

London Borough of Islington

**Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 14 May 2024**

Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 14 May 2024 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**        **Councillors:**        Williamson (Chair), Convery (Vice-Chair), Jackson, Clarke, Chapman, McHugh, Ibrahim, Pandor, Staff and Hamdache

**Also Present:**        **Councillors:**        Ward and Woolf.

**Councillor Flora Williamson in the Chair**

**195        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**

Apologies were received from Councillors Chowdhury and Weekes.

**196        DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**

Councillor Wayne substituted for Councillor Weekes.

**197        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**

None.

**198        MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**

A member noted that the minutes of the previous meeting read:

*Officers advised that they could circulate a paper to members summarising the latest position on the parking account and trends over time.*

It was requested that this report be circulated to members of the committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That subject to the above, the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**199        CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**

The Chair advised that it would be her last meeting as Chair. The Chair thanked the members of the committee for their contributions and the officers who had supported the work of the committee over the past year.

The Chair advised that she would revise the order of business, to take Item B3, Corporate Performance, before Item B2, Update on Transformation Projects.

**200        PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A6)**

None.

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**ANNUAL PRESENTATION - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY (Item D1)**

Councillor Woolf, Executive Member for Community Safety, presented his annual report to the Committee.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The Executive Member highlighted key actions in his portfolio over the last year. Partnership working with the Police had delivered a 10-point action plan for how the BCU would deliver the Met Police turnaround plan locally; the council had worked with the Police to deliver cultural competency training to 600 front-line police officers, approximately one-third of the 1,500 officers working in the borough. Walk-and-talk sessions had been held in 16 wards, and this included evening sessions. A governance review had been commenced to ensure that policing and neighbourhood structures were aligned.
- Islington had seen the largest reduction in public order crime types across the 32 boroughs; motor vehicle crime, robbery, VAWG, knife crime and firearms discharges had all decreased. The Executive Member commented that it was important not to be complacent, but these figures reflected the strong partnership approach taken to reduce crime in Islington.
- The Executive Member commented on the importance of the “critical friend” approach to working with the Police, calling out where improvements were needed, and championing examples of good practice.
- The Executive Member commented that the Safe Havens scheme continued to develop. The council was also implementing Bleed Control kits across the borough. The borough’s knife bins had now collected 4,000 knives.
- Implementing the recommendations of the ASB transformation programme had been a key theme over the past year, and the Executive Member thanked the committee for their review of ASB, which was aligned with the objectives of the transformation programme.
- The Executive Member noted that the restructure of the Community Safety, Security and Resilience directorate had consolidated services in his portfolio, and some further amendments to the structure were being explored to enable a 24/7 response service.
- A discussion was had on the prevalence of hate crime, and if the reduction in figures may actually be representative of under-reporting. This was a complex issue and there was a need to build trust and confidence in the police among all communities. The council had trained 50 Hate Crime Champions to raise awareness of hate crime in the local community. It was suggested that LGBT communities may be reticent to report hate crime, and a member suggested that engaging with local LGBT venues may be beneficial.
- A member expressed concern at the Police posting photos of large knives recovered on social media, suggesting that this may be counter-productive, as young people may feel the need to arm themselves. The Executive Member indicated this would be considered further. Although it was a concern that 4,000 knives had been handed into knife bins, it could also be viewed as 4,000 positive choices being made.
- A member noted that 824 HMO inspections had been completed and asked if this meant that 60% of properties had not been inspected. In response, the Executive Member noted that this was outside of his portfolio, however he would check.
- Following a question, it was advised that evidence is needed to take action against hate crime, and a new form was being launched to collect the necessary information. However, there would always be the option to report via telephone.

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- A member suggested that increasing the visibility of Safer Neighborhood Teams may improve resident perceptions of safety. The Executive Member referenced the additional police resources being allocated to the borough and the ending of the carousel system which would help local officers to build relationships in their communities.
- Following a question, the Executive Member noted that Ward Panels were police-led events. The Executive Member had received feedback from councillors that these events were not always functioning as they should be, and the Executive Member would be meeting with the Police on quarterly basis to discuss this issue.
- The Executive Member commented on joint work with Finsbury Park Mosque and Muslim Welfare House to raise awareness of hate crime reporting mechanisms. It was important to ensure that hate crime did not become normalised and accepted.
- A member questioned the council's use of contractors to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for littering. The Executive Member commented that this appeared to be working successfully, and this resource enabled the compliance team to focus on persistent and serious fly-tipping.
- It was clarified that the number of knife crime offences in London was increasing, but decreasing in Islington. A discussion was had on the broader work to challenge and discourage knife crime, including preventative work. Trading Standards had issued fines to businesses for selling knives to children.
- The Executive Member commented on the work of the Youth Safety team in developing a summer plan to mitigate and respond to any serious youth violence.
- The Committee considered moped, electric bike and scooter enabled theft targeting young people as they left school; members expressed concerns that young people were being targeted for mobile phones and that this appeared to be organised crime. It was asked what more could be done to prevent this crime and empower communities. The Executive Member commented on the need for ongoing safety advice, targeting police resources at hotspots, diversion activities, and listening to the concerns of young people. The Committee suggested that a cross-borough approach may be needed to address this issue effectively.

The Committee thanked the Executive Member for his presentation.

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### **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - Q3 2023-24 (Item D3)**

Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance, Dave Hodgkinson, Corporate Director – Resources, and Joanna Dawes, Corporate Performance Manager, introduced the report.

- In relation to the recruitment of agency staff, it was noted that Luton Council had an in-house bank of agency staff which had led to around £500k of savings, it was queried if Islington had explored this option. In response, it was advised that the Corporate Management Team regularly reviewed this issue; agency staff were typically used in front line roles that were difficult to fill. The report indicated that spend on agency staff had increased 25% since Quarter 1 and the committee expressed concern at this increase.
- Officers summarised some of the roles occupied by agency staff and how temporary staff could be used to address specific issues quickly, for example staff working to resolve damp and mold issues. The Committee noted that around one in five members of staff were recruited through an agency and suggested that the council may wish to consider the base level of staffing required to deliver day-to-day services.
- Following a question on apprenticeships, officers explained how the council supported and delivered apprenticeships for local people, including offering roles to care leavers.

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- A member asked if previously deleted roles were now occupied by agency staff. Officers advised that this should not happen and that this would be reviewed.
- A member asked about work to increase the take-up of funded childcare places for two year olds. The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee noted that this had been reviewed in her committee and that there was a plan to engage with difficult to reach groups. It was also noted that there had been an increase in parents staying at home since the pandemic which had impacted on take up.
- In relation to housing complaints, the Executive Member commented on the need to deal with simple transactional communications swiftly in order to resolve issues and stop them from escalating into complaints. Improving the resident experience in this way was a high priority and would allow for more efficient use of resources in responding to residents' issues.

### RESOLVED:

That the Quarter 3 performance report be noted.

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### **UPDATE ON COUNCIL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS (Item D2)**

Raj Chand, Corporate Director – Community Engagement and Wellbeing, and Charisse Monero, Assistant Director – Transformation, presented to the committee.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Officers summarised the progress of several transformation projects; their aims, impact and outcomes, and how they were targeted at improving service delivery and addressing challenges faced by residents.
- A member welcomed the development of the Access Islington Hubs and in particular the work to ease transitions between Children's and Adult's social services, which had been an issue considered in previous scrutiny meetings.
- The Committee noted that the satisfaction rate at Access Islington Hubs was 93% which was considered very positive given that they were a new service.
- In relation to the targeted work with the Somali community, the committee noted the range of challenges, frustration and discontent experienced by the community. Officers explained the importance of designing services with residents, understanding their needs and developing solutions together.
- The Committee welcomed that there had been 41,000 visits to the Access Islington Hubs so far and requested a breakdown of data on the types of issues residents were presenting with. Officers advised that data was collected and this could be reported to a future meeting. Officers summarised the wide range of services, support and advice offered.

The Committee thanked officers for their attendance.

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### **COMPLEX ASB SCRUTINY REVIEW - FINAL REPORT (Item D4)**

The Committee thanked all of those who had contributed to the review.

### RESOLVED:

That the report of the committee be agreed and submitted to the Executive.

205 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES 2023-24**  
206 **(Item D5)**

RESOLVED:

That the work of the council's scrutiny committees in 2023-24 be noted.

206 **MONITORING ITEM (Item D6)**

The Monitoring Items were noted.

The Committee thanked the Chair, Councillor Flora Williamson, and the Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Sheila Chapman, for their work, noting that they would be stepping down from their committees to take up other roles.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

**CHAIR**