

# Policy and Oversight Board Agenda

Tuesday 23 January 2024 at 7.00 pm

145 King Street (Ground Floor), Hammersmith, W6 9XY

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## MEMBERSHIP

Administration	Opposition
Councillor Lisa Homan (Chair) Councillor Jacolyn Daly Councillor Natalia Perez Councillor Helen Rowbottom Councillor Nikos Souslous Councillor Nicole Trehy Councillor Rory Vaughan	Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler

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Members of the public are welcome to attend but spaces are limited. To register for a place please contact [David.Abbott@lbhf.gov.uk](mailto:David.Abbott@lbhf.gov.uk). The building has disabled access.

Date Issued: 15 January 2024  
Date Updated: 17 January 2024

# Policy and Oversight Board Agenda

*If you would like to ask a question about any of the items on the agenda please email [David.Abbott@lbhf.gov.uk](mailto:David.Abbott@lbhf.gov.uk) by 12 noon on 19 January 2024.*

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pages</u>
<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	
<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS</b>  If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a particular item, whether or not it is entered in the Authority's register of interests, or any other significant interest which they consider should be declared in the public interest, they should declare the existence and, unless it is a sensitive interest as defined in the Member Code of Conduct, the nature of the interest at the commencement of the consideration of that item or as soon as it becomes apparent.  At meetings where members of the public are allowed to be in attendance and speak, any Councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest or other significant interest may also make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter. The Councillor must then withdraw immediately from the meeting before the matter is discussed and any vote taken.  Where Members of the public are not allowed to be in attendance and speak, then the Councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest should withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is under consideration. Councillors who have declared other significant interests should also withdraw from the meeting if they consider their continued participation in the matter would not be reasonable in the circumstances and may give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest.  Councillors are not obliged to withdraw from the meeting where a dispensation to that effect has been obtained from the Standards Committee.	
<b>3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b>  To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as an accurate record and note any outstanding actions.	4 - 19
<b>4. 2024 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY</b>  This report provides an update on the overall preparation and proposals for the 2024/25 revenue budget, risks, financial resilience, and the impact of those proposals.  The report also sets out the budget proposals for the services covered by the Policy and Oversight Board and provides an update on any proposed changes in fees and charges.	20 - 66

## **5. UPDATE ON VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS**

67 - 75

This report provides an update on the implementation of the voter ID requirements of the Elections Act 2022. It sets out the key findings from reports published by the Electoral Commission and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and provides further details of activities being undertaken to support residents to vote.

## **6. WORK PROGRAMME**

76

For the Board to discuss future items for inclusion in the work programme.

## **7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

To note the following dates of future meetings:

- 29 Apr 2024

# Agenda Item 3

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

## Policy and Oversight Board Minutes



**Monday 11 December 2023**

### **PRESENT**

**Committee members:** Councillors Lisa Homan (Chair), Jacolyn Daly, Natalia Perez, Nikos Souslous, Rory Vaughan, Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler and Rebecca Harvey

**Other Councillors:** Councillor Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Social Inclusion)

### **Officers:**

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services)  
Matthew Sales (Assistant Director, Programmes, Assurance and Analytics)  
Bathsheba Mall (Programme Lead)  
Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator)  
David Abbott (Head of Governance)

### **Guests and other attendees:**

Anastasia (Member of Youth Parliament)  
Ealaf (Youth Councillor)  
Precisa (Youth Councillor)  
Adam (Youth Councillor)  
Ellaria (Youth Councillor)  
Sarah Lumgair (People Arise Now)  
Stephan Wiedmer (Crosslight)  
Phil Storey (H&F Food Bank)

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nicole Trehy and Helen Rowbottom.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Rebecca Harvey. She joined the meeting at 7.20pm.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

### **4. UPDATE ON YOUTH VOICE**

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator) introduced the item that covered recent developments to strengthen the reach and impact of youth voice in Hammersmith & Fulham.

Brenda was joined by Anastasia, the borough's Member of Youth Parliament, and Youth Councillors Ealaf, Precisa, Adam, and Ellaria. They discussed the work they'd undertaken during the year with officers and partners to research, define, and action the priorities of young people on the following areas of focus:

- Inclusion
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Life skills (preparation for adulthood)
- Staying safe
- Work experience and work readiness.

Councillor Nikos Souslous asked about young people's fear or lack of trust in the police and what could be done to improve it. Anastasia said the Youth Council held a workshop with young people and the police to help build trust and they wanted to do more in future.

Councillor Rory Vaughan asked how the Youth Council identified their priority areas, how they communicated their work to young people, and how they judged if their initiatives were successful. Anastasia said there had been youth elections in March 2022 and candidates ran on a range of issues. Once elected, they had produced a video on key topics, gathered responses from young people, and then met with professionals to see where the gaps they had identified could be bridged. She noted that in many cases the services were there, but young people didn't know how to access them. Brenda Whinnett added that they always provided young people with feedback on their work. She said they had undertaken a large inclusive research project over the summer where they had spoken with over 2,000 young people to identify their needs.

Councillor Natalia Perez asked if there were any groups that were particularly hard to reach and what the main requests from young people were about.

Brenda Whinnett said they had been working more with young carers and were working with Jack Tizard School to engage non-verbal young people. To that end, they ran a youth voice art in the park session during the summer attended by Disabled young people and care experienced young people. Regarding the most common requests, she said sexual health was a focus.

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services) said it would be helpful to involve health colleagues and look at healthy relationships and health and wellbeing

more generally when procuring health services, rather than focusing purely on physical health. Members suggested this as an area for the Health and Adult Social Care Policy and Accountability to consider.

**ACTION: David Abbott / Councillor Natalia Perez**

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked if housing and homelessness was one of the priorities and felt it was important to include the voices of young people in temporary accommodation given the impact on their education and wellbeing. Brenda Whinnett said it was not one of the current priorities but recognised it was an important issue and said it would be considered next year (2024).

**ACTION: Brenda Whinnett**

Councillor Vaughan said he welcomed feedback from the Youth Council on any issues under the remit of the Economy, Arts, Sports, and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee that had an impact on young people.

Jacqui McShannon thanked the members of the Board and said they welcomed the interest. The assigned strategic leads had been tasked with taking the areas discussed forward and would be bringing items to the relevant PACs.

**ACTION: Strategic Leads / Brenda Whinnett**

Councillor Vaughan asked if the Youth Council were involved with the Council's London Borough of Culture bid. Brenda Whinnett confirmed they were already heavily involved and had fed into the bid preparation work.

The Chair asked that future Policy and Accountability Committees reports include a section to record whether the Youth Council have been involved.

**ACTION: David Abbott**

The Chair asked Ellaria how she had found the Youth Council as a new member. Ellaria said it had been very enjoyable, with productive discussions on important topics. Adam added that he appreciates that they were being listened to and could affect change. He highlighted the wonderful support system that Brenda Whinnett had created for them. Ealaf noted that Youth Council was structured in such a way that allowed people to contribute to the projects they were most interested in, which ensured engagement remained high and people were passionate about what they were working on.

The Chair thanked Brenda Whinnett and the Youth Council members for attending and the work they had carried out over the year. She reiterated the need to ensure strategic leads worked with the Policy and Accountability Chairs and drove progress against the priorities.

## **RESOLVED**

1. For the Board to note and comment on the approach and progress and agree how to support the next steps.

2. For the Board to identify a link Policy and Accountability Chair to support the young people with each of their priority areas.

## **5. CONTINUING RESPONSE TO THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS**

Matthew Sales (Assistant Director, Programmes, Assurance and Analytics) presented the report which showed the continued priority the Council was giving to supporting residents and businesses through the Cost-of-Living crisis, working with local voluntary and community sector organisations and local partners as part of the Cost of Living Alliance. It described the range of new and continued statutory, discretionary and partner schemes that formed part of the Council's response programme.

The Chair welcomed Sarah Lumgair (People Arise Now), Stephan Wiedmer (Crosslight), and Phil Storey (H&F Food Bank) to the meeting and asked them for their insights into the level of need in the borough and what support was required.

Phil Storey said food bank usage in the borough had doubled from 2022 to 2023, with over 2000 clients per month. He said the need for food and fuel was high. He noted that the Cost of Living Alliance approach had been positive, with the voluntary sector, public sector, and business working together. He also noted that the task and finish group approach had been productive. He gave the example of a group tasked with looking at a signposting tool. The group pulled together providers, looked at signposting tools on the market, and presented a business case. The project was at the procurement stage at the time of the meeting.

Stephan Wiedmer said Crosslight had a high level of enquiries, with no drop over the summer as there had been in previous years. He noted that due to the housing crisis they saw more private sector clients, and families in particular. He said the Alliance had been positive but felt the partners could be more proactive about promoting available family activities and support.

Sarah Lumgair said People Arise Now aimed to help communities thrive, particularly focusing on family members of offenders. She thanked the Council and the Alliance for their support and highlighted Councillors Nikos Souslous and Ben Coleman in particular for their help and guidance. She noted that a significant amount of her time was spent on the phone to the Council to try and help people get answers about their benefits. She felt customer service for certain services had gotten worse, with longer wait times.

Councillor Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety) said she was working closely with officers to improve customer services. She said the Council was keen to listen to residents and partners, and had held cost of living events to gather feedback to improve the services and support available.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked where the funding for the pre-payment vouchers came from. Matthew Sales said they were purchased from the fuel bank

foundation using Cost of Living funding and the fuel bank foundation had also secured funding from energy companies.

Councillor Brocklebank-Fowler noted that utility companies had their own hardship funds and asked how the Council determined people had applied for the appropriate fund. Matthew Sales said the support provided by the Council was for residents who had been cut off, or who were at a high risk of being cut off from their energy supply. Regarding broader needs, he noted that the Council had a dedicated cost of living support team who had completed assessments for 1,500 residents and they considered a wide range of support including council tax support, food bank referrals, support from charities, and support from energy companies.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly noted that the Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee that she chaired had been looking at the cost of fuel for social housing residents and how greening the housing stock (retrofitting with energy saving technology) would impact those on low incomes. She asked if officers had a sense of when the benefits of retrofitting would come into force and how long short-term solutions like vouchers would be needed for. Matthew Sales said the current cost of living schemes were designed to address the immediate crisis and The Winter Ready Homes grants and the Council's retrofit strategy would deliver benefits over time.

Councillor Daly asked about the difficulty people had trying to access discretionary housing payments and the impact it had. Stephan Wiedmer said Crosslight carried out a lot of applications. It was frustrating for those on the downsizing list with no progress. He said he had some clients in rent arrears, at threat of eviction, who had been applying every year but weren't offered anything appropriate to downsize.

Councillor Perez discussed the difficulty for those renting in the private sector, with bidding wars and rising rents.

Councillor Daly asked what areas the guests would like to see the Council's Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee focus on. Stephan Wiedmer said he would like more Council housing and key worker flats. He also said it would be good to have greater transparency around the process, including the chances of getting a property.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler noted that a previous Conservative Administration brought in the Council Tax Support Scheme and she was glad it had continued. She highlighted that the Council was no longer using bailiffs and asked if it had affected the amount of Council Tax being collected. The Chair said officers could provide exact figures but from her conversations with Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform) she believed the collection rate under the Ethical Debt policy was largely unchanged.

**ACTION: Sukvinder Kalsi**

Councillor Nikos Souslous asked what the £1m cost of living support fund was spent on and how it supported residents. Matthew Sales said there was a breakdown of the spend in the table at the end of the report.



Councillor Souslous noted the Government had signalled the Household Support Fund would be withdrawn in April 2024 and asked what impact that would have on residents. Matthew Sales explained that the Household Support Fund was a Government grant that started during the Covid pandemic and then became essential to the anti-poverty strategy. The expectation was that it would end in March 2024 but it had not been confirmed. The Government had written to the Council to say it was under review, but that made it difficult to plan as it was a key source of funding to help the Council to support residents. Officers were looking at the implications of it being withdrawn.

The Chair asked when the Council would know more. Matthew Sales said it was unknown and could be as late as the Spring 2024 budget.

Councillor Perez asked for more information on the signposting tool mentioned earlier. Phil Storey said there had been no good tool to connect agencies together. The goal was to procure a tool focused on signposting referrals that linked voluntary and statutory services together to encourage earlier intervention. Bathsheba Mall added that the aim was to deliver the tool in March or April 2024. She said it was a good example of partnership working with the Alliance partners.

Councillor Vaughan noted the thousands of families that have been supported through the work discussed in the report and asked to have his thanks put on record. He then asked about the numbers of people requiring support and the available resources. Phil Storey said 70% of clients who used the food bank only needed between one and three vouchers to manage short term issues. They were trying to help people resolve practical issues through Citizens Advice and other organisations to avoid the need for more support later on. They focused on simple solutions using a cash first approach.

Matthew Sales said across the full year we expected to make 45,000 awards to residents which was around 17,000 to 18,000 households, but he couldn't provide the number of unique residents or households.

Councillor Daly noted over 15,000 calls had been taken from residents and asked how the learning from them had been used. Matthew Sales said officers were using the lessons learned from those conversations to inform the longer-term strategic approach to tackling poverty.

Councillor Harvey addressed the Board and said it had been great to have the support and cooperation of the Food Bank, Crosslight, People Arise Now, and all of the other organisations that had been a part of the Cost of Living Alliance. She said it had been a real pleasure to work with such wonderful and dedicated organisations. She also thanked Matthew Sales and Bathsheba Mall for their hard work and support.

The Chair brought the discussion to a close and noted how important it was to have the Alliance in place, both to tackle today's cost of living problems and also build on in the future. She asked for another update once the Government had made a decision on funding. She thanked everyone for attending and their contributions to the meeting.

**ACTION: Matthew Sales**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Policy and Oversight Board note the report and provide comments and feedback to help shape and improve H&F's response to the COL crisis going forward.

**6. POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES' UPDATE REPORT**

This report outlines the areas of work and reports considered by each of the Council's six Policy and Accountability Committees at their meetings in November.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked why the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee hadn't considered a report on the borough's exam results. Officers explained that the Committee received an annual school performance report in March. Councillor Brocklebank-Fowler asked that future reports included leavers destinations.

**ACTION: David Abbott**

Councillor Natalia Perez highlighted that the Health and Adult Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee had requested a task and finish group to look at improving vaccination rates in the borough.

**RESOLVED**

1. To note the updates of the Policy and Accountability Committees and discuss any areas for future review or collaboration.
2. To approve the request from the Health and Adult Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee for a Task and Finish Group on improving vaccination rates in the borough.

**7. WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked that the Voter ID report included information on the Central Government budget grant for publicising the new requirements.

The Chair suggested the following item to add to the work programme:

- Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Local Government – exploratory item looking at what AI is, its potential uses, challenges, and risks.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Board note the draft work programme for 2023/24 and suggest any additions or amendments.

## 8. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The following dates of future meetings were noted:

- 23 Jan 2024
- 29 Apr 2024

Meeting started: 7.00 pm

Meeting ended: 8.55 pm

Chair .....

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## Policy and Oversight Board Action Sheet 2023/24

**20 June 2023**

No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
1.	Item 4 – Update on Co-production	Jane Wilmot said the Council wrote a statement for every (Civic Campus) contractor that set out its expectations around inclusivity. The Chair suggested these elements could be written into a range of contracts and activities undertaken by the Council. She asked officers to investigate potential areas where this could be done.	<p>Response from the procurement team:</p> <p>When we seek to buy goods, works and services, the specification identifies the context and requirements. Co-production allows for joint development of the specification. Engagement supports understanding of requirements and formal consultation may also be involved for some regulated areas.</p> <p>Any contractual requirements will be derived from the specification and align with H&amp;F contractual clauses regarding equalities.</p> <p>Based on the specification, our procurements can then include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific questions relating to inclusion in the evaluation of tenders for goods, works or services we are buying.</li> <li>• social/added value for contracts over £100k, where some measures are aimed</li> </ul>	Julian Eccles	Done

No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
			at enhancing inclusion e.g. care experienced residents, lone parents, those with poor mental health etc.		
2.	Item 4 – Update on Co-production	Cllr Nikos Souslous asked if there were lessons from working with organisations like the police. The Chair suggested inviting the police and the co-production team to a future meeting.	Item added to the Social Inclusion and Community Safety PAC long list for consideration.	David Abbott	Done
3.	Item 4 – Update on Co-production	Cllr Nicole Trehy noted that the Met Police wouldn't be responding to mental health calls beyond September 2023 and raised concerns about the impact on neurodiverse people. The Chair suggested this could be considered at a future meeting.	Item added to the Social Inclusion and Community Safety long list for consideration.	David Abbott	Done
4.	Item 4 – Update on Co-production	It was agreed that each PAC receive a quarterly update on previous and planned co-production activity. And the Board would consider a summary of such reports biannually.	The first updates have been scheduled for the November PAC meetings.	Julian Eccles	Done
5.	Item 5 – Introduction of Voter ID Requirements	Re producing elections materials in different languages - Kayode Adewumi said if members were aware of community organisations the team	Cllr Perez emailed the Elections team with community group contacts.	Committee Members / Kayode Adewumi	Done

No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
		could work with, they could send him the details.			
6.	Item 5 – Introduction of Voter ID Requirements	Cllr Jacolyn Daly thought Voter ID awareness needed a Council-wide approach and asked PAC Chairs to think about how different departments could respond.	PAC Chairs have been contacted to think about how different areas of the Council could respond.	PAC Chairs	Done
7.	Item 5 – Introduction of Voter ID Requirements	Elections officers to work with the co-production team to ensure all materials being sent out were accessible.	Actioned. Elections send all public materials to the co-production team for comment prior to circulation.	Zoe Wilkins	Done
8.	Item 5 – Introduction of Voter ID Requirements	Officers to circulate the Electoral Commission's report to members.	The EC's interim analysis report was circulated by email on 26/03/2023. The full report was circulated on 23/11/2023.	Zoe Wilkins	Done

**18 September 2023**

No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
9.	Item 4 – Intergenerational Practice	Officers to investigate London-based charity that matched young people looking for somewhere to stay with older people who had a spare room. Suggested the Council could promote.	In Adult Social Care a scheme that is similar to this is Shared Lives Plus ( <a href="https://sharedlivesplus.org.uk">sharedlivesplus.org.uk</a> ) and officers are in the process of developing a business case for starting this in H&F. Shared Lives is a care and support service which is for people aged 16+ (in England and Scotland) and 18+ (in Wales and Northern Ireland) who want to live independently in their community, with the support of a family and community network. It's an alternative to supported living or residential care. Shared Lives carers use their own home and family life to share it with someone who needs support around the UK.	Julius Olu	Done
	Item 4 – Intergenerational Practice	Officers to explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how the Council could highlight services available to charities and other groups.</li> <li>• programmes where students helped out in care homes (see Hammersmith Academy and the Elgin Centre).</li> </ul>	Officers are working on the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infusing intergenerational practice into relevant developing strategies or strategies under review – e.g. the draft 3SIF strategy.</li> <li>• Turn the policy team's research briefing into a</li> </ul>	Julius Olu	Done

No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
			<p>guidance document for third sector organisations to consider as part of the future 3SIF investment programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with Sobus about actions following their meeting with the Youth Council.</li> </ul>		
11.	Item 4 – Intergenerational Practice	Chair to develop idea around engaging young people in voluntary work.	Made links between the Youth Council and Nubian Life. Third sector programme lead tasked with exploring how to better promote young people volunteering through discussion with The Volunteer Centre and linking them to the Youth Council.	Cllr Homan	Done
12.	Item 5 – Digital Inclusion Strategy for H&F	Officers to circulate list of sheltered housing schemes with free Wi-Fi.	List circulated on 25 Oct 2023.	Tina Akpogheneta / Darren Persaud	Done
13.	Item 5 – Digital Inclusion Strategy for H&F	Officers to provide clear measures to track progress and include member involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers have contacted key internal stakeholders to pull together their specific key metrics.</li> <li>Digital Accessibility Group workshop 18/10/23 – to get views on key measurements.</li> </ul>	Tina Akpogheneta / Darren Persaud	In progress



No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third Sector workshop on 22/11/23 at Shortlands with 15 orgs attending to review work to date, and firm up key measurements. There will also be a stakeholder workshop with internal colleagues on 30/11/23.</li> <li>• The final strategy with key measurements will then go through internal governance before Cabinet approval on 12/02/24. One of the recommendations is a delivery group to be chaired by Cllr Chevoppe-Verdier.</li> </ul>		
14.	Item 5 – Digital Inclusion Strategy for H&F	Item for Health PAC – Connectivity and assistive technologies in day centres.	Item sent to Health PAC Chair / added to work programme long list for consideration.	David Abbott	Done

**11 December 2023**

No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
15.	Item 4 – Update on Youth Voice	Item for Health PAC - Healthy relationships and health and wellbeing to be given more consideration when procuring health services	Item was added to the Health and Adult Social Care PAC long list for consideration.	David Abbott	Done
16.	Item 4 – Update on Youth Voice	Housing and homelessness suggested as priority for the Youth Council.	Item added to list for consideration as part of the 2024 priorities.	Brenda Whinnett	Done
17.	Item 4 – Update on Youth Voice	Members requested input from the Youth Council on PAC work programmes.	Strategic leads have been tasked with taking the areas discussed forward and will refer items to the relevant PACs / PAC Chairs.	Strategic leads	Done
18.	Item 4 – Update on Youth Voice	The Chair asked that PAC reports include a section to record whether the Youth Council have been involved.	The PAC report template has been updated.	David Abbott	Done
19.	Item 5 - Continuing Response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis	Cllr Brocklebank-Fowler asked if the ethical debt policy had affected the Council Tax collection rate.	In common with other local authorities, a number of factors have affected council tax collection since early 2020 with the chief contributing factors being the cost of living crisis and the operational difficulties during covid. It is not possible to fully isolate these impacts but we do not believe there has been a significant impact on council tax collection rates from the council's Ethical Debt Collection policy as the proportion of debt referred to enforcement agents is	Sukvinder Kalsi	Done

No.	Item	Item / Action	Response / Update	Officer	Status
			<p>less than 1% of the amounts due.</p> <p>The Council Tax Team has been working strongly on this matter including supporting residents with benefit entitlement claims and early conversations with residents with arrears. As a consequence, collection rates have improved during 2023/24 (and arrears have reduced by £6m in total for LBHF/GLA). This trend is expected to continue in the future.</p>		
20.	Item 5 - Continuing Response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis	The Chair asked for further update once Government funding decision had been made.	The update was added to the Board's forward.	Matthew Sales	Done

*Last updated: 15/01/2024*

# Agenda Item 4

## London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

**Report to:** Policy and Oversight Board

**Date:** 23/01/2024

**Subject:** 2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

**Report author:** Andre Mark, Head of finance (Strategic planning and investment)  
Alex Pygram, Head of finance (Finance and Corporate Services)

**Responsible Director:** Sukvinder Kalsi, Strategic Director of Finance  
Nicola Ellis, Strategic Director Chief Operating Officer,  
Corporate Services

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### SUMMARY

Cabinet will present their revenue budget and Council Tax proposals to Budget Council on 28 February 2024. This report provides an update on the overall preparation and proposals for the 2024/25 revenue budget, risks, financial resilience, and the impact of those proposals. This report also sets out the budget proposals for the services covered by this Policy and Oversight Board (POB). An update is also provided on any proposed changes in fees and charges in the budget.

The strategic operating environment continues to be challenging (inflation, interest rates, economic stagnation, unemployment, real terms reduction in household incomes) and this will have an impact on the overall national and public finances. After the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in November 2023, analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has estimated that considering current spending commitments across the public sector, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (which includes local government) may face a 3.4 per cent real terms cut each year from 2025/26 to 2028/29.<sup>1</sup>

The budget proposals for 2024/25 are intended to protect our statutory services, deliver services valued by residents/businesses/visitors, promote the prosperity of the Borough, and support the poorest and most vulnerable in society. All our services have been funded at a time of continued austerity within local government since 2010.

Despite the financial pressures on the council, our ruthlessly financially efficient approach (by generating more than £118m of efficiencies since 2014/15), securing more than £100m in contributions from developing the Borough and generating more than £60m in annual income). Few organisations would be able to deliver the same services they delivered over a decade ago with less than half of the resources available. In Hammersmith & Fulham we have not just maintained front line services that residents rely on, but we have gone further, providing new services to support

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<sup>1</sup> [What does the Autumn Statement mean for local government and public service spending? | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](https://ifs.org.uk)

those living in the borough. We have also eased financial burdens that residents by keeping taxes low, freezing key charges and providing one of the country's most comprehensive Council Tax Support Schemes.

Hammersmith & Fulham is unique in many ways. In recent years the Council has been able to abolish home care charges, provide free breakfasts for school children, create a new Law Enforcement Team to keep our street safe and clean, maintain weekly bin collections across the borough, and end the use of bailiffs to collect Council Tax debt.

This has only been possible because of the ruthlessly financially efficient approach that we have taken to managing residents' money. We will continue to reform the council to ensure that we provide the best value for their money possible. This budget does this through innovative use of new technology and data, and council-wide efficiency programmes to streamline operations and ensure the best use of resources.

Despite the financial pressures on the council, our ruthlessly financially efficient approach has allowed us to keep Council Tax levels low. There is no better place to be a Council Taxpayer than right here in Hammersmith & Fulham. Not only do we have the third lowest council tax rates in the country, with this administration cutting or freezing Council Tax five times in the last nine years, but our Council Tax Support Scheme provides a discount to 42% of residents, with 11% of the most vulnerable paying nothing at all. This administration took the decision to exempt care leavers from paying Council Tax entirely, and this year, for the first time, we will also exempt in-house foster carers and special guardians so that they do not pay a penny of Council Tax.

The objectives of the General Fund revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 set out in the report:

- Protect the delivery of our core statutory services.
- Continue to deliver services valued by residents/businesses/visitors.
- Ensure the safety of our residents/businesses/visitors.
- Promote the prosperity of the borough.
- Embeds an agile, modern and innovative approach within the Council.
- Maintains strong financial governance and resilience across the Council.

The proposals include investment of £10.7m across many services and will allow the continued delivery of the best services to our residents/businesses and visitors. This includes an extra £4.2m for Home Care, £1.3m to support school transport services for children, £1.5m for people affected by homelessness and £1.7m to support our housing services.

The Council will continue to manage its financial resources effectively to financial resilience and sustainability (including a good level of reserves and in year contingencies).

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 obliges the Council to set a balanced budget, and the detailed proposals contained in this report will put the Council in a strong position to be able to do so for the next financial year. Cabinet in February will need to consider these alongside the outcome of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement and any other funding statements that may follow.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Policy and Oversight Board (POB) considers the budget proposals and makes recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.
  2. That the Board considers the proposed changes to fees and charges and makes recommendations as appropriate.
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**Wards Affected:** All

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<b>Our values</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the H&amp;F values</b>
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The council has a proud record of maintaining low Council Tax to its residents. The revenue budget for 2024/25 proposes savings and efficiencies across services and corporate functions that rationalise its estate and reduce its operating costs, whilst also delivering value for money from external contractors
Creating a compassionate council	The proposals in the revenue budget for 24/25 supports the ongoing investment in services that directly support residents in living, healthy and independent lives. This includes continuing to provide free homecare for older residents, providing Council Tax support to foster carers and increasing investment to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
Building shared prosperity	A significant proportion of services are delivered in partnership with local and national companies, and this will continue to promote all business sectors to the benefit of residents.
Doing things with residents, not to them	The budget for 24/25 will invest in our Family Hubs, ensuring that every child, young person, and family is able to access the right support at the right time. The Hubs will also be developed by collaborating with children and young people and their families, family groups, the local third sector, the NHS and the council's children's services in genuine partnership.
Taking pride in H&F	The council's revenue budget will invest over £50m in public realm services. These

	services will provide access to safe clean, green spaces for all to enjoy, visit and live in. It will deliver improvements to highways, whilst continuing to invest in the Law Enforcement Team and regulatory services to crack down on anti-social behaviour and rogue traders.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The council has an ambitious target to become a net zero borough. To help achieve this, the budget will invest in the roll out of food waste caddies for more than 50,000 households, continue to keep our streets and parks clean, and take a tough stance against anyone dropping litter, creating graffiti, or dumping rubbish.

## Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

## DETAILED ANALYSIS

### The Budget Requirement and Gap

1. The gross General Fund budget<sup>2</sup> rolled forward from 2023/24 to 2024/25 is £642.0m of which a **net budget requirement of £198.0m** is funded from council resources (such as Council Tax and business rates) and general government grant.

**Table 1 – Budget rolled forward from 2023/24**

<b>2023/24 Budgeted Expenditure</b>	<b>£m</b>
Housing benefit payments	91.2
Departmental budgets	550.8
<b>Gross budgeted expenditure</b>	<b>642.0</b>
<b>Gross revenue income budget requirement (specific government grants, fees and charges and other contributions)</b>	<b>(444.0)</b>
<b>Net revenue budget requirement</b>	<b>198.0</b>
<b>To be met from:</b>	
General grants	(56.7)
Locally retained business rates	(62.5)
<b>2024/25 Council Tax requirement (including the adult social care precept)</b>	<b>(78.8)</b>

<sup>2</sup> Figures exclude capital charges and internal service level agreements. These have a net nil impact on the budget.

## Budget assumptions

2. This Board are invited to comment on the wider budget proposals for all council departments. To assist this process a supplementary analysis of trend and cost data is provided in Appendix 4. This identifies:
  - Investment, savings, and inflation as a percentage of departmental budgets.
  - A summary of the current year projection
  - Trend unit cost data in key service areas

## Investment and growth pressures

3. Additional investment and growth of £10.7m is being provided following the budget setting and review process. The proposed investment and growth items are summarised in Table 3 and for those relevant to this Board in Table 4. The detailed investment proposals for this Board are set out from paragraph 47 and in Appendix 1 to this report.

**Table 3: 2024/25 Investment Proposals**

Department	£m
Adult Social Care	4.8
Children Services	1.6
Environment	0.5
Corporate Services	0.2
Economy	1.5
Other Services	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.7</b>

**Table 4: Investment and growth proposals relevant to this Board**

Proposal	£m
Strengthening cyber security	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.2</b>

## Savings and Income Generation

4. After more than a decade of austerity, it is increasingly difficult to identify and deliver substantive savings. However, further savings are necessary if the financial



challenge of real terms government funding cuts, unfunded burdens, inflation, and demand and growth pressures is to be met and the council has been able to find these. In the future, the Council must consider all available options to operate within the funding available to it.

5. The proposed savings (including additional income) for 2024/25 are set out in Table 5. The savings proposals for this Board are outlined in detail from paragraph 47 and in Appendix 1 to this report.

**Table 5: 2024/25 firm savings and additional income**

<b>Department</b>	<b>£m</b>
Adult Social Care	(2.1)
Children Services	(1.6)
Environment	(1.5)
Corporate Services	(0.3)
Economy	(1.4)
Finance	(0.4)
Other Services	(0.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(8.1)</b>

6. The savings relevant to this Board are summarised in table 6 below.

**Table 6: Summary of savings relevant to this Board**

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>£m</b>
An increase in digital advertising rental income and reduction in internal audit costs	(0.2)
Reduction in LBHF share of the Hampshire Finance System costs.	(0.2)
Reduction in digital services costs following procurement exercise and migration to a new cloud-based platform.	(0.2)
Additional income from coronial services contract.	(0.1)
<b>Total savings</b>	<b>(0.7)</b>

### **Inflation**

7. Inflation has been consistently high over the past two years (reaching 10.5% in December 2022, and the highest level for 40 years). The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for September 2023 is 6.7%. The Office of Budget Responsibility is forecasting inflation of 2.8% by Q4 of 2024/25 and the proposed budget for 2024/25 includes provision for both pay and price inflation in line with those assumptions: This budget allows for:

- Contract and external services inflation of £9.2m.
- £4.5m provision for a 2024/25 pay award (this equates to a 3.0% pay award)

### **Fees and Charges**

- Charges governed by statute are set in accordance with those requirements and not varied in accordance with inflation. For non-statutory **fees and charges** levied by the council, it is recommended that:
  - They are frozen for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Housing in line with administration policy.
  - Commercial services that are charged on a for-profit basis, will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in response to market conditions and changed as appropriate, with due authorisations according to the Council constitution.
  - Parking charges and fines are to be set in line with transport policy objectives and not considered as part of the budget process.
  - A standard uplift of 6.7% is applied for other non-commercial and non-parking fees, as per September 2023 CPI.

There are no exceptions to these assumptions for this Board.

### **Local Government Finance Settlement and Core Spending Power**

- The provisional 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) was published by DHLUC on the 18th of December 2023. This statement outlines provisional funding allocations for local authorities for 2024/25 alongside the Core Spending Power for each authority. For the sixth year in a row, this was a single year funding settlement. There was not a great deal of new funding included, as much of the funding announced in the statement had already been declared in the 2023/24 LGFS, particularly funding ringfenced for Adult Social Care and Council Tax referendum limits.
- Core Spending Power estimates total revenue funding available to authorities and includes Government assumptions on a maximum increase in Council Tax (4.99%). This is in line with the national working assumption that local authorities will need to increase local tax by 5% each year until 2027/28. It also includes assumptions on business rates income (including compensation for under indexing the multiplier) as well as growth in the Council Tax base.
- The Statement provided an increase in Core Spending Power of 6.7% (the level of CPI inflation in September) assuming that the council increases Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept to the maximum extent without triggering a local referendum. It also includes compensation for the decision to freeze the small business rates multiplier, which has resulted in lower council revenues in other areas.
- A summary of the Council's funding settlement and Core Spending Power in comparison to 2023/24 is set out in **Appendix 5**.
- The 2024/25 Settlement continues the recent trend of single year funding settlements with no grant allocations confirmed beyond next year. The lack of future certainty continues to undermine effective medium-term financial planning and resource

allocation. The planned review (Fair Funding Review) to explore changing how central grants are distributed between local authorities and with the potential for resetting the baselines for determining each local authority's need has been pushed back to April 2025 at the earliest after first being announced in 2016.

14. It should be noted that whilst the overall Core Spending Power for the Council has increased by £13.78m, only £5.75m (42%) of this relates to grant funding distributed directly to local authorities as part of the LGFS, as both Council Tax and business rates income are locally generated sources of income.

An explanation of the key funding streams is outlined below:

15. **Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)** – The SFA is made up of two elements: The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and the Baseline Funding Level (BFL). RSG is given to local authorities and can be used to finance revenue expenditure on any service. This grant has increased by £1.35m. This increase from 2023/24 is in line with the September CPI increase of 6.7%.
16. The BFL is the estimated retained Business Rates as calculated by the Government, usually uprated in line with the small business rates multiplier. The actual business rates estimated by the Council is set out in the business rates section below.
17. **Social Care funding** – There are four separate grants as part of the Core Spending Power which relate to Social Care funding. Except for the Social Care Support grant (which can be used for matters relating to Childrens and Adults social care), all the others are ringfenced and passported to the Social Care budget. The grants are as follows:
  - Social Care Support grant
  - Improved Better Care Fund
  - Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (now includes the MSIF Workforce Fund)
  - ASC Discharge Fund
18. A two-year funding package for social care was outlined in last year's LGFS and the funding this year represents the second year of this. Beyond 2024/25, it is unclear and uncertain the sustainability and level of funding which will be available to local authorities for social care.
19. **Compensation for the under-indexing of the business rates multiplier** – this is funding to compensate local authorities for lost business rates income arising from the decision to freeze the small business rates multiplier.
20. **New Homes Bonus** - There will be new rounds of New Homes Bonus (NHB) payments in 2024/25. In line with last year, these payments will not attract new legacy payments. It is unlikely that the New Homes Bonus will continue beyond 2024/25, and whether any alternative funding will be provided should this be the case.
21. **Services Grant** – The services grant has reduced by over 84% in 2024/25. The Government have made significant cuts to this funding (from £822m in 22/23 to £77m

in 24/25) as it has been top sliced to offset the rising cost of other grants in the settlement. Although the local government finance policy statement on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December stated that this grant would reduce, the scale of reduction was not anticipated or communicated to local authorities earlier in the budget setting process.

22. Other Funding

23. **Household Support Fund (HSF)** - In 2021, the Department for Work and Pensions announced that vulnerable households across the country would be able to access a new support fund to help them with essentials over the winter. The total HSF allocated to Hammersmith and Fulham during 2023/24 was £2.8m, all of which is planned to be spent as part of the council's Cost of Living response.

24. However, after the Autumn Statement, it was confirmed by DHLUC that the HSF will not continue beyond 31 March 2024. At time of writing, it is not known if this funding will be replaced with another scheme or will be folded into existing funding, but the ending of this funding stream will place a significant additional financial burden on the Council and those most vulnerable and affected by the Cost-of-Living crisis.

25. There are other specific grants which sit outside the main LGFS and for which allocations have been announced. The Council will receive £24.3m for the Public Health Grant, £3.89m for the Homelessness Prevention Grant (a further £120m has been announced nationally but allocations are not known at the time of writing), plus £177.3m for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). These grants are ringfenced and are assumed will have a neutral impact in the current budget proposals.

**Other Measures**

26. It is estimated that £5.0m relating to income from investing cash balances will be available as favourable interest rates is assumed as per the Bank of England's economic forecast assumptions. This income will be used to balance the budget in 2024/25 and our cash balances and base rate assumptions will be reviewed throughout the financial year in line with our treasury management strategy.

27. A comprehensive review has been carried out across both front and back-office functions within parking services. This has resulted in a programme of measures that has delivered more effective and efficient systems and processes, particularly in permit and suspension management, together with the introduction of more streamlined delivery and operational models. Front line services benefit from the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technologies in on-street enforcement, and the continued roll out of automated cameras in moving traffic, capturing alerts and contraventions. This outcome of this review is reflected in the budget for 2024/25.

28. In addition, there are budget measures to reduce budgeted reserve contributions, realigning corporate charges between the HRA and General Fund and short-term contributions arising from lower than budgeted contributions to the concessionary fares (freedom pass) scheme. The latter is due to the impact of passenger usage on public transport in response to the pandemic and changes to ways of working.

This is not expected to continue beyond 2024/25 as demand is forecast to return to pre pandemic levels and fares increase.

## **Council Tax**

29. The Council is proud to have the third lowest Council Tax in the country, and to have cut or frozen Council Tax in 5 of the last 9 years. LBHF also has one of the most progressive Council Tax support schemes in the country, with almost half of residents not paying the full amount, and those least able to pay facing no charge at all.
30. The national economic conditions of high inflation and interest rates made a Council Tax increase in 2023/24 unavoidable and a 2.99% increase in the Hammersmith & Fulham element of Council Tax was required to achieve a sustainable budget. As the current level of Council Tax is so low, even an increase of 2.99% keeps the overall level well below other local authorities.
31. The budget proposals assume Council Tax will be increased by the amount modelled in the Government's Core Spending Power calculations, including the ringfenced Adult Social Care precept. The level of Council Tax increase reflects the assumption that has been outlined by Central Government in the Autumn Statement made on the 17 November by the Chancellor and assumed in the funding settlement for local government. The additional income will fund rising costs, protect, and support investment in key services for residents, and strengthen future financial resilience. The increase is equivalent to £26 per annum, or 50p per week, for 2024/25 (at Band D). For the Adult Social Care precept, this is the equivalent to £17.44 per annum, or less than 35p per week (at Band D).
32. For 2024/25, despite the financial pressures on the council, our ruthlessly financially efficient approach has allowed us to keep Council Tax levels low. There is no better place to be a Council Taxpayer than here in Hammersmith & Fulham. Not only do we have the third lowest council tax rates in the country, but our Council Tax Support Scheme provides discounts and exemptions to many residents, with the most vulnerable paying nothing at all.
33. This administration took the decision to exempt care leavers from paying Council Tax entirely, and this year, for the first time, we will also exempt in-house foster carers and special guardians so that they do not pay a penny of Council Tax.
34. As set out in table 7 below, it is estimated that 42% of residents will not be required to pay the full increase (as they will be supported through the single person household discounts, Council Tax Support, and exemptions).

**Table 7: Liability for Council Tax at November 2023**

Total dwellings in the borough	94,177	100%
Reductions:		
Exemptions (mainly students, includes care leavers and vacant properties)	(3,415)	(4%)
Council Tax support claimants (elderly & working age on low income)	(10,087)	(11%)
Single person discount (25% discount)	(26,143)	(27%)
<b>Dwellings liable for 100% of Council Tax</b>	<b>54,532</b>	<b>58%</b>

### **Business Rates**

35. The recent change in legislation has meant that the business rates multiplier has been 'decoupled', and ministers now have the power to set different levels of rates for the elements of the multiplier (small and standard multipliers). The Autumn Statement confirmed that the standard multiplier rate would increase in line with September's CPI inflation (6.7%).
36. There will be a freeze in 2024/25 for the small business rate multiplier for the fourth year in a row. The 75% Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief will be also extended for 2024-25. Local authorities will be compensated by the government for the resultant loss of income from these measures.
37. The forecast assumes that Hammersmith & Fulham will receive and retain the minimum amount guaranteed, the safety net threshold, by Government. This is £62.5m for 2024/25.

### **Risk and financial resilience**

38. Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Strategic Director of Finance is required to include, in the budget report, a view of the robustness of the 2024/25 estimates and also views of the adequacy of the balances and reserves the budget provides for in light of the medium-term risks facing the authority.
39. An updated reserves strategy and forecast will be included within the suite of finance reports presented to Cabinet and Full Council.
40. The current reserves forecast is set out in Table 8 and models a fall in overall general fund reserves and balances to £91.6m by 2027/28. This assumes a balanced budget is set each year with no further call on reserves.

**Table 8: Reserves and general balances - cash flow forecast to 2027/28**

	<b>April</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>April</b>
	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
General balances (recommended range £19m - £23m)	21.3	21.3	21.3	21.3	21.3
Earmarked reserves	98.3	72.0	62.0	68.7	70.2
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>119.6</b>	<b>93.3</b>	<b>83.4</b>	<b>90.0</b>	<b>91.6</b>
Developer contributions (Subject to separate monitoring and approval)	48.9				

41. The Council's general balance for 2023/24 is £21.3m, after the council ran a budget surplus and contributed additional funds to general balance reserves. This equates to 3.8% (14 days spend) of the council's gross budget of £550.8m. The Strategic Director of Finance has recommended that the optimal range for the general balance is between £19m and £23m.
42. Reserves play a crucial role in good public financial management. They enable investment in service transformation and provide resilience against unexpected events or emergent needs.
43. Hammersmith & Fulham holds reserves for two main purposes:
  - As a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies – this forms part of general balances.
  - To build up funds for known or predicted requirements; these specific reserves are known as earmarked reserves.
44. Reserves are also a key enabler for future service transformation. The financial challenge facing the council will require investment to deliver future efficiencies to enable the council to balance the budget in future years.
45. The lack of an appropriate safety net has resulted in several councils running into financial difficulties. Over the last two years, nine local authorities have produced a section 114 notice (this is a notice from the s151 officer in their view that a Council's resources are not sufficient to fund its forecasted expenditure for a financial year) and one in five local authorities have reported that they "think it is very or fairly likely that their chief finance officer will need to issue a Section 114 notice this year or next due to a lack of funding to keep key services running".<sup>3</sup>

### **Key Risks**

46. The key financial risks that face the Council have been identified and are set out below:

<sup>3</sup> [Section 114 fear for almost 1 in 5 council leaders and chief executives after cashless Autumn Statement | Local Government Association](#)

- The continuing economic conditions relating to inflation, interest rates, unemployment, real household incomes (these may all increase our service delivery costs, recovery of income and viability of major projects).
- The increasing national legislative requirements (e.g., Environment Act 2021, Social Regulation 2023) will add additional pressures on our service delivery.
- The increasing regulation from national government (e.g., OfLog, Housing Ombudsman, CQC) will increase our cost burdens.
- The demographic pressures especially on Adult Services, Childrens Services (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), homelessness (temporary accommodation) and people from abroad will continue (as is the case nationally for many other local authorities). This is a combination of a number of factors including the Covid-19 recovery, addressing pent-up demand and supply issues post Brexit.
- Higher pay inflation particularly given current labour shortages.
- The stabilisation and restoration of Hammersmith Bridge, with the council incurring revenue and capital costs at risk until government funding is confirmed.
- The future impact on London of the government's 'levelling-up' agenda and wider local government finance reform (such as business rates)
- The impact of the wider economy on major council development projects and future contributions from developers
- The impact of, and costs of, tackling climate change
- The challenge of identifying further significant future savings that balance the budget over the longer-term.

Budget risks are set out in Appendix 2.

### **Comments of the Directors for Finance and Corporate Services on the 2024/25 Budget Proposals**

47. The budget information presented below is for the Finance Department and the Corporate Services Department.
48. The Finance department is responsible for a range of back-office functions that support the strategic aims of the Council including:
  - Finance (including Treasury Management)
  - Business Assurance and Intelligence and Assurance (including project management office and Chief Executives office)
  - Procurement and Commercial
  - Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance
49. The Finance Department's primary focus is to ensure the strong financial governance of resources to deliver the Council's key priorities and to support front line services in the delivery of excellent services. Some notable examples are:
  - Establishing a clear Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure the Council resources are well managed, completing statutory obligations, year-end accounts and ensuring the Council's financial resilience.



- Increasing the use of data and analytics to target resources and maximise effectiveness.
  - Complying with procurement rules and regulations and ensuring economic and social value through the Council's commissioning activities.
  - Detecting and prosecuting instances of fraud to ensure Council Services are provided to those who need them.
  - £4m of funding has been managed and distributed to support the Council's most vulnerable residents with the cost-of-living crisis.
50. The Corporate Services department is responsible for a range of services provided to residents, and support services provided to departments across the council. These include:
- Resident Services – Customer Services, Benefits and Revenues
  - Digital Services – provision and maintenance of our IT, storage and security of our data, and transforming the way we work.
  - Communications and Community Engagement
  - Registrars & Coroner's Services
  - Governance and Scrutiny
  - Electoral services
  - Legal Services
  - People and Talent
51. The Corporate Services department continues to review and challenge current service delivery models and budgets, to ensure that services are effective and efficient, and reflect the council's priorities. Some notable examples are:
- The Council was recently awarded London Regional Winner for Large Employer of the Year at the National Apprenticeship Awards 2023.
  - Following the council's ethical debt policy to support those unable to pay their Council Tax, helping them get into a position where they can pay rather than sending in bailiffs.
  - Continuing our programmes of service improvement. For example, investing in technology to improve resident experience and access to our services (notably via the Resident Experience and Access Programme which will improve residents' access to key council services).
  - Investment in digitalisation, automation technologies and cyber security along with an upgrade and device refresh for our workforce.
52. As well as maximising efficiency from current service budgets, the Finance and Corporate Services departments are helping to mitigate the significant medium-term financial challenges faced by the council through cross cutting workstreams focused on use of property, workforce, digital and automation, and commercialisation.

## **Financial Performance 2022/23 and 2023/24**

53. Spend across both the Finance and Corporate Services departments was kept within budget in 2022/23. It is currently projected that the outturn for 2023/24 will

be within budget for the Finance Department although there are some pressures on Corporate Services that will need to be resolved during 2023/24.

## Budget 2024/25

54. Finance and Corporate services are proposing a net budget before capital and corporately managed budgets of £42.120m. Within the departments there are many services which support frontline Council business. As such £21.602m of the budget is expected to be recovered as corporately controlled income (Table 10).
55. Corporate Services faces pressures from contract inflation, particularly in Digital Services, and additional resourcing requirements in Resident Services. These will need to be addressed during 2024/25.

**Table 10 – Corporate budgets 2024/25**

Directorate	Expenditure £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's
Resident Services	16,863	1,799	15,064
Digital Services	13,766	373	13,394
Democratic, Registrars & Coroner's Services	5,260	2,508	2,753
Finance	4,331	596	3,735
People & Talent	2,953	341	2,612
Legal Services	2,886	2,992	106
Assurance, Programmes & Analytics	2,458	904	1,554
Managed Services	2,042	0	2,042
Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance	1,126	36	1,089
Comms and Communities	1,038	79	958
Procurement and Commercial	940	2,762	1,822
Corporate Services	488	0	488
Members Support	359	0	359
<b>Total budget before capital and Corporately Managed budgets</b>	<b>54,510</b>	<b>12,390</b>	<b>42,120</b>
Corporately Managed Budgets	9,299	31,278	21,980
Capital Charges	378	0	378
<b>Total capital and Corporately Managed budgets</b>	<b>9,676</b>	<b>31,278</b>	<b>21,602</b>
<b>Total Corporate Budgets</b>	<b>64,186</b>	<b>43,668</b>	<b>20,518</b>

## Savings and Investments

56. There are total savings proposed of £0.665m across both Finance and Corporate Services in 2024/25 which come from a range of proposals outlined in Appendix 1.

57. Investment of £0.250m is proposed for 2024/25 to strengthen the Council's cyber security.
58. Contractual inflation of £0.434m on externally provided services has been allowed for in the budget. The council will continue to work with contractors and suppliers to minimise any adverse impact.

### **Equality Implications**

A draft Equality Impact Analysis (EIA), which assesses the impacts on equality of the main items in the budget proposals relevant to this Board, is attached as Appendix 3. A final EIA will be reported to Budget Council in February 2023.

### **List of Appendices:**

- Appendix 1 – Savings and investment proposals
- Appendix 2 – Risks
- Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessments
- Appendix 4 – Trend data
- Appendix 5 – Core Spending Power Calculations

Social Care

Change and Savings Proposals				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Change and Savings Proposals							
1	Independent living, Quality, Performance and Safeguarding	Reform - Commissioning Market Opportunities	Review care costs with NHS (CHC) as people with very high needs are discharged from hospital.	(200)	(250)	(300)	(300)
2	Independent living, Quality, Performance and Safeguarding	Reform - Continuous improvement of services	Supporting resident independence though better integration of council services with community networks	(150)	(350)	(350)	(350)
3	Independent living, Quality, Performance and Safeguarding	Reform - Continuous improvement of services	Further increased take-up of Direct Payments for choice and control for residents and increasing wellbeing and coproducing as part of the Direct Payment steering group.	(200)	(400)	(600)	(600)
4	Specialist Support and Independent Living	Cross Cutting - Continuous improvement of services	Joint commissioning steering group with Economy department on implementing the Disabled People's Housing Strategy and reducing voids. This will be done through reviewing the Extra Care Homes available for residents, ensuring new builds are co-produced with disabled residents and make good Housing voids.	(200)	(200)	(400)	(400)
5	Independent living, Quality, Performance and Safeguarding	Transformation - Continuous improvement of Services	Maximising adaptations in people's homes through use of Disabled Facilities Grant. Review Occupational Therapy service delivery across the department with a view to undertake joint care assessment. This increases a person's independence and reduces the need for longer-term care.	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
6	Independent living, Quality, Performance and Safeguarding	Reform - Service redesign	Better use of equipment to improve independence of residents with sensory disability.	(100)	(150)	(200)	(200)
7	All Divisions	Artificial Intelligence - Improve access to and support provided from our front door	Improved support and information for residents and make better use of digital technologies (such as care cubed, use of resident portal, timely return of equipment).	(250)	(450)	(550)	(550)
8	Commissioning	Reform - Commissioning Market Opportunities	Review of commissioning contracts in line with the third sector strategy. This will be managed by adjusting the available contingencies within this budget (it will not affect existing contracts or the Fast Track allocations and inflation will be allocated to contracts in 2024/25).	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
9	All Divisions	Reform - Service redesign	Reshaping the department as an all-age adults service and over a medium term neighbourhood resident focus.	(200)	(500)	(500)	(500)
Total Firm Change and Savings Proposals				(1,600)	(2,600)	(3,200)	(3,200)
Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth							
1	Independent living, Quality, Performance and Safeguarding & Specialist Support.	Home Care	Home Care and Independent Living procurement award for 6 borough-based new contracts (these contracts are for the Patch and Bridging Service and Home Care spot demand pressures).	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200
2	Specialist Support and Independent Living	Learning Disability Transitions	The integrated Learning Disabilities (LD) Transition Team	603	603	603	603
Total Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth Proposals				4,803	4,803	4,803	4,803

Public Health

Change and Savings Proposals				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Change and Savings Proposals							
1	Public Health	Rough Sleeping	Review of Rough Sleeper Public Health Contribution to support residents with independent living.	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
2	Public Health	Environmental Health	Review of Environmental Health Contributions to manage and support the health protection and outbreak prevention.	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
3	Public Health	Community Safety	Review the impact of targeted provision with underserved groups to improve community engagement.	(72)	(72)	(72)	(72)
4	Public Health	Transformation	Review of Community Champions Programme and Reprovision of Services to align services with resident needs and support the Councils response to the cost of living.	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)
Total Firm Change and Savings Proposals				(522)	(522)	(522)	(522)

Children's Services and Education

Change and Savings Proposals				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Change and Savings Proposals							
1	Children and Young Peoples Services	Placement service income generation	This proposal aligns the budget to the current profile of placements where there is joint health funding. There will be no impact on children and young people.	(325)	(325)	(325)	(325)
2	Children and Young Peoples Services	Client related non-placement spend	Reform care support via a targeted line by line review to identify efficiency opportunities to secure high quality packages at optimal cost, including capitalising on opportunities for external funding to invest in creating our own provision	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
3	Children and Young Peoples Services	Post 19 Housing Pathways	Through collaboration with Housing, to enable care leavers to transition into the Housing Pathway earlier, with increased floating support to ensure the transition is successful.	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
4	Children's Commissioning	Early Intervention Commissioning	It is proposed to align the budgets to current expenditure following the recommission. There is no proposed change to delivery	(137)	(137)	(137)	(137)
5	Food Poverty	Holiday food provision	Embedding long-term holiday food provision offer using the council's bulk purchasing power to more effectively procure long-term holiday food	(900)	(900)	(900)	(900)
Total Firm Change and Savings Proposals				(1,562)	(1,562)	(1,562)	(1,562)

Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth							
1	Education Special Educational Needs	Travelcare and Support - Education and Health Care Plan Demand Led Growth	Investment reflects the increased demand of children and young people accessing travel care and support services, whilst maintaining the same high-level quality of provision.	1,271	1,769	2,326	2,884
2	Children and Young Peoples Services	Development of Family Hubs - Full Year effect Investment 2024-25	Investment in launching Family Hubs which will act as a single point of access to help families navigate and receive the support they need when they need it.	260	260	260	260
Total Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth Proposals				1,531	2,029	2,586	3,144

The Environment

Change and Savings Proposals				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Change and Savings Proposals							
1	All	Review fees and charges	Non-residential fees and charges	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
2	Public Protection	Environmental Public Protection (Noise and Nuisance)	Use of alternative funding (through developers contributions)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
3	Street Environment	Review waste collections	Further efficiencies from rollout of wheeled bins	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)
4	All	Service transformation savings	REAP enabled savings (FTEs)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)
5	Street Environment	New waste collection services	Introduction of garden waste subscription service (this assumes sign up of 10,000 properties)	(650)	(650)	(650)	(650)
Total Firm Change and Savings Proposals				(1,550)	(1,550)	(1,550)	(1,550)

Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth							
1	Street Environment	New waste collection services	Additional collection costs for garden waste subscription service	278	278	278	278
2	Cultural Services	Continuation of Community and Cultural Events Programme	Realignment of service costs to ensure that programmes are fully funded and delivered	150	150	150	150
3	Cultural Services	Contribution to new H&F Black History Museum	Funding to allow the permanent establishment of this museum as part of the Council's culture strategy.	60	60	60	60
Total Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth Proposals				488	488	488	488

The Economy

Change and Savings Proposals			Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Change and Savings Proposals						
1	Planning	New fee flexibilities and cost reductions from fewer volumes	(350)	(350)	(350)	(350)
2	Property and Asset Management	Review of expenditure (6% reduction)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
3	Housing Solutions	Efficient commissioning of Temporary Accommodation	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
4	Housing Solutions	Review of Housing Solutions team	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)
5	Housing Solutions	Acquisition of housing for Temporary Accommodation	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
6	Property and Asset Management	Corporate Accommodation savings	(400)	(400)	(400)	(400)
7	Property and Asset Management	Non-domestic portfolio master plan	0	(100)	(400)	(400)
Total Firm Change and Savings Proposals			(1,400)	(1,500)	(1,800)	(1,800)

Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth			Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm New Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth Requests						
1	Economic Development Learning & Skills	Specialist and sectorial expertise to support development of the Strategy, content, design, marketing, engagement etc	(25)	(50)	(50)	(50)
2	Economic Development Learning & Skills	Specialist consultancy support for the development of STEAM sector strategies and their promotion	(25)	(25)	(25)	(25)
3	Housing Solutions	An increase in homeless presentations combined with a reductions in supply of rehousing solutions is resulting in additional client numbers	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Total Firm New Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth Requests Proposals			1,450	1,425	1,425	1,425



Corporate (Finance, Corporate Resources, Council Wide)

Change and Savings Proposals				Budget Change			
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Change and Savings Proposals							
1	Procurement and Commercial	Digital Advertising	An increase in digital advertising rental income.	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)
2	Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance	Internal Audit externally contracted work	Reduction in Internal Audit budget for contracted out audit days.	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
3	Managed Services	Hampshire Partnership Finance System	Reduction in LBHF share of the Hampshire Finance System costs.	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
4	Digital	Network and Telephony contract	Reduction in costs arising from the network and telephony procurement strategy and contract award.	(125)	(125)	(125)	(125)
5	Digital	SQL migration	Remove the need for server licencing and reduce support costs for smaller applications following migration to Microsoft Azure platform.	(60)	(80)	(80)	(80)
6	Coroners and Mortuary	Mortuary Income increase	Additional income from contract based on RPI.	(80)	(80)	(80)	(80)
7	ALL	Senior organisational structure review	An organisational review of the senior chief officer structures of the Council	(250)	(1,000)	(1,000)	(1,000)
8	ALL	Parking projects	Discontinuing annual contribution to reserves and utilising in year revenue resources	(275)	(275)	(275)	(275)
9	ALL	Street column replacements	Discontinuing annual contribution to reserves and utilising in year revenue resources	(245)	(245)	(245)	(245)
Total Firm Change and Savings Proposals				(1,435)	(2,205)	(2,205)	(2,205)
Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth							
Ref Nos	Service	Title & Theme	Summary	2024-25 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2025-26 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2026-27 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)	2027-28 Budget Change Cumulative (£000's)
Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth							
1	Digital Services	Digital cyber security	Enhancing the Council's cyber security through extending the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement and delivery of a robust out of hours support service.	250	250	250	250
2	ALL	Housing Services	A realignment of the charges between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700
3	ALL	Civic Campus programme	Anticipated pressures from the completion of the programme and award of operating leases	500	500	500	500
Total Firm Investment, Demand and Demographic Growth Proposals				2,450	2,450	2,450	2,450

**Children's Services Risk/Challenges**

Department & Division	Short Description of Risk	Mitigation
Children's Services		
Education and SEND	Sustained travel care growth across all client groups (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Children Looked After) in excess of current growth.	Robust assurance processes, route optimisations and transport sharing opportunities.
Children and Young Peoples Services	Increased presentation of need / cost, and subsequent growth in referrals and staff capacity to meet need.	Current additional fourth Contact and Assessment Team to support managing throughput of need, undertaking risk assessments, close monitoring of need.

## Social Care Risks/ Challenges

Department & Division	Short Description of Risk	Mitigation
<b>Social Care</b>		
Learning Disabilities	<b>Learning Disabilities Transitions:</b> Additional funding is required for the LD budgets to fund the increasing number of disabled young people transitioning into adult services. We have estimated that there are likely to be 126 more young people by 2027/28 creating a cost pressure on an already overspending budget.	Regular and robust review of residents' care is needed to ensure that care plans accurately reflect current assessed care needs.
All Divisions	<b>Demographic Pressures:</b> The Social Care budget is under severe pressure due to increasing demand in support at home, greater acuity of need, an ageing population and increasingly complex needs resulting from specialist services. For H&F demographic pressures relating to the increased numbers of older and disabled people requiring social care is forecast to be an average of 1.52% over the period 2023 to 2026 and equates in monetary terms to a cumulative total of £5.1m over the next 4 years.	Tight monitoring of the budget on a monthly basis, reprioritising as required.
All Divisions	<b>Better Care Fund (BCF) Health Pressures:</b> 1) Reduced allocation in hospital discharges 2) Review of all services in preparation for 24/25 by NWL Health	Tight monitoring of the budget and joint work with Health on the BCF review.
All Divisions	NRS Equipment contract:	Monitored as part of the contract negotiations and any additional funding to be managed over the lifetime of the contract. However, the consortium is also working through other options and will be updating Boroughs when they've received legal advice. These options may mean that we may not need to make additional payments.

**The Environment Department Risk/Challenges**

Department & Division	Short Description of Risk	Mitigation
Environment		
Climate Change	Significant funding requirements for addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency and achieving the Council's net zero carbon target.	Financial strategy has been developed to ascertain level of required investment and funding options. Officers will continue to pursue and lobby for external funding
Highways	Hammersmith Bridge works are being undertaken at risk, pending confirmation of funding contributions from the Department for Transport and Transport for London. If the full strengthening and restation project does not go ahead, some capital costs to date may need to be charged back to revenue	Continue to work with the Department for Transport and Transport for London
Street Environment Services	Waste disposal savings from the new wheeled bin waste collection service may be insufficient to cover the new service costs	Impact of roll out will be monitored and assessed. Expected to deliver longer term reductions in waste disposal tonnages and costs.
Street Environment Services	The new garden waste service may not fully recover its cost (insufficient take up and/or insufficient waste disposal savings)	Impact of roll out will be monitored and assessed. Expected to deliver longer term reductions in waste disposal tonnages and costs.

## The Economy Department Risk/Challenges

Department & Division	Short Description of Risk	Mitigation
<b>The Economy Department</b>		
Housing Solutions	Overall Benefit Cap (OBC) & Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	Support and enable residents to gain exemption from the Benefit Cap or meet the shortfall through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training and qualifying employment</li> <li>- Disability/Carers benefit where possible</li> <li>- Resettlement into affordable housing</li> <li>- Personal budgeting</li> </ul>
Housing Solutions	Cost of Living Crisis and End of Eviction Ban	Help new TA tenants (PRS evictees) manage rent shortfalls from tapered income (non-Benefits Cap) through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal budgeting</li> <li>- Welfare benefit advice</li> </ul>
Housing Solutions	Increase in bad debt provision on Temporary Accommodation (Bed & Breakfast and Private Sector Leasing) rent arrears because of reductions in personal income due to Cost of Living Crisis	Robust but sensitive TA Income collection processes post pandemic.
Housing Solutions	There is a risk of a further increase in the number of households in Temporary Accommodation - based on an additional 100 households this year above the current forecast	Increase access to private rented accommodation as outlined and agreed in Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.
Housing Solutions	Inflationary pressures on Temporary Accommodation landlord costs, based on an extra 1.5% rental inflation above the current forecast	Reducing expensive Temporary Accommodation is likely to mean procuring additional units outside of this borough. The Council is collaborating with Capital Letters to increase supply.
Housing Solutions	There is a risk of large families being accommodated in B&B due to unsuitable accommodation available	Procure Temporary Accommodation for larger families. Potential to split households on a voluntary basis.
Housing Solutions	Domestic Abuse Act - increase in households in temporary accommodation - extra 70 households next year above the current forecast	Increase access to private rented accommodation as outlined and agreed in Council's Housing Allocation Scheme. Working closely with Capital Letters to increase supply.
Property	Non domestic portfolio - increase in repairs and maintenance costs and reduction in rental income	Review of existing lease arrangements, and a review of the capital maintenance programme.
Planning	Planning application fees income	Service to continue to pursue opportunities to maximise income through Planning Performance Agreements and reviewing fees and charges.

## **Corporate Risk/Challenges**

<b>Department &amp; Division</b>	<b>Short Description of Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
<b>Corporate</b>		
Council wide	Contract and pay inflation in excess of current budget assumptions	The budget proposals include a retained contingency reserve for inflationary risk.
Council wide	Uncertainty over medium term future government and partnership funding and continuation of existing funded programmes (e.g. TfL, Household Support Fund, Homelessness Prevention, Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund)	Continue to work proactively with our partners and highlight the major outcomes being achieved through the grant funded programmes. Develop alternative funding strategies as practical.
Council wide	Increasing risks on IT systems (cyber security)	The budget proposes additional investment in cyber security processes and infrastructure, plus maintain a strong level of General Balances. There will also continue to be regular cyber security updates to staff as appropriate.
Council wide	Abortive costs for development and other capital schemes which cannot be capitalised and therefore would need to be funded by revenue resources.	Continue to work with service contractors to manage within existing budgets

## **Draft Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) 2024/25**

Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duty is a continuing legal duty and is not a duty to secure a particular outcome. Where appropriate the equalities impact will be revisited on each of the projects and/or savings proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duty should precede the decision to implement them.

The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of Disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of Disabled persons' impairment or long term health condition.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Tackle prejudice,
- Promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

In addition to the above, the Council also recognise those who are 'care experienced' as being a protected characteristic.

The Council must give due regard to its equalities duties, in particular with respect to general duties arising pursuant to Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

When making any decisions about growth, savings, and investment the Council must have due regard to the need to advance equality, in particular, to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.

An analysis of the proposal to increase Council Tax levels is detailed below.

Overall, these collective budget proposals are likely to result in a neutral impact on groups that share protected characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010.

Council departments that have outlined efficiencies around staffing, these are centred around residents not experiencing any decline in services. They are anticipated to be realised through 'natural wastage' and the reduction in agency staff, avoiding compulsory redundancies. For any proposed restructure, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the reorganisation process.

As proposals are developed further, the assessment to date will be built upon and the impact will be assessed further and any mitigating measures identified, where appropriate, to prevent negative impact on any groups that share protected characteristics.



## **Analysis of the impact of Council Tax increase and applying Adult Social Care precept**

A 2.99% increase in Council Tax is proposed and the application of a 2% adult social care precept. These increases are modelled by the government in their spending power calculations for local government. This will take Band D Council Tax from £871.86 to £915.37.

By increasing Council Tax, the Council can prevent reductions in services to local residents and in so doing can continue to mitigate against adverse impacts facing individual households.

The percentage increase will be applied to all bands of council tax, as required by law. This will impact on all residents who are eligible to pay Council Tax. The average increase in cost per week on a Band D property is £0.85p. Since Council Tax is applicable to all properties it is not considered that the increase targets any one group; rather it is an increase that is applied across the board. At the same time because the increase is applied to all properties it is not possible to exempt any group.

The impact of Council Tax could be mitigated through the Local Council Tax Support scheme and other exemptions and discounts.

### **Council Tax Exemptions and Discounts**

Some properties are exempt, or qualify for a discount, from Council Tax. The different classes of exemptions/discounts are listed below.

#### Occupied Properties with only the following residents:

- a) full time students (they must complete an application form and return it to us with a council tax certificate from their place of study);
- b) severely mentally impaired people;
- c) a foreign diplomat who would normally have to pay Council Tax;
- d) people who are under 18;
- e) members of a visiting force who would normally have to pay Council Tax;
- f) elderly or disabled relatives of a family who live in the main property, in certain annexes and self-contained accommodation.

If there is only one other resident in the property who does not fall into one of the above categories, then the property will receive a 25% discount rather than be exempt. If there are more than two such residents, then the property will neither be exempt nor receive a discount.

#### Unoccupied properties

- g) owned by a charity are exempt for up to six months;
- h) empty due to resident receiving care in a hospital or home elsewhere;
- i) empty as resident has been sent to prison;
- j) empty as resident has moved to care for someone else;
- k) empty awaiting probate and for six months after probate is granted;

- l) has been repossessed;
- m) is the responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee;
- n) is waiting for a minister of religion to move in,
- o) empty by a student whose term-time address is elsewhere,
- p) empty because it is against the law to live there, including from 1st April 2007 where a planning condition prevents occupation;
- q) empty as it forms part of another property and may not be let separately.

Pitch or mooring

- r) that doesn't have a caravan or boat on it is also exempt.

Those who are care experienced up to the age of 25 are now exempt from having to pay Council Tax. As part of the budget proposals for 2024/25, the Council will now provide exemptions for in-house foster carers and special guardians. This is in addition to over 13,000 households who currently receiving Council Tax support in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Those who feel they are entitled to an exemption are encouraged to contact the Council and information on how to do that is provided by the Council when Council Tax Bills are issued. Support for people struggling with their Council Tax Bill is also offered through advice centres.

The liability for Council Tax is summarised below:

Total dwellings in the borough	94,177	100%
Reductions:		
Exemptions (mainly students, includes care leavers and vacant properties)	(3,415)	(4%)
Council Tax support claimants (elderly & working age on low income)	(10,087)	(11%)
Single person discount (25% discount)	(26,143)	(27%)
<b>Dwellings liable for 100% of Council Tax</b>	<b>54,532</b>	<b>58%</b>

## Page Index

2	2023/24 Budget
3	General Balances and Reserves
4	5 Year Savings and Growth by Department
5	Current Year Monitor
6	Budget Requirement Before Savings
7	Savings and Investment Categorisation
8-9	Social Care - Cost and Trend Analysis
10-11	Children's Services Trend Analysis Data
12	Digital Services Data
13	Environment and Resident Services Data
14-15	Housing Solutions and Planning Data

Page

Expenditure

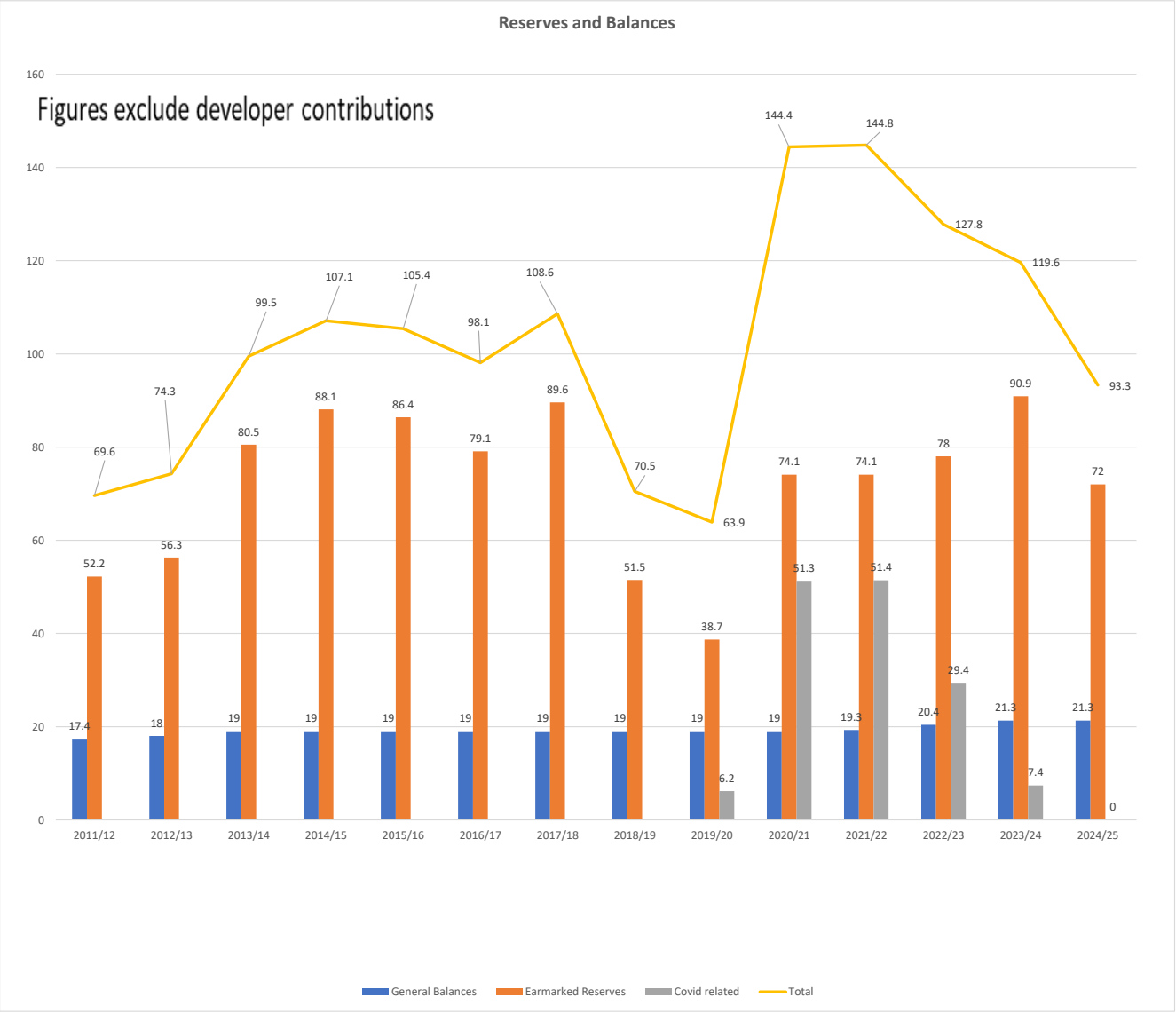
Department	£'m
Adult Social Care	91
Children's Services	65
The Economy Department	52
Public Health	22
The Environment Department	98
Controlled Parking Account	17
Corporate	138
Housing Benefit payments	98
Total	581

By type of spend	£'m
Employees	125
Transfer payments (eg schools)	140
Supplies and services	59
Borrowing/miscellaneous	3
Premises	13
Transport	2
Third party payments (eg commissioned services)	141
Housing benefit payments	98
Total	581

Income

Department	£'m
Adult Social Care	34
Children's Services	104
The Economy Department	33
Public Health	22
The Environment Department	19
Parking	49
Corporate	37
Housing Benefit Grant	98
General Grants	20
Revenue Spport Grant	33
Council Tax	73
Business Rates	59
Total	581

By type of income	£'m
Business rates	59
Council tax	73
Revenue Support Grant	33
Other unringfenced grants	20
One-off funding	7
Housing benefit grant	98
Developer contributions	0
Specific grants (eg public health)	57
Education grants	104
Miscellaneous (eg recharges)	17
Fees and charges	68
Contributions (eg health)	45
Total	581



Page 54

5 Year Investment & Savings by Department

Saving by Department	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Cumulative
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Children's Services	800	700	533	700	1,562	4,295
Corporate	7,500	1,000	1,229	20	1,435	11,184
Public Services Reform	300	-	-	-	-	300
The Economy Department	800	1,100	235	14	1,400	3,549
The Environment Department	1,000	1,100	1,184	520	1,550	5,354
Social Care and Public Health	2,500	2,800	1,670	1,670	2,122	10,762
Total	12,900	6,700	4,851	2,924	8,069	35,444

Investment by Department	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Cumulative
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Children's Services	5,500	1,600	534	2,597	1,531	11,762
Corporate	1,500	1,600	341	691	2,450	6,582
Public Services Reform	100	0	0	0	0	100
Economy	0	1,200	650	1,511	1,450	4,811
Environment	500	1,000	878	1,700	488	4,566
Social Care and Public Health	800	2,400	5,031	4,152	4,803	17,186
Total	8,300	7,900	7,434	10,651	10,722	45,007

**Summary of net forecast outturn variances after action plans  
(month 6 2023/24)**

Department	Forecast Outturn Variance	Potential Value of Action Plan Mitigations	Forecast Outturn Variance after Mitigations
	£m	£m	£m
Social Care	3.848	(0.930)	2.918
Children's Services	2.474	(0.140)	2.334
The Economy Department	1.151	0	1.151
The Environment Department	1.267	0	1.267
Controlled Parking Account	0.593	0	0.593
Corporate Services	0.669	0	0.669
Finance	(0.034)	0	(0.034)
Centrally Managed Budgets	(4.869)	0	(4.869)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.099</b>	<b>(1.070)</b>	<b>4.029</b>
Balance of the uncommitted unallocated contingency	(5.700)	0	(5.700)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(0.601)</b>	<b>(1.070)</b>	<b>(1.671)</b>

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	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
<b>Base Budget</b>	<b>154,400</b>	<b>156,902</b>	<b>160,416</b>	<b>166,608</b>	<b>191,959</b>
Contract & Pay Inflation	4,300	4,132	10,000	17,400	13,742
Reversal of Employers National Insurance Contributions (1.25%)				(1,250)	
Investment in services	8,300	5,235	4,793	10,651	10,722
One off cost of living / Council Tax support				1,000	
Covid-19 Contingency		1,096	1,500		
Impact of Covid-19/ Economic Downturn		2,650	2,641		
Increase in Council General Contingency		0	500	0	
Net Cost of Borrowing		800	400	600	1,000
Recognition of current income projection			(3,400)	(2,000)	(2,880)
Income from investment of cash balances				(5,000)	(5,000)
One off corporate items (Concessionary fares, Collection Fund)		(1,100)	(2,300)	(2,245)	(3,480)
Employee Budget Management				(2,500)	
Contribution to reserves / contingencies	7,200	1,100	3,390	5,287	
	<b>174,200</b>	<b>170,815</b>	<b>177,940</b>	<b>188,551</b>	<b>206,063</b>
New Homes Bonus and Other Revenue Grants	(16,800)	(20,772)	(27,186)	(32,891)	(35,120)
Revenue Support Grant	(17,400)	(17,500)	(18,046)	(20,198)	(21,540)
Business rates	(57,200)	(57,217)	(57,217)	(59,358)	(62,509)
Council Tax Income	(63,700)	(67,331)	(68,440)	(73,180)	(78,825)
One-Off Resources/Developer Contributions	(6,300)	(1,295)	(1,700)		
<b>Budget Gap Before Savings</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>6,700</b>	<b>5,351</b>	<b>2,924</b>	<b>8,069</b>



## 5 Year Savings and Investment Categorisation

### Savings by Category

	2020/21 Savings	2021/22 Savings	2022/23 Savings	2023/24 Savings	2024/25 Proposed Savings
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Budget reduced in line with spend	3,000	-	-	-	-
Commercialisation / Income	2,000	500	650	147	1,675
Estate rationalisation	-	-	-	-	400
Outside investment secured (i.e. Section 106, NHS)	-	-	35	-	-
Prevention	1,500	1,000	-	250	250
Procurement / Commissioning	800	1,400	1,828	880	2,125
Service reconfiguration	900	1,100	892	1,497	2,682
Staffing / Productivity	2,200	1,600	1,446	-	200
Pension triennial valuation	2,100	-	-	-	-
Debt reduction and restructuring	300	-	-	-	-
Service rationalisation / budget reduced in line with spend	-	1,100	-	150	737
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>6,700</b>	<b>4,851</b>	<b>2,924</b>	<b>8,069</b>

### Investment by Category

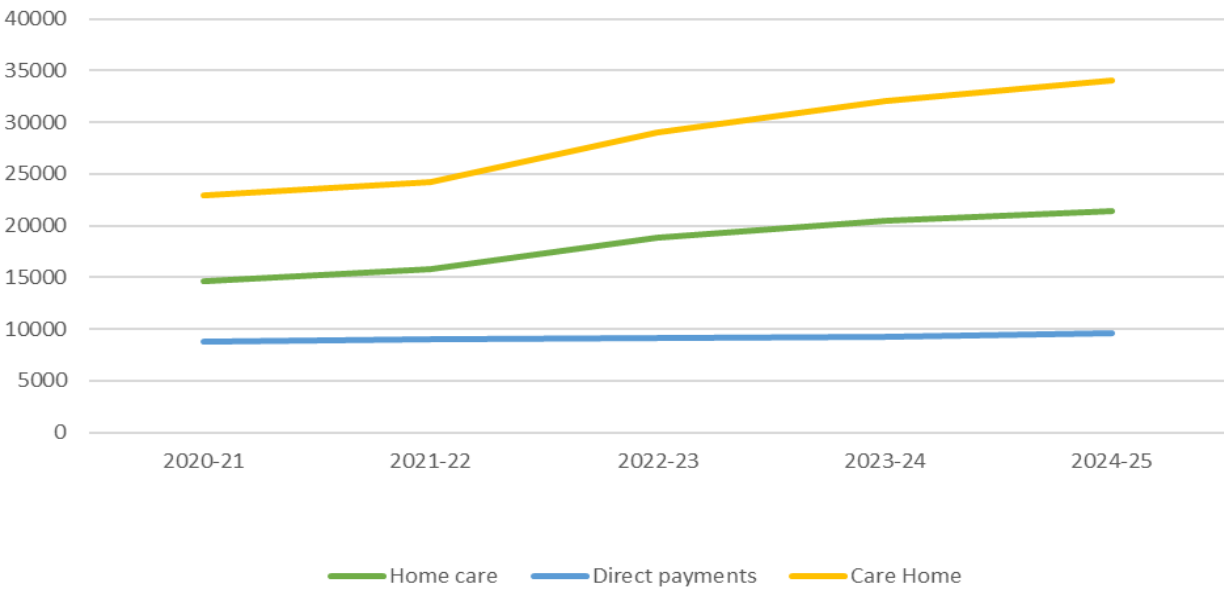
	2020/21 Investment	2021/22 Investment	2022/23 Investment	2023/24 Investment	2024/25 Proposed Investment
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Government related	-	-	1,137	441	-
Increase in demand/demographic growth	6,400	2,400	2,311	6,846	7,852
Resident priority	1,900	500	690	2,358	470
Budget pressure	-	2,300	655	1,006	2,400
Impact of Covid-19 / economic downturn	-	2,700	2,641	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,300</b>	<b>7,900</b>	<b>7,434</b>	<b>10,651</b>	<b>10,722</b>

Social Care - Cost and Trend Analysis

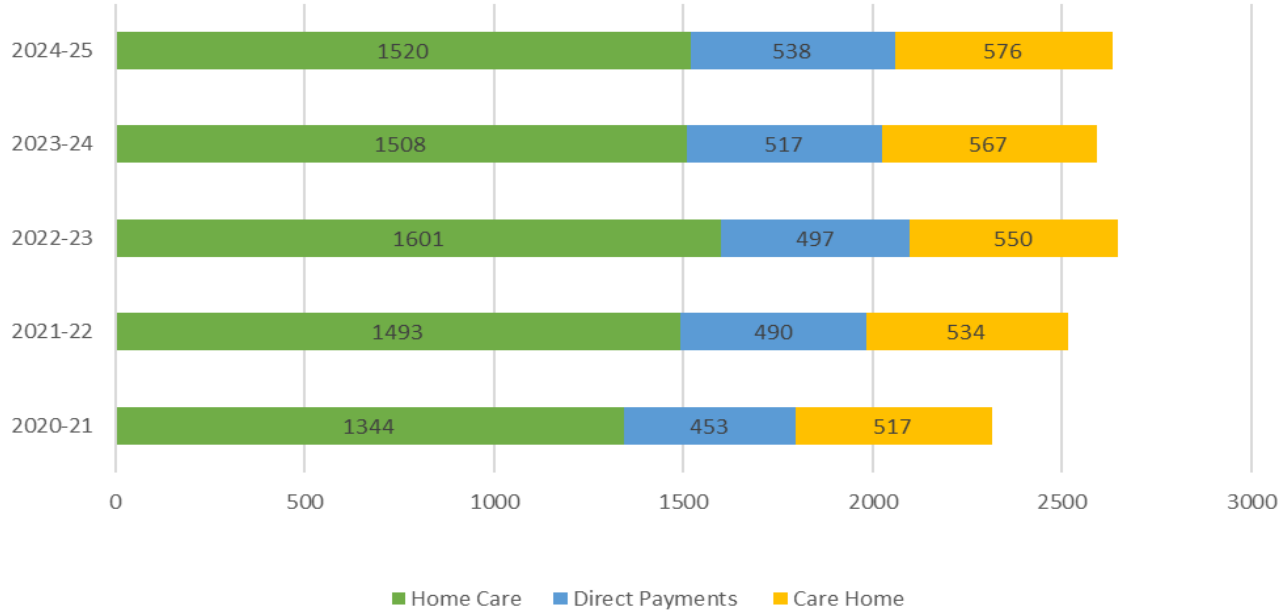
SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	2020-21 Outturn	2021-22 Outturn	2022-23 Outturn	2023-24 Forecast	2024-25 Estimates	Notes and Comments 2024/25
Delivery Cost						
Total Spend	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	
Home Care	14,647	15,747	18,820	20,482	21,400	<p>The costs for 2021/22 are 7% higher than 2020/21 and in 2022/23 costs are 19% higher than in 2021/22. This is primarily due to the impact of Covid, with resident being discharged from hospital as soon as they were medically fit. Additional costs were funded from Covid grants in 2021/22 and partly from the Discharge grant in 2022/23 with the remaining costs funded by Social Care for the ongoing care of these residents. The forecast costs for 2023/24 are 9% higher than actual costs for 2022/23. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, costs have increased due the need for Social Care to move towards paying a "Fair Cost of Care" to providers, with additional costs being funded from the Market Sustainability &amp; Improvement Fund grant.</p> <p>2024/25 estimates increase is due to the higher rates to be paid to providers following the Homecare retender and the greater emphasis on the quality of service.</p>
Direct Payment	8,799	8,960	9,180	9,263	9,634	The forecast cost for 2024/25 are 4% higher than the projected costs for 2023/24, based on budgeted inflation.
Placements	22,955	24,245	29,053	32,088	34,064	<p>Placements costs rose by 20% from 2021/22 to 2022/23. This was post Covid where unit costs were higher, an increasing number of placements and greater acuity of need. Covid grants funded the increased costs.</p> <p>The forecast costs for 2023/24 is a 10% increase from 2022/23. This is due to rising placement numbers and a substantial increase in unit costs due to high inflation and the need for Social Care to move towards paying a "Fair Cost of Care" to providers. These increased costs are partly funded from the Discharge Fund and Market Sustainability &amp; Improvement grants. The 24/25 projected costs of assumed a further 6% increase from 2023/24.</p>
Total	46,401	48,952	57,053	61,833	65,098	
Unit Cost of Activity						
Home Care	17.68	17.86	18.57	19.50	20.26	Unit cost per hour - based on current residents and 2023/24 block contract rate. 2024/25 unit costs based on the weighted average patch rate.
Direct Payments	£360	£324	£335	£327	£340	The average cost per week in 2023/24 has decreased due to resizing residents packages following a reassessment of care needs. The estimate for 2024/25 is based on average costs plus an anticipated 4% inflation increase.
Placements	£968	£1,022	£1,147	£1,250	£1,300	Unit costs per week continue to rise, especially for new placements. There was a 12% increase in unit costs from 2021/22 to 2022/23 and a further 9% increase from 2022/23 to 2023/24. The estimate for 2024/25 assumes a 4% cost increase.
Resident Numbers						
Home Care	1,344	1,493	1,601	1,508	1,520	Residents supported with home care services continues and will continue to increase due to early hospital discharges of medically fit residents, to be supported primarily at home. The department must manage down demand through a range of initiatives in 2023/24 and aims to continue this approach by regular review of home care packages and review and resize double-handed care packages which have come out of hospital.
Direct Payment	453	490	497	517	538	Direct Payments numbers are expected to increase as it continues to be the primary offer to residents to manage their care and support needs, in line with the Council's independent living strategy.
Placements	517	534	550	567	576	Resident numbers have increased over the last 2 years by 6% and are projected to rise again in 2024/25 due to increased demand as a result of increase in acuity of need, Learning Disability transitions and increases in Mental Health Joint Funded residents.
Home Care Package Intensity						
Annual Hours for the Year ('000)	925	977	1,099	1,151	1,234	Home care hours continue to increase due to early hospital discharges of medically fit residents, often with complex care needs, which means social care are incurring the costs of supporting residents sooner than pre Covid. Reablement and Independent Living services have enabled residents regain independence and reduce packages, which helps mitigate demand.

\*ASC FR - Adult Social Care Finance Return

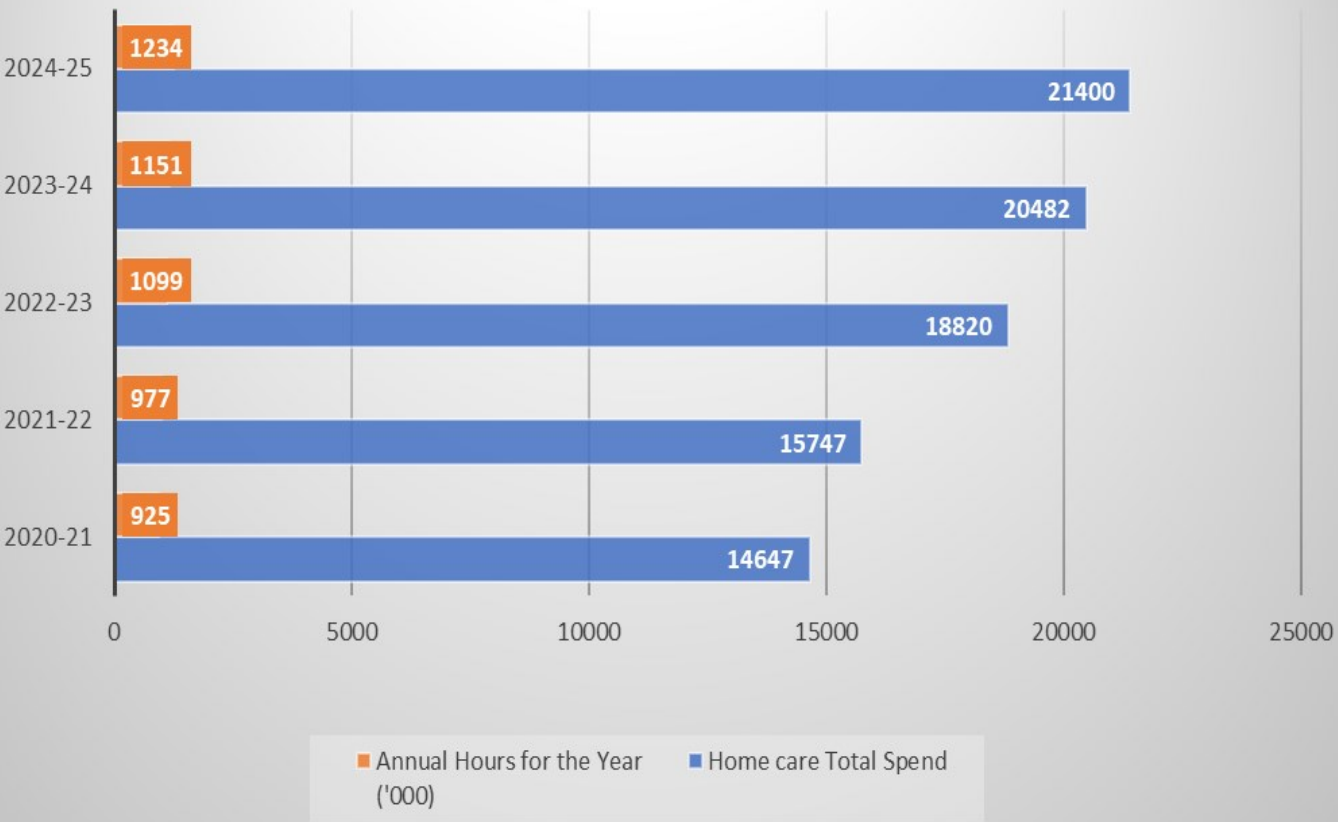
ASC Total Spend

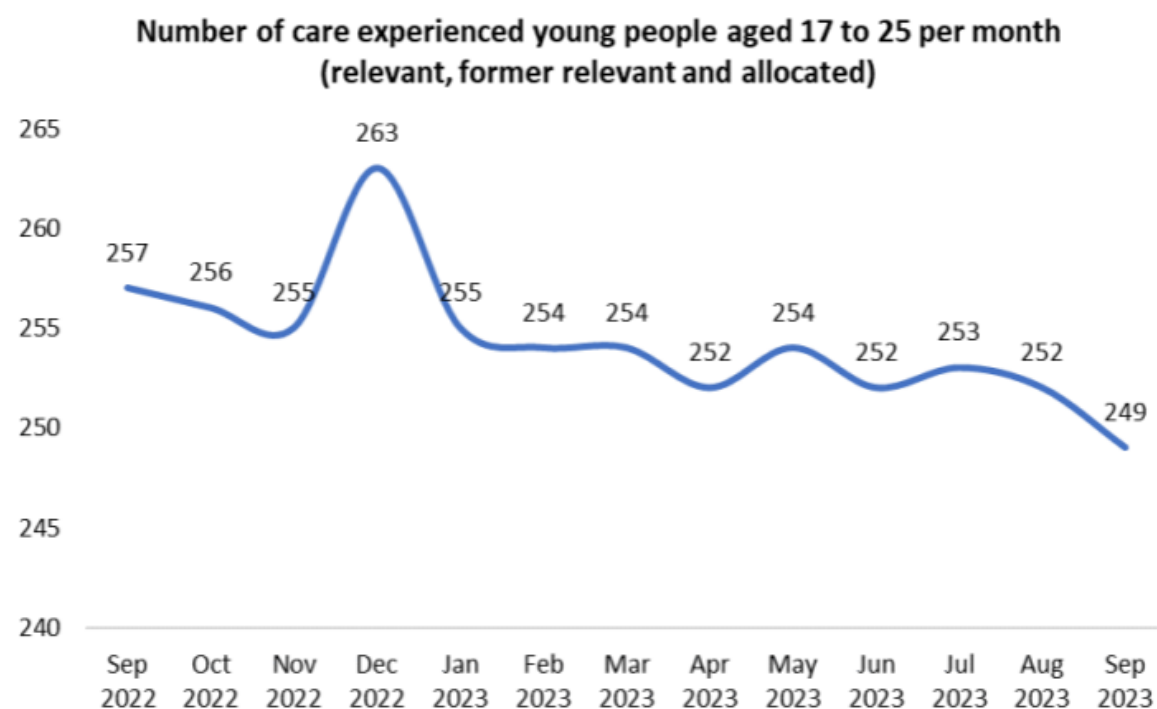
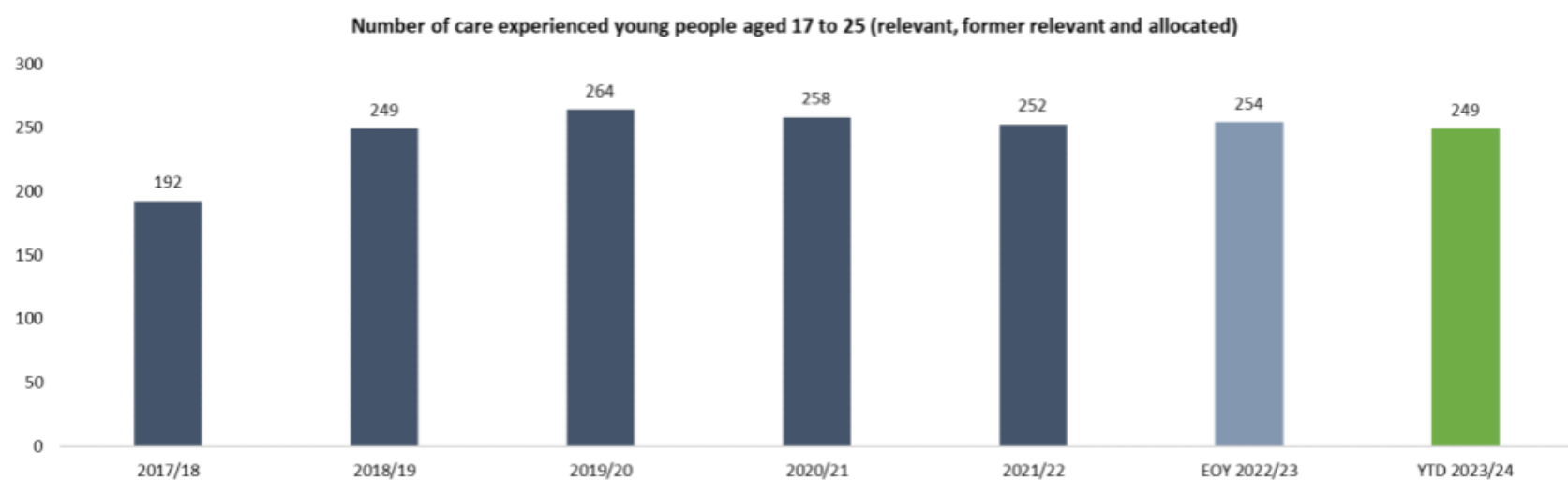
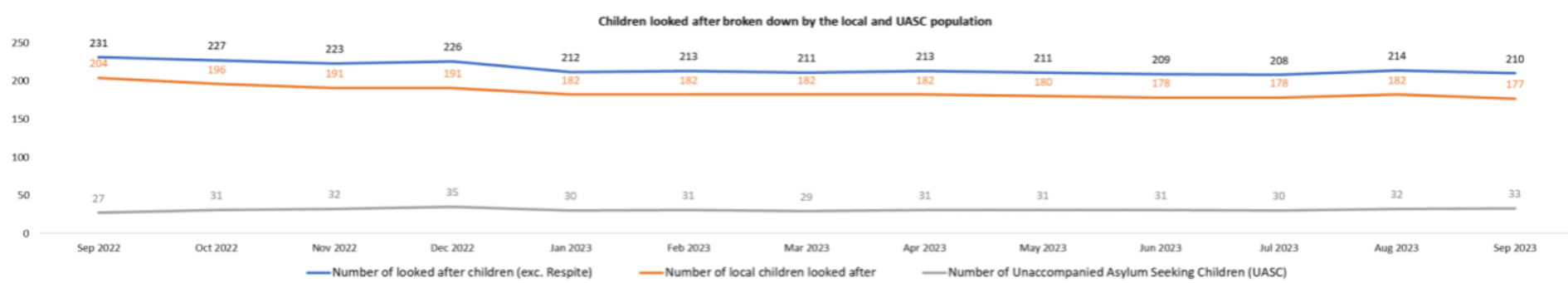
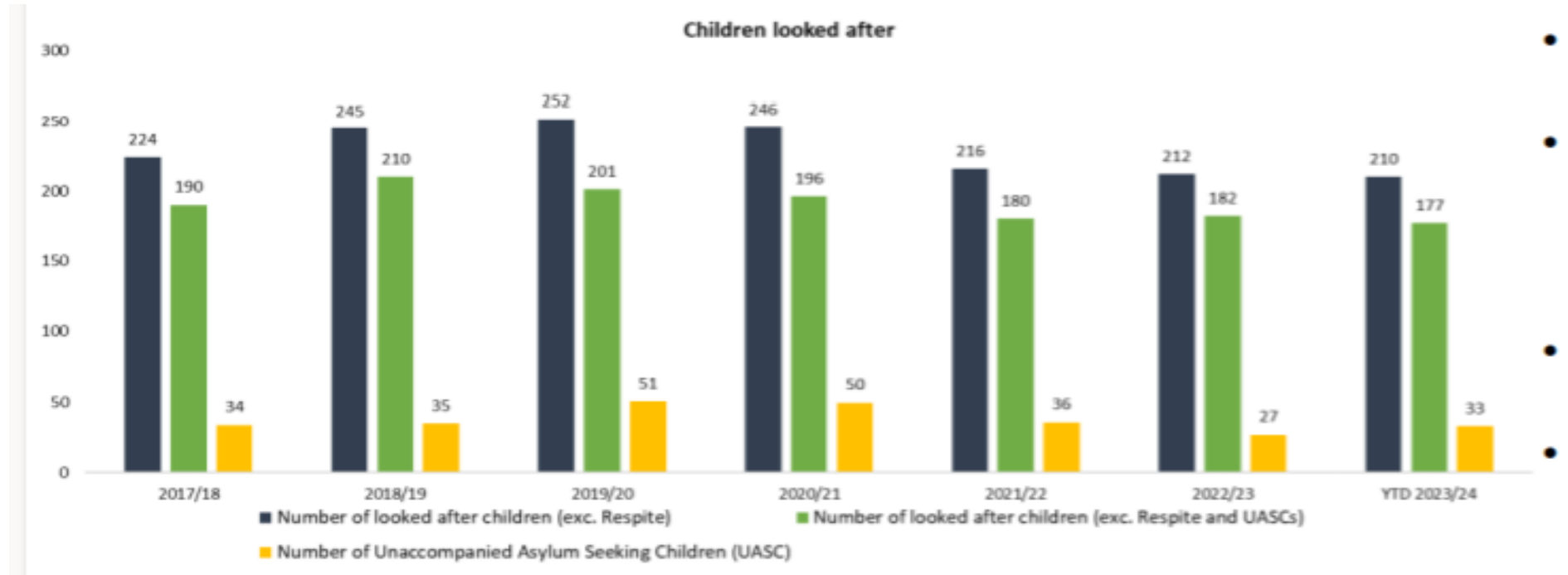


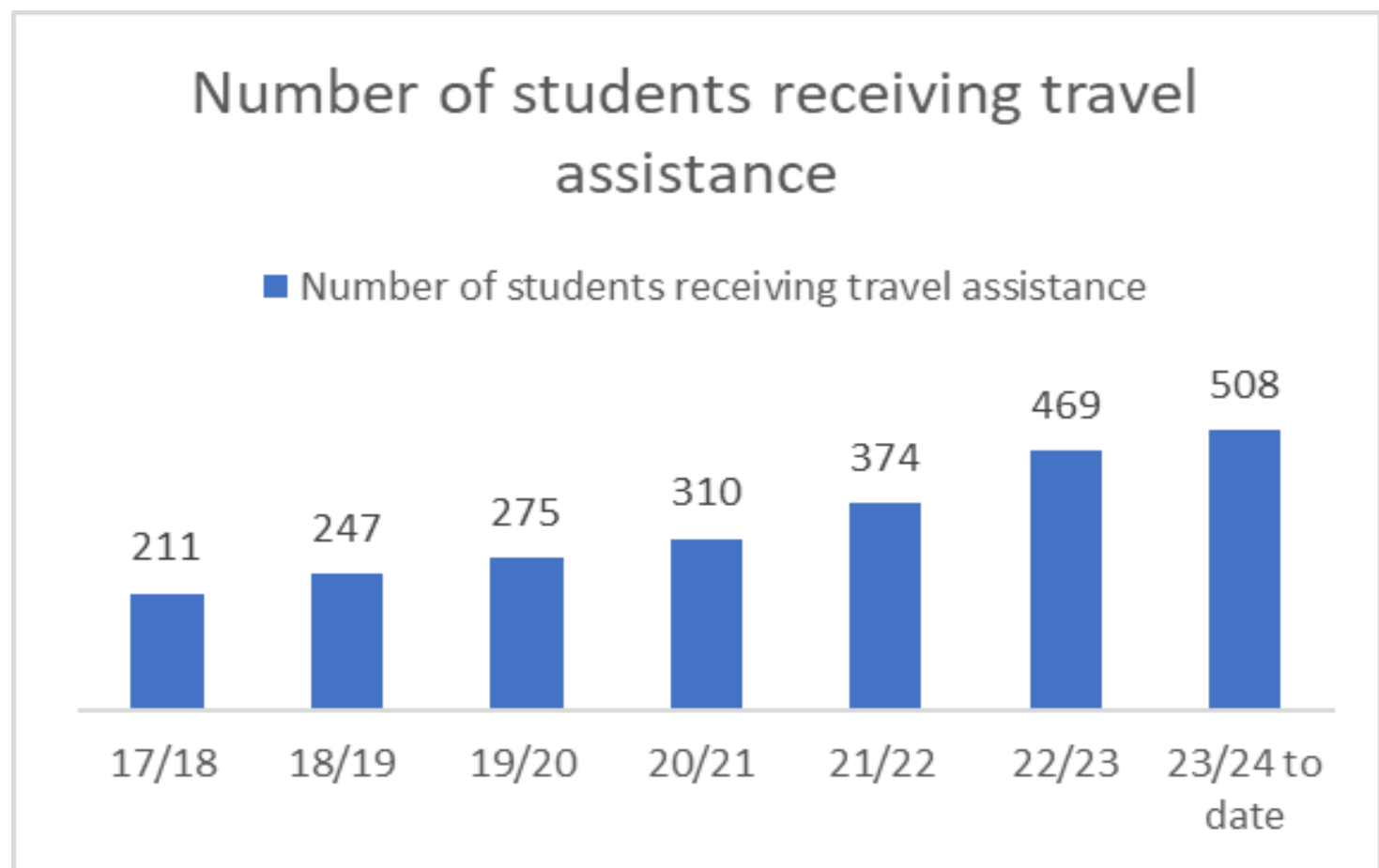
ASC Resident Numbers



Home Care Spend and Annual Hours ('000)

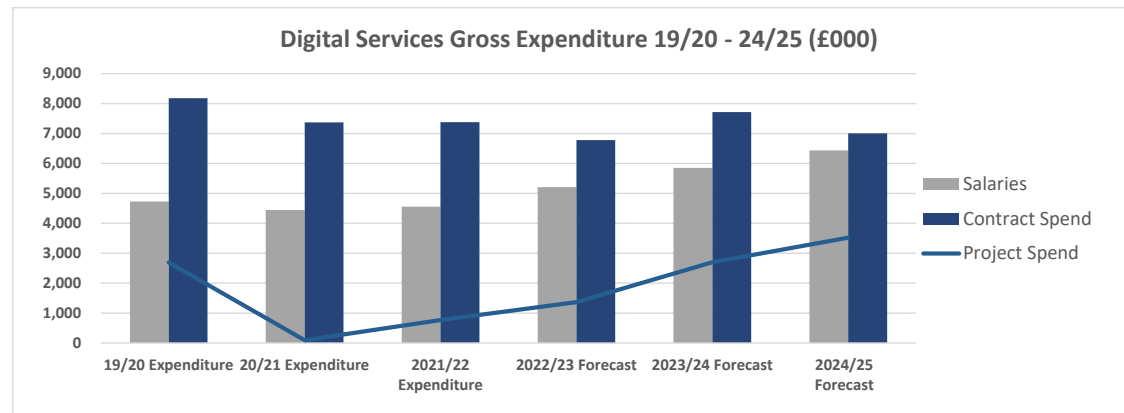


**Key Activity Data -Children's Services and Education**



**Digital Services Expenditure**

Type of Spend	19/20 Expenditure	20/21 Expenditure	2021/22 Expenditure	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Forecast
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Salaries	4,730	4,443	4,555	5,209	5,848	6,432
Contract Spend	8,178	7,370	7,382	6,779	7,714	7,005
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>12,908</b>	<b>11,813</b>	<b>11,937</b>	<b>11,988</b>	<b>13,562</b>	<b>13,437</b>
Project Spend	2,688	93	768	1,363	2,699	3,520
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>15,596</b>	<b>11,906</b>	<b>12,705</b>	<b>13,351</b>	<b>16,261</b>	<b>16,957</b>

**Digital Services Spend Chart**

The salaried expenditure of the service reflects an in-house delivery model since the novation of contracts and staff to the Council from the Hammersmith and Fulham Bridge Partnership (HFBP), and disaggregation from shared services with Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Councils. A revised Target Operating Model was implemented in 21/22. A further £600k has moved from contract spend to staffing, as a result of the new Desktop Services team moving in house.

Contract spend has decreased since 19/20 after the successful delivery of the Techtonic programme (desktop strategy) to replace the former end of life desktop solution, and implement up to date laptop devices which provide better performance to staff, plus support the council's agile working strategy and delivers significant savings. Contract inflation has been factored into the 2024/25 budgets, but the overall decrease represents the move of the Desktop Services team budget.

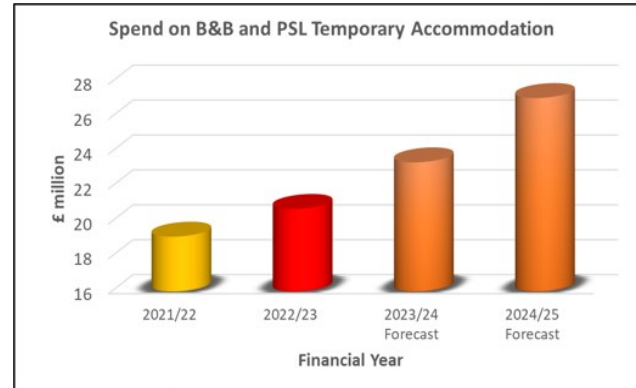
The new desktop services strategy is underway, and project spend is included in 23/24 and 24/25. Investment to move to a modern cloud base from 23/24 onwards is continuing into 24/25. This aligns with the Council's Digital and Information strategy and provides a modern platform that is agile, easily scalable and future proof, as well as with more cost effective technical services. Project spend in 24/25 also includes investment in automation technologies as the Council looks to utilise advances in technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Robotic Process Automation and workflow automation to improve the experience for residents accessing Council services and generate financial savings.

**Environment and Resident Services - Unit Costs and Trend Analysis**

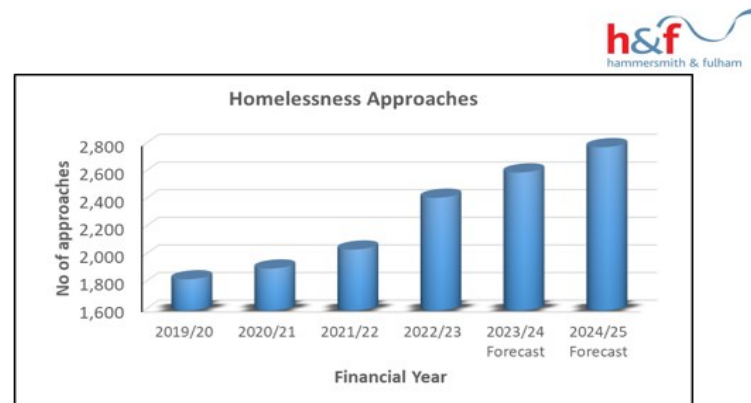
			Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	
Service Area	Service	Unit Measure	2020-21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Notes
Grounds Maintenance	Parks Grounds Maintenance Cost - Per Hectare	£	21,789	21,250	21,958	22,857	22,857	Annual inflationary increases. New zero inflation contract from 2022/23
Grounds Maintenance	Cemeteries Grounds Maintenance Cost - Per Hectare	£	18,782	18,898	19,226	20,013	20,013	Annual inflationary increases. New zero inflation contract from 2022/23
Sports/Leisure Centres	Number of Visits	No.	63,947	262,810	293,239	396,000	408,000	Fewer visits from 2020/21 due to Covid-19 pandemic
Waste Collection	Waste and Recycling Collection Cost - Per Domestic Dwelling	£	35.57	35.97	37.72	39.88	48.85	Annual inflationary uplifts. New contract and new waste collection services for food waste and garden waste from 2023/24
Waste Disposal	General waste tonnages collected per annum	tonnes	55,585	55,435	52,853	52,387	51,243	General positive downward trend
Waste Disposal	Recycling tonnages collected per annum	tonnes	12,573	12,030	11,149	11,345	10,877	General positive downward trend
Building Control	Number of chargeable jobs	No.	443	408	470	470		Reducing service demand due to Brexit and Covid-19 uncertainties. Difficult to predict future number of jobs due to continuing economic uncertainty.
Public Lighting	Public lighting maintenance cost - per column	£	24.47	24.62	22.56	26.39	27.44	Annual inflationary increases
Highway Maintenance	Carriageways and Footways maintenance cost - Per KM	£	8,437	12,441	14,178	15,472	15,755	Reduced spend from 2020/21 due to Covid-19 pandemic
Libraries	Visits to libraries	No.	70,248	440,106	625,581	723,491	850,000	Fewer visits in 2020/21 due to Covid-19 pandemic and temporary library closures. Visitor numbers are increasing, but have not returned to pre-pandemic levels
Libraries	Volunteer hours	No.	60	1,346	2,423	2,454	4,000	
Libraries	Event Attendance	No.	978	10,832	43,797	46,445	62,000	
Libraries	Cost Per Visit (£)	£	34.73	5.95	5.87	4.79	4.27	
Libraries	No. of physical items issued	No.	43,388	173,677	290,079	296,330	320,000	
Libraries	Active members	No.	18,594	13,701	20,465	20,418	27,000	
Resident Services	Business Rates Collection (in year as at 31st March)	%	98.70%	90.86%	95.00%	97.00%	97.00%	Covid-19 pandemic impact from 2021/22 and associated temporary suspension of debt recovery action
Resident Services	Council Tax Collection (in year as at 31st March)	%	93.00%	94.00%	93.00%	97.00%	97.00%	Covid-19 pandemic impact from 2021/22 and associated temporary suspension of debt recovery action

**Housing Solutions trend data****National and local context**

- 242,000 people will become homeless this year, a 10% increase in 2 years
- Councils "running out of temporary accommodation" and "struggling to procure more".
- Rough sleeping in London: increase of 1,700 over last year, a 21% rise.
- 41% reduction in London properties available for private rent since the Covid-19 pandemic
- 166,000 Londoners are homeless and living in temporary accommodation, nearly entire population of H&F

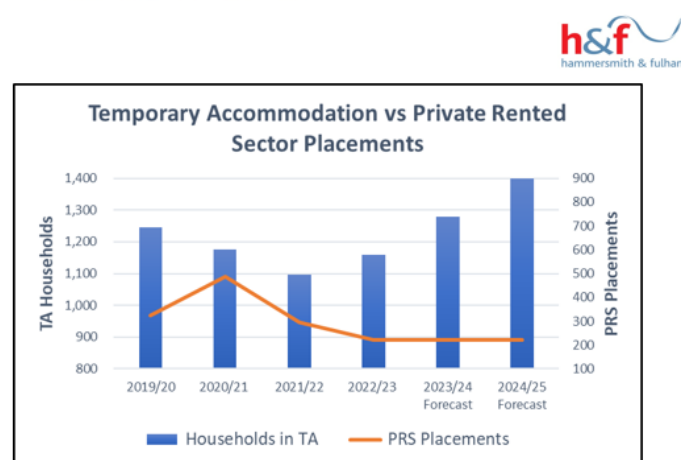


Hammersmith &amp; Fulham Council



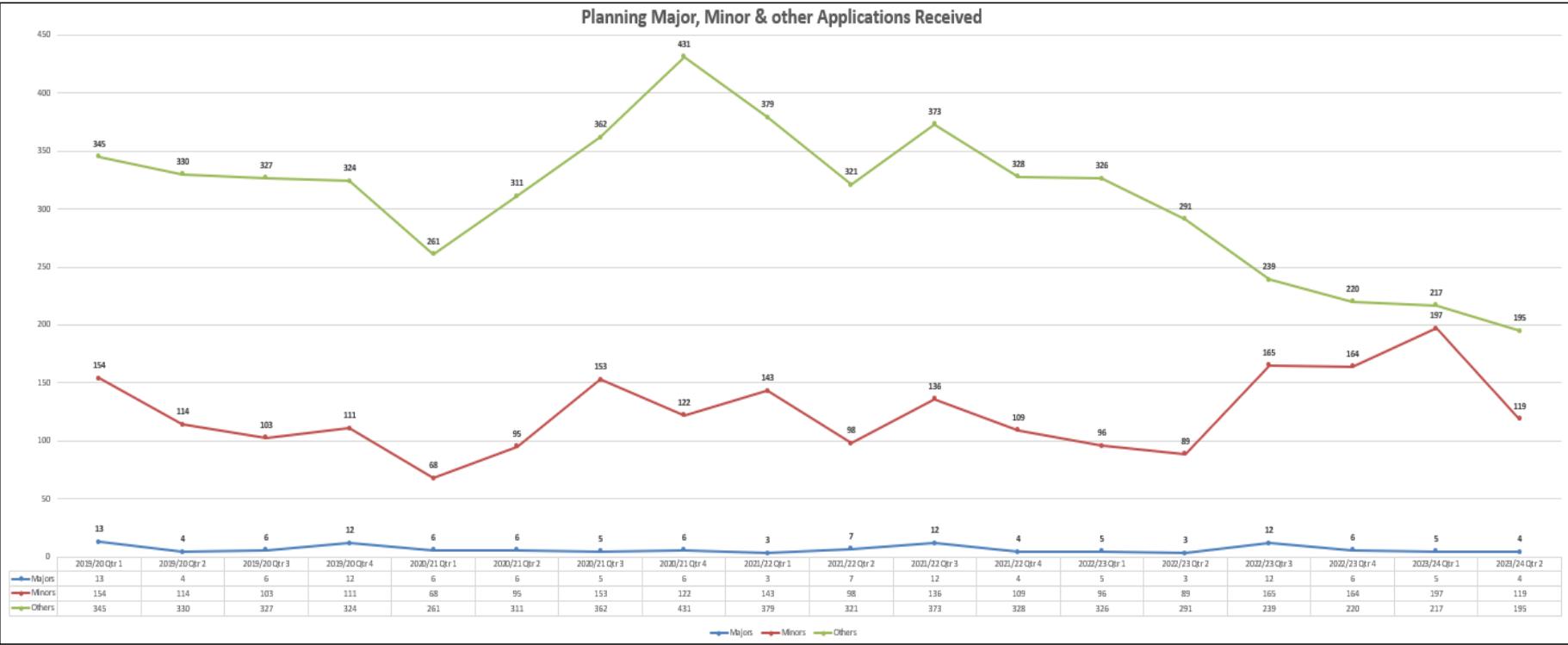
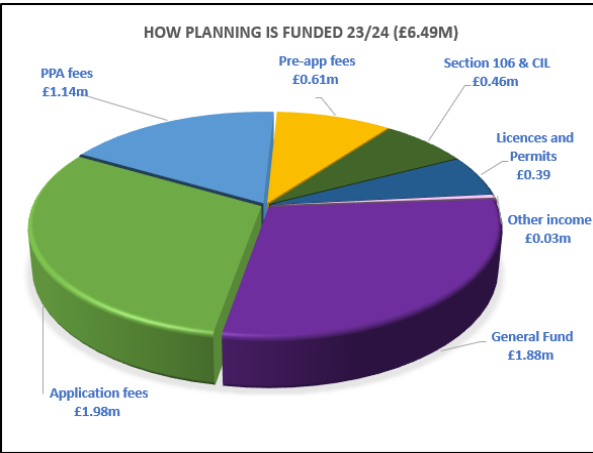
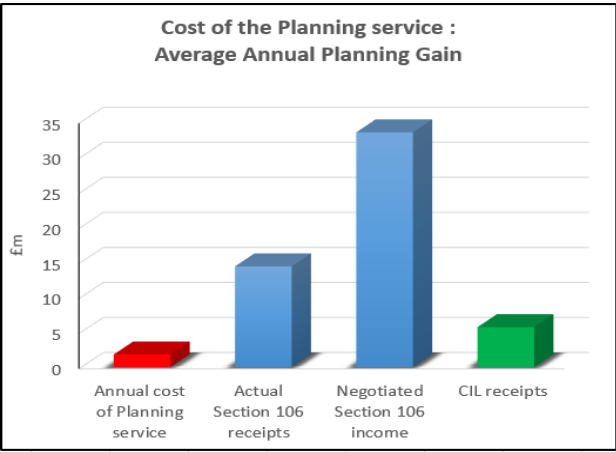
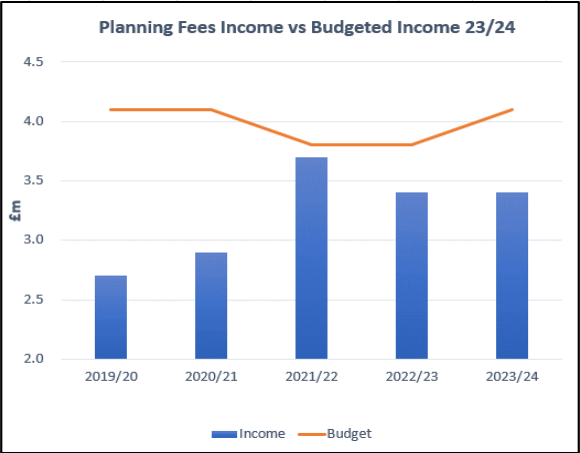
- An exceptional increase caused by many factors including the lifting of the eviction ban post-Covid, the cost of living crisis, the statutory duty towards victims of domestic violence and is at risk of worsening due to the prospect of the ending of refugee funding.

Hammersmith &amp; Fulham Council





Planning services trend data



<b>Funding within Core Spending Power</b>	<b>2023/24 £m</b>	<b>2024/25 £m</b>	<b>Change £m</b>	<b>Change %</b>
<b><i>Government grant funding</i></b>				
Revenue Support Grant (part of Settlement Funding Assessment)	20.19	21.54	1.35	7%
New Homes Bonus grant	1.19	1.60	0.41	34%
Social Care Support grant	17.28	20.59	3.31	19%
Multiplier cap compensation	10.93	12.32	1.39	13%
Services grant	2.50	0.39	(2.11)	(84%)
<b>General Grants (excludes cap compensation tariff and housing benefit admin grant)</b>	<b>52.09</b>	<b>56.44</b>	<b>4.35</b>	
<b><i>Ringfenced Social Care grants</i></b>				
Improved better care fund	10.02	10.02	0	0%
ASC Discharge Fund	1.41	2.34	0.93	66%
Market sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) [now includes the MSIF workforce fund]	2.15	4.02	1.87	87%
MSIF Workforce Fund <sup>1</sup>	1.40	0	(1.40)	(100%)
<b><i>Sub-total grant funding</i></b>	<b>67.07</b>	<b>72.82</b>	<b>5.75</b>	
<b><i>Locally generated sources</i></b>				
Baseline Funding Level (part of Settlement Funding Assessment)	64.17	67.58	3.41	5%

<sup>1</sup> This grant was not included in the Core Spending Power for 23/24 but is now rolled into the 24/25 calculations

**Report to:** Policy and Oversight Board

**Date:** 23/01/2024

**Subject:** Update on Voter ID Requirements

**Report author:** Zoe Wilkins, Electoral Services Manager

**Responsible Director:** Sharon Lea, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer / Nicola Ellis, Strategic Director, Chief Operating Officer, Corporate Services

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### SUMMARY

This report provides an update to the previous report to the Policy and Oversight Board on 20 June 2023 on the implementation of voter ID.

It sets out the key findings from reports published by the Electoral Commission and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and provides further details of activities being undertaken to support residents to vote.

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Board to note and comment on the report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

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Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Our publicity, staff briefings will be by electronic methods where possible, and our review of facilities in polling stations to incorporate the legislation will ensure that additional spend is incurred only where necessary for the efficient implementation of the requirements.

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### BACKGROUND

1. The previous report to the Board explained the new voter ID requirements that the Elections Act 2022 brought into force for all elections including parliamentary by-elections, mayoral and local referendums in England.

2. The first set of local council elections under the new rules were held on 4 May 2023 at local council elections in England, and the 20 June report set out the findings from initial findings arising from those elections.
3. The Electoral Commission published a full report on the May 2023 Local Elections in England on 13 September 2023. The Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities also issued a report evaluating the Electoral Integrity Programme on 30 November 2023. Links to both reports are provided at the end of this report.
4. Both reports provided confirmation about the groups of people who were likely to be adversely affected by the voter ID requirements and gave some slightly more detail.

## **Electoral Commission report on May 2023 Local Elections in England – Summary**

5. The key findings in the Electoral Commission’s report with regards to voter ID from the interim report were set out as follows:

“

- *around 4% of all people who said they did not vote at the elections on 4 May listed the ID requirement as the reason – 3% said they did not have the necessary ID, and 1% said they disagreed with the new requirement.*
- *at least 0.25% of people who tried to vote at a polling station in May 2023 were not able to because of the voter ID requirement – this was equivalent to approximately 14,000 people who were not issued with a ballot paper.*
- *awareness of the need to bring ID to vote at a polling station was high – 92% of people were aware of the need to bring ID to vote at a polling station, although awareness was significantly lower among people who said they did not have an accepted form of ID (74%)*
- *awareness and take-up of the Voter Authority Certificate was low – awareness of the availability of the free Voter Authority Certificate stood at 57% in May 2023, and only 25,000 certificates were actually used as a form of ID on polling day. ”*

6. The Electoral Commission’s research showed that some groups were less likely to have one of the forms of accepted photo ID, “particularly those renting from a social landlord, the unemployed, lower social grades, and disabled people”. The Electoral Commission’s final report also stated that their “evidence indicated that at least some of these groups were more likely to have a problem voting in person on 4 May”.
7. The Electoral Commission’s survey reported that, although 3% of all non-voters said they didn’t vote because they did not have the required ID, this was higher for unemployed non-voters (8%) and for disabled non-voters who reported being “limited a lot” by their disability or health condition (9%).

8. Other groups of electors who may be more highly impacted by voter ID and to be less aware of the requirements are those who do not tend to vote at local elections.
9. The Electoral Commission's survey found that only 84% of this group were aware of the requirement compared to those who more frequently vote at local elections, of which 94% were aware, and people who never vote in local elections were less likely to possess accepted ID (7%) compared to those who always vote in local elections (2%)

### **Voter Authority Certificates information from Electoral Commission**

10. The Electoral Commission reported that approximately 89,500 people applied for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC), the number was substantially fewer than the approximately 250,000 to 300,000 (30-36%) of the people estimated to need one to vote nationally.
11. Approximately 25,000 certificates of those issued were used as ID for voting on 4 May. The Electoral Commission's post poll survey suggests that some may have decided to vote by post instead of attending a polling station but states that the reasons are still uncertain as to why so many other voters did not use their VACs on polling day.

### **Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities (DHLUC) - Evaluation of the Electoral Integrity Programme**

12. DHLUC's report provided further insight into the groups of people less likely to be aware of the voter ID requirements.
13. The report states that 84% of voting age adults living in areas holding local elections were aware of the voter identification requirements. However, this report also found that "awareness was not consistent across the electorate. Those most likely to have heard nothing at all about the requirement were people who rarely or never vote at local elections (18%), ethnic minorities (12%) and younger adults (11% of those aged 18-34)".

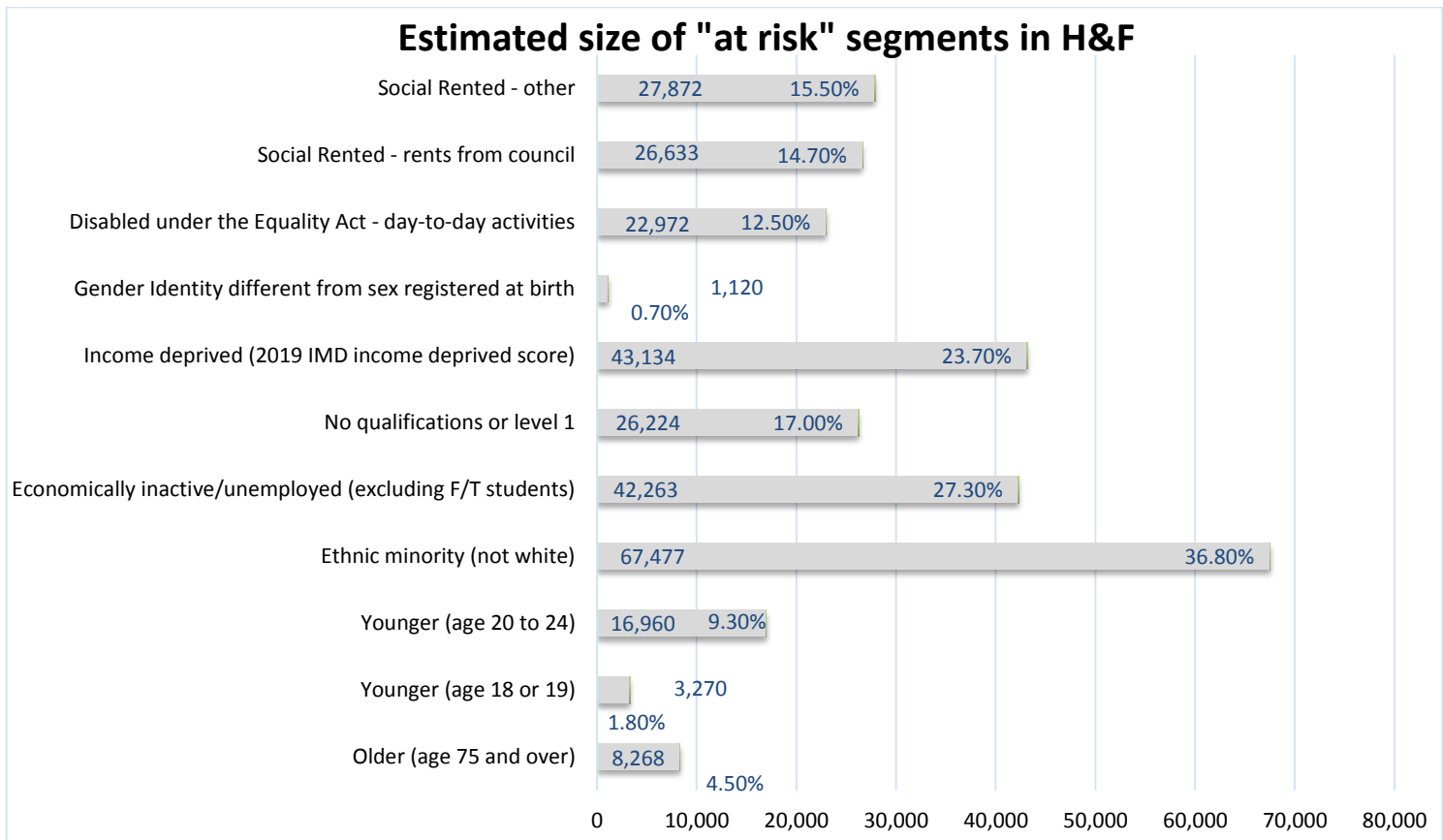
### **Voter Authority Certificates information from DHLUC**

14. The DHLUC report states that 70,017 applications were made for VACs in the run-up to the May elections in areas that had them. Most applications were made online, and half of all applications were made in the month prior to the deadline of 25 April.
15. Overall, 92% of applications resulted in a VAC being issued. The most common reason for rejecting an application was a non-compliant photograph, which accounted for 33% of rejections.

### **EVIDENCE FOR TARGETED COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT – THE KEY "RISK FACTORS" IN H&F**

16. Further work has been undertaken to establish what groups of electors in H&F fall into the groups identified by the Electoral Commission and DHLUC's reports and is summarised in the table below.

17. The figures given are at population level – not all residents in these groups will be eligible to vote – but nevertheless this gives a good indication as to the relative scales of each group within the electorate.



18. These figures have informed our plans for engagement and communications so that we are ensuring residents are given appropriate information and assistance.

### **Ethnicity and languages spoken**

19. ONS data shows that H&F's population is diverse with some wards with more diversity than others.

20. On ID ownership, the Electoral Commission's report on the May 2024 polls show that voters from minority ethnic backgrounds may find it harder to meet voter ID requirements.

21. 3.1% of Hammersmith residents cannot speak English well or at all. Areas with the highest concentrations are around College Park & Old Oak (5.4%) and White City wards (5.2%)

All polling stations have access to a telephone translation service, and the council's website has appropriate links to forms and information in other languages where available.

## **Disabled Voters**

22. An average of just under 13% of voters in H&F report that they have a disability that limits them a lot (6%) or a little (7%).
23. If applied to the local government electorate (at election time) of approximately 130,000 then it would equate to 16,900 voters, although as with the ethnic minority figures, it has to be noted that not all disabled voters will be eligible to vote, as some will not meet eligibility criteria around age or citizenship.
24. All polling station have been visited and all will meet the Electoral Commission's recommendations, such as low-level polling booths, tactile voting devices, seating for voters, and so on.

As the Electoral Commission's report highlights, there is a lack of awareness of the support available to Disabled Voters amongst Disabled Voters. In H&F we have co-produced advertising materials and messages with local Disabled Voters, and we will be updating and re-using those materials for the upcoming polls.

25. Electoral services have started discussions with the Co-production team to consider what additional materials and engagement would be useful for Disabled Voters.
26. The electoral services team are working with the Digital Accessibility lead to ensure that all our publicity materials are accessible.

## **Faith groups**

27. Members of some faith groups, such as Muslim women, are likely to have concerns about voter ID checks taking place in public.
28. ONS figures tell us that Muslims are represented in all wards of the borough, ranging from 4.9% of residents in Munster ward to just under 24.7% in White City ward.
29. We will be ensuring that a privacy area and/or privacy screens are available at all polling stations and that all stations will have at least one female member of staff to assist. A mirror will also be provided to ensure the face covering can be replaced with ease.

## **Unemployed/Economically inactive**

Unemployed and economically inactive residents at 24%+ of the population in H&F are a significant sized minority that the Electoral Commission's report suggests are more likely to find the voter ID requirements difficult, making this

group an important one to target as part of our communications and engagement activities.

## **HOW WE ARE SUPPORTING RESIDENTS TO MEET THE NEW REQUIREMENTS**

30. Communications and engagement are continuing and will increase in frequency and volume over the next three to four months ahead of the London Mayor and Assembly elections in May.

### **Activities that have already taken place include**

31. A flyer was sent to every household with the annual canvassing form and letters alerting residents that voter ID would be required at elections. This didn't raise the numbers of applications for VACs, but as per the DHLUC report, it is likely that most who need a VAC will apply when an election is imminent.  
(Cost:£2647)
32. A page was included in the winter booklet reminding residents of the voter ID requirements and to register to vote for the GLA elections. The booklet was distributed to c.95000 households (Cost: £2000)
33. We engaged with the GLA's Active Citizenship and Democratic Participation team to promote and distribute materials to our local community organisations, especially during Local Democracy Week. Local Democracy Week activities were promoted via social media, using the GLA's resources and our own messaging.

### **Activities to begin or intensify over the next three months:**

#### **A. General audience**

34. Facebook and Instagram advertising targeting borough residents, with an increase in frequency as the election approaches. This will cost £2000 (at £500/month)
35. Internal communications and newsletters will include sections to raise awareness and encourage onward distribution of advertising materials.
36. There will be a one-page advert in the Annual Report booklet. (Cost £2000).
37. E-newsletters will include information re photo ID and elections to be sent to all subscribers.

#### **B. Voters renting from Social Landlords / voters with lower income**

38. Digital Boards - Using high street boards and boards in H&F social housing lifts to raise awareness around Photo ID and election dates. (Design costs tbc)



39. “Warm Welcome” hubs and Cost of Living “pop ups” to be provided with distributable information/posters. (Costs tbc – estimated £500)

### **C. Young voters and future voters**

40. Electoral Services and members of the Youth Council are co-producing messaging for Young People in the borough – this is still in development and is expected to include short videos and reels about the voting process, voter registration and FAQs for publication on social media and distribution to schools.

### **D. Disabled Voters**

41. The existing Disabled Voters campaign, co-created with local disabled residents, will be reprinted and redistributed to include messaging about Voter ID. (Cost £500)
42. The council’s website and information provided with poll cards (see below) will also give more information about what facilities and assistance will be available in polling stations.

### **E. Voters with privacy requirements**

43. A leaflet explaining what privacy arrangements will be offered in all stations will be distributed via the Faith advisory group and associated Facebook and networks.

### **F. Poll cards**

44. Poll cards for May’s elections will be on A4 paper, enclosed into envelopes. This will also allow us to include a flyer about voter ID with the poll cards, which is now being designed.
45. The flyers are estimated to cost up to £5000, dependent on size/colour/folding etc.

## **LONDON EXPERIENCE OF ELECTIONS HELD UNDER NEW RULES**

46. Several London Boroughs have now held polls under the new voter ID rules. These included Hackney, with a borough-wide election for Mayor, while others, including Hounslow and Haringey have held council by-elections.
47. A workshop was held by the Association of Electoral Administrators to share learning from these elections. The discussion was wide ranging and extensive, but some key points are discussed below, although to avoid repetition, all the councils carried out social media communications, provided leaflets and posters and internal communications as we have, or are planning to do, in H&F.

### **Hackney**

48. Hackney had a borough wide election of a Mayor. The election had a very low turnout (22%), and the Elections Manager was not confident that the experience would be replicated at a higher turnout type of election.

- Their experience for the Mayoral election was much in line with the reports from authorities who held elections in May. An estimated 300 voters initially attended stations without ID, and of those around two thirds returned to vote later with acceptable ID. Precise figures were unavailable at the time of this report.
- Hackney utilised the “mayoral booklet” in which candidates provide and electoral address to voters.
- One of Hackney’s biggest assets in spreading information about voter ID were political campaigners who were provided with information via agents enabling them to subsequently inform voters about the new rules.
- Polling stations all had a “placemat” on their issuing tables showing samples of acceptable ID, which polling staff found very helpful, both to confirm that ID was of the right kind, but also to show voters who had arrived without ID what they needed to bring.

## **Haringey**

49. Haringey have had four by-elections since the new rules have come into force.

- Generally polling days have run smoothly – but there is lower turnout for by-elections than for borough wide polls and experience may consequently differ significantly.
- Provided information for polling staff to inform voters about which department in government can be contacted if they have feedback to offer about the new rules, following discussion with voters at initial by-election.
- They are investigating how to support voters to apply for VACs in libraries for future elections.
- Communications and engagement obviously targeted to wards with by-elections, but research into what “risk factors” affecting those wards was used to tailor their communications plans.

## **Hounslow**

50. Hounslow also had a by-election, but they have also conducted some borough-wide communications and engagement activities:

- Hounslow use faith community networks and internal networks to promote and distribute information.
- Libraries were used to display information about polls and voter ID.
- Area forums (hosted by councillors) were also provided with information leaflets and materials.

- Voters sometimes attended polling stations with copies of ID, rather than originals, so voter ID information was/is being updated to ensure that “originals not copies” messaging is clear.
- Use of digital boards was helpful, but one message at a time was better than messaging conveying several pieces of information.

## **FUNDING FOR ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE AWARENESS AND DELIVER THE NEW REQUIREMENTS**

51. Since the last report to the council, at which we noted that a further grant was due, we have received a further £37,690. The grant is not ring-fenced, but the funding was intended to cover changes to the Overseas and absent voting rules at £17,943 and £19,747 for voter id communications costs. This will allow us to conduct all the activities listed above.

52. We are expecting a final grant in April for the remaining provisions in the Act, and the grant determination letter is expected in January 2024.

## **HELPFUL INFORMATION**

Further reports which may contain helpful Information for Officers and Members can be found here:

Electoral Commission’s report on the May 2024 elections in England:

[Report on the May 2023 local elections in England | Electoral Commission](#)

DHLUC’s Evaluation of the Electoral Integrity Programme:

[Electoral Integrity Programme evaluation: Year 1 - executive summary - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

All Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and the Constitution:

[VID+Inquiry+Report+FINAL.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)

Local Government Information Unit, The Impact of Voter ID, the Views of Administrators : [The-impact-of-voter-ID-the-views-of-administrators.pdf \(lgiu.org\)](#)

# Agenda Item 6

## **Policy and Oversight Board – Draft Work Programme 2024**

The Board is asked to note the draft work programme for 2024 and suggest any additions or amendments.

### **29 April 2024**

- Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Local Government
- Other item(s) TBC

### **Items to be scheduled**

- Response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis (update report after Government funding decision)
- Resident Experience
- Co-production update
- Affordable and flexible childcare in H&F
- Corporate performance
- Third sector grants