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London Borough of Islington

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 18 June 2019

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at Town Hall on 18 June 2019 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Champion (Chair), Bell-Bradford, Chowdhury, Cutler, Gantly, Heather, Jeapes, Khurana, Nathan, O'Sullivan, Poyser and Russell and Khondoker

Also Present: **Councillors:** Hull and Watts

Councillor Rowena Champion in the Chair

115 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**
Councillors Chapman, Gallagher, Wayne and Hyde

116 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**
Councillor Khondoker for Councillor Chapman

117 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**
None

118 **TERMS OF REFERENCE/MEMBERSHIP ETC. (Item A4)**
RESOLVED:
That the report be noted

119 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A5)**
RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 May 2019 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them

120 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A6)**
The Chair referred to the scrutiny topics for PPS for 2019/20, and proposed that the Committee at the July and September meetings receive presentations as to how Members monitor performance, how performance indicators are determined and put together, how they are presented to PPS, and in addition to look at ways that the Council is held to account, and how this could be improved

The Chair also stated that she was of the view that the Committee should scrutinise the measures being put in place to ensure that the IT function now that it is coming back 'in house', from the joint venture with L.B. Camden, is fit for purpose and enables a robust IT function to be provided to the Council

The Chair also referred to the fact that a Workplace strategy is being formulated and that she proposed that this be submitted to the Committee in later in the year

RESOLVED:

That the above proposals be approved and added to the Work Programme 2019/20

121 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions, filming and recording of meetings, and fire evacuation procedures

122 PRESENTATION LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON EXECUTIVE PRIORITIES - 2019/20 - VERBAL (Item C1)

Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of the Council, was present for discussion of this item, and outlined the Executive priorities for 2019/20, and achievements in 2018/19

During discussion the following main points were made –

- L..B.Islington is one of the highest providers of new homes
- 1000 vulnerable residents have been assisted back into work
- Boroughwide transport improvements including extensive works at Highbury Corner, Old Street and Gillespie Road
- 10 school streets currently in operation, and the only LA to have an education hub
- Negotiated 60% genuinely affordable homes on the Holloway Prison site and the effective use of the planning process to enable this
- Continuation of the excellent work of the Integrated Gangs team and no reductions in youth facilities
- Localities programme introduced
- All the Council's policies are driving the Fairness agenda, and assist the poorer members of the community
- All these achievements made whilst at the same time having to reduce the budget by £250m over the last 9 years, because of Government budget reductions
- Key priorities for 2019/20 include – the appointment of a Service Director for New Build should enable the Council to move forward more speedily on its new build programme, and enable it to be a major developer of new homes
- Community Safety – concerned at the incidents of stabbings across London, and in the borough. Challenges remain and it is felt that the stabbings are mainly linked to the drug economy, which the Police are struggling to contain due to reductions in their funding. A number of services are linked in dealing with this issue and work is taking place with a number of agencies, including the Police and that it is felt that the work is having an impact
- The Council has managed to retain its Adventure Playgrounds and evidence has shown that this has proved beneficial to children from troubled families
- The Localities Programme assists in prevention/early intervention and a number of services are now working more effectively and more engagement is taking place with VCS/Youth services. Work is taking place with residents to enable them to take control of issues, and this is starting to make a difference
- There is a climate emergency and the Council is set to announce that it will have net zero carbon emissions by 2030. It was pleasing to note that the Council's current targets had been met 2 years early
- The Council wanted a more inclusive borough, despite the Government's austerity programme which mitigated against this.

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- The Council has lost a number of senior officers over the past few months, however there were strong candidates for the vacancies and it was felt that this could offer new opportunities for the Council to move forward with new ideas and delivery of excellent services
- Excellent work has been achieved in the budget monitoring process, however there is a need to improve programming and project management, and to ensure IT is provided effectively
- Concern was also expressed that a no deal BREXIT could have serious consequences for the borough and its residents
- A Member stated that he welcomed the Localities programme, however he expressed concern that CCTV that had been introduced to deal with drug dealing and had proved to be effective had been taken away by the Police, and had led to an upturn in drug dealing again, and that a youth hostel in the area had increased the incidence of drug dealing. It was stated that work is taking place with the Police to enable them to understand the wide extent of CCTV coverage that is available on Council CCTV cameras and that this needed to be used more effectively. It was also stated that the Council is endeavouring to provide a more integrated system of CCTV, in relation to CCTV traffic cameras and on housing estates
- Concern was expressed about the selling off of street properties by Housing Associations, and that receipts were not being used to provide housing within the borough. It was stated that it is expected that if properties were sold off then Housing Associations should provide replacement properties within the borough
- In response to a question it was stated that measures such as transport strategies, insulation of housing, electric vehicle charging points roll out, would be needed to implemented to get a net zero carbon emission policy by 2030, however this would mean substantial changes to housing stock and Government action would be needed as well. Offset carbon capture technology would also need to be looked at
- Members also expressed concern that the Borough Commander has changed on a number of occasions in the last few years, and that this was not conducive to partnership working or effective policing in the borough. It was stated that this issue had been raised and there had been reassurances given that the new Borough Commander will remain in post for the next 3 years
- Reference was made to anti-social behaviour on Housing Association properties and that there was no legal duty for Housing Associations to employ ASB officers. It was stated that Housing Associations needed to ensure that they provided support to residents, and discussions were taking place with Housing Associations on exchange of information re: tenants with mental health problems etc.

The Chair thanked Councillor Watts for attending

123

COUNCIL SICKNESS (Item C2)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present, together with Alan Grant, Acting Head of Human Resources, and Linda Nicholas for attending

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- It was noted that a new Workplace Strategy was being put in place and this would be submitted at a later date to the Committee
- Following the previous meeting of PPS when they considered this issue, a robust action plan had been put in place, and progress is monitored by CMB and improved management information is being provided to Directors

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- It was noted that improvements had been made and long term sickness had reduced. There is also a focus on wellbeing of staff, and there had been a number of dismissals and others are in the pipeline
- The annual appraisal has been removed and replaced with more regular appraisals where wellbeing of staff can be addressed at an early stage, and allow better reporting. This will allow continuous appraisal of staff
- In response to a question it was stated that organisational change can lead to stress amongst staff, however HR did provide support to Directors, and the process needed to be managed sensitively. Trade Unions were engaged and consulted at an early stage on reorganisation proposals
- Reference was made to the Medigold contract and that improvements needed to be made as this is not working as effectively as envisaged
- Discussion took place as to more elderly manual staff, who may suffer from more injuries than younger staff, and whether measures were being put in place to assist them to remain in employment, by offering reduced hours or more flexible working. It was stated that this could be looked at and proposals submitted at a later date
- A Member enquired why there was a 'pie chart' in the report detailing sickness levels by race, and that this did not appear to present any relevant information and should be removed in all future reports
- In response to a question as to whether the Council tried to ascertain whether stress/anxiety issues were caused by work or home life, it was stated that this was the case, however more regular appraisals would enable concerns to be raised at an earlier stage by staff/management
- The view was expressed that there needed to be more information provided in future reports detailing working days lost as a percentage of the Directorate, as well as a percentage of the workforce, as this would reflect a truer picture. In addition, a breakdown of sickness by gender. Reference was made to the fact that a number of these issues were being looked at by CMB, and would be reflected the next time the report was submitted to the Committee

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that a further report be submitted to the Committee in January 2020, detailing progress including

- data by service area of level of sickness, and how this has been impacted by the workplace strategy introduction
- how is support for older workers, particularly manual workers being addressed e.g. more flexible hours, flexible working etc.
- analysis of data by race to be looked at to ascertain if there is any relevance to this information being provided in future
- data to be provided on sickness levels by gender
- data should include % levels of sickness against % of people employed per service area to make the figures presented more relevant

The Chair thanked Councillor Hull, Alan Grant and Linda Nicholas for attending

124

NEW SCRUTINY TOPICS 2019/20 VERBAL (Item C3)

RESOLVED:

That the following scrutiny topics be agreed for 2019/20 –

Children's Services – Educational inequalities

Housing Services – Insourcing Planned Maintenance/Private Rented sector

Environment and Regeneration – to be decided and approved at the next meeting

Health and Care – Adult Paid Carers/Green Paper Social Care

Policy and Performance – Presentations on Performance Indicators and IT strategy post Joint Venture with L.B. Camden

125 **SCRUTINY REVIEW UNIVERSAL CREDIT - FINAL REPORT (Item C4)**

Robbie Rainbird, Head of Processing was present for discussion of this item.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- Members were of the view that in the opening statement of the recommendations the words – ‘and furthermore is not welcomed by this Council’ should be deleted
- Councillor Bell-Bradford expressed the view that he felt that the wording on the Habitual Residency Test recommendation 8 should be strengthened and that he would submit a revised recommendation in this regard for consideration by the Committee
- Councillor Heather indicated that he felt that the report did not effectively reflect the SID in the respect of effectively challenging the Government and communicating this to residents. Councillor Heather stated that he would submit a proposed recommendation in this regard for consideration by the Committee
- It was stated that the Appendices to the report should be referenced by page numbers at page 2 of the report

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above, the report be approved and referred to the Executive for consideration

126 **REVENUE OUTFURN 2018/19 (Item C5)**

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance, Performance and Community Safety was present, together with Steve Key, Service Director Finance

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- It was noted that the revenue outturn for the General Fund showed a gross underspend of £5.485m and a net break even position after transferring £2.870m to the Insurance Fund provision in 2018/19, and £2.678m into an Insurance Fund earmarked reserve, to be applied in the provision in 2019/20
- Noted the breakdown of the forecast General Fund outturn by individual variance at Appendix 1 to the report and by service area at Appendix 2
- Noted the 2018/19 revenue outturn carry forwards and transfers to reserves, where there is a specific and agreed purpose for this, as detailed in Appendix 3
- Noted that the HRA forecast is a break even position, and the capital investment of 3113.1m delivered in 2018/19
- It was noted that the Council had now increased its reserves to 5%, rather than 4% as previously

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- Discussion took place around the increase in long term debt and the Committee were informed that this is felt to be manageable, as the debt is on long term fixed interest rates

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

127 MONITORING REPORT (Item)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and the work programme be amended as referred to earlier in relation to the inclusion of items on Workplace Strategy, Presentations on Performance Indicators and IT post joint venture with L.B.Camden

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIR