

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Policy and Oversight Board Minutes



Monday 24 November 2025

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Lisa Homan (Chair), Jacolyn Daly, Natalia Perez, Nicole Trehy and Rory Vaughan

Other Councillors: Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform)

Guests:

Eddie Copeland (Director of LOTI)

Sarbjit Bakhshi (Digital Best Practice Manager at LOTI)

Officers:

Jo McCormick (Director of Procurement, Commercial, and Digital)

Umit Jani (Strategic Relationship Manager – Procurement and Commercial)

Tara Flood (Head of Co-production)

Geoff Cowart (Strategic Lead for Communications and Communities)

Liam Oliff (Committee Coordinator)

Rana Aria (Co-Production Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jose Afonso.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. UPDATE ON AI GOVERNANCE AND ADOPTION

Jo McCormick (Director of Procurement, Commercial, and Digital) introduced the item which was an update on the Council's governance and adoption of Artificial Intelligence solutions. London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF) was moving away from isolated AI pilots towards embedding AI into Council processes. An Ethics Board had been put into place to ensure that any AI that was being used by LBHF had been deemed ethical. LBHF was learning from other Councils in London and across the UK regarding scaling, and LBHF was receiving help from the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI). Eddie Copeland (Director of LOTI) and Sarbjit Bakhshi (Digital Best Practice Manager at LOTI) attended the meeting on behalf of LOTI to answer Member questions. Sarbjit Bakshi explained that LBHF was taking a cautious approach to the adoption of AI which included business cases for all procurement, and all cases were done on evidence. He added that this was the best and most well rounded approach.

Councillor Natalia Perez noted that it was good to hear examples of good practice and asked how innovative approaches were being co-produced, how models were being tested, and how residents were being involved in shaping projects. Jo McCormick explained that the Resident Experience Access Programme had led to detailed work with residents, which was feeding into changes being made, alongside wider changes arising from the Digital Inclusion Strategy. Jo McCormick confirmed that pilots referenced in the report were being used to identify necessary changes before considering how technology could enhance services.

The Chair asked about AI being tested in the housing department and how residents were involved in the testing. Jo McCormick stated that the housing trial was currently an internal project focused on streamlining internal processes. The Chair queried what structures existed within housing to allow service user testing, and Jo McCormick confirmed that tenant groups would assist with this. Tara Flood (Head of Co-Production) added that in the new year, the team had been supported in recruiting a wider co-production group, which would be broader and not limited to just disabled residents.

Councillor Rory Vaughan raised questions regarding Co-Pilot, noting that there were many business cases for the full version and asking who within H&F could approve access. Councillor Rory Vaughan also asked what training would be provided for staff using AI and technology. The Chair queried who the 1,200 members of staff who had access to Co-Pilot, referenced in the report, were. Jo McCormick clarified that Co-Pilot was available across the whole organisation for all staff, with business cases required for enhanced versions for more in-depth work, and that expansion of its use was being considered. Umit Jani (Strategic Relationship Manager – Procurement and Commercial) explained that strong business cases would be triaged and, if justified, progressed to the next stage with support to demonstrate efficiency. He confirmed that M365 Co-Pilot was the universal version and that staff were directed there first. He stated that training was provided on prompts and ethical use, ensuring data remained within LBHF. Councillor Rory Vaughan asked about structured training, and Umit Jani confirmed that initial training was given and that ethical guidance was included.

Councillor Rory Vaughan referred to the current suite of tools AI tools that were available and asked whether at the moment LBHF were currently mostly Co-Pilot-based. Jo McCormick confirmed that Co-Pilot was being used as much as possible as part of the Microsoft package, while a range of other tools were being trialled to assess where they might help.

Councillor Rory Vaughan asked how rollouts were monitored to check for errors in AI outputs, citing concerns about fraud recovery and ensuring genuine savings. Jo McCormick explained that fraud recovery work had identified areas for efficiency, noting that not all efficiencies were cash savings. Jo McCormick confirmed that governance processes ensured initiatives were robust, with sensitive proposals referred to the Ethics Board and others to the usual working group. Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform) added that Fraud, Recovery and Error Detection (FRED) detection software helped identify potential issues, which were then reviewed by the team, and noted £1m in recovery.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked whether benchmarking beyond local authorities had been undertaken to learn lessons. Sarbjit Bakhshi highlighted that other councils often focused on cost-cutting, citing Westminster's use of Google Street View to identify discrepancies in business rates for bus stops.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked LOTI to elaborate on LBHF taking a slower and more grounded approach to the implementation of AI. Sarbjit Bakhshi explained that while there was enthusiasm around AI, procurement decisions were critical, and some boroughs had invested heavily in licences without validating use cases. LBHF had instead rolled out some licences and then paused to validate business cases.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked how many AI proposals had been reviewed by the Ethics Board and how many had been changed or rejected. Jo McCormick confirmed that most AI tools had not required Ethics Board review due to low sensitivity, but Smart Box AI and CCTV changes had been referred.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked whether the Ethics policy and thresholds to be referred to the Ethics Board had been published. Jo McCormick confirmed these were set out in a paper presented to the Committee last year.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly queried the number of working groups at LBHF that were looking at AI, and Umit Jani confirmed that the AI working group met monthly, though less frequently now as best practice had been developed, and that other groups such as the People Digital Transformation Group and the Smart City working group also discussed AI. Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked whether these groups could be scrutinised, and Jo McCormick confirmed that updates were provided to POB.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked what success would look like. Jo McCormick stated that success meant delivering an inclusive vision of services for residents aligned with borough values.

Councillor Nicole Trehy asked about feedback loops from LOTI to LBHF. Eddie Copeland confirmed that opportunities were regularly created for colleagues to meet peers and that LBHF was ahead of the curve on ethics. LOTI published free

resources and guidance on designing use cases in areas such as housing and social care. Umit Jani noted that LOTI acted as a central hub.

Councillor Nicole Trehy asked about Microsoft's responsiveness to feedback. Eddie Copeland stated that collective action from London boroughs was needed to influence Microsoft. Sarbjit Bakhshi emphasised neutrality on technology and noted that Microsoft expected greater licence usage. Jo McCormick stressed the need for a UK-wide local authority approach, ensuring tools met local needs and supported data ownership. Umit Jani confirmed that similar scrutiny applied to Agent AI and other tools. Jo McCormick added that discussions were ongoing with waste providers about AI use.

The Chair asked for examples of poor council practice, and Eddie Copeland noted that some boroughs mistakenly assumed procuring AI would automatically deliver savings, without considering staff training and resource redeployment. The Chair acknowledged that this was an easy path for financially struggling councils.

The Chair raised concerns about residents resisting technology, citing examples of CCTV obstruction and opposition to 5G, and asked what reassurances they should be giving to residents. Jo McCormick confirmed that LBHF aimed to provide accessible, modern services and pointed to its ethical framework.

Councillor Natalia Perez asked about mitigation measures for AI risks. Jo McCormick confirmed that detailed risk assessments were undertaken before use, with high-sensitivity cases referred to the Ethics Board.

Councillor Natalia Perez asked whether LBHF was learning from other local authorities. Jo McCormick confirmed that lessons were being drawn from both councils and the commercial sector, noting that some US initiatives had been rolled back after failing to demonstrate value.

The Chair concluded by requesting future updates on the effectiveness of the Ethics Board, including what decisions had been made by the board and how its governance was working in practice.

RESOLVED

1. That the Policy and Oversight Board noted and commented on the report.

5. UPDATE REPORT ON EMBEDDING THE LBHF COMMITMENT TO CO-PRODUCTION WITH RESIDENTS

Tara Flood (Head of Co-Production) and Geoff Cowart (Strategic Lead for Communications and Communities) introduced the report which gave an update on Co-Production work that was taking place at LBHF. LBHF's commitment to working in co-production with residents was driven by the aspiration to create a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable borough for all residents. LBHF was always looking at new ways to work with residents to transform local decision making by co-

producing policies and services with the community. The council started to embed its commitment to working in co-production by focusing first on Disabled residents, as the Disabled People's Commission (DPC) found that Disabled people, when considering multiple intersectional barriers, were the furthest away from decision-making. However, the DPC were very clear in their report that whilst the work on co-production should start with Disabled residents, the commitment to 'doing things with residents not to them' through co-production should be about all H&F residents.

Councillor Natalia Perez said that it was great to see the wide range of working groups throughout co-production. She noted that the changes being seen were positive and that impact was being made.

Councillor Nicole Trehy stated that engaging 150 residents was a significant achievement, as it was very difficult to talk to residents. She added that residents were hard to engage on good news and asked what learnings had been taken from that and how focus and engagement could be improved. Tara Flood explained that many residents joined groups as an opportunity to tell their story, which marked the start of their co-production journey and led to how their story could shape progress. She noted that the Civic Campus group had been running for seven years, describing it as a great result despite a bumpy journey, and confirmed that conversations were taking place around the next iteration of the group. She added that residents would see the change and how their needs had been reflected.

Councillor Nicole Trehy thanked Tara Flood and commented that she used the work of the co-production team as inspiration when women were not being reflected positively.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly highlighted the difference between co-production and consultation, noting the move from listening to shared power. She asked for an example where residents and officers had disagreed, and residents had prevailed. Tara Flood cited the residents' panel, which had identified the need for planning applications to be available in different formats. Initially, officers had said this was not possible, but training providers were found who could produce accessible application formats, and training opportunities were shared. Tara Flood offered to share more information on this. Councillor Jacolyn Daly said that examples would be useful to show residents the impact.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly noted that the Digital Accessibility Group had challenged on digital inclusion and slowed processes down to be more reflective. Rana Aria (Co-Production Officer) stated that residents looked forward to co-production meetings as they could see the difference compared to consultation and felt like equal partners. She added that even the most cynical residents attended every meeting because they felt valued and eventually became critical friends.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked what the process was to get co-production involved in a project. Tara Flood explained that officers could contact her team directly, or if they heard about a project, they would get in touch and offer support. She said that officers discussed the work and timeframe, and the team helped them understand what was possible with co-production. She noted that on the Cost of Living project, they had been able to start a steering group.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly stated that budget influence had been referred to in the report and asked what residents' influence on the budget through co-production, looked like. Tara Flood explained that Youth Voices priorities had been included in grant criteria, working with the youth council to incorporate those priorities.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly referred to page 39 and 40 of the agenda, which had a table of indicators for successful co-production, she asked whether these indicators would be used as the criteria for identifying whether co-production can work for specific groups. Tara Flood said that they encouraged officers to look at external pots of money to add resources to departments through including co-production, as they recognised co-production wasn't free. She added that advice and training were given out free of charge at the moment as they hadn't worked out how to charge for it at this point. Councillor Rowan Ree stated that services designed around what people wanted were a better use of money than producing services that no one would use.

Councillor Rory Vaughan referred to paragraph 62 and said that there needed to be a pool of residents who were trained and able to get involved in co-production so that officers could draw on them. He also asked about costs as designing services in this way takes more resource. Tara Flood responded that at some point there could be too many service-focused groups on co-production, making it difficult to manage, and that consideration should be given to moving from multiple service groups to a larger pool of people who could be accessed for specific tasks. Councillor Rory Vaughan asked how the benefits of co-production were evaluated and whether resources were available to produce case studies showing how the model had improved service design and delivery. Tara Flood confirmed that longer versions of case studies were included in the report and that another tool being created was a co-production evaluation tool. Councillor Rory Vaughan noted that benefits were difficult to quantify and suggested bringing them out qualitatively.

Councillor Natalia Perez referred to Health and Adult Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee (HASPAC) and said that an update had been received on Charing Cross Hospital Co-Production, which was great to see.

Councillor Natalia Perez asked about there had previously been mention of a partnership board and whether other residents would be involved. Tara Flood replied that they did not think that route was being pursued now.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly raised challenges around communications for co-production. Geoff Cowart stated that challenges came from officers, as residents liked to have their opinion heard, and officers needed to build co-production into their work streams. The Chair commented that if officers had a project and wanted to co-produce, training was part of the culture change. The Chair noted that reports presented to PACs showed that some departments were much further ahead in culture change.

The Chair cited the Defending Council Homes policy as an example of co-production and noted that many historical policies had also been co-produced.

The Chair highlighted the line between consultation and co-production. Tara Flood stated that leadership was important to drive culture change and that more of a

culture shift was needed to make co-production usual business. She said that it was a big task to shift culture and expressed a desire for co-production to be part of the appraisal process to help officers consider co-production at the start of processes. Rana Aria added that initial training had been provided to senior officers and webinars for other officers, noting that culture was easier to change from the top down.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly concluded that co-production should be part of the appraisal process and included in objectives. Tara Flood added that she was happy to work with the People department to look at how this could be implemented.

RESOLVED

1. That the Policy and Oversight Board noted and commented on the report.
2. That the appraisal process change to add a mandatory co-production objective during each appraisal.

6. POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES' WORK PROGRAMMES

The Chair introduced the report which provided the draft work programmes for November 2025 to February 2026.

Councillor Daly mentioned that she had requested an item for Housing and Homelessness PAC on community life and residents safety in the neighbourhood and that this needed to be added to the work programme.

Action: Liam Oliff

RESOLVED

1. That the Policy and Oversight Board noted and commented on the report.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board's draft work programme was presented for discussion and noting.

RESOLVED

1. The Board noted the draft work programme.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were noted:

- 4 February 2026
- 29 April 2026

Meeting started: 7:01pm
Meeting ended: 9:09pm

Chair

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