

Annual Report of the Policy and Oversight Board and Policy and Accountability Committees 2023/24

Policy and Accountability Committees (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.

In May 2022, Full Council created the Policy and Oversight Board to oversee the Council's overview and scrutiny function, delivered through the PACs. The members of the Board include the Chairs of each of the PACs, who report their work and emerging issues to the Board for consideration.

In 2023/24 there were six PACs:

- Children and Education
- Climate Change and Ecology
- Health and Adult Social Care
- Housing and Homelessness
- Social Inclusion and Community Safety
- The Economy, Arts, Sports, and Public Realm

The Policy and Oversight Board and 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 Board and the PACs in 2023/24.

Policy and Oversight Board

Members

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

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform), Councillor Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety), Matthew Sales (Assistant Director, Programmes and Assurance), and officers from across the Council.

The Board is responsible for the creation and monitoring of new policy development via the PACs and task and finish groups. It is also responsible for scrutinising the corporate budget, finance and resources, human resources and performance management, shared services, communications, elections, IT, research and innovation, customer care and complaints, corporate programmes and assurance, and other major cross-cutting functions of the Council. Below are the key issues that the Board looked at in the 2023/24 municipal year.

Update on Co-production following the Disabled People's Commission report

In June the Board received an update on the Council's co-production activity alongside a report on action following the recommendations of the Disabled People's Commission. Members invited Jane Wilmot OBE to speak about her experiences of the award-winning approach to co-production taken with the Civic Campus project. She highlighted the importance of involving a wide range of Disabled people who could bring their lived experience to the project and ensure it was 'ruthlessly inclusive'. Members discussed how the Council, other public sector organisations, and contractors could embed principles of co-production into the way they worked.

Introduction of Voter ID Requirements

In June and January the Board requested updates on the Council's operational response to requirements in the Elections Act 2022 for voters to provide photo identification in polling stations. Members made recommendations around producing election materials in a range of languages and making them accessible to Disabled people. The Board continues to monitor the impact of the requirements of the Elections Act.

Intergenerational Practice in Hammersmith & Fulham

In September the Board commissioned a report into intergenerational practices in the borough and opportunities for developing and embedding intergenerational activities to address loneliness and social isolation. Members invited Jazz Browne

(Chief Executive of Nubian Life), Precisa Getsevich (Youth Council), and Adam Semar (Youth Council) to attend the meeting and speak about their experiences and ideas.

Members discussed how best to promote intergenerational projects and how to support the borough's diverse range of third-sector organisations. Members highlighted a range of issues for further investigation, including intergenerational housing arrangements, voluntary sector grant funding and building intergenerational work into funding commitments, sharing life skills across generations, the Council's role as facilitator, and intergenerational wealth inequality.

Digital Inclusion Strategy for Hammersmith & Fulham

The Board considered the Council's new Digital Inclusion Strategy for the borough, which had been co-produced with residents and voluntary and community sector partners. The strategy aimed to make Hammersmith & Fulham a more digitally inclusive borough, where residents have access to the digital skills, devices, and support they need to achieve their aspirations.

Members made recommendations around improving performance monitoring, the availability of free Wi-Fi in community spaces, and the use of assistive technologies for older people.

The Council's Continuing Response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis

In December the Board looked at the support the Council was giving to residents and businesses through the Cost-of-Living crisis. Members invited Sarah Lumgair (People Arise Now), Stephan Wiedmer (Crosslight), and Phil Storey (H&F Food Bank) to give their insights into the level of need in the borough and what support was required.

Members discussed the Council Tax Support Scheme, how many families had been supported by the scheme, the innovative work carried out in partnership with community groups through the Cost-of-Living Alliance, and the uncertainty around continued funding caused by the Government.

2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy

In January the Board scrutinised the Council's budget proposals for 2024/25. Members and officers discussed the challenges of high inflation, increased pressures of household budgets, new legislative burdens, and uncertainty around local government funding.

The Board discussed the Council Tax Support Scheme, the use of reserves, the impact of the Household Support fund ending in March, funding for cybersecurity, and the ongoing impact of a lack of long-term financial commitments from Government.

Generative AI: Opportunities, Challenges and Risks

In April the Board invited experts from Microsoft and Agilysys to discuss the current state and future implications of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. Members discussed governance around AI programmes and how to balance innovation and risk, particularly in complex areas such as social care.

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee

Members

Councillor Helen Rowbottom (Chair)
Councillor Daryl Brown
Councillor Mercy Umeh
Councillor Lucy Richardson
Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan
Eleanor Allen (Co-optee)
Nandini Ganesh (Co-optee)
Nadia Taylor (Co-optee)

The Committee was supported by Councillor Alex Sanderson (Cabinet Member for Children and Education), Jacqui McShannon (Director for Children's Services), and officers from across Children's Services.

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 educational needs. Below are the key issues that the Committee looked at in the 2023/24 municipal year.

A Year of Youth Voice

The Youth Council gave a presentation covering some of their highlights of 2022/23 including the launch of the Youth Voice Strategy, developing an inclusive Youth Voice Network, and the Youth Achievement Awards. The Committee offered their support for their future plans – including SEND strategy co-production, holding a youth-led hackathon in November, developing champions to support their priorities, and improving communication with schools and school councils.

Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report

Mike Howard (Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership) presented the partnership's first annual report, covering 1 April 2021 to 31 October 2022. He spoke about the benefits of having a sovereign partnership including better collaborative working and more of a focus on local issues, which enabled the best outcomes for children and young people in the borough.

Members discussed ways to use the Council's Business Intelligence data to lobby Government for changes to the way the most serious cases were handled. In relation to one of the cases in the report, the Committee asked about how mould and damp housing issues could be escalated and resolved if children were involved. Officers also offered to attend an upcoming Parentsactive meeting to discuss how the referral process worked.

Virtual School Annual Report 2022/23

Members expressed appreciation for the work of the Virtual School, including the collaboration with University College London to enable care experienced young people to access opportunities made available by local business matched by the local authority. It was noted that through the “Attachment Aware Schools’ programme”, centralised training and individual support had been provided to schools to enable the provision of a clear bridge between education and social care. On capacity for expansion, it was understood that the duty of the Virtual School Head had been extended to include promoting the education of children who had had a social worker within the last 6 years. It was hoped that the stretched efforts could be articulated into sustainable values to shape future service delivery.

Hammersmith and Fulham Local Area Outcomes Framework

The Committee discussed the Framework which had been developed based on feedback from an annual school survey that had been co-produced with children and young people with SEND. It was noted that after setting up the Framework and gaining a clear picture from the data, the Council would measure the performance against the outcome framework for the two to be more closely aligned with each other. As regards how the performance measures would impact on the education outcomes, the Council undertook to provide a sample of scorecard which had captured the performance of the children and young people with SEND for information.

Implementing the Industrial Strategy in Education

Members received a briefing on the events held after the conference with teachers co-hosted by Imperial College to kick off the Industrial Strategy in Education, such as interviews of young people with local businesses in White City, curriculum mapping, and delivery by schools and businesses matched to work together. As regards strengthening the accredited teacher training to provide career guidance early, the local authority indicated its intention to start industrial education for students at Key Stage 2/3 and develop bespoke curriculum involving new internship and work experience opportunities which shall enable H&F’s children and young people to envision a future that might be quite different from now. More information on the oversight of the Industrial Strategy in Education would be provided when the Committee considered the Annual Education Report.

Summer in the City 2023

The Committee considered the planning and outcomes of the Summer in the City programme 2023. The programme, which supported up to 1,200 children per week, had been designed to ensure a diverse range of high-quality sessions including enriching activity, physical activity, nutritional education, and food.

Members commended the success of the programme, despite some difficulties like ghost booking and bad weather. Members asked for a breakdown of attendance to help understand the interest among children that might not benefit from summer vacations. Members also suggested additional promotional routes to support increased attendance in future, including encouraging schools to distribute leaflets to the parents early to help boost the attendance.

2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Committee discussed the medium term financial strategy, including a corporate overview of the budget and the Children's Services departmental budget proposals. The key items discussed were:

- Funding for Family Hubs.
- The safety valve arrangement for SEND funding.
- The third sector investment fund.
- Council tax and the Council Tax support scheme.
- The Children and Education department's priorities for the coming year.

Education Performance Data

In March members discussed the annual school performance report of the academic year 2022-2023 assessments and examinations in Primary and Secondary schools. They were also briefed on Ofsted school inspections in the borough. Members were pleased to see strong results, and asked questions about the early years foundation framework, the support given to different types of schools, and how the Council monitored exclusions.

Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education

In March, the Committee heard from Elizabeth Spearman (Head of ACE and School Admissions) about the work of the ACE team – related to attendance, child employment and children in entertainment, elected home education, and children missing education. The Committee discussed data collection and measurement, the identification of unregistered children and safeguarding checks for them, and the need for greater funding and stronger legislation around home education.

Climate Change and Ecology Policy and Accountability Committee

Members

Councillor Nichole Trehy (Chair)
Councillor Laura Janes
Councillor Ross Melton
Councillor Stala Antoniadis
Councillor Jose Afonso

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology), Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment), Hinesh Mehta (Head of Climate Change), and other officers from across the Council.

The Committee is tasked to monitor the administration and spending in services within its scope, including climate change and the response to Climate Emergency, transport, parking and traffic management, planning policy, recycling and environmental sustainability, waste management and ecology & biodiversity. Below are some of the key issues that the Committee looked at in the 2023/24 municipal year.

Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document

The Committee discussed the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which helped ensure new homes and developments were more friendly to the environment. The new SPD offered guidance to developers, landowners, homeowners, planning officers and other interested parties when preparing and assessing planning applications.

The Committee stressed the urgency of introducing the necessary changes to the local plan. Members noted that this was vital to ensure that fundamental climate change issues particularly within new developments were being addressed and made mandatory in line with the Council's climate and ecological emergency target. Members were provided with an update on the timescales for the completion of the local plan. Officers would work in collaboration with the Climate Change team to review the local plan. Whilst officers had not yet committed to a timeframe for this, it was anticipated that an exercise to collect and build some evidence would take place this year with the view to begin consultation next year.

Commenting on the overall report, the Committee also recommended the importance of frequent pre-application planning discussions, to encourage the use of natural materials for the development of properties within the borough.

Solar Energy and Net Zero in H&F

In relation to the Solar energy and net zero item, the Committee discussed the Council's work on solar power and community energy, and the role it played delivering the Council's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the borough by 2030.

The Committee welcomed Etta Dale (Solar Development Manager, Repowering London) who gave a presentation on the Council's partnership with Repowering London to establish the borough's first community energy group, Hammersmith & Fulham Community Energy, which enabled residents to become involved in solar schemes across the borough. The Committee were excited by the development of this initiative and requested that this be amplified as much as possible within the local community and requested that members be kept updated of any community engagement events.

Circular economy strategy outline and the introduction of food waste recycling and wheeled bins

The Committee discussed the Council's circular economy strategy which aimed to keep materials in use through improved product design, repair, reuse, sharing and recycling, to reduce the borough's reliance on extraction of new materials. Members heard how the Council was embedding circularity as an organisation and delivering it within the borough. This included examples of future projects and initiatives that could be implemented within the Council to embed circular economy principles.

The Committee highlighted the importance of effectively conveying this message across to residents, including the need to progress community engagement initiatives. Officers would continue to promote what the Council was already offering, including the monthly repair events held within the borough. In addition, residents would be encouraged to participate in workshops and surveys to provide feedback in the overall design of the circular economy strategy and how it was delivered. In relation to construction and the amount of carbon emissions emitted, members enquired if there was any scope to condition the materials which could be used by developers on new builds. It was noted that currently under the London Plan, only operational carbon emissions were regulated. In the longer-term, Officers confirmed that the intention was to move towards embodied carbon within the construction phase.

Members were keen to learn more about the recycling hubs available to residents within the borough. The Committee discussed the use of Livat Hammersmith as its main circular economy hub which offered many opportunities for circularity. Residents also had access to 'library of things' allowing them to rent out useful items. In addition, Officers were in the process of exploring a more permanent space within the borough 5 days a week.

The Committee felt that the repair events were a fantastic opportunity for residents and were pleased to note the learning opportunities available as part of the offering at these events. Training sessions were available for residents to ask any questions and learn the skills to repair their own electrical goods.

The Committee were briefed on the Council's food waste recycling and wheeled bins service. The Council would introduce new food waste collections for more than

50,000 local households in the coming months. In addition, more than 16,000 local households would receive new wheeled bins. Bins would only be given for those with suitable and accessible space and an assisted collection service was available for residents that needed additional support.

Members were pleased to hear about the Council's plans to extend the prototype service and discussed the options currently available for the disposal of batteries and medical blister packs across the borough. It was noted that Officers were working in collaboration with the colleagues in the Communications department to raise greater awareness on the importance of correctly recycling batteries and separating these from general waste.

In relation to water fountains, the Committee were keen to encourage more water fountains in the Council's tube stations. Officers noted that the Greater London Authority was looking at introducing water fountains to public spaces within London. The Committee heard that the Council had relatively low levels of assisted collections within the borough. This was mainly due to the smaller layout and design of the properties. This area would be closely monitored by Officers and the Council would contact residents who used the assisted collection service to ensure that it was still working for them.

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and provided a summary of the key points discussed. It was noted that further updates would be provided around the disposal of medical blister packs and lithium-ion batteries. The Committee was also keen to learn more about the garden waste scheme going forward.

2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy

During the budget discussion, the Committee heard that the Council had delivered a balanced budget that protected core services and continued funding for the areas that were unique to the borough such as free home care, universal free school breakfasts, and the Law Enforcement Team.

The Committee was also updated on the recent achievements and budget implications relevant to the department and future strategic budget issues. This included significant funding requirements for addressing the climate and ecological emergency.

The Committee discussed the timeline for the Council's green investment scheme, including any planned projects to be funded as part of the scheme. This stood out as the largest of its kind. The Council was looking to raise up to £5 million to fund climate change projects across the borough.

The Committee enquired about the Council's success rate in securing grants for climate change related initiatives and were assured that officers were committed to pursuing all available grants and regularly sought new opportunities.

Flood risk and adapting to climate change

Cara Marie O'Keeffe and Francis Heil (Atkins Realis) joined to discuss the climate risk assessment and adaptation strategy. The discussion covered the following key points:

- The challenges faced by heatwaves including the impact of heat on the Council's social housing sector.
- Collaborating with public health to address some of the challenges related to sleep hygiene.
- The commonalities contributing to surface water flooding.
- Costs associated with previous events and their impact on Council services.

The Committee noted that the report on adaptation was particularly timely and felt that it's one of the most pressing issues needing consideration. Additionally, the Committee emphasised the essential nature of the work being carried out by the Council.

For the second presentation on the cause and impact of the flooding in 2021, the Committee was joined by Graeme Kasselmann and Michael Benke (Thames Water). The Committee discussed:

- The sewer flooding resilience programme. Including funding allocation to cover mitigation measures on all the properties that had reported flooding in the July 2021 floods.
- The strategy for alleviating flood risk in counter's creek catchment
- Fines issued by Ofwat as a result of sewage dumping in the Thames, and the actions being taken by Thames Water to address these concerns.
- The Committee expressed concerns about the minimal action taken to mitigate future flooding risk.
- The plans to significantly reduce the amount of sewage being dumped in the Thames by 2050. This included the completion timeline for the Thames tideway infrastructure.
- Thames Water's contingency plans for addressing call centre enquiries in the event of a recurrence of the 2021 floods.

The Chair emphasised the necessity for Thames Water to allocate further funding to accommodate the resilience programme and tackle the issues raised effectively. The Committee also urged Thames Water to offer further clarity on their plans regarding their communication with residents and meeting regulatory requirements set by Ofwat.

Health and Adult Social Care Policy and Accountability Committee

Members

Councillor Natalia Perez (Chair)
Councillor Genevieve Nwaogbe
Councillor Emma Apthorp
Councillor Ann Rosenberg
Councillor Amanda Lloyd-Harris
Victoria Brignell (Co-optee)
Lucia Boddington (Co-optee)
Jim Grealy (Co-optee)
Keith Mallinson (Co-optee)

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillor Ben Coleman (Deputy Leader with responsibility for Health and Adult Social Care), Linda Jackson (Strategic Director of Independent Living) and other officers from across the Council.

The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the health of both children and adults, the provision and improvement of primary and acute NHS services, the provision of mental health services, and adult social care services in the borough. Below are the key issues that the Committee looked at in the 2023/24 municipal year.

Impact of the delayed rebuilding of St Mary's, Hammersmith, and Charing Cross Hospitals

In July, the Committee welcomed Dr Bob Klaber from Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust to discuss the delayed rebuilding of Charing Cross, Hammersmith, and St Mary's Hospitals and the healthcare impacts on residents. Members highlighted the concerns that residents had over the delays, the importance of hospitals that were fit for purpose and met the needs of patients and the community, and the importance of partnership working.

North West London Adult Community-Based Specialist Palliative and End-of-Life Care Review Programme

The Committee also received an update on the new model of palliative and end-of-life care ahead of the launch of the official engagement process. Members were generally pleased with the progress made since the previous update, however there remained questions about the length of the engagement exercise and the Committee asked for an extension to ensure residents could have their say on the proposals.

Post Covid Syndrome Services Update

For the final item, Melissa Mellett (NW London ICB) gave an update on the post-Covid service offer in North West London. She discussed a new service due to open at Charing Cross Hospital in September. Members discussed digital inclusion, GP referrals, the funding for the service, reaching under-represented groups, and support for children and young people.

Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022/23

Mike Howard (Safeguarding Adults Board Chair) joined to discuss the Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022/23. The discussion covered a range of issues highlighted in the annual report including:

- Housing repairs issues in the public and private rented sectors.
- Fire safety training for frontline staff and training standards for partner organisations.
- Guidance for professionals and residents.
- Transitional safeguarding.
- Demographic pressures.

The Committee agreed actions around housing standards and domestic violence training.

Vaccination Services in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

For the second item on vaccination services, the Committee was joined by colleagues from the Council's Public Health team, NHS England, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, and the North West London ICB. The Committee discussed:

- Which populations were under-vaccinated and why.
- Efforts to improve the immunisation rate through targeted engagement programmes.
- The use of alternate venues and staffing issues.
- Vaccination rates in care homes and amongst care home staff.
- Why H&F's vaccinate rates were lower than its neighbours.

The Committee asked the NHS to consider Hammersmith & Fulham for a pilot to allow pharmacies to carry out childhood vaccinations and a dedicated vaccine coordinator for the borough. The Chair proposed a working group to look at improving vaccination rates in the borough.

2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy (including the corporate budget and the Adult Social Care and Public Health budgets)

On the budget item, members discussed the sustainability of the Local Government financial settlement, the impact of reductions to grant funding, the Council's commitment to providing free home care, and how the Council worked with the NHS.

Public Health Update (with a focus on vaccinations)

Under the Public Health update, members discussed improvements to childhood vaccine access through local pharmacies and work to progress this with the local Integrated Care Board.

Same Day Access to GP Primary Care

Following notification of planned changes to same day access to GP primary care services, members held a single-issue meeting to discuss the proposals. Members heard the concerns of Dr Kyla Cranmer (GP Chair of the H&F Local Medical Committee) and other professionals. Members discussed the need for further engagement with residents, the potential impact of the changes on patient safety and continuity of care, and the lack of evidence in favour of the proposed changes.

Members made a recommendation to formally withdraw the proposals in their current form and to publish clear proposals regarding access, including timelines.

Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee

Members

Councillor Jacolyn Daly (Chair)
Councillor Paul Alexander
Councillor Asif Siddique
Councillor Sally Taylor
Councillor Adronie Alford

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillor Frances Umeh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness), Richard Shwe (Director of Housing), and officers from across the Council.

The Committee is tasked to monitor the policy, administration and spending of all aspects of housing (including privately owned, council, housing association, sheltered and supported housing), provision of homes for local residents and tackling and reducing homelessness. Below are the priority areas that the Committee considered during the 2023/24 municipal year.

Southern Housing Partnership

Representatives of Southern Housing Association outlined its partnership with the Council in managing 1,147 social homes in H&F, its recent merger and operating structure. Representatives addressed member questions about their approach to damp and mould cases, independent living for older residents, and subletting.

Private and Social Housing Standards

The Committee was briefed on private housing standards, landlord licensing and enforcement work taken by the Council, including acting as mediator between landlords and tenants to provide an opportunity for resolution before taking enforcement action. Members noted the challenges for residents and officers with regards to some landlord business models, and additional information on rogue landlords was provided to the Committee after the meeting.

Repairs Improvement Plan

On Repairs Improvement Plan, members noted the introduction of a “Home MOT” service, seen as a way to significantly improve resident satisfaction with the housing repairs service; and an initiative that seeks to bring contractors into resident group meetings, to enable repairs work to be done better and quicker.

Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Prevention

Members received an update on rough sleepers and homelessness and noted that the Housing First model proved to be the most sustainable method of ensuring former rough sleepers did not return to the street. They noted that the number of rough sleepers in the Borough was low for an inner-London Borough, probably due to a range of support options and work undertaken by the enforcement team in a

multi-disciplinary way. As the number of households living in temporary accommodation in England had recently hit a 25-year high, the Chair requested the team report on local impact and any stress to the budgets by increasing placements into temporary accommodation.

Homelessness Prevention Update

The Local Authority gave the Committee a heads-up on the challenges faced by the Housing Services, in particular the number of people housed in temporary accommodation in London was increasing, inasmuch that the London Government Association was reporting that spending by councils on temporary accommodation had reached a record high in England placing financial pressures on many local authorities. The Housing Service was working closely with the Finance team on an evidence-based approach around budget assessment and resources allocation from the General Fund for 2024/25, including keeping abreast of the wider situation in terms of homelessness and temporary accommodation across London. To tackle the homelessness issues, the Council would be building more homes, including more affordable family-sized homes. Officers agreed to provide a demographic breakdown of homelessness approaches received in the current year and to revert after looking at the impact relating to a recent change to Section 21 Eviction Notice.

Complaints Management in Housing

Members noted that a dedicated Complaints and Disputes Resolution Team had been set up to handle all housing-related complaints and deliver one-stop services through the Housing Hub. The Local Authority acknowledged that there had been backlog of repairs in H&F, but that the number of outstanding repairs cases, including aged cases, had been substantially reduced in recent months. The Housing team was working systematically to ensure the repairs were done more punctually and to a higher quality with improved customer care. Couple with the reduction in age profile of outstanding repairs, this should result in fewer complaints being made. The more focused approach to complaint-handling was improving the quality and timeliness of response once a complaint had been made.

Greening of the Housing Stock

On Greening of the Housing Stock, it was noted that the “Retrofit Strategy” developed so far would influence council policy in 4 key areas, namely Energy Efficiency, Low Carbon Heat, Fuel Poverty and Adaptation. It was believed that the capital delivery team was the most efficient vehicle to address the retrofit need at the required scale and pace. The low carbon heat networks were likely to be the cheapest option which needed detailed planning over several years, public and private finance and significant changes to Planning policy to be rolled out effectively. Once the approach was finalised, the residents concerned would be consulted on their preference in taking forward the retrofit works. The Local Authority undertook to brief the Committee again in the new year on other policy implications of the Strategy.

2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

In receiving the briefing on corporate budget 2024/25 and housing solutions under 2024 MTFS, members noted the following:

- Accessing housing and homelessness services through the Family Hubs.
- Growth allocations and quality of services.

- Continuation of Household Support Fund by central government.
- Efficiencies achieved and planned by the Housing Solutions team.
- Residents placed out of the borough to prevent homelessness.
- Acquisition of affordable housing stock.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2024/25

When considering the HRA budget 2024/25, members discussed the issues below:

- Residents' response to the proposed increase in rent and service charge.
- Community engagement in Council's major projects or improvement works. Residents were encouraged to report repair issues directly.
- HRA general reserve balances.
- Provision for tenant arrears.

Housing Ombudsman P49 report on Hammersmith & Fulham

The Committee noted the following during scrutiny of the Ombudsman report:

- The Council's sincere apology to affected residents.
- Actions taken in response to Ombudsman's 18 orders and recommendations.
- Ownership and commitment of the Chief Executive led taskforce and Housing Services to rectify the situation.
- Changes in policies and procedures of repairs and complaint handling, especially record keeping and contractor transition.
- That the level of compensation was consistent with the Ombudsman's recommendations.

Social Inclusion and Community Safety Policy and Accountability Committee

Members

Councillor Nikos Souslous (Chair)
Councillor Omid Miri
Councillor Trey Campbell-Simon
Councillor Sally Taylor
Councillor Andrew Dinsmore

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Rebecca Harvey (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety), Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment), Matthew Hooper (Chief Officer - Safer Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services), and other officers from across the Council.

The Committee is responsible for improving social inclusion, community safety and anti-social behaviour, licensing and gambling, neighbourhood governance, community engagement, the Council's equalities and diversity programmes and support for vulnerable groups, the Council's Voluntary Sector strategy, and increasing access to opportunity in all aspects of social and economic life in the borough. Below are the key issues that the Committee looked at in the 2023/24 municipal year.

Policing in Hammersmith & Fulham following The Casey Review

In July 2023 the Chair led a discussion with the Metropolitan Police, Councillors, Community Groups, and Residents about the future of policing in Hammersmith & Fulham following the Baroness Casey Review.

Superintendent Craig Knight, joined by Detective Chief Inspector Scott Ware and Detective Chief Inspector Anne Linton, presented the 'New Met for London Plan'. The plan was designed to deal with the impact of austerity, recruitment and standards, changing demographics and demands, returning to policing by consent, cultural change, and fixing the fundamentals around pay and conditions, training, and internal processes. The police also discussed recent changes to policing in the borough aimed at tackling sexual assault, taking a more robust approach to violence against women and girls, and improving response times.

Members and guests discussed their experiences of racism and sexism in relation to policing in the borough – and suggested a number of improvements. The Committee asked to see more from the police about local training, plans to improve response times, and how to ensure residents were fully aware of the policing structures and processes in place to support them.

The Committee continued its work on policing in Hammersmith and Fulham following the Casey Review at its meeting on 22 November 2023.

Superintendent Craig Knight, joined by Chief Inspector Tom Orchard, presented the progress update of the 'New Met for London Plan'. £530 million had been invested into policing across London affecting every aspect, from reviewing response times and approach, strengthening local team structure, and increasing visibility by assigning more PCSOs to local areas. Recruitment for Police Community Support Officers and PCs continued to be a challenge, further complicated by the ongoing weekend protests in Central London.

Committee members questioned the Police on several issues, including:

- team structure and tenure;
- allocation of PSPOs and PCs to each ward and their composition in terms of ethnicity and gender;
- pay structure and difficulties in officers' recruitment and retention;
- H&F's asset sharing of the proactive teams reporting to the Basic Command Units;
- strengthening background checks and vetting procedures, and effectiveness of psychological assessments,
- positive promotion of Met and visibility in policing;
- feedback from the police's local engagement events in the North of the Borough;
- role of ward panels and attendances;
- VAWG 100 offenders and better support to victims and survivors to sexual assault;
- Intelligence gathering at Tactical Enforcement Group (TEG) and Tactical Tasking & Co-ordination Group (TTCG); and
- harassment to female colleagues.

2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy

In receiving the corporate and departmental budgets 2024/25, members discussed the following:

- The Council was acting far from the assumptions of maximising council tax and social care precept under the proposed increase in core spending power of 6.7%.
- The increased use of AI in delivering Council services such as Adult Social Care while continuing investment in CCTV/LET to tackle crimes and maintain existing Prevent service.
- The success of green bond in raising £1 million.

Trustee Diversity in the Third Sector in Hammersmith and Fulham

Four guest speakers from the third sector briefed the Committee on their work taken to diversify the trustee boards of charities, including those in H&F. Members discussed the following issues:

- In identifying suitable trustees for charities targeted at multiple protected characteristics, the board would target individuals with skills and experience representing the systems and beneficiaries.
- To incentivise younger/less well-off people joining the boards, there were advocates for a more flexible system/structure for charities in terms of pay and days off for Trust work. Some charities set up as a Community Interest

Company or Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise could pay some of their Trustees for their work.

- Local Authorities were expected to give policy advice to the third sector and help address recruitment issues. They might appeal to under-represented groups in the local community and guide the boards to become more dynamic.

Annual Performance Report for the Law Enforcement Team (LET)

The Committee discussed:

- Outcomes about LET officers being assaulted and support available to them.
- Measures in place to deepen the cooperation between the Police and LET officers, including sharing information/intelligence and during emergency.
- The additional number of police officers allocated to H&F following the government's announcement of putting more police officers on the streets.
- Difficulties in recruiting police officers and increased interest in LET positions.

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

Members

Councillor Rory Vaughan (Chair)
Councillor Liz Collins
Councillor Adam Peter Lang
Councillor Ashok Patel
Councillor Jackie Borland

The Committee was supported throughout the year by Councillors, Cabinet Member Sharon Holder Cabinet Member for Public Realm, and Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for the Economy.

The Committee is responsible for monitoring the policy, administration and spending on the local economy and support for local businesses, local employment opportunities, regeneration, parks and open spaces, public sports facilities, arts and cultural services, libraries and adult education, and street scene. Below are the key issues that the Committee looked at in the 2023/24 municipal year.

Update on the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Hammersmith & Fulham

The Committee considered an update on The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Hammersmith & Fulham. Following the recommendations of the borough's Community Sport & Physical Activity Network (CSPAN) presented in the last report to the Committee in January, there had been further extensive engagement and consultation with CSPAN members, sports organisations, and local stakeholders including education and disability forum representatives. The draft strategy and action plan were close to completion and the Committee's view were sought on these developments.

Themes to emerge from the meeting included: the need to ensure fringe sports (skateboarding and walking football) were not omitted from the list of activities residents were encouraged to participate in, as well concerns about how realistic the consultation timetable was. The Committee stressed the importance of involving young people and schools in the consultation process and were pleased to learn that the inter school's games organiser was the CSPAN representative. Members recommended ensuring there was sufficient accessible green space within the borough that was not being used for organised sport, as well as the opportunities for repurposing brown field and industrial sites for sports and physical activity.

The Chair recommended steps were taken to ensure there was co-production with disabled residents in the development of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and sought assurances on this. He also asked what the measures of success of the strategy would be.

The Committee recommended the way in which the opportunities for sport and physical activity were currently being communicated to residents could be improved in the future, such as by celebrating achievements. In addition, questions were asked about how the Authority was working to deliver sports and physical activity on the fringes of the borough, given its geography and very porous boundaries in some places. For example, Shepherd' Bush Cricket Club in Acton but a 2-minute walk from the borough boundary, as well as Wormwood Scrubs bordering Brent and Acton.

Commenting on the overall report, the Committee supported the priorities which had been set out and the Committee looked forward to an update in about six months' time.

The Draft Tree Strategy

In relation to the draft tree strategy, the Committee noted this was the first tree strategy for Hammersmith & Fulham. The report provided details on the vision of the strategy, how it would be achieved, as well as why the borough needed a tree strategy. The Committee noted that the strategy included three main aims: increasing the canopy cover, preserving and improving existing trees and working closely with residents and stakeholders. Details were provided of how these three core areas broke down into a further twelve sub-sections.

Members highlighted how a significant proportion of their casework related to trees. Recent topics included: that trees were pruned at the wrong time of the year, for dead trees to be removed and replaced and finally, a group of residents had asked how they could go about getting trees planted in their road. While the Committee commended the planting of more trees, it noted that there was a paucity of dates within the draft strategy and recommended the draft could be strengthened by the inclusion of some key milestone dates.

In relation to improving communication, the Committee recommended that the Council's website was revamped to include FAQ's on trees, to assist residents and Councillors and also for key information such a ward tree inspections to be sent to respective ward councillors.

The Committee recommended officers investigate the merits of events possibly being held in the north, middle and south of the borough, and for these to be held in conjunction with the Tree Council to inform future strategy development.

The Committee agreed with the points raised by the Hammersmith Society (in writing), namely the type of materials used at the base of trees (the need for a permeable surface), the promotion of watering some street trees by local residents and in town centre areas, cages were required around some saplings. The Committee were pleased that officers would act on these suggestions.

Finally, the Committee noted that the draft tree strategy consultation document was due to go out at the end of September / early October, but the duration of the consultation had not been finalised. The Committee recommended that the consultation was circulated for a long as possible to ensure residents had a good opportunity to provide their views.

An Emerging Approach to Developing and Promoting our Visitor Economy

The Committee considered a report on an Emerging Approach To Developing and Promoting Our Visitor Economy. Themes to emerge from the meeting included: The need to engage with residents and harness ideas from within the community. The advantages of using a place-based approach, referencing football clubs, theatres and events spaces.

For data to be gathered to determine the visitor profile to the borough. The need for a website to be created, providing an annual chronology of events being held within the borough and for this to feed into wider engagement through social media and other forms of channels. It was important that the 3-year strategy provided a strong steer to stakeholders, to ensure their actions actively promoted the visitor economy.

In addition, the strategy needed to spell out what the economic advantages of developing the visitor economy would be to residents. Further themes included branding (i.e., distinct themes - the home of Chelsea Football Club), a heritage / cultural trail (of blue plaques and their significance), and the need to utilise the river more. The Committee supported the revival of the Shepherd's Bush Comedy Festival. The committee suggested that businesses, hotels and the conference centre organisers should meet to promote activities within the borough.

Review of Performance of the New Household Waste Collection Contract / Implementation of Wheeled Bin and Food Waste Collection

The Committee examined a Review of Performance of the New Household Waste Collection Contract / Implementation of Wheeled Bin and Food Waste Collection. Themes to emerge from the meeting included: To make officers aware of missed collections and resultant fines. The issue of bins not being returned to their collection points which highlighted those properties which were vacant and hence at risk of burglary.

Further points included: the need to improve communication with residents so they knew that they needed to contact the Council if there were collection issues. The need for sampling / auditing of collections to assess how the scheme was working. It was noted that the extended wheeled bin collection implementation had only been rolled out for 2 weeks, so its performance would need to be assessed in the future.

2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy

During the budget discussion, members commended the savings that were being made through the new waste management collection service. The Committee supported the additional investment in services including the new garden waste collection service, the community and cultural events programme and the ongoing contribution to the new H&F Black History Cultural Centre.

The Committee examined business rates and were assured that the Council was using big data and analytics to improve collection rates. In relation to the cost of living crisis, it was noted that the Council had frozen all charges in children's, adult social care and housing services while other charges had risen with inflation.

The Committee also discussed recreation and pitch hire fees, household waste collection charges and how finances had been leveraged for new affordable housing.

Further topics included the savings identified for corporate accommodation and the importance of these being reviewed and monitored.

Hammersmith & Fulham Cultural Compact

The Committee discussed the membership and structure of the Cultural Compact and agreed that 16 members was probably about the maximum number to achieve the desired breadth of experience for the Compact. Members also noted there would be a Cultural Forum so those groups that were not members of the Compact would have a vehicle for their views. To ensure the Compact was inclusive and representative, the Committee welcomed that the membership would be reviewed every 12 months and that the Compact would meet every two to three months depending on its workload.

The Committee commended the use of the Compact to deliver the Cultural Strategy more broadly and the use of the Compact to deliver the ideas which had been generated through the bid. The Chair welcomed that a disabled representative would be integral to the Cultural Compact and looked forward to the Cultural Strategy (rather than the Hammersmith and Fulham Council Cultural Strategy) being driven forwards.