

The Economy, Housing and the Arts Policy and Accountability Committee Agenda

Tuesday 26 March 2019 at 7.00 pm
Small Hall - Hammersmith Town Hall

MEMBERSHIP

Administration	Opposition
Councillor Rory Vaughan (Chair) Councillor Zarar Qayyum Councillor Rowan Ree Councillor Ann Rosenberg	Councillor Adronie Alford

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Date Issued: 18 March 2019

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26 March 2019

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London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

The Economy, Housing and the Arts Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 28 January 2019

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rory Vaughan (Chair), Zarar Qayyum, Rowan Ree and Adronie Alford

Other Councillors: Lisa Homan and Max Schmid.

Officers: Hitesh Jolapara (Strategic Director, Finance and Governance), Emily Hill (Assistant Director, Corporate Finance), Glendine Shepherd (Assistant Director, Housing Management), David McNulty (Assistant Director Operations).

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were provided by Councillor Ann Rosenberg and Councillor Andrew Jones.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES**

The Chair explained that an update report had been requested on the work of the Arts Commission. The Committee were disappointed to learn there would be a delayed response to the actions raised at the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. 2019 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

Hitesh Jolapara (Strategic Director, Finance and Governance) introduced the report that set out the budget proposals for the services covered by the Committee. He showed slides that gave context for the scale of the challenge facing local government in recent years.

H&F's general government grant funding had been cut each year since 2010/11. The total reduction since April 2010 to April 2019 was £73m. This was a cash terms reduction of 47% and real terms reduction of 59%. It was noted that Funding was forecast to be reduced by a further 5% per annum from 2020/21 onwards with no confirmation of the continuation of new one-off funding of £4m received in 2019/20.

It was noted that Government resource assumptions, that were used to calculate Government grant for the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF), model the Council increasing council tax by 3% in 2019/20.

In terms of the adult social care precept, the Committee learnt that due to the continued high levels of inflation in the social care market and the Government's continued failure to propose a long-term funding solution to social care funding, the Council proposed, for the first time, to allow 2% of the government's adult social care levy for 2019/20.

Concluding his initial remarks, Hitesh Jolapara explained that in accordance with the administration's policy of keeping the council tax low while protecting and improving services, the Council's budgeted council tax increase was restricted to an inflationary increase of 2.7%.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked how business rates were forecast. Hitesh Jolapara explained that business rates were calculated using the same rate in the pound (the multiplier) across the whole of England. It was noted that there were two national multipliers, the first was the national non-domestic rate multiplier which was used to calculate the rates for all businesses. The second multiplier was for small businesses who qualified for rate relief. The actual amount a business would pay was calculated by multiplying the rateable value of the property by the relevant multiplier.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum followed his question by asking whether the Council's Business Intelligence Unit provided a calculation on those new businesses that came into the borough (annually). Officers responded that the work on new businesses was completed by the Business Rates Team. Intelligence was gained from a number of sources including the work of Council Inspectors, Valuation Office Agency, information from new occupiers, landlords and their agents and Street Naming & Numbering (Gazetteer). This year, the Council's database had grown from 9,795 properties on 3 April 2018 (rateable value £567,261,653) to 9,952 properties expected at the end of March 2019 (rateable value £580,194,220), an increase of approximately £6.2m.

Councillor Rowan Ree noted the reduction in overall grant funding and asked for further details to be provided on forecasting and how this worked. Hitesh Jolapara said that Finance officers looked at inflation, spoke to service areas and used these conversations to produce a forecast on inflation. Further calculations were then conducted on budget pressures. He explained that when the modelling was being done, officers assumed a zero percent Council Tax increase. When these calculations had been completed, officers examined all income and expenditure streams and the best and worst-case scenarios before producing a forecast which balanced these factors.

In relation to Business Rates, Councillor Adronie Alford commented that there had been a number of shop closures which had adversely affected collection rates. She asked what actions were being taken to address business closures. In response, Hitesh Jolapara explained that officers had baseline figures, spoke to colleagues within departments, as well as the Business Intelligence Unit and used this data to forecast likely numbers through predictive modelling. The Chair commented that the Business Rate formula was very complex and asked how officers arrived at the £78 million figure. He also asked what the difference was between the assumed amount and the actual amount. Hitesh Jolapara confirmed that the assumed amount was provided by government on the basis of assumptions around the business base and levels of need, however actual collection may be less than that assumed. In the Council's case we have historically collected less than the assumed amount and have therefore have received business rates at the safety net threshold, which provided the minimum level of funding.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked who determined the amount of business rates that were paid to the Government. In response, the Strategic Director, Finance and Governance explained that ultimately the Government decided after various conversations had been conducted between London Councils, the GLA and the Mayor's Office in relation to the London Business Rates retention pilot.

In relation to growth, Emily Hill explained that the Council was developing an Assets and Growth Strategy, which would enable the redevelopment of existing non-residential assets to provide new community assets and affordable housing. It was noted that each specific scheme would be the subject of separate approvals at Cabinet and Full Council where necessary. Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked if there was a benchmark for growth bids. In response, Emily Hill explained that all growth bids were brought forward on a case by case basis.

Speaking on the Affordable Housing Strategy, Councillor Lisa Homan, Cabinet Member for Housing said that only a limited amount of work had been done on Council housing at this stage, but this work would help the Council to assess whether or not to develop pockets of land as well as work collaboratively with housing associations. Emily Hill confirmed that there was budget growth within temporary accommodation last year, but not within the current year.

With regards to savings proposals, Emily Hill confirmed that the Council faced a continuing financial challenge due to overall Central Government funding

cuts, unfunded burdens, inflation, and demand and growth pressures. It was noted that the budget gap would increase in each of the next three years if no action was taken to reduce expenditure, generate more income through commercial revenue or continue to grow the number of dwellings and businesses in the borough. As a result, it was noted that Growth & Place planned to deliver a savings target of £0.779m primarily from the Housing Solutions and Planning divisions. These included actions such as: The Temporary Accommodation reduction programme and investment in private rented sector properties, internal staff restructuring (within Housing Solutions and Planning), as well as restructures of the Work Matters service and Section 106 substitution.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked for further details to be provided on the Planning and Housing Solutions Savings. In response, Glendine Shepherd (Assistant Director, Housing Management) confirmed that the idea was for Housing Management and Housing Solutions to be brought together. The Council was in the process of realigning services and was putting more emphasis on front line services and reducing back office expenditure. David McNulty added that this work involved how teams worked across service areas and how further efficiencies could be made.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked whether the savings targets would be reviewed in 6 months-time. Glendine Shepherd confirmed that all savings targets were monitored very closely and were continuously reviewed monthly.

Emily Hill, provided an overview of the main budgetary risks. It was noted that the main risks affecting Growth & Place related to managing the impact of the Government's programme of Welfare Reform, which anticipated added client numbers and additional costs. Further risks included the inherent volatility of Planning Department income, as well as the Adult learning and Adult Education Budgets which were reliant on grants and fees income.

Councillor Adronie Alford noted the pressures which had been described and commented that the difficulties appeared to stem from the Council not receiving sufficient income. Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked about how the spending on Adult Learning operated and whether this was funded only from S106 monies or if other funding revenue streams were used. Emily Hill confirmed that course fees and EFA grants were the main sources of funding.

The Chair noted that the Economic Development Service was responsible for the delivery of key elements of the Council's Economic Growth priorities and that the service was dependent upon securing Section 106 funding. The Chair asked for confirmation that should funding not be approved, the risk was £1.2m for each year from 2019/20 onwards. In response, Emily Hill confirmed that Cabinet decisions were needed to award S106 monies. The risks in Planning stemmed from the likelihood of an increased number of planning appeals (and the associated costs) which in the past had been funded from reserves. However, this was now funded differently.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked for clarification about how the S106 process worked and whether an officer team worked with developers to determine what

funds might be generated. In response, Emily Hill provided an overview of the S106 process and confirmed that a dedicated team worked on S106 funding opportunities. These officers worked in a cross cutting way, using expertise across the Council to mitigate risks (i.e. schools, education, highways and Planning policy) to ensure informed choices were taken.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked how many officers were in the S106 team. Emily Hill confirmed that this information would have to be provided outside the meeting.

Action: Emily Hill to provide details of how many S106 officers worked at the Council.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked whether S106 agreements generated spending power. In response, Councillor Max Schmid, Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercial Service provided a detailed explanation of how S106 funding agreements worked and underlined how important it was to have excellent negotiating skills within the Council.

Noting the fees and charges outlined in the report, the Chair drew the Committee's attention to Appendix 4. The Chair highlighted that there were lots of 0% increases. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair agreed it would be useful for the Committee to receive an update on savings targets later in the year.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report.

5. FINANCIAL PLAN FOR COUNCIL HOMES 2019/20

Councillor Lisa Homan (Cabinet Member for Housing) and Emily Hill (Assistant Director, Corporate Finance) introduced the report that covered the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and the Financial Plan for Council Homes.

Emily Hill stated that the draft budget for Council homes for 2019/20 included the final year of the decision by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reduce social housing rents by 1% each year for four years from April 2016. Moving forwards, it was noted that rents may need to increase in future years to support the effective management and maintenance of homes - Government announced last year that annual rent increases are likely to be limited to the Consumer Price Index (CPI + 1%) for at least five years from April 2020.

Councillor Lisa Homan explained that the Fire Safety Plus Programme (started in 2017) would continue to make sure that the Council's homes and property meet high standards and this programme would move into the delivery phase. This would be supported by the new HRA Asset Management Strategy, which was approved at Cabinet on 3rd December 2018 which set out the priorities for investment in the Council's homes, with fire safety and health and safety compliance of primary importance.

Emily Hill highlighted that the repairs and maintenance contract with MITIE was being terminated and the Council would be introducing a more permanent, residents' focused delivery model.

To enable the successful delivery of the Capital Programme, fire safety plus, and improved services to residents, restructures to the Growth and Place directorate were under way. This had resulted in budget growth of £1.94m in these areas of operations, which would enable on going revenue savings of £0.8m per annum from 2020/21 rising to £0.9m per annum from 2021/22. It was anticipated that these savings would materialise due to better stock condition following investment and savings from improved customer service.

In relation to rent increases, Councillor Lisa Homan assured the Committee that the Council had consulted residents about what the Council thought was a reasonable rent increase going forwards. Councillor Adronie Alford commented that she thought rent levels were meant to be on parity with Housing Associations. In response, Councillor Homan commented that the Council's current rents were low and very competitive within the market place.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked what the impact was of the Right to Buy scheme on the HRA. Councillor Lisa Homan confirmed that at present, the Council was selling between 30 to 35 properties per year. David McNulty confirmed that the implications of Right to Buy on the HRA was a technical area and further information could be provided outside the meeting.

Action: David McNulty to provide further information on the Right to Buy scheme and HRA outside the meeting.

Councillor Adronie Alford asked about the Fire Safety Plus Programme and specifically how the Council made savings by investing. In response, Councillor Lisa Homan provided a detailed explanation of how infrastructure and maintenance savings could be made. She also explained that the Council was in the process of reprogramming the Capital Programme to ensure that the Fire Safety Plus recommendations could be implemented as a priority.

Adding additional detail, Emily Hill provided further information on the Asset Management Programme. She explained that savings would come from the repairs model and specifically by ensuring that repairs were carried out correctly first time. David McNulty commented that if the Council understood the asset better, then officers could invest capital in a more targeted way.

The Chair asked about future rent increases and how this meant that the Council would have additional funds to invest in rent repairs. In response, Councillor Lisa Homan explained there was a correlation between increased rental income and increasing the planned maintenance programme. In the past when the Council chose to reduce rents, residents were consulted (so that the implications for doors and windows maintenance were understood). David McNulty commented that Grenfell and the outcomes of the Hackett enquiry would determine what actions the Council needed to take in the future.

Councillor Zarar Qayyum noted that the MITIE contract was being terminated and asked what steps were being taken to mitigate risk. In response, Councillor Lisa Homan confirmed that a Cabinet report had been prepared which set out the arrangements for interim model to be implemented for 10 to 15 months as well as what the monitoring arrangements would be.

A resident stated it was their understanding that MITIE did not relinquish the contract and MITIE had sold the contract on to Mears. David McNulty confirmed that in accordance with standing orders, the Council had served notice for the repairs and maintenance contract and had provided 6-months' notice in the usual way.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report.

6. GROWTH AND PLACE: TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PRESSURES

Glendine Shepherd (Assistant Director, Housing Management) introduced the report that set out the challenges in delivering services to fulfil the Council's statutory obligation to provide suitable and affordable TA in the face of welfare reform changes, rising accommodation costs and decreasing availability of in-borough accommodation.

As well as providing a comprehensive overview of the pressures, Glendine Shepherd outlined what the Council was currently doing to help mitigate the risks. Steps included, having a strong TA reduction programme in place to reduce the financial impact of this accommodation type.

It was noted that a Cabinet report had been written requesting the Authority join Capital Letters - an ambitious Government and London Councils sponsored scheme to centralise the procurement of TA and Private Rented accommodation from private landlords. Further actions included, implementing an interim staffing structure to prepare for the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 with temporary roles being budgeted to end in March 2019. In the longer term, Glendine Shepherd explained that a full-service review was underway to establish the interim structure and review overall service delivery to ensure a robust response to the new legislation, ensure legal compliance and provide greater emphasis on preventing and relieving homelessness.

In addition, and as a result of the current budget pressures for 18/19, Glendine Shepherd explained that a review of the TA provision had been carried out to ensure that the best possible value for money was being achieved from available resources. Finally, it was noted that the introduction of a new Trail Blazer service would support and enable tenants to gain exemption from the Benefits Cap through: Training and qualifying employment; Disability/Carers benefit where possible; Crowd funding arrangements in partnership with BEAM

(a service that fund-raises for employment and training for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness).

Concluding her initial remarks, Glendine Shepherd stated that increasing the supply of social and affordable housing was crucial to the success of any strategic approach to managing the TA process. Low turnover in social housing (in common with all of London) had slowed the TA move on process and resulted in more households remaining in TA for longer periods – compounding the need for additional TA units. It was noted that the Council plans to increase affordable housing, reducing pressure on TA budgets by providing permanent lower cost homes through direct delivery, partnership with housing associations and working with developers through the planning process

Councillor Zarar Qayyum asked in cases where a resident or homeless person had a connection within the borough whether this affected their housing entitlement. In response, Glendine Shepherd explained that this factor only carried weight if it was for an application for permanent housing. In those cases where an offer of temporary accommodation was appropriate, only temporary accommodation would be offered on a time limited basis.

Councillor Zara Qayyum asked for further details to be provided on the Trail Blazer scheme. Glendine Shepherd explained that this was a 2-year pilot scheme funded by the Government which was geared to working with young people. Full details of the scheme were provided and it was noted that 200 homeless persons had been assisted back into sustainable employment.

Action: The Committee requested a further breakdown of the Trail Blazer scheme, including the numbers of persons assisted back into employment.

In relation to the Capital Letters scheme, Councillor Rowan Ree asked if the Council paid into the scheme and how it worked. Councillor Lisa Homan confirmed that the scheme had not started yet but further information could be circulated to Committee outside the meeting.

Action: That a copy of the report on Capital Letters be circulated to the Committee.

Councillor Adronie Alford commented that the mitigation measures outlined in the report were excellent if they worked and asked for a further update on temporary accommodation be provided to a future meeting. Councillor Adronie Alford followed this, by asking what happened in those cases where a request for temporary accommodation was centrally turned down. In response, Glendine Shepherd said that the Council still worked to assist the family by putting them in touch with the Moving on Team.

The Chair noted that the Capital Letters Scheme stopped London Councils from bidding against each other for housing stock and asked how the collaboration process worked. In response, Glendine Shepherd explained that the scheme used a pool of temporary and private accommodation to provide a wealth of housing options. However, the concept was still in the early stages

and so would need close monitoring before an assessment of its overall effectiveness could be made.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report.

5. WORK PROGRAMMING 2018/19

The Chair introduced the item and suggested the Committee could be provided with an update on the work of the Arts Commission, a report on digital inclusion on estates and an update report on Private Sector Licensing to the next meeting. The Committee was also conscious that it wanted to look at the progress that was being made on the Fire Safety Plus scheme later in the year. Committee Members were encouraged to contact the Chair with any potential topics they might have.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.58 pm

Chair

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Agenda Item 4

<p>London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p>THE ECONOMY, HOUSING AND THE ARTS POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE 26th MARCH 2019</p>	
ARTS COMMISSION 2019	
Report of the Cabinet Member of the Economy and Arts	
Open Report	
Classification - For Policy & Advisory Review & Comment Key Decision: NO	
Consultation Growth and Place, Planning and Regeneration	
Wards Affected: All	
Accountable Director: Jo Rowlands, Strategic Director, Growth & Place	
Report Author: Joanne Woodward Chief Planning & Economic Development Officer	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8753 4429 E-mail: Joanne.Woodward@lbhf.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. As described in its Manifesto 2018-2022, the Council's is establishing an independent Arts Commission to ensure that its collective arts and cultural strengths are maximised to deliver greater economic prosperity to the Borough. This report provides an update on the potential themes to be explored by the Commission.

2. UPDATE

- 2.1. At its meeting in December 2018 the Committee discussed the proposed scope of the forthcoming Commission and made a number of comments regarding the proposed membership, scope and programme.
- 2.2. Following this the Council has continued to consider the proposed themes and has distilled these into a number of questions to be explored. These are set out in Appendix 1 and will provide the basis for a discussion at the meeting.


Approach to the Commission’s work

- Research and convening
 - We will identify a broad range of practice and insight in the areas of culture and place and draw up a comprehensive understanding of the range of ways our challenges are addressed. We will identify leadership voices in each area.
- Papers and context
 - We will gather a range of ideas, practice and approaches, digest these into guidance papers that will then be presented to commissioners in advance of meetings to inform the debate.
- Hearings and debates
 - We will convene a range of hearings and debates with commissioners that explore and illuminate each topic, engage with noted experts in the topic and enable discussion and debate. 8-10 sessions (6 weekly intervals)
- Proposals and recommendations
 - We will support the development of concrete and specific recommendations from each commission hearing, as well as a consolidated set of recommendations from the commission as a whole.

Questions we are exploring

1. What cultural activity is happening across the borough, how much of it is excellent and what would it take for it to be better supported and developed?
2. What challenges are there in our borough that could be (at least partially) addressed with arts and culture, and what steps would we need to take to make this happen more?
3. Which parts of the borough are seen as possessing the most/best cultural provision and how could this be working better for more and different people?
4. How have other boroughs/cities/countries created rich cultural hubs that are vibrant, relevant and sustainable, and what would it take to create more of these in Hammersmith and Fulham?
5. What do residents and workers in Hammersmith and Fulham value about the arts and culture and how would they like to see these develop?
6. What role does arts and culture play in the skills and employability of young people in our borough and what could be done to enhance and improve this?
7. What changes would we need to make to the current town centres as well as the future plans and frameworks to enable a more vibrant cultural ecology in the borough?
8. How can artists and cultural leaders shape and enhance communities and places and what steps should we be taking to enable that?
9. How have other boroughs/cities/countries used endowments to enable sustained investment in arts and culture and how should Hammersmith and Fulham create, fund and manage one?
10. How have other boroughs and places created change through investing in and enabling arts and culture and how long did it take for that impact to be realised?

Agenda Item 5

<p>London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p>THE ECONOMY, HOUSING AND THE ARTS POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE</p> <p>26 March 2019</p>	
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING - PROPERTY LICENSING	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing – Councillor Lisa Homan	
Open Report	
Classification: For Information	
Key Decision: No	
Consultation: N/A	
Wards Affected: All	
Accountable Director: Sharon Lea, Strategic Director for Residents' Services	
Report Author(s): Dawood Haddadi/Anju Sidhu Valerie Simpson	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8753 3905 E-mail: dawood.haddadi@lbhf.gov.uk valerie.simpson@lbhf.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Borough's property licensing schemes and how they are being used to improve housing standards in the private rented sector.

2. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The private rented sector in LBHF has grown rapidly in the last 10 years and now accounts for approximately 27,500 properties, a third of the borough's housing. It is likely that this trend will continue, leading to the private rented sector becoming the dominant housing provider.

Mandatory Licensing

- 2.2 The Housing Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to licence certain types of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), to improve standards in the private rented sector. This duty of mandatory licensing only applies to HMOs which are occupied by five or more persons forming two or more separate households.

- 2.3 A HMO is a building, house or flat or part of a building that is used for residential purposes. In brief this includes bedsit type properties, self-contained flats, mixed use (bedsits and self-contained flats) and converted blocks of flats where less than two thirds of the self-contained flats are owner occupied and fail to meet the Building Regulations 1991. It does not include hotels or short term lets such as Air BnB properties. These are classed as commercial lettings not residential.
- 2.4 It should be noted that certain types of properties are exempt from licensing. For example, properties that are owned or managed by the Council and Registered Providers e.g. Housing Associations.
- 2.5 Private sector housing licensing provides a mechanism for ensuring that the licence holder is accountable, is a 'fit and proper person' and that properties are safe and well maintained.

Discretionary Licensing

- 2.6 In 2016 officers carried out a detailed survey of housing conditions in the private rented sector and found that a significant proportion of properties that did not meet the criteria for licensing, were substandard. Following extensive consultation with landlords, residents and other major stakeholders the Council introduced two discretionary licensing schemes to raise standards in the private rented sector. These schemes can only operate for up to five years.
- 2.7 The **additional licensing scheme**, regulates housing standards in HMOs that do not fall under the mandatory licensing criteria. The whole borough has been designated as licensing area under this scheme.
- 2.8 The **selective licensing scheme** was introduced in over hundred streets where the Council demonstrated 'significant' and 'persistent' anti-social behaviour i.e. fly tipping and rubbish accumulation. The scheme requires all private rented properties to hold a selective licence. This includes family homes that are rented.
- 2.9 Both discretionary licensing schemes are in operation **until May 2022**.

3. KEY ISSUES

Licensing Schemes

- 3.1 The property licensing team is part of the Private Sector Housing Team and is responsible for processing all licence applications.
- 3.2 To date the team has licenced 1098 properties in the Borough. A further 1200 licences are currently being processed. As part of the statutory process draft licences have been sent to applicants for comments, before the terms and conditions of the licence become legally binding. They are given 20 days to respond.

Licensing fees

Type of licence (Per application)	Fee	Comment
Mandatory Licence	£1400.00 (typical average)	Each fee is property specific and depends on the number of habitable rooms and whether any discounts may apply. For an average-sized property, a five-year licence will cost about £1,400
Additional Licence	£540.00	Same fixed fee, irrespective of when the application is made. All licences expire in May 2022.
Selective licence	£540.00	Same fixed fee, irrespective of when the application is made. All licences expire in May 2022.

3.3 The scheme also allows for landlords to benefit from a discount. Only one discount can be applied per application. If both apply then the £75 discount will be applied. Fees and discounts for licences are given below:

Applicable Scheme for discount	Discount (£)
Applicant has signed up to the H&F Landlord Charter	£50
Membership of an accredited landlord body such as: LLAS – London Landlords Accreditation Scheme NLA – National Landlords Association RLA – Residential Landlords Association	£75

How we have improved protection for our residents and the customer experience for landlords

3.4 The examples below illustrate some of the work that has been done to improve the service.

- a) **Advice and assistance** is available to applicants over the phone, in writing, on our [website](#) and face to face. Where applicants do not have access to a computer, to submit their application, arrangements have been made through Hammersmith Library to facilitate this.
- b) **Innovative digital solutions** are being used, such as ensuring that the application form has built-in intelligence to ensure that the applicant applies for the correct licence. Hammersmith and Fulham are the first Council to do this.
- c) **Customer feedback and landlord insight and ideas** have been used to ensure that the application form is user friendly. The ‘setting up a landlord account’ feature is particularly useful for portfolio landlords as there is an autofill function. It also allows the landlord to monitor each application and financial information.
- d) **Social media** platforms are used to inform landlords of any changes in the law or housing standards.

- e) **Working with landlord advocates** we have been able to disseminate advice and publicise our licensing schemes through their communication channels.
- f) **Due diligence checks** are carried out to ensure that the most suitable/ appropriate person applies for the licence. Where the owner of a property and the proposed licence holder are different parties, contractually binding management agreements are sought, to ensure accountability at the property.

Targeted improvement to raise standards

- 3.5 There are local guidelines for housing standards in HMOs and non HMOs. Through the Council's licensing schemes, officers can ensure that accommodation is maintained above minimal national standards that do not adequately reflect the built form, size, layout and type of HMO that is typically found in the borough.
- 3.6 The local guidelines provide detailed and comprehensive information to landlords on what is required of them to comply with the law. This includes the management, safety, facilities, waste storage and collection and living space for the occupiers.
- 3.7 The HMO team is part of the private sector housing team and is responsible for inspecting properties to ensure that they are safe. To date over 250 properties have been inspected to ensure they are safe for our residents.
- 3.8 Given the high volume of inspections required, officers prioritise their inspections based on the information provided by the applicant and local intelligence that officers receive, relating to the property.
- 3.9 Once on site a risk based approach is taken and where appropriate licence conditions are varied to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the residents. Over 50 licences have been varied, in the majority of cases the variations relate to undersized rooms used for sleeping accommodation and inadequate kitchen facilities.
- 3.10 Where poor housing conditions are noted relating to hazards such as fire precautions, these are referred to the officers for enforcement action.

Legal challenges

- 3.11 We have received a number of legal challenges relating to the licence conditions. In all cases officers have been able to demonstrate the need for the specified conditions. An example was a recent success in demonstrating the need for 100% testing of the electrical installation in one property.

7. WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS.

LBHF Social Lettings Agency

- 3.12 The private sector housing team works closely with the social lettings agency team. This has led to better engagement with landlords and it ensures that our vulnerable residents are placed in safe accommodation.

Greater London Authority and Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government

- 3.13 The Council is signed up to the government's database which records details of landlords and managing agents who have been given a banning order or convicted of certain offences. We have also signed up to the Greater London Authority database which records landlords and letting agents that have been successfully prosecuted for housing offences. Officers use this information to assist in our assessment as to whether the licence holder is fit and proper to hold a licence.

London Fire Emergency and Planning Authority (LFEPA)

- 3.14 The private sector housing team regularly consults with the LFEPA on fire standards required in properties. This process ensures that the fire standards required are property specific.

Conclusion and next steps

- 3.15 Officers will continue to engage with our landlords and residents on a regular basis to ensure safe housing.
- 3.16 From the intelligence that officers have gathered we intend to carry out more targeted interventions, for example fire safety and refuse collection checks.
- 3.17 Officers will identify our portfolio landlords and encourage joint working to raise housing standards and good management practices, to benefit our residents.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 This report is intended for information for the committee.
- 4.2 It is recommended that Members note the importance and potential impact of this work in protecting residents and holding private sector landlords accountable for maintaining robust housing standards.
- 4.3 Officers would welcome feedback and suggestions about how officers can improve how we work with our residents and/or improve our service to landlords.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Officers have engaged and consulted with various key stakeholders as part of the implementation of these licensing schemes. Consultees, include residents, landlords, other local authorities and other partner and government agencies.

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council, when making decisions in relation to any of its functions, must comply with its public-sector equality duty as set out in s149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Act).
- 6.2 The licensing schemes, referred to into this report apply to residential premises across the borough and officers treat all cases equally according to the facts of each application or case. This work has low relevance in relation to its impact on the areas under the statutory duties contained in the equalities impact assessment for the Private Sector Housing team, but contributes towards the corporate priorities of the council, set out in the H&F Business Plan, in relation to improving housing standards.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The legal implications are set out in the report.

Implications verified by: Janette Mullins, Acting Chief solicitor (litigation and Social Care); telephone 020 8753 2744.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The licensing fee income helps to support and is directly related to the continuation of this work, in terms of additional costs and resources to implement these licensing schemes.

Implications to be verified by: Lucy Varenne – Interim Head of Finance – Residents Services, telephone 020 7341 5777.

9. IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS

- 9.1 Whilst there are financial implications for landlords in the borough, the existence of the schemes helps to ensure a level playing field. Landlords are treated consistently and the schemes help to improve housing standards across the borough.

10. COMMERCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Please see finance comments, under section 8 above.

11. IT IMPLICATIONS


- 11.1 All schemes are operated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and other data sharing principles.
- 11.2 As no paper applications are accepted, there is a strong reliance on IT and access to the council's website.
- 11.3 As part of the teams' continuous service improvement, officers will continue to look for new and innovative ways to make the best of use of IT when administering and enforcing the scheme.

11 OTHER IMPLICATION PARAGRAPHS

- 12.1 Consideration will need to be given to what the local authority will do when the scheme comes to an end in May 2022, to ensure that improved housing standards are maintained.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1	Local guidelines for housing standards in HMOs	Anju Sidhu	020 7341 5658

<p align="center">London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p align="center">THE ECONOMY HOUSING AND THE ARTS POLICY & ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE 26 MARCH 2019</p>	
<p align="center">DIGITAL INCLUSION ON HOUSING ESTATES UPDATE</p>	
<p align="center">Report of the Assistant Director Place, Growth & Place</p>	
<p>Open Report</p>	
<p>Classification - For Information Key Decision: No</p>	
<p>Consultation n/a</p>	
<p>Wards Affected: None</p>	
<p align="center">Accountable Director: Fiona Darby, Assistant Director Place</p>	
<p>Report Author: Daniel Miller</p>	<p>Contact Details: Tel: 020 753 6652 E-mail: daniel.miller@lbhf.gov.uk</p>

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides a summary of the work that's taken place to date to establish five weekly digital hubs across the borough on council housing estates for residents to access support to use laptops, tablets, and smartphones for a whole range of areas from employment, education, and training, accessing benefits information, and staying connected with friends, family and neighbours. The report highlights the key achievements and proposed next steps for the project. This report is intended for information for the committee. We would welcome feedback and any further ideas for supporting council housing residents to get online.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. Since February 2018 H&F Growth & Place has funded Citizens Advice Hammersmith & Fulham & Bishop Creighton House to deliver digital skills training sessions at council housing tenants and residents association (TRA) halls across the borough.

- 2.2.** In line with the Administration’s manifesto pledge to *“improve the use of digital technology to make it easier and quicker for residents to get what they need from the council”*, the digital hubs have been created specifically to target those who are digitally excluded and potentially limited in their ability to access services.
- 2.3.** While H&F is one of the most digitally included boroughs, our housing estates fall below average.
- 2.4.** The sessions are run by a project coordinator and volunteers who Citizens Advice recruit and manage. Sessions are promoted to the host estate and surrounding council housing estates, small blocks and street properties.
- 2.5.** The project aim was to set up five hubs by May 2019. Since January 2019 this aim has been met with weekly digital hubs now taking place at Queen Caroline, Clem Attlee, Charecroft, Wood Lane, and Philpot Estate halls. These sessions are helping to increase the positive activities that are taking place in community spaces on housing land and are a proactive way of reducing social isolation.
- 2.6.** The Growth & Place Resident Involvement Team has worked closely with the Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) at each location to make sure that the sessions are meeting their aims and requirements and those of the residents they represent. The sessions have also generated more interest in joining the TRA committees and sustaining community involvement.
- 2.7.** The digital inclusion project links to the Resident Involvement Strategy 2016-2018 with the objectives of:
- Placing greater control and influence at the hands of our residents, making us more accountable for the housing services they receive.
 - More involvement, better involvement
 - Promote social inclusion and support thriving and vibrant communities
- 2.8.** A copy of the strategy can be found at:
- https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section_attachments/resident-involvement-strategy-2016-18-print.pdf
- We’re currently working with residents to develop a new Resident Involvement Strategy for 2019-2022.
- 2.9.** The cost of this project is £79,048. This has been paid for from section 106 contributions. Funding is currently until 6 May 2019 and options are being considered with the aim of extending this funding for another 12 months.

3. OUTCOMES DELIVERED FROM THE PROJECT TO DATE

- 3.1.** As at the end of the last reporting period (27 February 2019), the total attendance at the digital hubs for the year to date has been 564 council housing residents.
- 3.2.** 91 separate sessions have taken place across the five locations.
- 3.3.** Sessions are user-led and some of the areas residents have been supported with include:
 - Setting up online banking
 - Switching energy suppliers
 - Using council web pages
 - Using government web pages
 - Accessing benefits
 - Booking flights
 - Ordering online shopping
 - Using skype
 - Accessing email
 - Writing CVs and cover letters
- 3.4.** The registration target for hub users has been exceeded by 100%, along with volunteer recruitment targets.
- 3.5.** Numbers of residents accessing the digital hubs has been increasing or constant throughout the project.
- 3.6.** Digital exclusion remains an issue nationally for people with disabilities. 24% of Hammersmith & Fulham digital hub attendees describe themselves as disabled (compared to around 20% of people nationally), so the project is working to proactively support them.
- 3.7.** Appendix 1 shows a summary of registrations, reasons for attending, and a breakdown of user diversity data.
- 3.8.** 27 volunteers have been recruited and trained to date on a rolling basis. All of the volunteers have been residents from the borough. Six highly skilled and trained volunteers have been recruited from O2, the telecoms provider. Five volunteers have also gone on to find permanent employment as a result of their participation, helping local people to find jobs. Appendix 2 shows a summary of the marketing materials used to recruit volunteers and to promote the hubs.
- 3.9.** Two digital forums have taken place as part of the project, with the aim of bringing digital support providers together and sharing ideas and best practice.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1. We want to continue to support the development and delivery of the existing five digital hubs and, if possible, compliment these with the addition of three further hubs across the borough.
- 4.2. We would like to continue the user-based and informal nature of the digital hub drop-in sessions, but also introduce theme-based learning after the user has had their initial requirements met, such as:
- Accessing the council's website and functions such as My Account as well as government websites
 - Budgeting and saving money
 - Healthy eating and wellbeing
- 4.3. We'll use data such as digital heat maps and universal credit take-up in the borough to help to determine where the next digital hubs are best located. We'll continue to work with TRAs to ensure that new digital hubs add to civic life and create thriving community centres.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

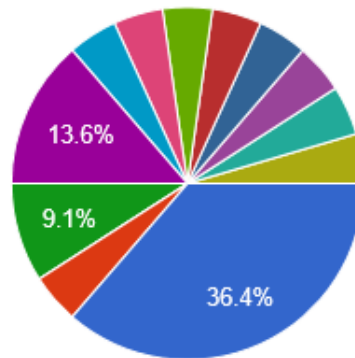
No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1	Resident Involvement Strategy 2016-2018	Daniel Miller, 6652	Growth & Place
2	Citizens Advice & Bishop Creighton House Techmate Management Report February 2019	Daniel Miller, 6652	Growth & Place

LIST OF APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1 – DIGITAL HUBS SUMMARY OF REGISTRATIONS

How did you hear about the Computer Club

22 responses



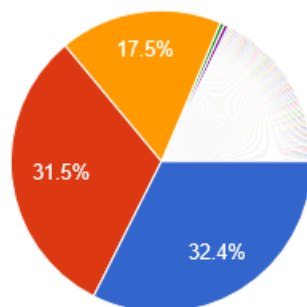
- I live on the estate
- Referred by council
- Referred by job centre
- Referred by Citizens Advice
- Leaflet in library
- friend told me about it
- leaflet in Community Hall
- saw the sign outside

▲ 1/2 ▼

- via Charecroft Community Hall
- Leaflet from Bishop Creighton House Computer Club
- Found out via Bishop Creighton Computer Club
- someone told me about it
- Housing Officer recommended

What do you want to do today?

441 responses

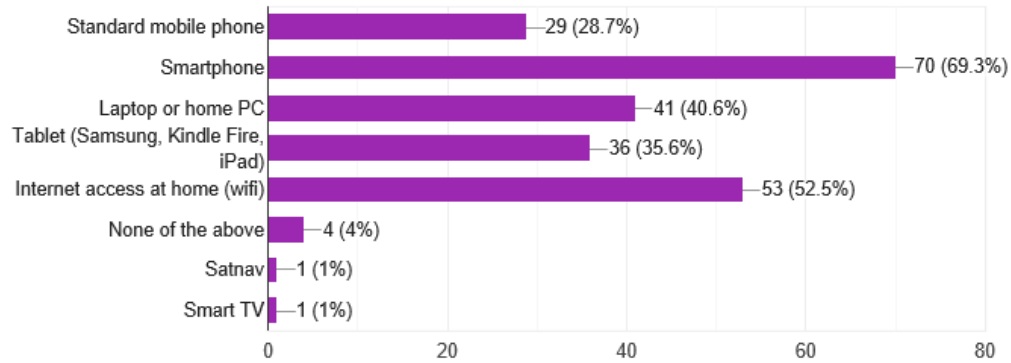


- I'm not sure. I would like some help...
- I want to continue to use Learn My...
- I have a specific problem I want help...
- Phone
- google
- Learn about Youtube
- Learning YouTube and practising iP...
- help with using ord online

▲ 1/11 ▼

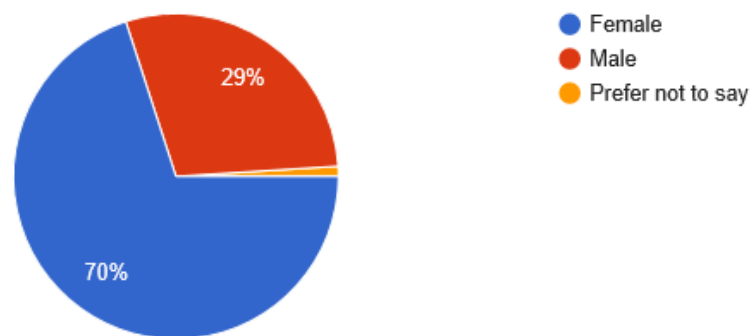
Do you have access to any of the following? (tick all that apply)

101 responses



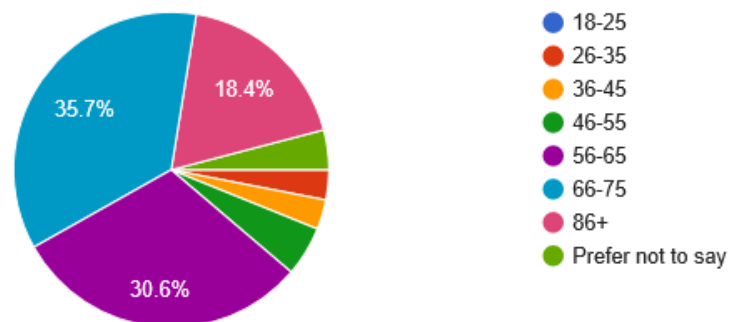
Gender

100 responses



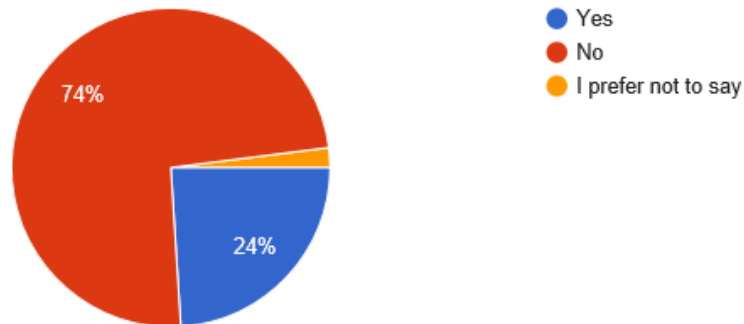
Age Group

98 responses



Would you describe yourself as disabled

100 responses



APPENDIX 2 – PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEERING AND HUB SESSIONS

Here are examples of the marketing used to recruit volunteers

Volunteer as a Digital Champion and help others to improve their digital skills

If you are able to give half a day 1-2 mornings per week to volunteer in hubs across the borough, we'd love to hear from you. You don't need expert technical skills but patience and a desire to help others is essential.

citizens advice Hammersmith & Fulham **h&f** hammersmith & fulham

To find out more about all our volunteering roles, please email tania.lewis@cahf.org.uk or visit www.cahf.org.uk/volunteering

Do-it for *people*

Start volunteering | Find volunteers | Search organisations | News & Campaigns

Home / Start Volunteering / Digital Champion – Become a TechMate

Digital Champion – Become a TechMate

Volunteer as a Digital Champion and help others to improve their digital skills	Citizens Advice Hammersmith and Fulham	★ ★ ★
	Hammersmith and Fulham	Places available: 6
	Posted	31/5/2018

VOLUNTEER AS A DIGITAL CHAMPION!

If you are able to give half a day once a week to volunteer in digital skills centres across the borough, we'd love to hear from you. You don't need expert technical skills but patience and a desire to help others is essential.

You'll be trained by Citizens Advice Hammersmith & Fulham, have fun and learn new skills!

To find out more
email volunteer@cahf.org.uk
or call 07739 768625



Citizens Advice Hammersmith and Fulham

Digital Champion - Become a TechMate!

Commitment 1-2 half days per week

Restrictions Hammersmith and Fulham residents preferred but not essential

Recruitment timetable Actively recruiting throughout the year

Role Description We support residents who want to learn basic digital skills. Sessions are held at Avonmore Library and weekly Computer Clubs in local housing estates. We mainly use www.learnmyway.com for those with limited digital skills. Individual requirements and ability will vary according to the learners' experience. Residents are taught using tablets or laptops provided or their own equipment.

- Work with a team of volunteers to provide 1-to-1 guidance in weekly sessions held at different locations around the borough
- Assess resident's initial needs
- Suggest an appropriate learning plan using modules from Learn My Way or other online resources
- Support learners in weekly sessions and/or ad hoc training requests

Key Skills, abilities and experience

- Confident using basic computing functions such as setting up an email address, downloading apps, using Microsoft or Google Docs
- Experience of using different operating systems (Android, iOS and Window) is helpful
- Specific technical expertise is not required as most learners are at basic level
- Experience of teaching / mentoring is an advantage but patience and empathy are essential

Here are examples of the marketing used to advertise the digital hubs

DROP IN TODAY

FREE SESSIONS
Learn to use a laptop,
smartphone or tablet

Computer Club

Everyone welcome
Tea, biscuits and equipment provided
Here every Tuesday 2.30-4.30

- Find out how to email and surf the internet
- Learn how to chat to your friends and family online
- Get help with Universal Credit applications and journals
- Access council and government services online
- Save money and look for jobs
- Meet new people and learn new skills

Our friendly TechMate volunteers are waiting to help you
New volunteers always welcome!

To find out more drop in, call
07739 768625 or email
Computer.Club@cahf.org.uk

Want to learn to use a computer, smartphone or tablet?

**Free drop-in classes available to
Hammersmith & Fulham council
residents across the borough**
(see inside leaflet for times and venues)

Get help with Universal Credit applications and journals
Find out how to email and surf the internet
Access council and government services online
Save money and look for jobs
Learn how to chat to your friends and family online
Make the most of your smartphone or tablet
Meet new people and learn new skills

Our friendly TechMate volunteers are waiting to help you!

Free weekly drop-in classes for Hammersmith & Fulham council residents

Kathy Dolan Centre
78 White City Close,
Shepherd's Bush,
London W12 7DZ
Mondays 10.30-12.30

**Clem Attlee
Community Hall**
21 Len Freeman Place,
SW6 7TN
Tuesdays 10.30-12.30

**Charecroft
Community Hall**
Rockley Road, London
W12 8PQ
Tuesdays 2.30-4.30








Free weekly drop-in classes for Hammersmith & Fulham council residents

**Queen Caroline Estate
Community Hall**
Worledge Street, London
W6 9BP
Thursdays 10.30-12.30

**Philpot Square
Residents Hall**
Philpot Square, London
SW6 3HU
Thursdays 2.30-4.30

**To find out more drop in, call
07739 768625
or email
Computer.Club@cahf.org.uk**

