

Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee - 5 November 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 5 November 2024 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Wayne (Chair), Chowdhury, Clarke, Jackson, Ozdemir, Hyde, Ibrahim, Jegorovas-Armstrong, Pandor, Staff and Weekes

Also Present: **Councillors:**

Councillor Nick Wayne in the Chair

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

Apologies were received from Councilor Khondoker.

33 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)

Councillor Hayes acted as substitute for Councillor Khondoker

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

35 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)

The minutes of the Corporate Resources and Economy Meeting held on the 12 September were agreed as an accurate record by the Committee and the Chair was authorized to sign them.

36 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)

The Chair reminded the committee that it had requested data on contracts, including their social value. It was explained that this information would be available for their meeting on the 5 December.

In regard to its scrutiny review, the committee heard there would be a visit on the 20 November to affordable workspaces and a virtual session was being planned for either the 27 or 28 November so the committee could learn from other councils.

The Chair highlighted that the sub-committee on performance data decided it would be beneficial to consider different directorates each quarter. Work was still underway to determine what data they wished to consider at those meetings.

The Chair felt it was important for the committee to keep track of requests for updates and information since the committees had been reconfigured. It was requested that committee members look back over previous meetings to ensure none of their requests had been missed.

The committee were informed that there would be a Joint Committee of the Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Environment, Climate and Transport Scrutiny Committee on the 23 January 2024. The Joint Committee had been set up to scrutinize Thames Water.

Following a request at their last meeting, an update on the Access Islington Hubs had been planned for the January meeting.

37 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A6)

No public questions were received by the committee.

38 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PROGRESSIVE PROCUREMENT (Item D1)

The committee received a presentation from the Social Value Portal for their scrutiny review into progressive procurement. The Social Value Portal addressed the Committee as an expert witness, who helped organisations measure and communicate their social value in areas like local job opportunities, environmental outcomes and community wellbeing.

The committee raised and discussed the following main points:

- In response to a question on the weighting afforded to social value, the committee were informed that the proposal was for a minimum of 20%
- The committee considered making a distinction between social value and climate change weightings to ensure that the social and environmental elements were considered in conversations with suppliers.
- Following a question on carbon emissions and sustainability, it was explained that the council used approximately 35 TOMs measures out of a bank of around 170. The council could tailor the measures they used to incorporate existing measures for reducing carbon emissions and improving sustainability.
- It was explained that although the Procurement Act 2023 did not refer to social value and climate change it would refer to a Procurement Strategy that would pick up those issues.
- Following a question on ensuring local needs were understood, it was explained that a tool, which the committee would hear from Waltham Forest on, had been developed to provide a needs analysis. The analysis would pull together crime, indices of multiple deprivation and health data to see what the needs in a community were and to design the offer around that. This would be supplemented by a wider policy piece for suppliers and feedback from communities.
- A committee member asked whether there was evidence the use of the Social Value Portal had added value. It was explained by the Social Value Portal that they were seeing additional value of 20-30%. The committee were informed of the importance of building businesses understanding of social value.
- The committee considered how to incentivise the procurement of local business and the hiring of local people. There was a weighting within the procurement process that meant businesses were more likely to win a contract if they were supporting local jobs and providing a positive impact within the community.
- The committee considered how small, local organisations could be supported to win contracts. It was explained that understanding social value and how to articulate it to the council was important and that within procurement certain types of organisations could be ringfenced for certain types of projects.
- That the new procurement act contained more tools to support smaller, local businesses to get into the supply chain. This included a longer timeline that would give those businesses time to acquire the necessary tools to respond effectively and a single digital platform for finding opportunities.
- That there were opportunities for businesses to learn more about social value and to engage with anchor networks to develop a place-based approach. It was highlighted that Islington already had a construction directory, that was a collation of local businesses, e.g. plumbers, electricians.

- A committee member said it was important to ensure existing relationships within the community were not harmed by changes in procurement. It was explained that a place-based approach should be complimentary not a substitute for existing relationships.
- A committee member asked what the biggest challenge for the council would be. It was explained that strong leadership was important and a commitment from officers to gaining value.
- The Chair reminded the committee that they would be providing a steer to the Executive and the Leader of the Council on what should be prioritised regarding social value. It was highlighted that the PowerPoint slide provided on 'learning' could be a good starting point for thinking about recommendations.
- It was explained that the list of TOMs could be shared with the committee if they wished to receive them.

The committee were asked to submit any further comments to the Chair.

39 **UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EQUALITIES, COMMUNITIES AND INCLUSION (Item D2)**

The committee received an update from the Executive Member for Equalities, Communities and Inclusion on their portfolio.

The committee raised and discussed the following main points:

- A committee member asked why 10% of respondents to the Bright Lives Coaching Service had said their ability to cope following coaching wasn't good. It was explained that although those participants may have seen an improvement they may still not be in a 'good' place. It could be that they have more complex support needs, and they were referred to other services. The service evaluation could be returned to the committee once complete.
- That there was a rotation of services providing outreach to vulnerable adults at Manor Gardens in addition to connectors providing links to housing and other council services. There was not staff from the Access Islington Hubs providing outreach but there was strong partnership working with other organisations. There was the potential to look across services to see what outreach was provided using data from the hubs.
- A member highlighted the importance of community cohesion in regard to Asylum seekers. It was highlighted that the Borough of Sanctuary Grants Programme could help to fund receiving communities. This could be reported back to the committee.
- A committee member asked what lessons had been learnt from the launching of the Black Cultural Centre. It was highlighted that there had to be a balance between appropriate safeguarding and due diligence and not making it too difficult for organisations. The pop-up approach was more agile and could be opened to a broader range of people who wouldn't have met the full criteria previously. It was hoped the space would become a vibrant and animated space that could build its reputation and provide a positive experience for people.
- A committee member asked why they were possibly looking at new locations for an Access Islington Hub. It was explained that the council may spend money to save money long-term. It was considered that somewhere less municipal and more inviting, where communities were already working and organising, would be beneficial. It was explained that the hubs were providing huge benefits for residents, improving the resident experience, improving digital inclusion, improving referrals and providing a more holistic service overall.
- The committee considered the services for asylum seekers. It was explained that Islington's work with Asylum seekers was recognised nationally but individuals could have very complex needs.

- A committee member highlighted that some minority ethnic groups were feeling unsafe since the August riots. It was explained that there were events and talks to encourage feelings of safety on the streets. There had also been a recent community cohesion event attended by over 100 people and an action plan was being created based on their feedback. There was a strong steer from participants that more events aimed at cohesion rather than segments of the community would be helpful. The action plan could be shared with the committee in the new year.

The chair asked any members with further questions to email him.

40 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - Q1 2024-25 (Item D3)

The committee received the Quarter 1 Performance Update for 2024-25, covering April-June 2024. The performance update focused on corporate resources.

The following main points were raised and discussed by the committee:

- A committee member asked why targets to complete Subject Access Requests (SAR) were not being met. It was explained that with more resource targets could be met but the resource would have to be diverted from other areas. The number of requests received by the council varied and could put pressure on the team. The council was in regular contact with the Information Commissioner on the management of SAR's and there had been a restructure of the service to centralise it and performance did improve for both SAR's and Freedom of Information (FOI's) requests.
- A committee member asked why Access Islington Hubs call abandonment was 1 in 6 callers and what could be done to improve it. It was explained that there had been improvement but there was more that could be done. It was highlighted that a more detailed report could be brought back to the committee in the Q3 report.
- A committee member highlighted that the performance indicator on savings would not be met by 30% and asked whether this would impact the rest of the savings targets for the year. It was explained that a detailed analysis of the budget monitoring would be presented at the next meeting. It was often delayed rather than undeliverable savings and this was manageable within the contingencies.
- The Chair asked whether the Delivery Plan was led by officers or politicians. It was explained that the missions were member led and the particular objectives were officer led. It was explained that it was a working document, and members could offer their feedback.

41 ANNUAL WORKFORCE REPORT (Item D4)

The committee received the annual workforce report.

The committee raised and discussed the following main points;

- Following a clarification question on ethnicity profiles it was explained that the data categories had been broken down into broad equality groups, with some data containing finer detail. The finer detail was available but, in some cases, had been collated for information.
- A committee member asked what support was provided to ensure minority ethnic group employees promoted to senior positions would succeed. It was explained that the check-in process was key in addition to training and mentoring programmes that were available to all managers.
- A committee member asked why the overall structure of the council's workforce included a growing number of senior officers when the council was facing severe budget pressures. It was explained that in the resources directorate they had

reduced the number of IT contractors by hiring senior officers in IT; the initial draft of the resident experience business case included contractors, and senior staff were engaged instead, saving in excess of £1,000,000. There had also been more senior staff hired to cover schools and pensions where the financial pressures required more senior staff. Further information on other directorates could be brought back to the committee. A committee member said a report should be provided that included what roles were recruited for, why, and the future plans for the position.

- A committee member felt the use of agency staff and a lack of people from minority ethnic groups in middle and top tier roles was consistently a workforce issue. It was explained that there had been a huge effort to get the agency staff numbers down and a timeline of permanent staff from each directorate could be provided to the committee. There were ongoing discussions on increasing the number of minority ethnic group people in senior positions as the targets had been exceeded. It was highlighted that it would take time to increase representation, but this could be mapped out and returned to the committee. The committee agreed they would like to receive data on this.
- A committee member asked about a four-day work week. It was explained that there was the ability to work flexibly, including working compressed hours, but the council was not in a position to move to a four-day work week.
- A committee member asked for clarification around whether apprenticeships were a new work opportunity or whether they were offered to existing staff. It was explained that some existing staff would access apprenticeship programmes. How the data was presented could be amended to reflect that.

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed to note:

- (i) The workforce profile for the financial year 2023/24, found in Appendix One.
- (ii) The trends and progress in 2023/24 detailed in section 3.2.
- (iii) The progress reported (in section 3.3) in delivering on Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion through our Workforce Strategy 2023 – 2026.
- (iv) The main priorities (in section 3.4) for the 2024/25 workplan, based on the workforce profile and progress made to date.

42 MONITORING ITEM (Item D5)

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm

CHAIR