

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
**Public Services Reform
Policy and Accountability
Committee
Minutes**



Wednesday 2 September 2020

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rowan Ree (Chair), Christabel Cooper, Guy Vincent, Zarar Qayyum and Dominic Stanton

Other councillors

Councillor Adam Connell (Cabinet Member for Public Services Reform)

Officers

Rhian Davies (Director of Resources)

Emily Hill (Director of Finance)

Veronica Barella (Chief Digital Officer)

Nicola Ellis (AD Resident Services)

Dawn Auger (AD People and Talent)

Martin Calleja (AD Efficiency and Zero-Based Budgeting)

Matthew Sales (AD Programmes and Assurance)

David Abbott (Head of Governance)

Guests

Georgina Maratheftis (TechUK)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair carried out a roll call to confirm attendance. Attendance is listed above. There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28th of July 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public questions were received.

5. COUNCIL OF THE FUTURE - TECHUK

The Chair welcomed Georgina Maratheftis, Head of Local Public Services at [TechUK](#), to the meeting. She gave a presentation to the committee on TechUK's Council of the Future guide.

Georgina Maratheftis noted that the pandemic had been a multiplier for technology adoption and innovation. The sector had shifted very quickly to mass remote working and had seen improvements in collaboration through the use of platforms like Teams, Zoom, and Skype. Councils had also used digital infrastructure to coordinate volunteers to support vulnerable residents who were shielding.

Georgina also spoke about the [Local Digital Declaration](#), a joint endeavour initiated by the UK Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS), and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK. The declaration expressed an ambition for local public services in the internet age to:

- design services that best meet the needs of citizens
- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

She then highlighted some ways in which Councils could help move this forward:

- Be a digital champion and empower digital leadership at the executive level
- Use data to make informed decisions
- Sign up to the local digital declaration
- Spearhead a culture of innovation

The Chair asked how GDPR had affected data sharing. Georgina Maratheftis said any data sharing would have to take place within data protection rules and officers should work with their data protection officer. She added that data could be anonymised to ensure that nothing sensitive was shared. Veronica Barella (Chief Digital Officer) added that the Council had data sharing agreements in place around how data was handled and stored.

The Chair asked what a 'smart city' was, and if there was a danger of it being used as a Trojan horse for privatisation. Georgina Maratheftis said she preferred the term 'smart place' and that the idea was about considering what technology could do to help enable the vision for a place. For example, in Camden there were booths where visitors can get free Wi-Fi and make calls.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked about the implications of smart cities and increased automation on employment and job security. He also asked whether a smart city would provide services on top of the traditional local authority provided services.

Georgina Maratheftis said a smart city should start with the local authority and their vision for a digital council across the place. In terms of the impact of technology on jobs – she said it was important to upskill the organisation and better equip workers and young people to have the digital skills needed for the jobs of the future.

Martin Calleja (AD Efficiency and Zero-Based Budgeting) noted the complexity of the local government technology market and asked how the Council could encourage high quality procurement and investment. Georgina Maratheftis said TechUK worked with the sector and ran events to better educate them and ensure they could have more informed, meaningful conversations with local authorities. She said it was important for technology providers to see local authorities as partners, not just customers.

Councillor Guy Vincent felt that few of the technology ideas referenced in the agenda papers seemed to improve the day-to-day activities of the Council like housing repairs or tackling anti-social behaviour. Councillor Christabel Cooper disagreed and said she could see huge benefits in the 'single view of a resident'. A common frustration for residents contacting the Council was that they were pushed from department to department with little or no data sharing or tracking so they had to repeat their issue multiple times to different people. It would also be more efficient for residents to be able to interact with the Council online rather than having to wait on hold to a call centre for example.

Councillor Adam Connell (Cabinet Member for Public Service Reform) said a priority for the Council was to be inclusive and co-produce services with disabled people. He asked if there were any examples of co-production with users on digital services. Georgina Maratheftis said TechUK was putting together a database of local government innovation to share examples of good practice. She added that Croydon were currently working on a digital inclusion project with Leeds – more information can be found on the Croydon Digital blog: croydon.digital/2020/09/16/leeds-and-croydon-are-creating-a-digital-inclusion-toolkit/

Veronica Barella agreed that technology should be seen as the enabler for outcomes. The Council's new resident access and improvement programme was designing services from a resident point of view – looking at the outcomes first then looking for appropriate technology solutions.

The Chair asked if, given the history of public sector procurement failures, there was a risk of public sector institutions being scared to be first to try new things, and if that was stifling innovation. Georgina Maratheftis said it was an issue that had been raised by TechUK's members, but the relationship between councils and suppliers was evolving. TechUK was encouraging councils to have honest conversations with suppliers about needs and expectations at the start of the process, undertake thorough market engagement and, where appropriate, start small and scale up.

The Chair thanked Georgina Maratheftis from TechUK for attending the committee. He then summarised the discussion, noting that new technology should never be a goal in and of itself, but that councils should focus on the outcomes and resident

services they wanted to achieve, and then work back to find the most effective way to deliver them.

6. TECHNOLOGY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

NOTE: This item was taken after Item 7.

Veronica Barella (Chief Digital Officer) presented the report and the Council's digital and information strategy and the following points were noted:

- The Council's goal was to enable the delivery of the council's priorities for residents, local businesses and staff through the innovative provision of digital and information services
- The Resident Experience Access Programme will modernise the Council's public-facing services – from the more transactional ones which will be redesigned and automated end-to-end, to building a single front door for Social Care, Children's Services and Housing.
- The Council has a Digital Board in place to provide strategic leadership, engage with council members, internal services and other relevant stakeholders to deliver transformation and key priorities
- The Council was committed to open up data and make decision based on data.

The Chair asked if the Council had an ethical framework in place for use of technology and data. He noted that the company he worked for kept a register of the algorithms they used and who was responsible for them. The algorithms were regularly reviewed and assumptions tested. Veronica Barella said Digital Services did intend to set up a register of algorithms.

The Chair, noting that the Council held a great deal of data about residents and services, asked how robust its security procedures were. Veronica Barella said the Council regularly reviewed and tested its cyber-security procedures. Systems were in place to protect users and their data. It was a major risk area for the organisation and was taken very seriously.

The Chair asked if there had been an increase in attacks this year. Veronica Barella said there had, and it had been a problem for all major organisations.

The Chair asked if there were disaster recovery procedures in place – could the Council retrieve critical data if there was a major incident? Veronica Barella said the Council and third-party contractors had processes in place and regular exercises were carried out to test preparedness.

Councillor Dominic Stanton asked how much of the Council's data was still stored in local file systems and servers, rather than in cloud-based servers. Veronica Barella said most of the Council's major systems were now hosted externally with third party providers but there was still some data on local servers. All new procurements were hosted externally to reduce risk in case of an attack.

7. OVERVIEW OF THE RESIDENT EXPERIENCE AND ACCESS PROGRAMME

NOTE: This item was taken after Item 5.

Martin Calleja (AD Efficiency and Zero-Based Budgeting) presented the report on the Council's Resident Experience and Access Programme (REAP) – a flagship initiative for driving transformation, improved access, reliability and quality across all front-line services. He noted that the programme was moving from the design stage to the delivery stage. Phase one of the programme was focused on universal services like council tax, parking, and benefits. Phase two of the programme was focused on targeted support services like adult social care and children's services.

Martin Calleja explained that the Council was currently delivering around 30 percent of services digitally and the aim was to deliver over 60 percent of services digitally. The programme would be delivered over five years with the majority of investment in the first three. Officers estimated savings of £9.28m.

The Chair welcomed the programme. He noted that while calling the Council's noise and nuisance number he learned that the call centre wasn't based in the borough. He asked where the Council got those services from and how many third-party providers the Council used. Martin Calleja said he understood that the service was in the process of being desegregated from RBKC and the current team worked remotely.

The Chair asked if the programme had been co-produced with residents. Martin Calleja said officers had reached out to residents through various channels and five residents with specific skills had been involved to give feedback. The team would also be working with residents through existing routes on a service by service basis. The Chair said it was important to testing the programme with residents to ensure the Council was getting it right.

Councillor Christabel Cooper asked how officers could ensure they got feedback from residents who were less tech savvy. Martin Calleja said they had reached out and would continue to try to get a stronger resident voice into the programme.

Councillor Guy Vincent said he agreed with the goals of the programme but asked officers what this investment would do to improve common service problems like housing repairs or tackling anti-social behaviour. Martin Calleja said the services mentioned were in phase two and hadn't been modelled yet, though broad design principles were in place. Phase two design work was due to be completed this year and delivery was due to start in 2021. Veronica Barella added that the Council was already working on a long-term repairs model – the service had been brought back in house and software had been procured to help triage requests and provide a portal for residents to see information about their repairs and upcoming appointments. This work would join up with the work happening in the REAP in phase two.

Councillor Vincent expressed concern that phase two of the programme had not yet been fully thought through. He noted that the projected £3.4m of savings per year would mean a workforce reduction of around 50 people and asked what services that those people were providing would be delivered by software. Martin Calleja said the

savings were based on detailed modelling work – the programme would realise savings by bringing together services, reducing the workload, and lowering transaction costs.

Councillor Vincent asked if there was a project plan with clear milestones that the committee could track to ensure it was delivered on time and on budget.

Martin Calleja said following Cabinet approval in October there would be monthly progress reports that could be shared with members. He added that there was a board governance structure in place and the senior leadership team reviewed progress on a monthly basis.

Councillor Dominic Stanton asked when the first visible change would appear for residents (on the website, an app, digitised parking etc.). Martin Calleja said the first major change would be parking and council tax. Members asked that the delivery schedule be circulated.

ACTION: Martin Calleja

Councillor Zarar Qayyum, noting the target of 60 percent of resident interactions to be digital by April 2023, asked if there were similar targets for other routes. Some residents weren't able to use digital means – was there any way of identifying those people and providing support? Martin Calleja said there was a breakdown of target channel mix across all major services on page 86 of the agenda.

The Chair summarised the discussion and said he was keen to see this programme delivered and requested regular progress updates.

8. H&F WAY PROGRESS REPORT

This item was deferred to a later meeting.

Meeting started: 6.30 pm
Meeting ended: 9.10 pm

Chair

Contact officer: David Abbott
Head of Governance
☎: 07776 672877
E-mail: david.abbott@lbhf.gov.uk