capital spend to be higher, there were positive results from this, namely in 2017/18 the outturn represented 37% of the capital budget and in 2018/19 it was 53%, which meant a 16% improvement in the year. It was noted that there was a continual focus to improve upon the 53% outturn. It was added that in relation to individual capital schemes, in many instances reasonable and explicable reasons were provided as to why there was not a full delivery. The Director of Finance highlighted that there were no resources lost in trying to minimise some slippage.
- b. The Director of Finance confirmed that road maintenance and infrastructure came under the capital budget. The Director of Finance noted that the degree of underspend on capital projects was variable depending on which project was viewed. The Director of Finance then referred to the Borough Roads scheme - scheme reference number 302 at page 80 of the report - which had a capital programme of £4,164 million and an outturn of £4,172 million. In terms of addressing road pothole issues speedily, Cllr Chandwani -the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods – clarified that there were two types of maintenance, planned and reactive maintenance, and noted that the type of maintenance referred by Cllr Jogee was reactive maintenance. The Cabinet Member further mentioned that an email that was sent to all Councillors about problems with the LOHAC contract that was managed by TFL. Regarding the LOHAC contract, the Cabinet Member acknowledged concerns with this contract and advised that a report to Cabinet had gone up in July around its retender.
- c. Regarding a query as to whether priority areas could be moved around within the capital budget, the Director of Finance explained that the budget was set based on the expectations at that point. During the course of the year there were some circumstances in which money was transferred through virement, but that was done through a proper decision-making process. The Director of Finance noted that in relation to the scheme headings shown on the Capital Programme, those resources had been allocated for the stated purposes, and the schemes would continue to be delivered in the next year for their stated purposes when the schemes were carried forward.
- d. Regarding a query as to whether the remaining amount of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be carried over as the Early Years block was underspent, the Director of Finance highlighted that the DSG section of the report, set out at section 7 of Appendix 1 of the report, showed the demand problems faced by the High Needs block. It was noted that there was an underspend on the Early Years block by £0.71 million. The Director of Finance referred to Table 2 on the DSG Reserve at section 7.6 of Appendix 1 of the report, which showed an agreed transfer during the course of the year between the Schools block and Early Years to the High Needs block. The transfer was made with agreement of the Schools Forum in recognition of the need to help improve the High Needs block. Despite this, the High Needs block was struggling and had put the DSG in negative position at £2,2 million at the end of the financial year. The Director of Finance agreed that what was happening with the DSG was not sustainable and confirmed that there were limitations on how much could be moved around. A recovery plan had been started as a

- degree of negative reserve in excess of the threshold had been forecasted by the end of the year.
- e. In terms of savings, the Director of Finance noted that the aim for 2019/20 was to deliver savings of £13 million. The delivery of the savings agenda for 2019/20 was stronger than last year due to several reasons which were set out as part of the MTFS. Firstly, a lot of difficult savings were taken out of the budget; and secondly, both Adult and Children Services had additional budget provisions made. A £7 million resilience factor had been built into the budget to help deal with problems that arose. In terms of the reserves position, at the close of 2018/19, some work had been done that made it as strong as it could be, which included a review of the grants. The upshot of the review was that three things were done with the reserves: firstly, more money was put into the transformation agenda; secondly, more money was put into the ICT reserve; and thirdly, £2 million more was put into a resilience reserve to deal with the negative £2 million balance with DSG at the close of last year.
 - f. The Director of Finance stressed that as an organisation it was important to focus on delivering the £13 million savings because there would be a legacy problem if the savings target were not delivered. The Director of Finance confirmed that reserves could only be used once. Regarding the limited opportunities that had been utilised in 2018/19 to improve the reserves position, it was noted that the business rates improvement was used to offset the service overspend during the course of the year.
 - g. The Chair requested clarification on the Business Rates section of the report at section 8.3 of Appendix 1. In response, the Director of Finance explained that performance on Business Rates were not at the point where the authority wanted it to be. The target of 98% was in the ballpark of what was expected to be collected year on year. However, it was noted that the money was still collectable, and the department had worked to catch up with that money from last year to ensure a better performance for this year. The department were aware that the shortfall needed to be collected from last year because the business risk was that if the money was outstanding for longer, then there would be an increased likelihood of difficulty in collection and bad debt costs.
 - h. In relation to section 9.7 of the report at Appendix 1 regarding Broadwater Farm, the Director of Finance clarified that the information provided was in respect of the level of spend on the existing scheme, and underspend on the level of spend on the existing scheme.

RESOLVED

- I. That the Committee noted the contents of the report and considered how it could be used to inform future scrutiny work and overview of the financial monitoring and planning process during 2019/20.

45. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND STRATEGIC REGENERATION

Councillor Adje, Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategic Regeneration, responded to questions from the Committee:

- a. The Cabinet Member noted that his main concerns were to ensure there was adequate funding for services to be provided for the people of the Borough, to ensure the Borough was secure, and that there was a balanced budget.
- b. In terms of the Council's finances, the Cabinet Member noted that everything was being done to ensure the Council had a balanced budget. Regarding the expected position of the Council's finances in 2022, the Cabinet Member foresaw the Council's finances being in a balanced position.
- c. Regarding possible virements to high road works, the Cabinet Member explained that if the fund was ring-fenced then it would be difficult to vire the funds; however, if a case was made where there was a grant that was not ring-fenced, then it would be looked at whether that could be used to assist.
- d. In terms of whether the budget was aligned with the manifesto, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the two were aligned and were reflected in the Council's Borough Plan.
- e. Regarding a query on funding for a nursery, the Cabinet Member advised that normally the school would have a maintenance budget, and if the maintenance had not been dealt with or there were insufficient funds, then the teacher or the finance subgroup of the governing body needed to raise the issues to the Governors, and also appeal to the Director and Cabinet Member on how the service could assist. In terms of the repairs for the nursery, it was advised that an analysis of the repairs needed to be made and a business case prepared. The Chair suggested that the issues with the nursery could be picked up and discussed at the Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Panel, especially around budgeting. **(Action: Cllr Dogan)**.
- f. In terms of making Council Tax fairer, the Cabinet Member referred to the CTRS, which was part of the Borough Plan. Regarding raising funds, the Cabinet Member explained that the Council had to collect funds from small business through business rates, however, to assist small businesses, the Council provided a three-month discount or rent-free period when businesses started. The Cabinet Member understood that Council Tax payment was difficult for some people and highlighted that everything was being done to apply discounts for residents who were unable to meet their needs, for instance there were single persons discounts to assist those that lived alone. He noted that Council Tax was a statutory payment, and therefore, the Council had a responsibility to collect the money, and in some cases, bailiffs were used as enforcement.
- g. Regarding a query on invest to save proposals in other portfolios, the Cabinet Member clarified that the term 'invest to save' should not be used loosely. Although there would be an input into the service, there would also be revenue costs, therefore consideration need to be made of whether there would be a yield on the return. The Cabinet Member mentioned that he had regular monthly meetings with officers within Adults and Social Care, and had held conversations with officers around invest to save proposals.
- h. In terms of encouraging new businesses to invest in the Borough, the Cabinet Member noted that for instance, the Council encouraged businesses to use their shop as a meanwhile traded opportunity rather than be left vacant; and there were also three-month rent free periods and conversations around discounts on business rates for new business. The Cabinet Member positively highlighted the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) on Wood Green High Road. Regarding Tottenham High Road, the Cabinet Member noted that there

was a Tottenham High Road Strategy, which started from the Tottenham Spurs Stadium to Seven Sisters. The Cabinet Member offered to provide Cllr Dogan a copy of the Tottenham High Road Strategy. **(Action: Cllr Adje).**

- i. The Committee raised concerns regarding funding issues faced by voluntary sector nurseries. In response the Cabinet Member reiterated that those matters should be referred to the relevant Director and Cabinet Member as there were possibly funds available in the service. The Cabinet Member suggested that if there were no funds available, then a conversation with the Director of Finance would be required, and possibly a political discussion would be required on the matter.
- j. The Committee suggested that it would be useful to assist struggling businesses in the Borough by having finance for Town Centre managers. In response, the Cabinet Member noted that he was pleased Cllr Connor was due to meet Cllr Gideon Bull, the Cabinet Member for Local Investment and Economic Growth, and he trusted that Cllr Bull would address the matter.
- k. Regarding the query around the St Ann's site, the Cabinet Member noted that the site did not belong to the Council. In terms of the amount of social housing that could be asked for the site, the Cabinet Member clarified that it was a planning matter. The Cabinet Member mentioned that when he had a conversation with Mr James Murray, GLA Deputy Mayor of Housing and Residential Development, he understood that 50% affordable housing was wanted because it was a GLA site. The Cabinet Member noted that the Council could use its influence to have conversations with the GLA regarding social or keyworker housing on that site; however, it was something that would arise during the Planning Permission process. The Chair suggested that this discussion could be picked up at the Housing and Regeneration Panel **(Action: Cllr Moyeed).**
- l. Regarding the Council developing the capacity to build its own homes, the Cabinet Member noted that recruitment of key specialist officers was underway and that Homes for Haringey were involved in this process.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Committee for inviting him and commended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's involvement in the proposed Invest to Save programme in Children's Services. The Cabinet Member suggested that in future the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should also look at underperforming contracts. The Chair noted that this would be picked up as part of a separate conversation **(Action: Chair & Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategic Regeneration).**

46. FOBO - ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the Front Office Back Office Transformation Programme, following a previous update provided to the Committee on 30th April 2019. The report was introduced by The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods. Andy Briggs, AD for Customers Services and Libraries, was present along with Helen Gaffney (HR Business Partner) and Belinda Black (FOBO Programme Director). Maggie Smith and Gerard McGrath from Unison were also in attendance. The following was noted in discussion of the report:

- a. The Cabinet Member advised that her primary concern around implementing the FOBO programme was around ensuring that undue stress and excessive workloads were not placed on staff as a result. There had been significant

consultation undertaken with trade unions and their concerns had been incorporated into the proposals as they developed. The Committee was advised that the formal staff consultation did not end until 25th July but that the information given during the meeting was the latest that was available. The Cabinet Member set out that she recognised that the Council needed to offer a 21st Century technology-based customer service solution to residents, whilst ensuring that services worked for everyone.

- b. In response to a question, officers advised that there were around 2000 calls and 300/400 emails per day to Haringey Customer Services.
- c. In response to a question, officers advised that there were nine staff engagement sessions held, including a number of pre-engagement sessions and that as a result, there were no surprises for staff in respect of these proposals. Officers advised that Committee that they had been able to have an open and constructive dialogue with staff and to ensure that the numbers of compulsory redundancies were kept to an absolute minimum. Officers advised that the number of expected redundancies had been reduced since last coming to the Committee and that through a series of mitigations they were able to advise that there would be no compulsory redundancies for staff.
- d. In response to a request for their comments, the Unison reps advised that engagement with management had improved since the previous update and that they were satisfied that a positive way forward had been found overall. The Committee noted a number of concerns from the unions which included:
 - i. The process felt overly rushed and the unions felt that back-office jobs had been taken before management were able to demonstrate adequate technological solutions.
 - ii. There was a lack of clear evidence to justify the level of posts deleted within the Revenue and Benefits service.
 - iii. The unions raised concerns from staff that those left behind would be dealing with increased stress levels and workloads from backlogs.
 - iv. Concerns were raised about gaps in service and that Customer Service staff would be asked to attend Liability Order hearings without the proper training or accreditation.
 - v. The Committee was advised that the unions remained concerned about whether the IT programme needed to run this programme was fit for purpose and the level of IT support that would be available for staff.
 - vi. That staff had raised concerns about a lack of training within the team entrusted within the new roles and that the training courses only took place once a month. Staff were also concerned about the impact on existing roles and having to effectively do two people's jobs.
 - vii. The Committee noted that the technology in question was not working as effectively as hoped within the DWP, who were much further advanced in the process. This would have a significant impact on existing staff.
 - viii. Given the issues around the technology, concerns were raised about deadlines being revised and implementation being delayed.
 - ix. The unions set out that whilst they welcomed having no compulsory redundancies, they did not want to see redundancies of any kind as this they represented job losses. Rather, the unions wanted to see their members in work in secure employment.

- x. The formal response to the consultation of behalf of the unions would be submitted to management on 24th July.
- e. The Chair directed the Committee to focus its questions around the communications with staff. The Chair acknowledged that officers were due to bring a follow-up report back to the Committee in October and requested that the report set out some of the concerns raised here including; whether what had been implemented to date was working effectively, what the impact of those changes had been and further information about the impact on staff undertaking Liability Order hearings. **(Action: Andy Briggs/Clerk).**
- f. The Committee sought clarification about whether the decision to transfer the business support function back to Children's Services from the corporate centre had been considered for other services, and whether adequate consideration had been given to the loss of specialism arising from adopting a centralised model. In response, officers advised a series of workshops were held with representatives of all services around 18 months ago and the business support function was not raised as an issue at that time. Subsequent to these workshops, a new Director for Children's Services had been appointed and it was decided, following significant discussions, that those functions would be better placed within CYPS. Following further questions, officers advised that there had been no desire to go back to services and actively seek reconsideration of the discussions that took place 18 months ago. However, officers emphasised that the FOBO programme was fully communicated and that the FOBO Board consisted of representation from across the Council and met monthly. There were also a variety of sub-boards which met regularly.
- g. In response to the discussion outlined above, Unison advised that in their opinion the shared service model had never worked and questioned the implementation of an additional level of management as a result of the model. Unison welcomed the return of the shared service functions back to Children's Services and suggested that this should be replicated for services across the Council.
- h. The Committee enquired what level or grade the Change Champions were within the organisation. In response, officers advised that they ranged from PO2 to Scale 5. Of the around 30 Change Champions, the majority were at the Scale 5 or Scale 6 Level.
- i. The Committee requested that the Change Champion newsletters be shared with all Members. **(Action: Andy Briggs).**
- j. The Chair highlighted some of the information contained in the newsletters and emphasised staff feelings of negativity, frustration and poor IT systems. The Chair suggested that there was a lot of learning for the Council in this around the culture of the organisation and asked the Cabinet Member how this information might be used to bring about positive change to the organisation's culture. In response, the Cabinet Member set out that the newsletter demonstrated that the organisation was serious about culture change and acknowledged that staff across the organisation were feeling some of the pressures outlined therein. The Committee was advised that the FOBO programme would play a central role in updating and improving IT systems, which was one of the main concerns highlighted. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the concerns outlined and advised the Committee that she would be taking the issue of culture change to Cabinet.

- k. The Committee enquired about how officers were going to ensure that there was a continuous level of service given the staff losses outlined and the fact that the demand of answering 2000 phone calls and 300 emails a day would still be there. In response, officers reiterated that they acknowledged the concerns about overloading staff and emphasised that the purpose of the programme was not just a cost cutting exercise, but rather a transformative approach which would, as a consequence, allow the Council to provide a more focused and responsive service to residents with higher needs. The AD for Customer Services and Libraries advised that resources would not be released until officers knew that what was being implemented would work. In addition, significant work had, and would continue to be, done around tracking this programme and its impact on staff.

RESOLVED

- I. The Committee noted the report.

47. LIBRARY UPDATE

The Chair asked the representatives from the Friends of Libraries groups to introduce themselves.

Mr David Bennie, Chair of For the Friends of Reading and Education in Haringey - which was an umbrella group for the various friends' groups at different libraries in the Borough - and he was also Chair of St. Ann's Library Friends. Firstly, Mr Bennie mentioned that he was pleased the Council kept nine libraries open and that the hours were not cut. Secondly, in terms of the Enhancement programme for the branch libraries, Mr Bennie was concerned that it had taken a long time and felt that it would be instructive to follow that back to understand how it took so long for a relatively small programme. Mr Bennie stressed that libraries had become crucial providers of Council services, for example the Council's Customer Service Centre introduced at Wood Green library and Marcus Garvey library; however, libraries had become less welcoming and acted as a security operation to control people that were out of order. Lastly, Mr Bennie raised concerns on the uncertainty and long-term plans of Wood Green library and Coombes Croft library in Tottenham. It was further noted that Muswell Hill Library had access issues as the mechanical lift had not worked properly for a substantial period, and it was suggested that it would be ideal to have lift access for the upper floor of the Library.

Ms Jasmine Taylor, representative of Friends of Marcus Garvey Library, briefly referred to the email response from the Friends of Marcus Garvey Library that was sent to the Councillors regarding the inaccuracies in parts of the report. Ms Taylor raised concerns that issues that related to Marcus Garvey Library were kicked down the road. Ms Taylor explained that when Marcus Garvey Library re-opened following refurbishment, the Friends of Marcus Garvey Library and other residents carried out a community audit and had meetings with library management about issues with the library. It was acknowledged that some

issues at the Library that were resolved, such as additional shelving, the youth section was returned, and the back door was no longer used as an entrance. Nonetheless, it was noted there was an agreement to reconfigure the lower floor to ensure there was better use of the Library space; however, it was felt that officers were hanging back on the agreement. It was highlighted that the £3 million that was meant to be spent on the Library was rather spent on customer service provision within the Library. Consequently, there were still various problems at the Library, particularly the lack of space. Ms Taylor put forward the following requirements for Marcus Garvey Library:

- The reconfiguration of the Library to allow more space;
- A Librarian within the children's library and children's desk in the Library to ensure children were provided support; and
- The removal of light boxes, which took a lot of space and had no useful function.

Ms Joanna Bornat, representative of Stroud Green and Harringay library, acknowledged that in the last year there was good support from Council officers, and the Library was about to go through a refurbishment. However, Ms Bornat raised concerns for the future of the library service as she felt afraid that the library service would be run by volunteers rather than existing library staff. Ms Bornat noted that the Library catered for a wide age range of people and also crossed the Borough boundary. Ms Bornat highlighted that she was delighted that Haringey had 9 libraries, a book budget and refurbished the new IT; however, the whole library building could not be used and accessed due to health and safety reasons Ms Bornat subsequently requested help to fundraise to open up the top level and for a lift to be installed. Ms Bornat noted that the Friends group had ideas on raising money for the Library and that the Friends group would be happy to discuss them with the Council, as the library was an important asset.

The Chair thanked the library representatives for sharing their observations and acknowledged receipt of the email. The Chair welcomed discussion on the Library representations.

The following was noted in response to the discussion:

- a. Regarding a query on the effectiveness of the relationship between the Friends groups and the Council, Mr Bennie mentioned that generally the relationship was good, but described it as patchy at times, particularly when there was a proposal 2 to 3 years ago to cut branch library hours which came as a surprise because the Friends group were not informed of it in advance. However, he explained that there had been improvements since then, for instance the Friends group had regular meetings with the Head of Service, and also, they had a good relationship with the branch Librarian. Mr Bennie raised a concern on dedicated library staff as they had become less attached to individual libraries. It was stressed that the relationship

between established librarians and the people who used libraries were crucial.

- b. Regarding a query on the capturing of concerns and conversations, Ms Taylor noted that the situation with Marcus Garvey Library was complicated as they not only had to deal with the library service but also the Council's Regeneration team. Besides communication issues with officers, another major issue were deadlines that were not met, for instance, similar issues continued to be discussed at meetings three to four months later.
- c. Judith Walker, Head of Libraries and Customer Services, noted that the capital allocation was initially for Library enhancement, for an internal fit-out. There had been a lot of work to fully identify the critical maintenance requirements and the ongoing 5-year plan, which had taken time to solidify. It was highlighted that engagement with the wider public around the internal designs had been completed and the aim of the programme was to develop a five-year maintenance plan. Ms Walker acknowledged the Friends groups representatives' frustrations of not being provided dates, but hoped they felt communicated with.
- d. The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Civic Services agreed that all the Borough's libraries were important for the residents of the Borough. The Cabinet Member highlighted that despite the challenges in the budget, the Council maintained the Borough libraries, which showed that the Council cared about its libraries. The Cabinet Member stressed that the Borough libraries should be promoted to ensure everyone used the libraries. It was noted that since the redevelopment of Marcus Garvey Library into a Customer Service Centre, the challenge was that any new developments at the Library would require a strong business case. It was further added that consideration would need to be made as to how the Customer Service Centre and libraries were kept as two separate spaces. The Cabinet Member mentioned that she would be attending the next meeting around libraries and the issues raised would be picked up to ensure the libraries worked. The Cabinet Member further noted that in relation to Muswell Hill Library she would pick up on the lift accessibility issue as there needed to be a decent lift, and also the children's library accessibility issues. The Cabinet Member also acknowledged that she would pick up on the lift at Stroud Green library, and would be glad to work with the Friends group around fundraising. **(Action: Cllr Amin).**
- e. The Cabinet Member highlighted that she would be glad to work with the Friends group on fundraising for libraries as income for libraries was an issue. The Cabinet Member concluded that she cared about libraries and she was glad the representatives of the Friends groups attended and raised the issues to ensure a way forward in the future.
- f. The Chair suggested that comments be provided on progress and timings, ideas for fundraising and income for libraries, and for some of the issues to be teased out. It was recommended written responses be provided on some of the matters that were raised. The Chair also suggested for visits to libraries be organised in the next 6 months for the Overview and Scrutiny

Committee Members, and feedback be provided on the progress of libraries and progress on building up the partnership relationship. **(Action: Cllr Amin/ Judith Walker).**

- g. In addition, a Committee Member requested a response on the role of the Librarian, impact on the dedicated staff and what the allocation of staff looked like. The Chair requested that the feedback and responses be provided in writing. **(Action: Cllr Amin/Judith Walker).**
- h. Regarding a query on the impact on the public of the Customer Service Centre in libraries, the Cabinet Member explained that there was a dedicated feedback process in libraries, that was separate from Customer Services

The Chair concluded that responses to further questions, feedback on libraries and the library peer review be provided to a future meeting. **(Action: Cllr Amin/Judith Walker/Andy Briggs).**

RESOLVED

- i. That the Committee noted the information provided in the report.

48. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered the Work Programme Update report as set out at pages 121-153 of the agenda pack.

Following a discussion, the Committee agreed to postpone the recommended appointment of Cllr Diakides to the Housing and Regeneration panel in response to concerns that Cllr Stone did not feel that he had received adequate notification of the decision to replace him. The Chair commented that she had spoken to him in person about the decision.

RESOLVED

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

49. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

50. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the remaining scheduled meeting dates for 2019-2020:

- 1 October 2019
- 25 November 2019
- 14 January 2020 (Priority X)
- 23 January 2020 (Budget Scrutiny)
- 12 March 2020

CHAIR: Councillor Lucia das Neves

Signed by Chair

Date