

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Policy and Oversight Board

Date: 24/04/2023

Subject: Policy and Accountability Committees' Update Report

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SUMMARY

This report outlines the areas of work and reports considered by each of the Council's six Policy and Accountability Committees, from January 2023 to March 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the updates of the Policy and Accountability Committees and discuss any areas for future review or collaboration.
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Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Doing things with local residents, not to them	The Policy and Accountability Committees aim to amplify the voices and concerns of residents and to give them a mechanism to comment on, participate in, and determine Council policy.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The Policy and Accountability Committees were set up to hold the administration to account and scrutinise decisions in the interest of residents.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE UPDATES

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee

The Committee considered the following items at its meetings on 30 January 2023 and 27 March 2023:

- 2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Co-production in Mental Health Provision for Young People
- School Performance Report for Academic Year 2021/22

At the January meeting the Committee discussed the financial pressures on schools, the rising numbers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Education Health and Care Plans, safeguarding numbers, and the new Family Hubs. They also discussed how the Council's finance and Business Intelligence teams approached financial forecasting and modelling over the long term.

At the March meeting, members discussed how partners worked with the NHS to provide mental health services, better use of data and how to measure effective service delivery, if services were inclusive, and how the Council could support providers with co-production expertise. Finally, the Committee congratulated the Council's schools and education team on another year of excellent performance and recommended thinking about how to spread the good practice and learning further afield.

Areas of potential collaboration / cross-over with other PACs

- Data sharing and collaboration between the Council, partners, and the NHS
- The Council providing co-production support to partners

Work programme

3 July 2023:

- Early Years
- Care Review Introduction
- Youth Voice

Climate Change and Ecology Policy and Accountability Committee

The November meeting was postponed until January so there have been three meetings since the last update.

The Committee considered the following items at its meetings on 3 January 2023, 31 January 2023, and 28 March 2023:

- Clean Air Neighbourhoods
- 2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Climate Education in Hammersmith & Fulham
- Air Quality and Wood Burning
- Climate Change Communications

At the 3 January meeting, the Committee discussed the impacts of the Clean Air Neighbourhoods on traffic and the amount of carbon dioxide in the air. Residents generally welcomed the scheme, but some wanted the Council to take more radical action. The Committee asked officers for information on the timeframe of implementing rewilding in the borough and the optimal use of land for greening. They also recommended putting clear signage in place to guide traffic through the scheme areas.

At the 31 January meeting, the Committee discussed the Council's budget proposals and had an update on Climate Education in the borough. Members discussed how to overcome barriers and improve school engagement further. They also discussed the new Climate Education and Wellbeing Centre. The Committee requested a report on participants' feedback and school case studies and the business case of the Centre.

At the 28 March meeting, the Committee welcomed Dr Gary Fuller of Imperial College London to talk about the effects of wood burning on air quality. Members discussed the numbers of households using different fuels for wood burning, the positive impacts of ultra-low emissions zoning, the impact of air pollution on respiratory diseases like asthma, and the role of stakeholders in tackling air quality and climate change together. The Committee also discussed communications and recommended an educational and informative campaign about the danger of using solid fuels for wood burning.

Areas of potential collaboration / cross-over with other PACs

- Air Quality – cross-over with Health and Adult Social PAC
- New build energy efficiency and greening – Housing and Homelessness PAC

Work programme

The agenda for the next meeting is to be confirmed.

Health and Adult Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee

The Committee considered the following items at its meetings on 25 January 2023 and 22 March 2023:

- Palliative Care – Model of Care Working Group Update
- 2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Emergency Planning – Response to 2022 Heatwave
- West London NHS Trust Update

The Committee made recommendations on the Palliative Care item around improving the frequency of communication with residents and highlighting opportunities for residents to engage with the group.

During the budget discussion members made recommendations to explore the level of funding available for transitions and how delays may be alleviated. They also considered the accessibility of Careline and other support services. The Committee also discussed the emergency response to the heatwave and made suggestions to improve communication to residents.

Finally, the Committee raised a number of issues with the West London NHS Trust at its March meeting, including a range of actions from previous meetings, the planned closure of a number of Ealing mental health beds, and an engagement project with Healthwatch. Members made recommendations to improve reporting, improve transparency at Trust meetings, and carry out independent audits of Trust services.

Areas of potential collaboration / cross-over with other PACs

- The cost-of-living crisis – The impacts on the borough and actions the Council and partners could take to mitigate them
- Homelessness – health inequalities linked to poor or inaccessible housing
- Health and wellbeing support in the context of domestic violence and abuse, and violence against women and girls
- Digital inclusion in primary health care services

Work programme

Members called for an extraordinary meeting on 26 April 2023 to look in detail at proposals to close Ealing mental health beds.

The agenda for the July meeting is still being planned but the following items were added to the long list:

- Annual complaints and complements report
- Long Covid
- GP Services
- Palliative care

Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee

The Committee considered the following items at its meetings on 23 January and 20 March 2023:

- 2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Housing Revenue Account 2023/24
- Introduction by Richard Shwe, Interim Housing Director (IHD)
- Update on the Council's Development Programme

At the January meeting, the Committee discussed the provisions set aside to support residents with cost-of-living pressures and to procure more affordable properties to meet the rising demand for temporary accommodation. Members expressed concerns for more supply of family-sized homes, more resources for dealing with damp and mould, and additional assistance to residents in meeting the rent increase and costs for potential default. They also noted about the Council's endeavour to help the tenants in resolving rent arrears, the principles and mechanism of imposing service charges, the target of void reduction, and measures taken to bring down the number of outstanding repairs.

At the March meeting, the Committee noted that the Housing team would strive to report items undertaken by the IHD at his introduction, including overall management, strategic financial approach, general repairs, voids management and decant and temporary accommodation.

The Committee discussed the Council's development programme, to build 3000 energy efficient homes over the next four years. Members noted that units had all been developed according to the national space standard and that 4-bedroom properties were needed to cater for bigger families. They also noted that 10% of the units in the development schemes presented would be wheelchair accessible and the schemes were 'zero car', where the car parking on site only catered for people with blue badges. Under co-production, residents would be shown how to maximise the benefits of the new technologies and keep their energy bills low. The new maintenance contracts would be resident-centric and charged according to residents' living style. They further noted that the Regeneration and Development team was exploring embedding social care in new homes to provide extra care housing for those in need.

Work programme

- Items proposed – Greening the housing stock, Repairs, Voids.

Social Inclusion and Community Safety Policy and Accountability Committee

The Committee considered the following items at its meetings on 1 February 2023 and 21 March 2023:

- 2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Annual Performance Report for the Law Enforcement Team
- Public Space Protection Orders
- Harmful Hexagons
- Police Briefing with Superintendent Craig Knight

The Committee discussed the way the Law Enforcement Team worked in the borough and asked for more data about their outreach work to support rough sleepers. They also made suggestions about which communities would benefit from greater engagement with the team. Members also discussed Public Space Protection Orders and asked to be updated on their use.

Finally, members and community representatives spoke with Superintendent Craig Knight of the Metropolitan Police about neighbourhood policing in the borough. They discussed stop and search, diversity in the police force, the outcome of the Casey Review, police numbers, and the need for robust partnership working.

Areas of potential collaboration / cross-over with other PACs

- Cost of living, in the context of community safety – The trend of increased crime during periods of economic uncertainty.
- Development of a borough Food Strategy.
- Digital inclusion - what the Council is doing internally and with partners.
- Mental health and wellbeing in the context of community safety.

Work programme

The Leader announced the Committee would hold a special meeting to discuss the Baroness Casey Review of the Metropolitan Police. Date TBC.

26 July 2023:

- LET Update
- Prevent
- Review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)

The Economy, Arts, Sports, and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee

The Committee considered the following items at its meetings on 30 January 2023 and 29 March 2023:

- Update on The Development of the Borough's New Five-Year Sport & Physical Activity Strategy
- 2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Update on The Refresh of Hammersmith & Fulham's Industrial Strategy
- Update on Development of A Cultural Strategy for Hammersmith & Fulham
- Civic Campus Programme Update
- Update on The Development of the Borough's Parks For The Future Strategy

When considering the Update on the Development of the Borough's New Five-Year Sport & Physical Activity Strategy, the Committee agreed that the proposed themes of the strategy were the right ones and recommended that promoting physical activity to the less active in the community was important.

The Committee recommended that existing sports networks needed to be expanded and developed further to include schools, the third sector, disabled groups and Public Health. The Committee recommended 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 position statement.

During the budget discussion members commended the work of the LET (Law Enforcement Team) to make neighbourhoods feel safer for residents and agreed this was money very well spent. The Committee were pleased there would be additional investment in waste management in the forthcoming year, and the Chair was keen to revisit the new contract in due course.

The Committee recommended there was scope to improve how the successful implementation of Section 106 Agreements was communicated. The Committee also explored business and domestic rates and commended how 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 Committee also discussed High Street Strategies and Management Plans and the importance of regenerating local high streets given their increased importance since Covid.

At the March meeting the Committee considered four substantial topics.

The Leader provided a detailed overview of how the Industrial Strategy was progressing. The Committee welcomed the report and the hard work by officers. It was noted the strategy was ambitious and far reaching and recommended there was scope to improve how the ramifications of the strategy was communicated to residents.

Commenting on the overall update report, the Committee recommended the individual themes would benefit from adding a narrative to substantiate some of the key points. The Committee identified several topics for further investigation. These included the difficulties faced by women returning to work after the pandemic and the need for more affordable childcare, the opportunities presented by the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) and the importance of any future updates incorporating some tangible examples of success (such as people, research and statistics on the number of residents that had attained success through a particular project).

In relation to the Cultural Strategy, the Committee thanked Thomas Dodd and Paul James from the Activist Group for all their hard work. The Committee recommended more engagement was conducted with young people and additional work was done to promote the rich heritage of the borough, including how the cultural/heritage strategy should interact with the borough's tourist/visitor strategy. To ensure diversity, inclusion and activities across the Borough were celebrated, the Committee recommended that a marketing plan for the Arts and Culture Strategy was devised.

The Committee were excited by the developments to the Civic Campus. The Committee recommended that more information about the progress to date (including the plans for Nigel Playfair Avenue), needed to be made available to residents. And further communication across the borough was required to sell the development, as well as celebrate the new feel of the Civic Campus.

Finally, the Committee thanked officers for their work to Develop the Borough's Parks for The Future Strategy, including the need for more trees to be planted and the use of parks by schools. Further issues included the need to return parks and green space to its original state quickly after events and the importance of using the Parks Forum in conjunction with Friends Group to steer future policy and parks usage.

Areas of potential collaboration / cross-over with other PACs

- Mental Health and wellbeing – Links with the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and the Development of the borough's Parks for the Future Strategy.
- Rising levels of obesity - Links with the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and actions the Council and partners could take to mitigate them.
- The cost-of-living crisis – (Regeneration) - Local economy and local employment.
- Air Quality (and greening) - Links with Development of the borough's Parks for the Future Strategy.
- Responding to the climate emergency - Development of the borough's Parks for the Future Strategy and education in schools.

Work programme

The agenda for the July meeting is still being planned but the following items were added to the long list:

- To revisit the Sport & Physical Activity Strategy in July 2023.
- To revisit the Civic Campus in the medium term.
- To revisit The Development of the Borough's Parks For The Future Strategy at the end of 2023.
- Waste Strategy, including the new waste contract.

LIST OF APPENDICES

None.