

Annual Report of the Policy and Accountability Committees 2020/21

Policy and Accountability Committees (PACs) were an innovation introduced by the Council's new administration following the election in May 2014. They implemented the following commitment made by the administration in its manifesto:

“We will open up council decision-making and policy-making by setting up new Policy and Accountability Committees, cutting all but the statutory scrutiny committees. Each new Policy and Accountability Committee will have sufficient support to hold the administration to account and take a full part in developing policy. We will give residents and users' groups co-opted roles on the relevant Policy and Accountability Committees”.

As agreed by Full Council in July 2014, PACs have the following key responsibilities:

- To hold the Cabinet to account
- To be a critical friend to the Executive and to challenge the assumptions behind the policies and actions of the Council and other local service providers
- To amplify the voice and concerns of residents and to give them a mechanism to comment on, participate in, and determine Council policy
- To improve the Council's services by listening to residents and user groups
- To scrutinise decisions made by partner organisations in the interest of the residents of the Borough
- To be independent of party politics and ensure an informed evidence-based approach to policy development

There are six Policy and Accountability Committees:

- Children and Education
- Community Safety and Environment
- The Economy, Housing and the Arts
- Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts
- Health, Inclusion and Social Care
- Public Services Reform

Now in their seventh year, the PACs have continued to deliver engaging work programmes and have given residents the opportunity to be heard on the issues that matter to them. The following pages give an overview of the work of the PACs in 2020/21.

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee

Membership

Councillors

Sharon Holder (Chair)
Lucy Richardson
Alexandra Sanderson
Asif Siddique
Mark Loveday

Co-optees

Eleanor Allen, London Diocesan Board for Schools
Nandini Ganesh, Parentsactive Representative
Nadia Taylor, Parent Governor Representative
Matt Jenkins, Teacher Representative

The Committee was supported by Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education), Jacqui McShannon (Director for Children’s Services), and officers across Children’s Services.

Chair’s introduction

The fundamental nature of any local authority’s Children’s Services should always be to keep young people at the heart of service provision. This has again been shown consistently by H&F’s Children’s Services officers in this annual report. From continuing to manage demands in an extremely challenging budget period, to sustaining excellent school performance in the borough, all whilst managing to maintain Hammersmith & Fulham’s values.

Young Hammersmith & Fulham in turn have responded during Covid-19 by working in collaboration with Children’s and Education Services and supporting their fellow peers including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Thank you as always to CEPAC members for your diligence and scrutiny of Children’s Services and Education.

— *Councillor Sharon Holder, Chair of the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee*

The committee covers a wide range of services aimed at children and families in the borough including education, children’s social services, safeguarding, child protection, children in care, and services for children and young people with special

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educational needs. Below are the key issues that the committee looked at in the 2020/21 municipal year.

The 2021 Medium Term Financial Strategy – Children’s Services Budget

In January the committee held a joint meeting with the Health, Inclusion and Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee to consider the Council’s budget proposals for Children’s Services and Health and Adult Social Care.

Youth Voice Update

In April the committee received an update on the work of the Youth Council during the Covid-19 pandemic, including:

- Producing youth centred communication and videos to share key messages about Covid-19.
- Developing the Inclusive Youth Voice Network
- Organising the 2021 Youth Achievement Awards
- Promoting mental health support for young people
- Collaborating on inclusive employment projects
- Producing the Youth Council Manifesto for 2021/22

Members welcomed the Youth Council’s continued focus on inclusion of young people with special educational needs and disabilities – and discussed how they could be more involved in the Youth Council’s work.

School Performance Report 2021

The Council’s Director of Education updated the committee on the outcomes of the Summer 2020 assessments and examinations in the borough’s primary and secondary schools, and the position with regard to Ofsted school inspections.

Members discussed the challenges caused for schools and pupils by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government’s decision to withdraw Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments.

Members also discussed:

- The work being done in schools to ensure equitability in the system of assessed grades.
- The work being done by schools and the Council’s Education Psychology team around socialisation and children’s mental health following the series of pandemic lockdowns.
- The mental health support available to teachers and school staff.
- The challenges of home education.
- Innovative projects for schools carried out with Imperial College.

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Annual Report 2019/20

In April the committee was introduced to Amana Gordon, the Council’s new Operational Director for Children and Young Peoples Services. She presented the

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Looked After Children and Care Leavers Annual Report for 2019-20 following delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report highlighted the significant responsibilities the local authority has in relation to its Looked After Children and Care Leavers and how those responsibilities were discharged.

Members discussed the issues raised by young people at the Corporate Parenting Board meetings, including the language used to describe them and the need to support them to thrive as adults.

The Council's Draft Equalities Plan 2021-25

The Committee also received an item on the Council's draft Equalities Plan 2021-2025 and the vision to become the most inclusive borough in the country, where residents feel valued, welcome and included, embracing the diversity of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

Members welcomed the consultation and discussed ways to bring it to a wider audience – including sending it all schools in the borough and the H&F Youth Council.

Community Safety and Environment Policy and Accountability Committee

Membership

Councillor Bora Kwon (Chair)
Councillor Iain Cassidy
Councillor Fiona Smith
Councillor Ann Rosenberg
Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillors Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) and Sue Fennimore (Deputy Leader).

Chair's introduction

The global coronavirus pandemic has continued to challenge the daily lives of our residents. The national lockdown and 'Stay at Home' orders have meant that the use of our local services and amenities have become more important than ever before. The committee has been monitoring the use of our parks, roads and public spaces to ensure the best possible access for residents whilst balancing the need for caution in the light of the ongoing public health concerns.

The Committee welcomed the report from the resident-led Climate and Ecological Emergency Commission who have been meeting and working despite the pandemic and whose findings will help shape the work of the Council's Climate Emergency unit.

On community safety, the Committee reviewed the formation of the new Gangs Violence and Exploitation Unit which was set-up in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police with the aim to protect and prevent vulnerable young people in our borough. I would like to recognise and give thanks to our Council officers who have worked so hard continuing to deliver services to our residents despite the challenges of the past year.

- *Councillor Bora Kwon, Chair of the Community Safety Environment Policy and Accountability Committee*

This Committee covers a wide range of areas within the Council. Below is a selection of some of the important topics that the Committee considered during the last municipal year.

The Formation of the Gangs, Violence and Exploitation Unit

In November 2020 the Committee was given a briefing on the formation of the newly established Gangs, Violence & Exploitation Unit. The Unit had been set up in response to an increase in serious youth violence, largely attributed to organised gang activity, in the past 18 months.

The Committee heard about the Council's progress with resourcing the team, developing its operating model and the work officers intended to undertake within the wider Council and strategic partnerships to reduce the harm caused to young people who were at risk from gangs, violence and other forms of exploitation. It was noted that the dedicated unit would consist of 11 Council employed officers and 6 Metropolitan Police Officers. Its goals were to keep people safe, prevent young people from being victimised and exploited by organised criminals.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Commission Recommendations

In March 2021 Members of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Commission (CEEC) were invited to the Committee to present their findings and recommendations to support the development of the Council's climate and ecology strategy.

The Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in July 2019, aiming for the whole Borough to reach net zero-carbon emissions by the end of 2030. The Council appointed thirteen local resident commissioners. The Commission conducted extensive research and engagement, with numerous stakeholders to produce its findings.

Paul Beaty-Pownall (Chair of CEEC) gave a presentation and members got an insight on the following four principles and the proposed actions for achieving a net zero borough by 2030.

- Defining a vision that encouraged change to a zero-carbon society
- Communication and engagement with the local community
- Building knowledge at a local level
- Creating a road map to net zero

Members thanked all Commission members for the detailed and very ambitious report, noting that it was aspirational, and the vision encompassed within the report was very important.

As well as hearing about the findings and recommendations made by the CEEC, the Committee learned that the Council had committed to setting up a community map that would provide everyone with the opportunity to share information about the new initiatives that were already taking place in the borough.

The Committee discussed the importance of the Council defining and implementing a positive vision and embedding a culture of change across the borough to achieve the Council's net zero target by 2030.

The Committee learnt that majority of the young people were passionate about this issue because of the ramifications it had on future generations. One of the main issues for young people was that they felt a disconnect around their involvement in the decision-making process. Therefore, one of the recommendations sought to increase engagement with young people, listen to their views and consult them before making key decisions that would affect them.

Members were informed that the task of the Council was to change the culture of the entire borough through an effective and sophisticated communications strategy to help deliver the recommendations in the report. The Council also needed to prepare a robust communications plan which explained the actions the Authority needed to take so that residents understood the climate change implications.

The Committee also considered:

- Update on Council's use of Investigatory Powers (RIPA and IPA)
- Prototype Containerisation and Food Waste Collection Service
- 2020 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22

Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts Policy and Accountability Committee

Membership

Councillors

Helen Rowbottom (Chair)
Patricia Quigley
David Morton
Guy Vincent
Donald Johnson

Co-optees

Tony Boys
Erik Hohenstein
Chris Littmoden
Judith Worthy

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillor Max Schmid (Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts), Councillor Andrew Jones (Cabinet Member for the Economy), Emily Hill (Director of Finance), and officers across the Council.

Introduction

As a Committee we benefit from a range of expertise which includes dedicated officers and the invaluable support of our co-opted members, the combination of which ensures that we can discharge our scrutiny responsibilities in ways that are both insightful and progressive.

— *Councillor Helen Rowbottom, Chair of the Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts Policy and Accountability Committee*

2021-22 Medium Term Financial Strategy

The annual budget setting process is driven by a recognition that each year local authorities find that they are being asked to deliver local services on an ever-reducing income. Planning services in the context of financial uncertainty has required careful calibration and the long term financial framework of austerity has meant that in order to achieve this, local authorities have had to be increasingly innovative and creative in order to continue to provide sustainable services. The council tax increase is attributed to the adult social care precept and links to Covid related expenditure. Demand led services such as social care and children's services have grown exponentially, and this is likely to increase in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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The economic impact of Covid-19 highlighted a devastating impact on business rates currently expected in the future which represented a funding risk to the council. A Covid specific six-month contingency budget was in place to address the level of associated risk which had also been increased to reflect this.

The Committee recognises that an increase in council tax reflects the government expectation to raise funds locally but the long term economic impact of Covid requires further evaluation and relates to a corresponding reduction in local services. The Committee examined the following areas:

- Developer funding and how this would be utilised for the benefit of residents
- What could residents expect in return for council tax payment;
- The financial impact on the council in sustaining staff and services;
- The financial impact of Covid-19 on commercial services and advertising revenue;
- The financial impact of Covid-19 related expenditure and how the council could mitigate this;
- How Brexit had been a factor considered in preparing the MTFS;
- Cost and trend analysis which afforded a clear financial picture of each of the departments and highlighted problem areas;
- Aspirational changes within social care service delivery and the introduction of artificial intelligence utilised in assisted technology;
- The inclusion of more specific details regarding zero based budgeting MTFS;
- Continued work on the civic campus regeneration in terms of identified risks and opportunities, to be a considered focus for the Committee and to specifically include staff and public engagement as part of shaping ongoing delivery and development;
- Less reliance on employing agency staff calibrated to achieve a significant planned reduction.

2022 Budget Context

The Committee focused on the need to maintain financial health and how innovative and creative approaches could be developed to help sustain efficient services and maintain savings, providing local and national context to the MTFS planning process and council's commitment to delivering more for less within a compassionate framework. The reduction in spend of approximately £58 million has meant that the council was "lean" and that this presents challenges. The Committee plans to undertake future scrutiny within the context of:

- Identifying the most significant financial issues that the council might be expected to address in future;
- Recognising that there will be impactful opportunities to capitalise on and to explore these and identify areas where strong interventions are possible; and

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- Using an evidenced based approach to inform innovative financial policy development.

Draft Equalities Plan 2021-25

The Committee welcomed the draft Equalities Plan 2021-25 which set out the framework and borough direction for progressing equality of opportunity for the next four years and which was also considered by other policy and accountability committees. The Equalities Plan is intended to inform policy making across the council in the context of the impact of the pandemic in the past year. Informing and shaping financial policy will be undertaken through the lens of the equalities plan.

The 12-week consultation period closes on 30th April 2021 and the committee is submitting a response to the consultation and the draft equalities objectives set out in the report with due regard to the responsibility and need to eliminate discrimination for residents, services and the council as an organisation.

Health, Inclusion and Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee

Membership

Councillors

Councillor Lucy Richardson (Chair)
Councillor Jonathan Caleb-Landy
Councillor Amanda Lloyd-Harris
Councillor Bora Kwon (Vice-chair)
Councillor Mercy Umeh

Co-optees

Victoria Brignell - Action On Disability
Lucia Boddington (appointed March 2021)
Jim Grealy - Save Our Hospitals
Keith Mallinson
Roy Margolis

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillor Ben Coleman, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care, and Councillor Patricia Quigley, and Councillor Sue Fennimore, Deputy Leader.

Introduction

The following highlights represent a selection of reports and issues that were considered by members during the municipal year November 2020 to March 2021. The issues continue to be monitored and closely align with equalities priorities. The Committee remains focused on the following areas:

- The council's response to Covid-19
- Health engagement
- Inclusive employment
- Digital patient care pathways post-Covid-19
- Impact of NHS Long Term Plan – North West London Integrated Care System

— *Councillor Lucy Richardson, Chair of the Health, Inclusion and Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee*

Covid-19 – Council Response

The Committee has received regular updates about the council's response to Covid-19 throughout the pandemic. Frontline service delivery to our most vulnerable residents has been maintained by working with service providers with some adjustments to support nursing and care homes provision in the borough. The Committee commended the work led by the Director of Covid-19 which included the

setting up of Community Aid Network (CAN) and Mutual Aid Groups (MAG) to co-ordinate the work of community volunteers in managing local foodbanks, address social isolation and loneliness and providing support in a range of services to support residents.

The Council response has been innovative and creative in every aspect, ranging from successful local test and trace work to setting up vaccination hubs, with the safety and protection of residents being the driving force at the heart of all that has been achieved. This work continued as two further national lockdown periods for England in commenced on 5 November 2020 and 6 January 2021 respectively. The positive news that a vaccine would be licensed for use in the UK was met with a sense of cautious optimism that we were finally beginning to emerge from this horrendous period. This presented a logistical challenge that was met head on by the NHS, clinicians and staff in primary care and we have seen the successful roll out of a vaccination programme on an unprecedented scale.

For many, however, there have been mixed concerns about what the vaccines would offer, how they would work and how they could be delivered in the most effective and efficient way. The narrative around vaccine confidence has been coupled with a recognition that health inequalities have been prominent in understanding the Covid-19 experience which has varied across minority ethnic communities. The council is working hard to address historically low childhood immunisation rates given that the culture of vaccination is also varied and means to different communities. We hope that this will be a conversation that will continue to further explore these issues and begin to address disproportionality in health outcomes.

Covid-19 – working with health partners

The Committee commended the work of health colleagues in dealing with the pandemic recognising both individual and collective efforts to sustain our residents through this difficult and challenging time. The continued delivery of primary care services to ensure that people were able to have face to face contact throughout the second lockdown to ensure that access to healthcare services such as immunisations continued. The Committee welcomed news that the CCG established escalated primary care clinics for those with Covid-19 symptoms with plans to deal with increased patient volume. Collective and joint working was recognised as key across the wider health system, but it was important to continue to deliver essential health services balanced with the balanced with the competing priorities of responding to Covid-19. The Committee accepted that were also combined issues of maintaining segregated space and limited resources to support collaboration across north west London. Elective care numbers were almost on par with the same period in 2019 and that since Covid-19 in March there was a significant backlog that the NHS was working hard to address.

2021-22 Medium Term Financial Strategy (with Children's and Education PAC)

The Committee jointly undertook detailed scrutiny of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 reviewing the overall financial context against the narrative of a ten year austerity programme advocated by central government and which implemented challenging reductions in revenue funding considerably limiting core spending. The council needs to make significant savings whilst concurrently

managing a growth in budget for demand led services in Social Care and Children's Services.

i) Children's Services – MTFS

The council's ambitious plan for Children's Services (CHS) would be underpinned by high aspirations for the borough's children offering protection from harm, abuse and exploitation, and be supported in their learning with equitable access to education. The current uncertainty, historic and current budget pressures meant that the service was having to meet increased complexity of need with higher numbers of adolescents at risk. About 1300 children were supported through social care with a range of needs including 100-50 with complex high needs and who also required a protection plan. The overall income budget was just under £95 million which included £48 million of the delegated maintained and special school grant budget.

The key focus was to protect frontline services with cost reductions predicated on achieving high quality, value for money services. Cost pressures included non-placement expenditure and transport costs specifically linked to social care:

- Significant legal expenditure which was vital to protect vulnerable children through legal proceedings;
- The provision of school meals during holidays and the support provided to about 4000 families, fully met through grant funding;
- Children's services working in partnership with housing services to secure borough accommodation placements for young care leavers;
- Recruitment of independent travel advisors confirming the council's commitment to ensuring quality support services for vulnerable children with complex care needs; and
- The audit advice to set aside reserves as part of contingency planning to fund deficits within the financial forecast linked to high needs block funding.

ii) Social Care - MTFS

The Committee considered the departments overall vision to support residents in remaining independent and to support people with disabilities through the independent living strategy. Significant achievements included no social care discharges however, the ongoing difficulties around how social care should be funded remained unresolved. The financial impact of Covid was considerable and had made it harder to achieve savings for a demand led service. This was expected to grow as the number of those discharged from hospital increased, combined with the accelerated cost of care and the council's commitment to pay the London living wage to contractors and sub-contractors. Social care achievements also included:

- Free home care;
- Subsidised meals on wheels charged at £2; and
- No increase in careline charges.

The department's response to Covid had been highly commended and recognised as an exemplar of good practice when the borough's care homes were closed to protect vulnerable residents. There had been innovative infection control led by Dr Nicola Lang, care home and home care staff were offered financial support to encourage wide ranging testing, and the council procured and freely distributed in

excess of 2 million pieces of personal protective equipment to care workers and frontline staff. An integrated systems management approach had helped to deliver a balanced budget, despite significant and deeply challenging circumstances.

Community Champions

The Committee had previously scrutinised the work of the Community Champions programme in 2016 when it was shared across three boroughs and the programme was now delivered and supported locally. The Committee recognised that one of the more positive outcomes of the pandemic was that generated in immense interest in community volunteering which locally led to the establishment of the CAN and MAGs. Established schemes such as community champions were uniquely placed in understanding their respective communities, able to listen to, empathise and help signpost local services. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to hear from a local community champion project lead who shared their experiences and reflections. Members endorsed the importance and need for strong, health advocacy. The fundamental role of community champions contributed significantly to social value and the way in which such advocates were able to amplify localised support and advice in a unique way.

Draft Equalities Plan 2021-25

The Committee welcomed the draft Equalities Plan 2021-25 which set out a framework of priorities which sought to redress recognised social, health and employment imbalances. The Plan commended insights offered in tackling inequality recognising the disproportionate impact on minority ethnic communities and how this could be proactively addressed through ongoing engagement. The committee is submitting a collective response to the consultation.

Public Services Reform Policy and Accountability Committee

Membership

Councillor Rowan Ree (Chair)
Councillor Christabel Cooper
Councillor Guy Vincent
Councillor Zarar Qayyum
Councillor Dominic Stanton

The Committee was supported by Councillor Adam Connell (Cabinet Member for Public Services Reform), Lisa Redfern (Strategic Director of Social Care), Rhian Davies (Director of Resources), Emily Hill (Director of Finance), and officers across the Council.

Chair's introduction

“There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen”, as someone once said. Although it has only been a few months since the last annual report, with the council working around the clock to respond to a global pandemic, councillors and council officers have done a great deal of work in this time. I would like to thank the members of the committee and officers who have allowed us to continue scrutinising the council's work over this period, in particular David Abbott, Dawn Auger, Rhian Davies, Emily Hill, Mary Lamont, Matt Sales, and Kim Smith.

In January we held a joint meeting with Councillor Rowbottom and the members of the Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts PAC to review the annual budget. It was good to see that despite the additional work and budget pressures created by Covid-19, the council was able to put together a progressive budget that protected services for vulnerable residents while keeping council tax and charges low. Working with another committee allowed us to explore a wider range of views and set of perspectives. I hope that we can look to work with other committees in this way in the future.

In April we were able to consider a very important subject, and one particularly close to my heart, how the council is addressing equality, diversity and inclusion, both as an employer but also across the borough. This was a lively and informative meeting, and it was hugely informative for the committee to hear the passionate contributions from staff working in this area. The committee looks forward to hearing about the progress on this work in the coming months.

- *Councillor Rowan Ree, Chair of the Public Services Reform Policy and Accountability Committee*

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The committee covers a wide range of areas including business intelligence, policy and performance, the Council's continuous improvement and cultural change agenda, organisational transformation, and human resources and development functions. Below are some of the key issues that the committee looked at in the 2020/21 municipal year.

The 2021 Medium Term Financial Strategy

In January the committee participated in a joint meeting with the Finance, Commercial Revenue and Contracts Policy and Accountability Committee to consider the Council's medium term financial strategy and departmental budget proposals. The committee heard from officers about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council and the local economy, the ongoing challenges of rising social care demand, and the financial uncertainty coming from Central Government.

Members discussed:

- The financial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and Britain's exit from the European Union.
- The Civic Campus project and how it had been affected by the periods of lockdown due to the pandemic.
- The potential longer-term impacts of the pandemic and the proliferation of home working on the Council's use of buildings in the borough.
- The Council's efforts to significantly reduce spend on agency staff.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Matters in H&F

In April the committee held a meeting focused on equality, diversity and inclusion matters both in the borough and in the Council itself. The first item updated the committee on corporate initiatives as part of ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion were at the core of services to residents.

Members welcomed the public consultation on the Council's new Equalities Plan for 2021-25 and discussed ways to include the hardest to reach groups in the borough. The committee discussed the Council's vision to become the most inclusive borough in the country, where residents felt valued, welcomed and included – and its commitment to tackling unfairness, promoting diversity and fostering inclusion.

The committee heard from officers across the Council about how inclusion had been incorporated into their work and improved services – including the co-production of services for disabled people and carers, and Covid-19 work carried out with a wide range of different communities in the borough. The committee also heard from members of staff who were working on race equalities initiatives within the Council like black history and social inclusion events that were open to all employees.

Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The committee also considered a report on the focused and fast paced programme of work to enliven the Council's own equality, diversity and inclusion goals in 2020 and beyond. The Council's ambition was to become a more equal, diverse, and

inclusive employer and equalities, diversity and inclusion had been prioritised in the Council's business plan.

The committee learned about the Council's key area of work in this area, including:

- Being an inclusive employer
- The H&F Way (staff-led culture change initiative)
- Embedding co-production across departments
- Tackling racial inequality
- Robust data, insights and monitoring of equality data
- Holding events, memorials and celebrations (Black History Month, LGBT+ History Month, International Women's Day)
- Employment policy development, training and oversight

Members discussed embedding these core values throughout the workforce, how to track and monitor progress, and consideration of what metrics could be used to track more difficult to identify areas of inequality like socio-economic background.

Workforce Efficiency: Reducing Agency Spend

The committee received an update on the Council's efforts to reduce the organisation's spend on agency staff. Use of agency staff had been a focus of the committee's for the past year and members were pleased to hear that there had been a 47 percent reduction of agency headcount and 58 percent reduction in weekly spend.

Members praised the progress made in reducing agency spend at such a turbulent time, and discussed the Council's agency staff policy, the need to balance ambitious goals with service continuity, and the reasons managers chose to use agency staff.

The Economy, Housing and the Arts Policy and Accountability Committee

Membership

Councillor Rory Vaughan (Chair)
Councillor Helen Rowbottom
Councillor Daryl Brown
Councillor Ann Rosenberg
Councillor Adronie Alford

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillors Lisa Homan, Cabinet Member for Housing, and Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for the Economy and the Arts.

Chair's introduction

I would like to thank all of those – including residents, officers and Committee members – who have contributed to work of the Economy, Housing and the Arts PAC during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020-21 municipal year has been a short one, but we have covered important topics including: the Council's policy on defending Council homes; the work with Beam to tackle homelessness; and (at the end of the last municipal year) an update on the Council's work to support businesses during the pandemic. We were also particularly grateful for the hard work and dedication of the Commissioners on the Arts Commission – and those who supported them – for producing such a comprehensive report, particularly given the circumstances of pandemic. It should serve as an important roadmap for further developing the cultural life of the Borough. We look forward to further developments based on the Commission's recommendations in 2021-22 and beyond.

- *Councillor Rory Vaughan, Chair of the Economy, Housing and the Arts Policy Accountability Committee*

On the following pages is a selection of the priority areas that the Committee considered during the 2020/21 municipal year.

Support for Local Businesses during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Committee considered a report, which provided details of the measures taken by the council's business support team to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the borough's small business community during the ongoing pandemic.

Several Business Network representatives and a representative from the Federation of Small Businesses attended the meeting to reflect on their experiences of the action the Council had taken so far. Themes which emerged included: the success of Council's Shop Local and the Shop Safe campaign to open up Hammersmith again. The Committee learnt about the Your Space / Our Space initiative and how the Council had facilitated the fast tracking the permissions businesses required to

operate legally. Other welcome actions included the assistance the Authority had provided to retailers including social distancing / hand washing guidance and signage to enable businesses to operate safely.

Councillor Guy Vincent (Local Business Champion) explained how the Business Networks operated and provided details of the Parcels Not Pollution initiative which had been launched by Hammersmith BID to encourage green Christmas shopping (by reducing the number of local car journeys).

Further points of discussion included: home working and office space in the borough, given the significant downturn in its use and the ramifications this was having on the local economy. As well as, the Council's enforcement responsibilities, mask wearing, 15-minute neighbourhoods and the recovery of the hospitality sector.

Concluding the item, the Chair thanked all the participants for their hard work and contributions to the local economy and confirmed that the committee would revisit some of the themes explored during the meeting at a future committee meeting.

Defend Council Homes Policy Consultation

The Committee considered a report which provided the context of the Defend Council Homes Policy and summarised the work which had been conducted in the past year. The Committee were encouraged to learn that resident involvement and engagement had developed significantly since 2014, and despite the consultation for Defend Council Homes falling within the pandemic, over a thousand residents had responded to the online consultation.

Shirley Cupit, Defend Council Homes Unit Chair, provided a comprehensive presentation setting out what the Defend Council Homes Policy was, as well as details on the recent consultation with council housing residents.

During the course of discussions, a number of issues were raised including: the operational effectiveness of the DCH policy in light of the Developers Charter legislation on the horizon, the likely cost to amend the land register, as well as, the implications for leaseholders wishing to sell their homes. Although the cost implications were currently under review and some matters were uncertain, assurances were provided that leaseholders and the right to buy would not be affected in any way. Officers confirmed that discussions were on going with the Land Registry, but the cost implications of the DCH Policy would be set out in the Cabinet report.

Summing up the discussions, the Chair thanked everyone in attendance for their contributions in devising such a thorough Defend Council Homes policy. He reiterated it was important that residents were fully engaged with any future proposals to redevelop their properties.

The Resident-Led Arts Commission

The Committee were provided an overview of the report, which set out the eight recommendations made by the Arts Commission in its final report, for consideration

by the Council for adoption. Councillor Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for the Economy, expressed his thanks to Jonathan Church, the Commissioners and all the participants in the Arts Commission review which had taken over two years.

Several Commissioners, including the Chair, Jonathan Church attended the meeting. He drew the Committee's attention to recommendations 1 and 7 which were particularly significant. Recommendation 1, which focused on the new knowledge base and making the new strategy and recommendation 7 which centred on building capacity and developing the economic growth of the Arts sector, alongside the Cultural Strategy.

During the course of the meeting, a number of themes were explored including: the importance of the Authority acting as an enabler; the future of funding streams; and the alignment of the arts to the Council's Industrial Strategy. The Committee also examined the changing face of high streets / retail space and the opportunities to use this innovatively in conjunction with outside space. Further topics included performance space and the need for venues across the borough, as well the importance of assisting creative groups such as potters, painters and jewellers.

Closing the item, the Chair confirmed the Committee welcomed the Arts Commission's report and the considerable effort which had gone into producing such a comprehensive body of work. After the Authority had reviewed the recommendations, he hoped the Council would be in a position to take many of these forward with the assistance of H&F Arts Fest and other Arts organisations in the Borough. The Chair commented there was clearly scope for further investment to bring organisations together and the committee wished to monitor the progress of the report in the future.

Tackling Homelessness with Beam

Chloe Moore from Beam provided a presentation, which set out how Beam uses community-powered crowdfunding and technology, to empower and support residents impacted by homelessness into employment and their own rented homes.

The Committee welcomed Beam's work in creating sustainable employment and the impact this had on reducing homelessness across the borough. Councillor Sue Fennimore, Deputy Leader, applauded the crowdfunding model which Beam had devised. She commented that she envisaged links with Beam becoming stronger over time (especially as furlough schemes ended and greater need arose) which meant more and more residents would benefit.

The Chair welcomed the innovation and partnership working with the Council and asked for an update to be provided in the future.

The 2021 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Draft Equalities Plan

The Committee held a joint budget meeting with Community Safety and Environment Policy Accountability Committee in January 2021 to discuss the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Committee also commented on the Council's Draft Equalities Plan, setting the inclusion agenda for 2021-2025.