

# Public Services Reform Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Tuesday 28 July 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)

Dawn Aunger (Assistant Director, People and Talent)

Martin Calleja (Assistant Director, Efficiency and Zero-Based Budgeting)

Emily Hill (Director of Finance)

Kevin Caulfield (Strategic Lead for Co-Production)

Peter Smith (Head of Policy & Strategy)

Linda Jackson (Director of Covid-19 Response and Recovery)

David Abbott (Head of Governance)

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

## **2. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair carried out a roll call of members to confirm attendance. A full attendance list can be found above.

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. MINUTES**

The Chair noted that a briefing paper on agency spend had been circulated to members.

## **RESOLVED**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No public questions were received.

### **5. CO-PRODUCTION UPDATE**

Kevin Caulfield, Strategic Lead for Co-production, presented the report. He spoke about how the Covid-19 pandemic presented huge challenges for the Council and how it had an outsized impact on marginalised communities. From the beginning of the pandemic, H&F had taken action to ensure disabled people were supported. The Council had sent communications to reassure people receiving care that there would be no reduction in support, PPE would be available to carers, and restrictions on direct payments would be loosened.

The co-production team had worked closely with mutual aid groups who provided a wide range of practical support to residents who were shielding or self-isolating. They would also be working with the Communities and Strategy team to help develop an action plan for the recovery.

Kevin Caulfield also highlighted the acceleration of co-production across the Council – there had already been a number of good examples but there was still a long way to go. He felt it was really important for there to be more ownership and resilience in the community.

The key areas of focus going forward were:

- How to embed co-production across the Council
- Exploring different ways of working with and engaging residents
- Building strength and resilience in the community and voluntary sector

The Chair thanked Kevin Caulfield for his presentation and asked how the Council was engaging with residents and what had been learned so far.

Kevin said a broad cross-section of disabled people had been involved from the start (a number sitting on the Disabled People's Commission itself) but there was still a long way to go as co-production began on larger, strategic areas of work like the Civic Campus project and the resident access programme. The intention was that as the work evolved, individual services would embed co-production practices. His focus was to create a framework to allow co-production to flourish across the organisation.

The Chair asked what form the community engagement had taken. Kevin Caulfield said a researcher from Imperial College had been seconded to the team to lead on

engagement – including conversations, digital engagement, and community research.

The Chair asked if there were any groups that were particularly difficult to engage. Kevin Caulfield said traditionally those most excluded from decision making were people in residential homes, refugees and asylum seekers.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked what the key challenges had been over the past year (in addition to Covid-19). Kevin Caulfield said the key challenges were:

- The need to mainstream co-production. Now that a number of practical applications were getting off the ground, he felt it would help other services see the benefits.
- Building trust with residents and groups. There had been a level of uncertainty from the mutual aid groups in the beginning based on the traditional view of how Councils operated.
- Managing and delivering an ambitious, ground-breaking programme.

Councillor Qayyum asked who was overseeing co-production work at the Council. Kevin said there was an implementation group of Councillors, disabled residents, and officers overseeing the delivery of the work.

Councillor Adam Connell, Cabinet Member for Public Services Reform, said he applauded Kevin Caulfield and Tara Flood for their work leading co-production, but they could only do so much by themselves. There were plans to launch a network across the Council to engage staff and help embed co-production more widely.

The Chair asked if the current budget of £40k was enough. Kevin said the goal was to embed the principles of co-production across the Council and for services to incorporate the work into their own budgets.

The Chair summed up the discussion and thanked Kevin Caulfield for his contributions. The Chair requested that the Council's co-production materials be circulated to members.

**ACTION: Kevin Caulfield**

## **6. RESIDENT-LED COMMISSIONS**

Peter Smith, Head of Policy and Strategy, presented the report. He explained to the committee that the resident-led commissions were usually tasked with policy and / or service design in a specific area. They were each assigned a Cabinet sponsor and a Chair appointed by the Leader and Cabinet. The Commissions would ask for expressions of interest from residents to form the rest of the membership.

Peter Smith noted that the first commission, on air quality, had 9 expressions of interest and the most recent, on the climate emergency, had over 65. Peter said this demonstrated that residents were becoming more aware of the commissions and the impact they could have.

Most commissions followed a similar process – first there was a literature review, followed by an open review for written evidence, then oral evidence was taken at public meetings, complemented by commissioned research and focus groups.

There are currently 8 commissions in progress:

- Police and crime
- Civic campus
- Arts
- Climate
- Women's equality
- Parks
- Teaching
- Cycling and walking

The Chair asked how the commissions were resourced. Peter Smith said there was a broad research budget that the commissions could make use of but there wasn't a defined budget for each one. As the number of commissions has grown, they've had to draw in resources from different areas of the Council. For example, the Climate Commission is working closely with the Climate Change Unit in the Council's Environment department.

Councillor Dominic Stanton asked how many people were on each commission and how they were selected. Peter Smith said there were selection restrictions for some of the commissions – for example the Parks Commission didn't allow any members of 'friends of parks' type groups because they would tend to focus solely on their own parks. Peter said the optimum number for a commission was between 6 and 12 people. The final selections were agreed with the Leader, the Cabinet sponsor and the Chair. The main selection criteria were a diverse range of skills and experience. Councillor Stanton noted that the commissions should also try to ensure a diversity of views.

Councillor Christabel Cooper suggested that a new commission on racial justice and equality be considered. The Black Lives Matter movement and the news that Covid-19 was having a disproportionate impact on BAME communities had highlighted a number of factors that needed to be addressed – including housing, employment, and health outcomes. Councillor Adam Connell welcomed the proposal.

Martin Calleja, Assistant Director of Efficiency and Zero-Based Budgeting, added that phase 2 of the Resident Access Programme was focused on residents in most need and the Council wanted residents to be involved in shaping services to address inequalities. The programme could link in with any commission that was set up.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked how recommendations from commissions were monitored. Peter Smith said the recommendations would usually be presented to the relevant Policy and Accountability Committee for comment then Cabinet for approval. A year after formal approval there was usually an evaluation exercise looking at what progress had been made.

The Chair summed up the discussion, noting the many successes of past commissions and the important programme of work planned for the future. The Chair supported the proposal of a new commission on racial justice and equality.

## **7. COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY**

Linda Jackson, Director of Covid-19 Response and Recovery, presented the report. She took a moment to thank Councillors, officers, residents, and the Council's partners for the contribution they made to the borough's response to the pandemic.

Linda Jackson noted that the Council were early to step-up its response at the beginning of March. The Chief Executive appointed her as Director of Covid-19 Response and Recovery and set up internal response structures to focus on three main areas:

- Residents and the community
- Workforce resilience
- Partnerships and the economic response

Some services had to close due to the requirement to lock down which was done quickly – within 8 days. A range of people across the Council were activated to enable a safe closure of services and to ensure people affected were still supported.

The H&F Community Aid Network (CAN) was a huge success. Over 9000 people in the borough were shielding and the network provided them with food and support. The service was run 7 days a week with great support from staff.

The Council's response to the pandemic has had a massive financial impact with a grant shortfall of around £27m. Some allocations are coming in from Government but some of that money is quite strictly ringfenced.

In terms of the workforce – productivity has gone up and sickness has gone down. The People & Talent department had done a lot of work engaging with staff and supporting them to be more agile and work from anywhere. They had also put a robust vacancy management system in place.

Linda Jackson was working on the recovery plan with the Council's senior leadership team while also planning for the possibility of a 'second wave'.

The Council had put a tracing and prevention programme in place in addition to the national 'track and trace' scheme.

Public Health England had been complementary of the borough's approach – particularly the use of automation, delivery of PPE, and early closing residential homes early.

The Chair thanked all of the Council's officers involved in the recovery for going 'above and beyond' during the crisis. He noted how heart-warming it had been to see the community response with people all over the borough reaching out and offering help to their neighbours who were struggling.

The Chair noted that at the beginning of July there was reporting that H&F had high instances of coronavirus compared to other London boroughs, he asked when officers became aware of those figures - and if there had been a good line of communications with Central Government.

Linda Jackson said the figures came out as contact tracing started. There had been some difficulty getting data from Public Health England and some of their data was misleading. For example, a reported spike in positive tests included a number of pre-existing tests. H&F was now back at low levels with around 2 or 3 positives per week.

The Chair, noting the second wave in some parts of Europe and the local restrictions placed on Oldham, asked for an outline of measures if there was a second wave.

Linda Jackson said data was now being sent through every day and the Council's BI team have built a dashboard to monitor that data.

The Council's outbreak plans were published on its website. There were 8 plans for different areas – schools, care homes, hostels, factories, HMOs etc. The Council was clear about what actions it would take. At present one care home had been closed due to a worker and a resident testing positive.

Councillor Dominic Stanton requested a breakdown of the income loss from fees and charges. He also asked if the uptick in productivity and improvement in sickness numbers meant the Council would change the way it worked in the future.

Emily Hill, Director of Finance, said there was a full breakdown in the papers for the Finance Policy and Accountability. She said the breakdown included parking and enforcement fees and charges but also things like planning and licensing fees. Officers would circulate the full breakdown by email.

**ACTION: David Abbott**

Dawn Aunger, Assistant Director of People and Talent, said officers had been looking at staff resilience. Currently around 75 percent of staff were working from home and the learning from this period would inform decisions about the future of the workforce.

Councillor Guy Vincent asked if enough attention was being paid to the economic crisis facing the borough. Linda Jackson said the economic impact of the pandemic had been on the Council's radar throughout and was a major part of the recovery programme. The Council had worked hard to get grants out to local businesses to support them. Officers had also been working with local businesses – giving advice on how to reopen safely and reassure customers. The Council was also looking at introducing a social value model to support employment and training opportunities for residents.

Councillor Christabel Cooper, noting the projected £27m deficit, asked what assumptions the projection was based on. She also noted that the Government had

promised to pay expenditure incurred by local authorities but assumed that wouldn't cover any loss of revenue.

Emily Hill said it was a forecast based on current spending and not assuming a second wave. The projection also assumed that the additional money the Council had put into the social care market to support it wouldn't continue. She added that the Government had announced new funding to Councils on 2 July that included another £2m grant for expenditure and a scheme announced for recovery of income where Councils would bear first 5 percent, after which the government would fund 75 percent. Based on early estimates H&F was expecting to receive around £8.5m on an income loss of £16m.

Councillor Christabel Cooper asked if the impact on the price of housing and office space had affected the Council's investment in the Civic Campus programme. Emily Hill said there had been a review of the scheme. The view was that the housing market will have rebounded by the time it was due to come on stream. Conversations were ongoing about the cinema lease and officers were taking advice on the office accommodation market. Though the picture was not as worrying as first thought as Hammersmith was still a desirable location for businesses.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked how the financial impact on the Council affected the zero-based budgeting process. He also asked if the recovery board had businesspeople on it. Emily Hill said the Council was currently looking at the financial recovery and the zero-based budgeting process was a major element of that.

Linda Jackson noted that the recovery board was internal and chaired by the Chief Executive. Its function was to look at the recovery across the Council. There was a local resilience forum that included business partners and also an industrial strategy board that included businesspeople.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked if staff turnover had been affected by the pandemic. Dawn Auger said turnover had been low. She agreed to circulate exact figures by email.

**ACTION: Dawn Auger**

The Chair asked if there were any future plans for the Community Aid Network and the mutual aid groups. Linda Jackson said the Council was actively building on that work. A researcher from Imperial College had been seconded to the Council to focus on this – working closely with community on how to sustain support and build better relationships.

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Date of next meeting: 2 September 2020

Meeting started: 6.30 pm  
Meeting ended: 8.25 pm

Chair .....

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