

**London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
The Economy, Arts, Sports and Public Realm
Policy and Accountability Committee
Minutes**



Monday 30 January 2023

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rory Vaughan (Chair), Liz Collins, Adam Peter Lang, Ashok Patel and Jackie Borland

Other Councillors:

Councillor Sharon Holder (Cabinet Member for Public Realm)
Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform)

Officers:

Andre Mark (Head of Finance –Strategic Planning and Investment)
Kellie Gooch (Head of Finance Environment)
Daniel Rochford (Head of Finance)
Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment)
Steve Hollingworth (Assistant Director Leisure, Sport & Culture)
Jon Pickstone (Strategic Director of Economy)
Roy Morgan (Assistant Director Housing Management)
Joanne Woodward (Director of Planning and Property)
Charles Francis (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Jones (Cabinet Member for the Economy).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Economy, Arts, Sports and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee meeting held on 28 November 2022 were approved subject to clarification being sought on engagement with the Bhavan Centre in West Kensington.

The Chair explained that, as Councillor Rowan Ree, Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform was also attending the Children's Policy and Accountability Committee, he proposed that the running order of the agenda be changed. The Committee agreed that Item 5 – the Update on the development of the borough's new five-year Sport and Physical Activity Strategy would be considered first, followed by Item 4 – the 2023 Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

ITEM 5 – UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOROUGH'S NEW FIVE-YEAR SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY

Steve Hollingworth (Assistant Director Leisure, Sport & Culture) introduced the report which provided an update on the Borough's new five-year sport and physical activity strategy.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang commented on the post pandemic period and the importance of ensuring the well-being of young people. He asked what was being done to encourage young people to engage in activities to support healthy lifestyles into adulthood. In response, Steve Hollingworth explained there was more work to do with Primary Schools, but the Council was already providing physical activity sports sessions with free meals in the summer holidays. However, he stressed it was important to engage with young families and children, so that they developed a sporting habit for life. Councillor Adam Peter Lang agreed this was vital work and it was excellent that activity sessions with free meals were being provided.

Councillor Jackie Borland asked how officers were consulting with local community groups. In response, Steve Hollingworth explained CSPAN (Community Sport and Physical Activity Network) comprised of representatives of the whole sports community, and the strategy had been taken to this forum for feedback from its members. As the Sports Strategy was being developed, it was his intention to put the report out to wider consultation through the Council's website before it finally went to Cabinet for sign off.

Councillor Jackie Borland asked if more emphasis could be placed on the work being conducted in Fulham (and not solely in Hammersmith). Steve Hollingworth acknowledged there were several great parks in Fulham, as well as the Sands End Arts and Community Centre which supported young children, adults and providing services for adults with dementia.

In terms of the priorities set out in the strategy, Councillor Ashok Patel commented that one of the things that was missing was the goal of getting young people off their (phone) screens. He also asked if further details could be provided on the community support and physical activity network. In response, Steve Hollingworth confirmed that this was a difficult challenge, but it was important that children were introduced to sports professionals early so they received the right experience, and in doing so, wanted to adopt the sport and do more of it and build it into their lifestyle.

On CSPAN (Community Sport and Physical Activity Network), Steve confirmed it was Sports England that had suggested their needed to be a network in the

community of all those volunteers - volunteers' groups and sports club which had shared issues such as recruitment, training and finding affordable venues so there were lots of synergies. Steve confirmed that CSPAN met on a quarterly basis and despite good progress, further work needed to be done in this area. In relation to the composition of CSPAN, Steve Hollingworth confirmed the members were drawn from community sports groups. Councillor Ashok Patel asked if these groups should also contain school PE teachers as these were closely connected with schools and pupils. Steve Hollingworth confirmed it would be an important asset if a schools representative joined CSPAN.

Councillor Liz Collins highlighted the cost to parents of accessing sports provision for their children, both in terms of time and financially, and enquired if there was any assistance available. Steve Hollingworth confirmed the Council currently offered free activities in the holidays as well as at half term and these included swimming and learning to row across the borough, provided by Fulham Reach. However, he also acknowledged that physical activity was also about making time, and most people were not time rich.

The Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan asked how disabled residents would be involved in terms of co-production to ensure they received access to good physical activities within the borough. Secondly, he enquired about the Public Accounts Committee's report on grass roots participation in sports and physical activity and whether some of the learning from the report had been integrated into the strategy. He also commented on the lasting legacies of sporting events, such as the 2012 Olympics and what officers' views were on this.

The Chair suggested that the consultation net was cast wider and recommended that the strategy should include the views of school's representatives, the third sector, as well as the Dementia Alliance, the disabled and other groups.

The Chair asked what the timetable was for developing the strategy, how might residents become involved and how would the strategy be measured (for success) and monitored in the future. In response, Steve Hollingworth commented the value of major events was the inspiration it provided to residents to take part in an activity in the future. He highlighted that research was being done on the Birmingham Commonwealth Games last year and how this had inspired and influenced local residents. Steve commented that that Borough took an active role in the London Youth Games which was the largest event of its type globally. In terms of the measures of success, Steve Hollingworth commented that Hammersmith and Fulham was the second most active borough in London and a goal could be to become the most active borough in the country. And, in terms of resourcing, this should be focused on the least active elements, to raise the overall activity profile of the borough.

In response, Steve Hollingworth explained that the themes needed to be developed further and put out to consultation for feedback, and then for the Strategy to be revisited by the Committee in June / July 2023. The Chair agreed that the proposed themes set out in the report were the right ones and suggested that it would be good if the strategy could paint a picture of where the borough was at the moment in terms of the level of physical activity, facilities and where there was perhaps scope to

develop these in the future. The Chair asked for Steve Hollingworth's view on what might be done to engage wider groups to become more involved in physical activity.

Action – That the borough's new five-year Sport & Physical Activity Strategy be revisited at 24 July 2023 committee meeting – Steve Hollingworth

In response, Steve Hollingworth confirmed that the Council could map its current sports facilities to provide a snapshot of current provision and officers would use the Council's current networks to encourage greater participation.

The Chair asked what could be done to increase access to sports such as encouraging residents to think about the types of activity, price and location of this, as well as what could be done in residents' homes or gardens. The Chair explained that one of the biggest challenges was not only to encourage physical activity but also people's mindsets. Steve Hollingworth confirmed that an aspect of encouraging residents to become more active was through Public health and GP's prescribing more physical activity.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang referred to an event which was held over the summer in Fulham Palace, whereby tennis court access was free for local families and cited this as a good example of trying to think creatively to get people involved in a number of physical activities / try a new sport. He also explained that traditional sports were now giving way to a new wave of sports such as mountain-biking, skateboarding and walking football so there was scope to think outside the box. Commenting further, Councillor Adam Peter Lang explained that the Council was posed with a challenge post pandemic and further re-engagement with communities was necessary.

Councillor Liz Collins noted that there had been higher rates of depression during the pandemic where shielding had necessitated staying at home. This had brought about more social isolation and some residents now felt safer remaining in their homes. She asked how officers proposed to overcome this type of resistance. To address these points, Steve Hollingworth confirmed that Environment worked in partnership with Adult Social Care and Public Health colleagues to provide specific targeted support to reduce social isolation where this was needed most.

Councillor Ashok Patel confirmed that he lived between four parks, but when he went for walks, no sports groups were actively using the parks. He commented that in his view, this might be due to the amount of red tape from the Council which dissuaded people from forming or joining new groups. He asked what could be done. In response, Steve Hollingworth confirmed that Hurlingham and South Park were currently over-subscribed, and the Council needed to restrict activity here. He explained that if a group wanted guaranteed use of an open-air space, such as Eel Brook and Parsons Green, it needed to be booked and paid for and so there was cost and affordability to consider.

Summing up the discussions, the Chair thanked officers for the report and confirmed that: there was general agreement that the proposed themes of the strategy were the right ones and promoting physical activity to the less active in the community was important. That existing sports networks needed to be expanded and developed further to include schools, the third sector, disabled groups and Public Health. That

officers needed to ensure co-production was weaved into the strategy and that the strategy needed to include an appendix containing a document which stated what sports and physical activity provision currently looked like, so there was a picture of where the Council was starting from. He confirmed that the Committee welcomed the update the Committee would receive in July 2023.

RESOLVED

1. For the Committee both note and comment on the report.

ITEM 4 – THE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST

Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform) introduced the item. He noted the challenges of finding further efficiencies given the dual pressures of high inflation and high interest rates. Despite this, he was proud of the budget which protected the Council's key front-line services / priorities and included an investment of almost £1m to support residents through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. He thanked Cabinet Members and officers for their hard work.

Andre Mark (Head of Finance –Strategic Planning and Investment) gave an overview of the financial context and the corporate budget.

Key Principles of the proposed Budget Strategy 2023/24 were:

- Pay & Price Inflation (5%)
- Investment for the Delivery of Council Priorities
- Council Tax Increase of 3% plus 2% for Social Care Precept
- Provisional Revenue Grant Settlement
- Some Savings Proposed (£2.9m)
- Maintaining Resilience (Retaining Contingencies)
- Costs of Planned Borrowing (to fund Capital Programme)

Councillor Adam Peter Lang and the Chair congratulated officers and Councillor Rowan Ree for leading on the difficult task of setting a balanced budget which protected front line services.

Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment), gave a presentation of the budget for the Environment Directorate.

Key budget changes that were highlighted included:

- Additional investment in the new waste collection and street cleansing contract (£1.7m). Protects current service standards including at least weekly waste collections. Allows for the addition of new services (such as food waste collections), inflationary pressures, and growth in the number of properties in the borough
- Additional 5% investment for inflationary increases on both major contracts and council staff pay

- Thorough review of fees and charges to generate increased income (£133k). General inflationary uplift, alignment with other boroughs and full cost recovery.
- Sustained reductions in waste disposal tonnages and continuation of discounted rate for processing recycling (£150k budgetary saving)

Councillor Jackie Borland congratulated officers for their work on parks and noted the borough was awarded fifth place in Parks for London. In relation to the Parking Business turnover, she asked what elements were included in the £50 million and if this was just on-street parking. In response, Bram Kainth confirmed this included all parking income, such as pay and display tickets, permits and suspensions.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang commended the work which had been conducted by the LET (Law Enforcement Team) to make neighbourhoods feel safer for residents and commented that this was money very well spent. Turning to the new waste collection contract which had been recently signed, he asked if this was a continuation of contractor or if there had been a change. In response, Bram Kainth confirmed that the old contractor was Serco which had been replaced by Veolia.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang asked for further clarification on the food waste collection and if this is included within the new contract. Bram Kainth confirmed that food waste was included in the new contract and funded, but discussions were ongoing with the new contractor as to when and how exactly this would be rolled out.

Councillor Ashok Patel commented it was reassuring to learn that the Council had a healthy cash balance. Noting that interest rates had recently increased, he asked officers what plans there were to increase these funds. In response, Andre Mark confirmed that cash balances were held across a number of areas as part of the wider treasury management strategy, including a mixture of cash funds and reserves. Councillor Rowan Ree thanked the Treasury Management Team for their work in ensuring Council funds were in the most appropriate places to maximise income. He confirmed that the Authority had not undertaken any new prudential borrowing this year which meant the Council was in a strong position and had an additional £5 million for next year's budget which stemmed from rising interest rates.

Councillor Ashok Patel thanked the Cabinet Member for providing these details and commented that locking this money away in long term investments was an option that could be considered in due course. Councillor Rowan Ree provided details on the wider treasury management strategy and confirmed that maximising returns was an important ongoing element of this.

The Chair, Councillor Rory Vaughan, commented he was pleased there would be additional investment in waste management in the forthcoming year, and that he was keen to revisit the new contract in due course to assess how it was performing (new initiatives such as bins, food waste collection and potentially garden waste).

The Chair asked officers to provide further details on the Resident Experience and Access Programme. Bram Kainth confirmed that officers were continuing to make savings from the programme and the goal of the programme is to improve the experience of residents when they access Council services. A key part of this is managing all the contacts residents make with the Council in the most effective way and ensuring there is a seamless digital experience from the initial contact to service

delivery. He explained that officers are investigating channel shift, so by using resources wisely, the Council is in a better position to provide face to face contact to those residents which need the most help. At the same time, the programme also seeks to increase the number of residents accessing services online. The Chair thanked officers for the overview and confirmed that, if the programme was within the Committee's remit, he would like to revisit the topic in the future.

Councillor Rowan Ree explained the aim of the programme is to reduce siloed thinking across departments and create efficiencies within the Council. Turning to waste management, Bram Kainth commented that the pilot studies had demonstrated there had been a marked increase in recycling in those areas and the schemes had become very popular. One of the added benefits of the scheme was that increased recycling lowered waste disposal costs, as it is cheaper to process recycling compared to general waste.

Following an introduction from Jon Pickstone, Strategic Director of Economy, Daniel Rochford (Head of Finance) gave a presentation on the budget for the Economy Directorate.

It was noted that the overarching aim of the Economy Department was to deliver excellent services, whilst minimising the need for budget growth by:

- Continuing to support income generation Council-wide through Planning Gain, Planning Fees, Adult Learning & Skills, Business Rates, rental income from corporate property and through limiting the call on the General Fund
- Supporting economic growth and development to generate new business rates and council tax income and to reduce Temporary Accommodation and other costs of poverty
- Reviewing the Council General Fund asset base to maximise efficiency, create new development opportunities and reduce existing debt TA costs
- Managing inflationary and demand pressures within existing budgets
- Continuing to mitigate financial risks of £1.3m through maximising income through Planning Performance Agreements and Pre-Application fees

In relation to Section 106 money, Councillor Jackie Borland asked whether developers could renegotiate with the Council if a contribution had been agreed, but market conditions had affected their margins. In response, Joanne Woodward, Director of Planning and Property, confirmed that technically Developers could, but explained these were voluntary agreements which were entered into by the Developer and the Council, and so every party with an interest in the land would need to agree to renegotiate. It was noted that Developers would also incur the Council's costs to renegotiate, so these instances were very rare.

Adding a supplementary question, Councillor Jackie Borland asked if this also applied to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Joanne Woodward explained that CIL was different, as this is a levy which is set in advance by the Council across the borough and paid on the commencement of a development. It was noted that the Mayor of London also collects CIL to pay for large pan-London developments such as Crossrail. Cllr Jackie Borland asked if the £98 million which had been negotiated over the last three years was a source of concern or a material worry to officers if

this figure changed. Joanne Woodward provided details of how the S106 pipeline worked and reassured the committee that these were carefully monitored as finance only became available as set phases or milestones within a development project were met.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang commented that approximately £100 million of Section 106 monies over three years appeared a high figure in relation to what other boroughs might achieve. Joanne Woodward confirmed this was a result of Hammersmith being an attractive West London location for Developers. Councillor Adam Peter Lang asked (officers) if the Council did enough to highlight to residents the success arising from developments within the borough, such as how S106 had impacted on Council tax, schools etc and to translate what £100 million over three years meant.

In response, Joanne Woodward confirmed that £100 million over three years was what the Council had negotiated through planning applications, but the Council would not see most of this funding for a number of years as the funding was tied to the start of the development. However, what the Council did have was money in the pipeline from negotiations which had been conducted 4 or 5 years ago. She confirmed that the Council did publish how S106 monies were spent via a brochure to Cabinet (affordable housing, improving parks, funding the LET Team as well as highways improvements) but there was scope to improve how this good news was shared and publicised.

Councillor Ashok Patel asked for clarification on the income generated by Council properties and secondly, what the risk factors were, in relation to business rates (especially the impact of homeworking). Adding a further question, he noted that while the borough had the third lowest council tax in the country, almost half of residents were not paying the full amount due, with the least able paying no charge. In view of the current economic climate, Councillor Ashok Patel asked if this should be reviewed.

In relation to business rates, Jon Pickstone explained that the Council received approximately a third of the income. As set out in the manifesto, the Council was actively seeking to attract as many high growth jobs to the borough as possible, thereby generating additional business rates. Officers agreed that the under-occupation of office space stemming from Covid was a short-term risk, but that in the longer term, anticipated a growth in business rates.

Daniel Rochford confirmed there was £1 million of commercial property income in the (Economy) budget, and he could provide a schedule outside the meeting which broke this figure down into individual properties. However, also explained there was other commercial income from other Economy Departments, such as the Housing Revenue Account which generated a further £1.3 million income from commercial properties. Daniel Rochford also provided details of the Property Transformation Team and the income opportunities which were envisaged (from this growth item) in the next 12 months to medium term. Jon Pickstone commented that income maximisation was always a goal associated with commercial property.

Councillor Ashok Patel asked what the collection rate was for business rates (and domestic rates). In response, Councillor Rowan Ree confirmed he was proud of the Council Tax Support Scheme and that Councillor Ashok Patel was right, that half of residents did not pay the full amount (of Council Tax) as a result of exemptions or discounts. The Council Tax Support Scheme protected the most vulnerable and the least able to pay and there were no plans to dilute the scheme.

The Chair noted the £95k for High Street Strategies and Management Plans and asked for further details on this (and which secondary High Streets this might involve). In response, Joanne Woodward provided details of the plans which are in place to regenerate local high streets given their increased importance since Covid. She explained that the High Street Strategies was linked with Planning Policy as well as the Economic Development Programme / Industrial Strategy. The Chair thanked officers for these details and highlighted that the Industrial Strategy was on the agenda for the next meeting, and this could be explored further then.

The Chair thanked the officers present for their clear presentations and summarised those areas such as waste management, the industrial strategy and the civic campus which had been identified as future agenda items. Echoing the comments which had been made by Councillor Rowan Ree, the Chair thanked officers for their work on such a challenging topic

RESOLVED

1. That the Policy and Accountability Committee (PAC) considers the budget proposals and makes recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.
2. That the PAC considers the proposed changes to fees and charges and makes recommendations as appropriate.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.00 pm

Chair

Contact officer: Charles Francis
Committee Co-ordinator
Governance and Scrutiny
☎: 07776 672945
E-mail: charles.francis@lbhf.gov.uk