

## Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee

### Scrutiny Committee Response Tracker

	Date of meeting	Query raised	Response / Update
1.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>The Committee considered issues related to the increased cost of energy, the urgent key decisions that had to be taken over the summer, and the recent Executive decision to seek to enter into a Public Buying Organisation.</p> <p>Members queried what lessons had been learned from this process and sought reassurance that there is an appropriate risk management strategy in place.</p> <p>While it was noted that the increased cost of energy was having significant impacts for all sectors, it was queried if the financial risk to the council and mitigating actions taken were comparable to other London Boroughs.</p> <p>It was requested that the Energy Services Team provide a briefing note to the Committee.</p>	<p>Environment Directorate officers are producing a briefing note for the Committee. This will be circulated separately.</p>
2.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>In relation to the upcoming decision on the Forward Plan on parking fees and charges, it was queried if the new fees and charges model would fully cover the cost of providing the Parking service, or if the service would continue to be subsidised through other income.</p>	<p>The parking service is fully self-financing and is not subsidised by other income, the service generates a significant surplus which is ring-fenced by law and must be re-invested into transport related matters.</p>

3.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>In relation to children’s centre occupancy data at <a href="#">Figure 9 of the report</a>, members asked for more information on why occupancy rates were falling. Although it was noted that demographic factors would impact on occupancy, it was also suggested that Covid-19 may no longer be a significant factor, and members noted anecdotally that new private nurseries were opening in the borough. It was queried if affordability and marketing of the local offer may be contributing to the fall in occupancy.</p>	<p>Occupancy of nurseries is falling in all types of provision – private, voluntary, LBI maintained and schools. The most recent Childcare Sufficiency data shows that the vacancy rate across all nurseries was at 19% in summer 2022 compared with 17% in summer 2021. Vacancy rates at children’s centres have actually improved slightly since last summer, whereas the rate at private nurseries remains high and has risen from 21% in summer 2021 to 24% in summer 2022. The 4 new private nurseries which have opened are operating with vacancies, particularly in the toddler and pre-school rooms. Despite the vacancy rate at children’s centres improving slightly, this is an issue which we are addressing by improving the marketing of places, including creating a dedicated website for the 8 LBI run nurseries. Communication about the benefits of the subsidised childcare offer at children’s centres is woven into the council wide cost of living campaign. Reasons for the falling occupancy rates include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a reducing birth rate</li> <li>• a reducing 0-5s population due to people moving away from Islington as a result of housing costs and other cost of living pressures</li> <li>• the high costs of childcare due to the lack of properly costed government financial support resulting in working parents finding alternative free childcare options where possible e.g. through grandparents</li> </ul> <p>greater flexibility of working hours introduced during Covid, allowing parents to make adjustments to reduce their childcare requirements.</p>
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4.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>Members asked for further information on the cost pressure faced by Islington Lettings. It was queried how many people were in the scheme, and the impact of the revised arrangements on residents.</p>	<p>The council currently have 10 households residing in Islington Lettings properties. This is planned to reduce to zero by the 31st of March 2023. 8 of the 10 households have been offered permanent council housing accommodation to protect their future housing security. 6 of the 10 households have accepted the offer of permanent Islington Council accommodation and are waiting to move into their new homes once the voids work have been completed. 2 of the 10 households are waiting to view the council property offered. The remaining 2 households are waiting offers of permanent accommodation.</p>
5.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>Members noted the overspend in Fairer Together included cost pressure to deal with complaints effectively and efficiently. Members requested details of what actions are being taken to resolve the complaints backlog, and how the recruitment and retention issues would be resolved.</p>	<p>Complaint volumes have been increasing across the Council, with the largest increase seen for housing and council tax. There are number of reasons for this, including the impact of the pandemic and additional work services were required to undertake to support residents with the unprecedented rise in energy costs and the cost of living crisis. This additional demand led to the backlog of complaints we are currently working to address.</p> <p>A range of strategic and operational activity is currently being undertaken to reduce the backlog to ensure compliance with the council's complaint response times as well reviewing, more broadly, the organisation's response to complaints, identifying actions that will reduce complaints at source and prevent escalations.</p> <p>In late summer 2022, two additional Complaint Officers were seconded to the Corporate Complaints Team, with another two officers taking up posts in the team in November, further bolstering our ability to</p>

			<p>respond to resident concerns and reduce the current backlog.</p> <p>An interim manager has also been recruited to lead the service, tasked with both reducing the backlog and undertaking a root and branch review of the way resident feedback and complaints are managed across the council. They have already implemented a range of improvement initiatives, including activities to improve the quality and timeliness of complaint investigations and responses at the earlier stages of the process and introducing a culture of learning and best practice in terms of how resident feedback is used to improve service design and delivery.</p>																						
6.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>The Committee requested an update on spend on agency and interim staff; including details of which posts are filled by agency and interim staff, and why.</p>	<p>The data below sets out agency FTE by department as at end of September.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1375 767 1955 1281"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1375 767 1807 850">FTE based (September 22)</th> <th data-bbox="1807 767 1955 850">%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 850 1807 895">Adult Social Care</td> <td data-bbox="1807 850 1955 895">24.60</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 895 1807 940">Chief Executive</td> <td data-bbox="1807 895 1955 940">14.08</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 940 1807 984">Children's Services</td> <td data-bbox="1807 940 1955 984">8.97</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 984 1807 1029">Community Wealth Building</td> <td data-bbox="1807 984 1955 1029">6.46</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 1029 1807 1074">Environment</td> <td data-bbox="1807 1029 1955 1074">16.34</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 1074 1807 1118">Fairer Together</td> <td data-bbox="1807 1074 1955 1118">3.74</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 1118 1807 1163">Homes &amp; Neighbourhoods</td> <td data-bbox="1807 1118 1955 1163">11.67</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 1163 1807 1208">Public Health</td> <td data-bbox="1807 1163 1955 1208">0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 1208 1807 1252">Resources</td> <td data-bbox="1807 1208 1955 1252">10.04</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1375 1252 1807 1281">LBI</td> <td data-bbox="1807 1252 1955 1281">11.86</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	FTE based (September 22)	%	Adult Social Care	24.60	Chief Executive	14.08	Children's Services	8.97	Community Wealth Building	6.46	Environment	16.34	Fairer Together	3.74	Homes & Neighbourhoods	11.67	Public Health	0.00	Resources	10.04	LBI	11.86
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7.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>The Committee queried previously agreed savings that were now considered to be undeliverable. The Committee requested a summary of those savings, with analysis of why they could not be delivered. It was suggested that this would help to inform the budget setting process for 2023/24.</p>	<p>This update will be included within future budget monitoring reports.</p>
8.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report:</b></p> <p>The Committee asked for an update on the outcomes of the Consultation on the In-House Transformation Programme. Paragraph 4.12 of the report indicated that this was due to complete in mid-October 2022.</p>	<p>The consultation was extended from the 10/10/22 to the 16/11/22 to allow Unions to further consult with members on work patterns and flexible working proposals.</p>
9.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Corporate Performance Report</b></p> <p>The Committee noted that measures to reduce the use of temporary accommodation included <i>'weekly focus on cases in TA where the council does not have a statutory duty. In these cases, the service has reduced the offer to one reasonable offer of accommodation'</i>.</p> <p>The Committee expressed concerns about homelessness residents and queried the wider impact of this approach, particularly on vulnerable residents. It was requested that officers provide an update.</p>	<p>The council is the only council in London to offer one property to all homeless households when the council does not have a statutory/legal homeless duty. This offer of private rented accommodation goes beyond the council's statutory housing duties. To offer more than one offer would place the council's budget under severe financial pressure.</p>
10.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Corporate Performance Report</b></p> <p>The uptake of places on school holiday activities was lower than expected, and a known issue was families who book activities but then do not attend. Members suggested that the introduction of a waiting list may help to ensure that spaces are made available if a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We strongly encourage all providers to keep a waiting list as well as proactively contacting families who have booked a place a couple of days before the activity to remind them of their booking and check they are still planning to attend. We also include messaging on our web pages reminding families to inform providers if</li> </ul>

		<p>young person is not able to attend. Members asked if officers had considered such a system.</p>	<p>they are no longer able to attend a booked activity so that others can be offered a place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently there is no central booking system which means it is possible for families to book on to multiple sessions with different providers happening at the same time</li> <li>• We are currently working to secure and implement a centralised system for booking on to activities which will both streamline and simplify the process for families, removing barriers to access, while helping us to monitor bookings and identify whether double-booking is an issue</li> <li>• We know from other local authorities that the issue of ‘no shows’ is not unique to Islington. DfE have suggested that local authorities remove all reference to ‘free’ and instead advertise activities as ‘funded’. We have continued to advertise our activities as ‘free’ in order to ensure our messaging for families is clear and simple</li> <li>• The Family Information Service supports families looking for holiday activities in their local area, including looking at alternative provision where their preferred activity is fully booked</li> </ul>
11.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Corporate Performance Report</b></p> <p>The Committee welcomed the progress made on voids performance and requested further data on this, in particular in relation to the number of households choosing to downsize, the time taken to process voids, and so on.</p>	<p>In the 2021/2022 fiscal year the council re-housed 145 households seeking to downsize into smaller accommodation. As of the 31st of October 2022, there are 664 households seeking to downsize to smaller properties</p>

12.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Corporate Performance Report</b></p> <p>The report stated:</p> <p>‘Recruitment and retention across the early intervention and prevention service within Fairer Together continues to be challenging. Staff sickness and turnover has been high and phased returns from long Covid have also had an impact on capacity.’</p> <p>The Committee requested further information on the challenges and how this was being addressed.</p>	<p>Recruitment continues to be challenging in the service with vacancies particularly hard to recruit to in our LBI managed children centre nurseries. This is a national picture across the early years sector generally where wages are low and staff are leaving to work in better paid service industries. A recent recruitment campaign in partnership with the Comms team resulted in a high number of applicants although applications were generally of low quality. We are linking with local colleges and using apprenticeship schemes to try and grow our own staff more consistently.</p>
13.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Annual Workforce Report</b></p> <p>The Committee requested further information on the council’s use of the apprenticeship levy, and if we undertake any transfer to SMEs.</p>	<p>Islington joined the online levy sharing service designed by government so that large organisations can support SMEs to create and recruit apprentices through pledging some of their unused funds. We are named in the press release from September 2021: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-service-to-help-businesses-offer-apprenticeships">New service to help businesses offer apprenticeships - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>.</p> <p>The online service specifies that we only share funds with Islington businesses who pay LLW.</p> <p>As at Q2, £178,493 had been spent of £314,223 available</p>

14.

20 October  
2022

**Annual Workforce Report**

Members requested a further discussion on the ethnicity pay gap and the council's actions to improve diversity in the top quartile of earners. It was suggested that, due to an increase in remote working, council job vacancies were increasingly appealing to those living outside of London, and it was queried if this had an impact on the demographic profile of the council's workforce.

It was suggested that these issues could be taken forward through an Informal Working Group.

We are not at this stage seeing an impact on the overall demographics of the council and representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues continues to improve incrementally.

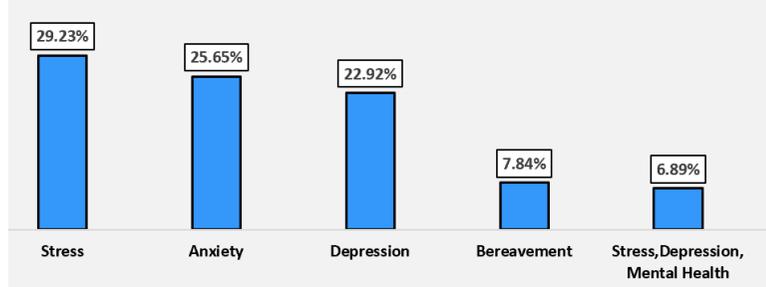
**Broad ethnic profile (where known)**

Year	% Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic	% White
2021-22	41.59%	51.00%
2020-21	40.94%	50.77%
2019-20	40.02%	51.31%
2018-19	39.18%	51.74%
2017-18	38.41%	51.76%
2016-17	37.62%	52.08%

The top 5% has increased from 20.2% to 27.3% in the past five years.

However, there are considerably higher percentages of those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds amongst working age Londoners compared to the wider population.

15.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Annual Workforce Report</b></p> <p>The Committee requested further data on the reasons for staff leaving their post. Officers noted that staff leaving the organisation were invited to give an exit interview. Members requested details of the main reasons given for leaving the council’s employment.</p>	<p>The table below sets out the reasons for leaving across the council. Exit interview data is being collated.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1384 300 2130 655"> <thead> <tr> <th>Reason for leaving</th> <th>Total</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Compulsory Redundancy</td> <td>5</td> <td>1.19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deceased</td> <td>11</td> <td>2.63%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dismissal</td> <td>25</td> <td>5.97%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Early Retirement</td> <td>4</td> <td>0.95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End of Contract</td> <td>33</td> <td>7.88%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ill Health Retirement</td> <td>10</td> <td>2.39%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mutual Severance</td> <td>2</td> <td>0.48%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resignation</td> <td>272</td> <td>64.92%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retirement</td> <td>39</td> <td>9.31%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Voluntary Redundancy</td> <td>18</td> <td>4.30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grand Total</td> <td>419</td> <td>100.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Reason for leaving	Total	%	Compulsory Redundancy	5	1.19%	Deceased	11	2.63%	Dismissal	25	5.97%	Early Retirement	4	0.95%	End of Contract	33	7.88%	Ill Health Retirement	10	2.39%	Mutual Severance	2	0.48%	Resignation	272	64.92%	Retirement	39	9.31%	Voluntary Redundancy	18	4.30%	Grand Total	419	100.00%
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16.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Annual Workforce Report</b></p> <p>Members requested further information on the destinations and career progression of those on the council’s apprenticeship schemes, including those who had since left the council.</p> <p>The Committee also requested data on the destinations and career progression of those the council had supported into apprenticeships offered by third parties.</p>	<p>The retention rate for council apprenticeships is 76%. We are currently updating our systems to improve the collection of end destination data.</p> <p>We don’t capture data regularly on people we support into apprenticeships offered by third parties, because of the length of time that this might involve – up to 4 years in the case of a higher-level qualification and usually at least two years.</p> <p>However we have put a lot of thought into securing positive outcomes for these apprenticeships, as the majority are secured as a result of a section 106 or other contractual obligation and have historically been more of a mandated requirement than the result of a genuine commitment by the employer. We are addressing this by introducing a new employer's commitment for our own contractors, whereby they are asked to commit to offering a meaningful experience including letting employees experience other sites if they need the variety in order to cover all the required modules in their studies. To ensure compliance with</p>																																				

			<p>this, the councils new build contractors are actually now asked to invoice iWork for the wages, after evidencing that the apprentice is still in their employment, rather than the previous system which allowed them to cost the apprenticeship into their contract fee and receive the moneys up front. The money is now closely tied to feedback about the individual and we are ensuring that at least for the first year, the apprentices is assured of continuous employment. This first year is the most vulnerable, as it is when the apprentice is least productive, so we anticipate that more Islington residents will complete and continue in their trades as a result.</p>												
17.	20 October 2022	<p><b>Annual Workforce Report</b></p> <p>Members noted that ‘mental health’ was the most common reason for sickness absence and requested further information on the wellbeing offer available to staff.</p> <p>It was queried if the council held data on if absence due to mental health was work-related or due to external factors.</p>	<p>Mental health data is broken down as follows for the past year.</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Mental Health Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Stress</td> <td>29.23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Anxiety</td> <td>25.65%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Depression</td> <td>22.92%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bereavement</td> <td>7.84%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stress, Depression, Mental Health</td> <td>6.89%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The council has a range of support available including employee assistance programme with referrals for counselling, partnership with Able Futures, mental health ambassadors, mental health first aiders, mental health training for managers and wellbeing Wednesdays.</p>	Mental Health Category	Percentage	Stress	29.23%	Anxiety	25.65%	Depression	22.92%	Bereavement	7.84%	Stress, Depression, Mental Health	6.89%
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