

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Policy and Oversight Board Minutes



Monday 25 November 2024

PRESENT

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

Cabinet and Lead Members

Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform)

Councillor Sharon Holder (Cabinet Member for Public Realm)

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology)

Councillor Florian Chevoppe-Verdier (Lead Member for European Co-operation and Digital Innovation)

Officers

Matthew Sales (Assistant Director, Programmes, Assurance and Analytics)

Nicola Ellis (Director, Chief Operating Officer, Corporate Services)

Tina Akpogheneta (Chief Digital Officer)

Joanna McCormick (Director – Procurement, Commercial, Digital)

John Galsworthy (Director of Climate Change and Transport)

David Abbott (Head of Governance)

Tiffany Yip (Assistant Committee Coordinator)

Guests

Sam Nutt (Researcher & Data Ethicist at the London Office of Technology and Innovation)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nikos Souslous and Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Nicole Trehy.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. UPDATE ON AI ADOPTION AND GOVERNANCE

Tina Akpogheneta (Chief Digital Officer) provided an update on artificial intelligence (AI) adoption at Hammersmith & Fulham covering the following points:

- Since the last update to the Board in April, the working group had been extended to include different services.
- Microsoft Copilot for Edge had been enabled so staff could get familiarised with using AI at work.
- A comprehensive AI Governance Framework had been developed.
- The view of the team was that Hammersmith & Fulham would likely benefit from more purpose-built tools and from tools that were integrated into the systems.
- Resident Services was using Copilot for Word to assist with complaints procedures, while Social Care was exploring using AI solutions to generate Education, Health, and Care Plans. Housing was implementing Voicescape for tenancy analytics.
- The recommendation of the team was that Hammersmith & Fulham needed to ensure its data was AI-ready and that the costs of adopting AI should be managed. There would be continued work on data literacy and data stewardship among staff, and options on managing costs would be taken to the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) shortly.

Sam Nutt (Researcher & Data Ethicist at the London Office of Technology and Innovation) gave a presentation covering how other London councils were using AI and the public attitude towards AI. A few key points for adopting AI responsibly were highlighted:

- Start with common ethical principles
- Ensure compliance with common legislation (GDPR, Equalities Duty, Human Rights)
- Embed your standards and policies into procurement processes
- Invest in proper evaluation of AI uses
- Engage with residents and staff to understand concerns better

Councillor Natalia Perez enquired about what Hammersmith & Fulham was doing to nurture public trust in the Council's use of AI and the role of co-production in the process. Tina Akpogheneta said the use cases were currently small scale, but the team would look at options to build public trust when they started to scale up to larger use cases. It was noted that co-production and training on ethics for decision-makers were important going forward. In the meantime, AI projects would go through the Digital Board, which was comprised of SLT members and others.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly was interested in how AI was being used in the Housing department. She applauded the slower move around using AI for any process that could penalise residents. She was interested in how AI could be used in budgeting,

predicting demand, and making information more accessible to residents as well as the use of data for predictive analytics. Tina Akpogheneta said that at the moment, the use of AI in Housing was limited to Voicescape, a software which analysed tenancy behaviour, such as the likelihood of residents falling behind on rent. A human decision-maker was in place to make the final decision. She said that she would come back to Councillor Daly on this point.

ACTION: Tina Akpogheneta

Nicola Ellis (Director, Chief Operating Officer, Corporate Services) added that they were looking at using AI to make services more accessible as part of the Resident Experience and Access Programme and would continue to examine this in the second phase of the programme.

Noting that she felt AI could be radically transformational if done right, Councillor Helen Rowbottom asked the following questions:

- Was there any insight about the procurement of AI technology across the sector?
- How could councils capture the value of their data?
- What was the discussion like from a commercial angle?

Sam Nutt replied that the information governance hurdles were significant, and no councils were at the stage of using sensitive data yet. The London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI) was working with the Local Government Association, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, the Information Commissioner's Office and the Crown Commercial Service on producing guidance on procuring AI in an ethical way. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission's recent report on the use of AI by local authorities reflected poorly on the meeting of duties, and the barriers in information governance were high.

Councillor Helen Rowbottom followed up by asking how the value of data could be captured both ways, highlighting that councils had a responsibility to capture the full value of technology if it was available. Sam Nutt said that the sector was not quite thinking about that yet, but LOTI was developing data standards and a platform which used AI to find insights from data collected from damp and mould sensors, allowing for more proactive intervention. With regards to Children's Services, the tools around predictive analytics did not always perform to a satisfactory level, but he agreed that things generally should be moving in the direction proposed.

The Chair asked if the long lead-in time for procurement in the public sector had been considered and if there was any risk of having limited choice if a few big companies were to monopolise the technology. Tina Akpogheneta responded that the use of AI had been embedded in the procurement process and the use of AI by existing providers were being tracked already to balance potential risks and benefits. Sam Nutt added that this was the sensible approach considering the difficulty in making procurement more agile. The Council could still focus on governance and upskilling staff who worked on procurement. Joanna McCormick (Director of Procurement, Commercial and Digital) agreed that the procurement process could be long but pointed out that they had scope to buy digital tools via the existing framework, adding that it was exciting to hear about the guidance LOTI was working

on. It was also noted that currently all contract reports went through a lead in Digital to ensure that proper checks had been done before they reached Council members.

Councillor Rory Vaughan wondered if the focus on governance would slow the Council down in the adoption of AI. Referencing a Gartner article, Tina Akpogheneta said that organisations that wanted to be successful with AI needed to get their governance right first to avoid major issues in the future. Generative AI was quite new, so its functions had to be well understood first. Individual licenses that were being tested showed little benefit to the organisation as a whole. The goal was to scale up to tools that could benefit the whole organisation rather than spending money on licenses that could only benefit a few. It was noted that generative AI was not the only solution and there was value in integrating different systems and tools.

Councillor Rory Vaughan followed up by asking if there was an issue with risk appetite with using different types of AI and when the committee could expect to know about the limits of using AI in different services. Tina Akpogheneta replied that the current focus was shaping the approach with SLT, so the team and the leadership could work together to shape the strategy. As an organisation, Hammersmith & Fulham had not always been a first adopter, but the desire was to be able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by AI while managing the risks.

The Chair was keen to know more about the use of AI to assist efforts to tackle fly tipping at Westminster City Council and if there were any lessons that could be applied to the H&F Love Clean Streets app. Sam Nutt replied that the Westminster City Council tool emerged out of a political commitment to reform waste reporting services, and a lot of resources were invested to develop the app in-house. The lesson that other councils could take from this was to have a very clear outcome in mind during the design process.

Councillor Florian Chevoppe-Verdier (Lead Member for European Co-operation and Digital Innovation) addressed the Board and thanked officers and members for their valuable contributions. He noted that the upcoming Data Bill was well-positioned to make the most of AI and he was confident that the Council would be able to balance making savings and improving the delivery of public services while also ensuring residents' safety. The Digital Accessibility Group (DAG) tested all digital tools being rolled out to ensure accessibility and there were checks and balance to make the most out of technological development. He was confident about the ability of the Council to continue on the AI journey.

Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform) thanked the Board and the officers and guests for an interesting discussion and said that AI could have the same transformational power as computers had in the office environment. It was important to get the basics right at this moment so the Council would become well-placed to take advantage of it. He echoed Councillor Rowbottom that the Council had a responsibility to use technology where it benefitted residents. From a finance perspective, the Council had a responsibility to use technology to make it cheaper to provide services to residents. He agreed with Councillor Daly that the output of AI technology was only as good as the input so using the right data with safeguards was important. As Councillor Perez mentioned, maintaining residents' trust in the

Council's use of AI was important, following the approach of doing things with residents but not to them. He was grateful for the framework laid down by officers and the expertise of Councillor Chevoppe-Verdier.

The Chair wrapped up by highlighting how far the council had come. Since the last meeting, a proper governance structure, a business case process and a procurement process had been put in place. She said the Board would like the next update to take place once scaled up uses of AI were in place.

ACTION: Tina Akpogheneta

The Chair thanked Sam Nutt for attending and members and officers for their contributions.

RESOLVED

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

5. UPDATE ON FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES CO-PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES

Nicola Ellis gave an update on co-production in relation to Finance & Corporate Services. Co-production was coordinated by the Corporate Co-Production Team and co-production had helped developed the Council's services, as the following shows:

- The Digital Accessibility Group (DAG), a diverse group of residents from across the borough, had been very successful and positive. The team was also working on digital signposting with the Voluntary and Community Sector Alliance and had worked on developing and implementing the digital inclusion strategy.
- The Resident Experience and Access Programme (REAP) and the DAG had worked with the team on designing new processes, self-serve options, forms and information available on the website.
- Another area of co-production was the Cost-of-Living Programme, which involved working with residents' groups and members of the Voluntary and Community Sector Alliance. The Programme set up the H&F Community Compass, which was a product that would enable residents to identify what support was available through the voluntary and community sector, including information on the digital inclusion strategy.
- People and Talent had been delivering a programme in conjunction with Inclusion London on co-production and disability equality. The team had also been supporting various events among staff, for example Wellbeing Wednesday and the EDI Board.
- Regarding procurement, residents were involved in building designs, architect plans and evaluation. The team was also looking at co-producing service models in market engagement. Co-production was embedded in the service and benefits were being seen.

Councillor Helen Rowbottom asked if there had been reflection on the groups of people being reached and whether that mirrored everyone who was being provided for by the Council. The Chair added that there might be people who did not have

time to come to meetings and enquired if the Council's digital channels were used to reach a wider group of people. Nicola Ellis acknowledged that it was challenging for some residents to co-produce with the Council and so the issue would be taken to the team for them to investigate further.

ACTION: Nicola Ellis

Councillor Helen Rowbottom mentioned the difficulty of gathering information of the people they met on canvassing and wondered if a large language model would help with that and make co-production less onerous on residents.

Councillor Rowan Ree pointed out that some people might not wish to spend a lot of time interacting with the Council and REAP would be important in changing how people interacted with the Council, such as creating a one-stop shop for council services.

Councillor Rory Vaughan asked about the learnings from the pre-market engagement activities, particularly with engaging with local businesses. Joanna McCormick said that the team worked with Economic Development colleagues on engaging with small businesses and trying to understand what they knew and did not know about getting a contract with the Council, the contracts available to them, how they might get onto the supply chain, and what they would want to see in the design of specifications. The Council could not always procure at that scale but there were opportunities to look at through supply chains and direct purchasing where appropriate. Having direct conversations with small businesses was very valuable and trainings were also jointly given by the Economic Development and Procurement teams.

Councillor Rory Vaughan followed up by asking if the Council did more business with Small and Medium-sized Businesses as a result. Joanna McCormick said more small businesses were coming onto supply chains, but it was less frequent to buy from very small businesses directly. Nevertheless, the team was aware of the local businesses they could reach out to when an opportunity arose.

Councillor Rory Vaughan was also keen to know more about the feedback garnered from the young inspector programme for semi-independent living. Joanna McCormick said that she would come back with more information from Children's Services colleagues. Finance & Corporate Services was involved in contract management and the procurement cycle was something that could be replicated in other areas. Councillor Rory Vaughan suggested looking at how the evaluation took place and how the contract could be tweaked mid-stream or when re-procurement took place.

ACTION: Joanna McCormick

The Chair enquired if there were barriers to involving residents in procurement decision-making given the details and confidentiality of many procurement matters. Joanna McCormick replied that the best opportunity for residents to be involved in procuring new services or programmes was to be involved in co-producing the design and specifications, which would feed into the questions asked during

tendering. There were limitations to what involvement there could be during the tendering process and the team had worked to ensure that residents were involved in the questions that were most relevant to them. They were cautious about involving residents in evaluation because they would like to avoid opening residents to the complications of legal process should the process be challenged at any point.

Councillor Natalia Perez commended the report and welcomed the commitment to co-production and the work of the DAG. She found the co-production away day she attended very informative with residents and officers coming together and looked forward to hearing updates from other departments.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly asked about the position of data and AI in procurement co-production and what directions these might take. Nicola Ellis responded that there was risk in co-production moving in a different direction from that of technology procurement. Developing knowledge alongside residents and taking residents on the AI adoption journey were important. Co-production could not be seen as a barrier but a tool for understanding residents' concerns and informing the Council's communications strategy.

The Chair asked if the H&F Community Compass was live yet. Matthew Sales (Assistant Director, Programmes, Assurance and Analytics) replied that it was set to go live to the sector early in 2025, after which contributions from the sector would be invited for setting out the directory of their services and offers, including digital inclusion. It would be a sign-posting platform for residents and voluntary and community service organisations to search for what services were available against particular needs and interests. It was hoped that residents would have better control over what services they could access, and services could reach people earlier through self-servicing. The platform was co-produced with members from DAG and other residents.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and noted that the Board would like to see updates in the future in time.

ACTION: Nicola Ellis

RESOLVED

1. The Policy and Oversight Board noted and endorsed the report.

6. GREENING THE GREY WORKSHOP

Matthew Sales (Assistant Director, Programmes, Assurance and Analytics) introduced John Galsworthy (Director of Climate Change and Transport) and Sam Baldock (Policy Officer), who organised the Greening the Grey workshop and summarised the feedback received from the workshop held on 5 September 2024, covering the following areas:

- Background of the workshop
- Purpose of the workshop
- The reason for exploring how 'grey' public areas could be improved
- Key findings from the workshop

- Future work

It was noted that this was an important part of placemaking of Hammersmith & Fulham given that the borough had the second highest population of greenspaces in London and was the third most at-risk of flooding. How people wanted to use or interact with public spaces changed over the decades, for example there was a lot more active travel now than before. It was highlighted that the public realm would continue to be a key part of the Industrial Strategy and play an important role in enabling communities to interact. The future placemaking and transport vision included a focus on active travel and the infrastructure needed to achieve this, such as reallocating public realm spaces. As one resident put it, the key message which came out of the workshop was to “be bold” with related policies.

The Chair invited Cabinet Members to share their thoughts on the workshop and if there was anything that could be done better.

Councillor Sharon Holder (Cabinet Member for Public Realm) agreed that the event went very well and the people who attended understood what “greening the grey” was about. Residents were very grateful to have been invited, and they made great contributions towards the policy decisions around improving the infrastructure for the public realm.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology) found the workshop very useful and highlighted that most people who attended were keen to move this agenda forward. It was interesting to see what their priorities were and how the work around climate change was impacting people, not just around carbon emission but also around topics of air pollution and flooding. It was important to consider how to bring residents along with the Council’s work and to overcome people’s resistance to changes in their local environment.

Councillor Jacolyn Daly noted that it was an inspiring workshop and a fantastic opportunity to meet residents with brave and bold ideas. The rambling society had great ideas about how to join up parks and greenspaces to create safe green routes for people to take. Reflecting on the varied feedback received from residents during consultation on school streets and rain gardens in her ward, she asked if there was anything that could be done to help residents with different opinions engage in conversations among themselves.

Councillor Helen Rowbottom welcomed this workshop and its findings and asked the following questions:

- Could the Report It app be expanded for residents to give suggestions on their local environment?
- Would access to green and clean tech be democratised across the borough, such as the WellHome Initiative by Dr Frank Kelly at Imperial College?

Councillor Helen Rowbottom also asked to see any notes from the workshop on democratising access to green and clean tech.

ACTION: Matthew Sales/John Galsworthy

Councillor Wesley Harcourt said that getting the health message of the WellHome Initiative across was necessary for changing people's behaviour. Work to understand people's perception around climate change was underway and would feed back into the work with Dr Frank Kelly in the new year. There was also an ongoing project with Imperial College on installing physical pollution barriers along curb sides. It was key to link health and climate change together in the communications of these projects.

Councillor Natalia Perez was curious about the boldest idea received from the workshop. John Galsworthy said that during a further session with residents of Harwood Terrace, the residents preferred the bolder idea of planting an architectural garden over installing more traditional humps, showing that the more transformational the team was being the more support they received.

Councillor Rory Vaughan commended the great work done by Councillor Holder and noted that a number of the initiatives were already in progress and had been discussed by the Economy, Arts, Sports and Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee. He suggested reprioritising the key workshop findings according to how long it would take to see results. For example, regulating utility companies' roadworks would take a primary legislation and was more aspirational at the moment. It was also important to evaluate how well the Council was doing on these initiatives, such as how the Sustainable Drainage Systems were performing in some of the major rainfall events recently. Recent work such as installing extra cycle storage, developing the tree strategy and the results of the park satisfaction survey could be shared with attendees of the workshop in order to identify what gaps there were.

ACTION: Matthew Sales/John Galsworthy

Councillor Sharon Holder said that the wide scope of public realm allowed the team to work across areas and with each other at the same time. The crucial thing was to let the public know better how it worked together as a system and more work could be done on communicating this better with residents.

John Galsworthy said that the workshop highlighted that good communication was needed and common consensus could only be forged with continuous conversations with residents, which was the biggest change delivered by the workshop.

Councillor Nicole Trehy also agreed that communication was key and enquired about the people who attended the workshop. Noting that a masculine view of the world had long dominated discussions on the public realm, it would be interesting to see how the workshop came together and how the workshop was being communicated to residents.

The Chair noted that the people who attended had a wider range of interests comparing to those who attended specific consultations held in the past. The attendees had similar views on policies, but they might not know much about things that were done outside of the areas of their interest, which linked back to the communication issue discussed. The Chair thanked officers for the workshop and the report, noting that the Board would consider bringing this model to other policy areas.

RESOLVED

1. The Policy and Oversight Board noted the report and provided comments and feedback on H&F's Greening the Grey workshop.

7. POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEES UPDATE REPORT - NOVEMBER 2024

As the Chair of the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee, Councillor Helen Rowbottom expressed that she looked forward to discussing the exemplary co-production of Children's Services. The Chair noted that it would be useful for the committees to discuss co-production at some point in the future.

RESOLVED

1. The Policy and Oversight Board noted the work programmes of the Policy and Accountability Committees and discussed any areas for future review or collaboration.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair highlighted that the Board would be looking at the Council's Budget and Corporate Performance Indicators in the February meeting. The May meeting would look at the drug strategy, which was being developed to combat drugs, crime and antisocial behaviour.

RESOLVED

1. The Policy and Oversight Board noted the draft work programme and suggested any additions or amendments.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates of future meetings were noted:

- 5 February 2025
- 6 May 2025

Meeting started: 7.02 pm
Meeting ended: 9.05 pm

Chair

Contact officer: Tiffany Yip
Assistant Committee Co-ordinator
Governance and Scrutiny

E-mail: Tiffany.Yip@lbhf.gov.uk