

---

London Borough of Hackney  
Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2019/20  
Date of Meeting Monday, 20th July, 2020

Minutes of the proceedings of  
the Skills, Economy and  
Growth Scrutiny Commission  
held at Hackney Town Hall,  
Mare Street, London E8 1EA

---

**Chair** Councillor Mete Coban MBE

**Councillors in Attendance** Cllr Polly Billington (Vice-Chair), Cllr Richard Lufkin, Cllr Steve Race, Cllr Gilbert Smyth, Cllr Guy Nicholson and Cllr Carole Williams

**Apologies:** Cllr Sam Pallis

**Officers In Attendance**

**Other People in Attendance**

**Members of the Public**

**Officer Contact:** **Timothy Upton**  
☎ 020 8356 1872  
✉ timothy.upton@hackney.gov.uk

---

## Councillor Mete Coban MBE in the Chair

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Cllr Sam Pallis sent apologies.

### **2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

2.1 No urgent items were raised.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

3.1 No declarations of interest were declared.

### **4 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

4.1 Minutes were agreed.

<b>RESOLVED:</b>	<b>That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2020 were agreed as a correct record.</b>
------------------	---

- 5 Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2020/2021**
- 5.1.1 Cllr Coban opened the item by stating the Annual General Meeting had been delayed due to the situation with COVID-19.
- 5.1.2 Cllr Coban advised that the commission's remit is around strategic licensing & planning, transport, large scale economic regeneration, skills, and business engagement, and that the Work Programme & Terms of Reference will help to shape that work.
- 5.1.3 Cllr Coban welcomed Cllr Guy Nicholson to the meeting explaining that his input will be useful in terms of putting the Work Programme together in a way that ensures the commission is adding value to policy discussions.
- 5.1.4 Cllr Nicholson introduces himself as the cabinet member for Planning, Culture, and Inclusive Economy.
- 5.1.5 Cllr Coban asks the commission if there are any questions around the purpose of the meeting. There were no questions.
- 5.1.6 Cllr Coban invites Cllr Nicholson to give an overview of how local businesses have been impacted by COVID-19.
- 5.2.1 Cllr Nicholson opens by saying that a lot of activity has taken place trying to ensure that grants and monies have reached businesses in a timely fashion.
- 5.2.2 Cllr Nicholson advises that the discretionary grants initiative is still going through due process, applications have been received and are being processed. This will yield results in the upcoming weeks.
- 5.2.3 Cllr Nicholson advised that the council will be in an unusual position in that town centres are likely to come into their own in the next couple of years following COVID, and Hackney has a number of vibrant town centres where SME's have been thriving.
- 5.2.4 Cllr Nicholson advised that the number of residents in proximity to these town centres, as well as the traditions of walking and cycling, are allowing the '15 Minute City' to rise to prominence. It was explained that term refers to residents being able to access local goods and services within a 15-minute walk or cycle.
- 5.2.5 Cllr Nicholson advised this is realistic, and the '15-minute city' is being discussed by central government in reference to central London's economy which has been badly affected by COVID.
- 5.2.6 Cllr Nicholson spoke about the interplay between Hackney's social values and the aims of the businesses that the council wants to engage with and build relationships with, and that delivering the Inclusive Economy objectives will be reliant on these local businesses thriving.
- 5.2.7 Regarding the Inclusive Economy objectives, Cllr Nicholson advised that Cllr Williams will be in a good position to speak due to her involvement with employment, training, apprenticeships, and skills, and the wider portfolio.
- 5.2.8 Cllr Nicholson advised that the resilience and ability of local small and medium-sized enterprises to attract people to town centres is being actively considered in the Inclusive Economy strategy.

- 5.2.9 Cllr Nicholson advised that the economic situation represents an opportunity to support businesses and their cash flow, to support the inclusive economy, and to promote and match Hackney's social values, and to advocate those to the local businesses.
- 5.3.1 Cllr Coban thanks Cllr Nicholson and asked if there is a known number of successful discretionary grants. Cllr Nicholson advises that once all the applications are processed the number will be available.
- 5.3.2 Cllr Nicholson advised that additional resources have been applied by the council to process the influx of applications.
- 5.4 Cllr Coban opens to questions, first inviting Cllr Smyth to speak.
- 5.5.1 Cllr Smyth poses a question around the possibility of a community bank citing examples of Preston and Liverpool local authorities who have pursued such schemes, asking what Cllr Nicholson thinks of them.
- 5.5.2 Cllr Nicholson advised that there may be difficulties with the financial conduct authority when establishing these mutual societies & community banks but suggests that the focus should instead be around credit use and the current relationships with the credit union. The suggestion would be to improve on financial devices already in existence within the community rather than create something from scratch.
- 5.6.1 Cllr Race poses a question on the emergency transport plan, asking to what extent Cllr Nicholson and his teams have utilised the Emergency Transport Plan to support local businesses, particularly the hospitality industry.
- 5.6.2 Cllr Nicholson advises that there's a great deal of collaboration happening across council services to support businesses, particularly in easing licensing issues. There is a list of criteria that need to be filled, and that there are two competing interests: the interests of resident groups and the interests of businesses, giving the example of businesses using public realm space in order to achieve greater footfall. Cllr Nicholson says the balance between those interests is a delicate challenge.
- 5.6.3 Cllr Nicholson advised that there are several performance spaces in the borough which are also businesses, have the same set of serious problems as other types of business, most of which cannot be remedied by having a greater flexibility around licensing.
- 5.7.1 Cllr Lufkin posed a question around how some residents in the borough who are heavily dependent on public transport to get to work or for leisure, giving Shoreditch & Dalston as prime examples. Cllr Lufkin asked what the fallout is likely to be with increased social distancing measures on transport.
- 5.7.2 Cllr Nicholson answered by saying that the challenges faced by Transport For London and the current health crisis are largely beyond the council's reach in terms of aid. Cllr Nicholson advised the compulsory use of facemasks on public transport may alleviate the impact on those reliant on public transport.
- 5.8.1 Cllr Billington posed a question around what kind of scenario planning the council is doing in regards to the future, particularly economic scenario planning, to further ensure that residents and businesses are well supported.

- 5.8.2 Cllr Nicholson answered by saying himself and Cllr Williams are consistently discussing the best sources of horizon scanning information, stating that it is sometimes a struggle to find that in the council, and as such there is active recruitment going on to recruit someone to a horizon scanning type role. Cllr Nicholson highlighted that there is a restructuring opportunity, the revised corporate plan may help to steer and shape economic scenario planning, but ultimately that role being filled will be the most tangible element to horizon scanning improvements.
- 5.9 Cllr Coban thanks Cllr Nicholson for his responses so far before opening up to a further round of questioning, posing a question himself of what the best focus for future SEG reviews should be to move toward building back better in a way that is greener and inclusive.
- 5.10 Cllr Nicholson advises that the council must be clear to promote a more open borough to encourage footfall, and to promote the Hackney Business Network. Cllr Nicholson advises that the challenge of helping businesses increase their cashflow is a difficult question, but the business toolkit is available, and ensuring the inclusive economy strategy can succeed will be bolstered by active scrutiny work. Cllr Nicholson referenced central government withdrawing from the open market stating that the consequences for local economy in Hackney are not yet clear, but focusing on individuals who are looking for work, or who have entrepreneurial endeavours, will help to protect the macro goals of the economic strategies of cabinet. Increasing football to town centres will be of key importance.
- 5.11 Cllr Smyth made a statement about rebuilding the economy post-COVID, and community wealth building, suggesting that local institutions rather than multi-nationals will be increasingly essential to maintaining local economy, giving universities, colleges, hospitals as examples of local businesses with crucial spending power.
- 5.12 Cllr Billington made a statement around not underestimating how severe the economic disruption to the local community could be. Cllr Billington advised that the council must support the institutions propping up the economy, particularly when long-term investment from central government isn't clear since COVID-19. Cllr Billington added that supporting local jobseekers and entrepreneurs and ensuring they have adequate technical skills will be essential. Cllr Billington advised that the council's role can be transformative, asking Cllr Nicholson about the regeneration team's role in this.
- 5.13 Cllr Coban echoed the statements made, highlighting that going back to 'business as usual' would be a huge missed opportunity for the council.
- 5.14 Cllr Nicholson came back on the statements made by Cllr's Billington & Smyth agreeing that the organisations that are supporting the local economy must be identified and supported themselves. Cllr Nicholson advised this is an opportunity for the public sector to work actively with local institutions, stating that the relationships built up since COVID should continue when looking at how to improve the economy. Cllr Nicholson advised that the investment in these relationships will strengthen the local economy, and aid competitiveness, productivity. The Cllr also advised that the digitalisation of the economy will be

an important consideration for the council to have when trying to support residents and business.

- 5.15 Cllr Coban thanked Cllr Nicholson before moving on, introducing Cllr Williams.
- 5.16 Cllr Williams stated that she has sent in a detailed summary of points to consider for the Work Programme, and that she's happy to come back in writing on what has been submitted.
- 5.17 Cllr Williams advised that adult learning will be a key strand to Hackney's skills offer and stating that health and social care jobs are particularly of concern.
- 5.18 Cllr Coban thanked Cllr Williams, advising that the commission will be discussing her submissions before moving into a wider discussion with the commission around the Work Programme & the review.
- 5.19 Cllr Coban mentioned the Just Transition review stating that it's on hold due to COVID-19 but rebuilding the economy in a greener way will incorporate a lot of the ideas. Cllr Coban posed an open question to the commission asking what the focus of the review should be.
- 5.20 Cllr Race suggested that a review around Hackney's response to COVID19, comparing it to the response of other local authorities could be useful. Cllr Race used the example of the emergency transport plan suggesting that such a review could look at whether the work was delivered on time, whether it met the council's strategic objectives and supported local businesses adequately.
- 5.21 Cllr Coban asked the scrutiny officer to confirm that looking at the transport plan was suggested by the Director of Housing. The Scrutiny officer confirmed that was the case and that analysing the transport plan after it's delivered would be a good use of the commission's review. Cllr Coban invited Cllr Lufkin to speak.
- 5.22 Cllr Lufkin says that some of the transport plan has been implemented but large sections has not, with more progress looking to be made in upcoming months, and therefore recommended postponing that as a topic of review.
- 5.23 Cllr Coban echoed Cllr Lufkin's thoughts that the review must be focused on something the council has control over.
- 5.24 Cllr Lufkin also suggested looking at the impacts of the emergency transport plan by ward to see if different areas in Hackney require different levels of support, and went on to say that changing planning legislation will have an effect on these aspects also.
- 5.25 Cllr Coban asked the scrutiny officer to check with their manager about whether there could be a review around each area of policy as opposed to a single, wider-reaching review.
- 5.26 Cllr Billington spoke about the capacity the council has in regards to sending a message about what the local economy should be like, and what the council expects to see from other institutions to further those goals using example of local learning institutions being prepared and able to administer Hackney's skills offer. Cllr Billington also suggested there be community outreach with people in those institutions to gauge how they're feeling about the skills offer and the changing world of work.

- 5.27 Cllr Coban expressed an interest in seeing Cllr Bramble's and Cllr William's portfolios working more closely together, and that getting young people ready for emerging roles in emerging markets following COVID-19 will be important.
- 5.28 Cllr Race posed a question around what town centres and high streets will look with the emergence and eminency of online goods and services, using the example of online health services. Cllr Race expressed interested in what policies around town centres are being considered currently, and whether trying to preserve high streets when public consumption is moving online represents good investment.
- 5.29 Cllr Coban agreed that actively talking about what the high streets and town centres will look like as being important and would be good to have as a standalone review item.
- 5.30 Cllr Coban asked for any further suggestions before outlining the process for drafting the work programme and terms of reference. Cllr Coban suggested that the commission will reach out to more members for input into the work programme.
- 5.31 Cllr Billington stated that the commission could do some evidence gathering with people who had provided other local authorities with horizon planning to try and get further ideas about what kind of local-level interventions could be looked at it scrutiny reviews.
- 5.32 Cllr Coban asked the scrutiny officer to outline what responses had been received so far in terms of input into the work programme.
- 5.33 Scrutiny officer outlined the topics submitted by Cllr William's & the Director of Housing's recommendations.
- 5.34 Cllr Coban expressed concern that there were not a larger number of responses received, confirming that only two had come back to date.
- 5.35 Cllr Billington echoed the concern around the lack of responses, suggesting that the commission could write to the administration to voice concerns about this.
- 5.36 Cllr Coban suggested the commission will talk offline about who could be contacted about the lack of response, stating that it isn't necessarily the right thing to do to prioritise submissions that have actually been submitted over those that haven't.
- 5.37 Cllr Billington agreed with this, suggesting that it could create an incentive not to submit suggestions in the future to subvert the role of scrutiny.
- 5.38 Cllr Coban requested that the scrutiny officer provide a list of officers and members who have not submitted a response.
- 5.39 Cllr Coban advised that further offline discussions will take place to confirm the elements of the work programme and invited the commission to continue to recommend items of interest if any more become apparent.
- 5.40 Cllr Coban thanked everyone for their input and drew the meeting to a close.

<b>ACTIONS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Scrutiny officer to check with their manager about whether there could be a review around each area of policy as opposed to a single, wider-reaching review</b></li><li>• <b>Scrutiny officer to provide chair with details of officers yet to submit topics for consideration to the work programme.</b></li><li>• <b>Scrutiny officer &amp; commission to draft letter urging a greater level of response</b></li><li>• <b>Scrutiny officer to draft terms of reference &amp; work programme.</b></li></ul>
-----------------	--

**6 Any Other Business**

6.1 There was no other business.

**Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 8.43 pm**