



**London Borough of Hackney  
Scrutiny Panel  
Municipal Year 2020/21  
Date of Meeting Thursday, 23rd July, 2020**

Minutes of the proceedings of  
the Scrutiny Panel held at  
Hackney Town Hall, Mare  
Street, London E8 1EA

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<b>Chair</b>	<b>Councillor Margaret Gordon</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance</b>	<b>Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Mete Coban, Cllr Sharon Patrick, Cllr Sophie Conway, Cllr Sade Etti and Cllr Peter Snell</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr Polly Billington</b>
<b>Co-optees</b>	
<b>Officers In Attendance</b>	<b>Polly Cziok (Director Communications, Culture and Engagement), Sonia Khan (Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery), Ian Williams (Group Director of Finance and Resources) and Timothy Upton (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)</b>
<b>Other People in Attendance</b>	<b>Councillor Christopher Kennedy (Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure), Councillor Rebecca Rennison (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply), Councillor Caroline Selman (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy and the Voluntary Sector), Councillor Carole Williams (Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources), Councillor Nick Sharman and Councillor Yvonne Maxwell (Mayoral Advisor for Older People)</b>
<b>Members of the Public</b>	
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**Councillor Margaret Gordon in the Chair**

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
  - 1.1 Apologies for absence from Cllr Billington.
- 2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

2.1 No urgent items.

### **3 Declaration of Interest**

3.1 Chair declared an interest. Cllr Gordon is a lawyer employed by the Government's legal department and advises the Department of Works and Pension (DWP). Cllr Gordon will abstain from any discussions related to benefits.

3.2 There were no other declarations of interest.

### **4 Update on the Impact of Covid-19 on Poverty and Inequalities in the Borough**

4.1 The Chair introduced the item, identifying key points of discussions as being:

i. the analysis and assessment of the impact of the pandemic on poverty and inequality

ii. information about the areas highlighted in a recent letter from the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources to a parliamentary inquiry on people with protected characteristics

iii. a verbal update on the future and refresh of the corporate plan because of Covid-19.

4.2 The Chair welcomed Cllr Williams, Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources; Cllr Selman, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector; Cllr Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure; Cllr Rennison, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply; Sonia Khan, Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery and Cllr Maxwell, Mayoral Adviser for Older People.

4.3.1 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery started the discussion. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that she was going to start by introducing the first item, and that Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources would cover the submission for parliamentary inquiry before moving onto questions.

4.3.2 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery highlighted that item 5, the Corporate Plan refresh, does contain a summary of the impact of Covid-19 on poverty in the borough.

4.3.3 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that since the outset of the crisis, mid-March, Policy was concerned about the risks and impacts of Covid-19 on residents and started receiving data early on which was systematically logged, and therefore the Community Impact Assessment document submitted represents a high level, comprehensive summary.

4.3.5 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the level of information received allowed Policy teams to understand the levels of vulnerability in a way that went beyond the prominently publicised health-related vulnerabilities, and allowed them to understand the scale of need presented by the situation.

- 4.3.6 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the understanding allowed Policy teams to adapt the humanitarian response in the early weeks of the crisis, and to identify the medium-term priorities. Essentially, the Community Impact Assessment document was designed as a planning tool for both short and long-term approaches.
- 4.3.7 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that in addition to informing the response to the crisis, the document has also been used to inform the corporate plan.
- 4.3.8 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the document allows understanding of how residents have been disproportionately impacted directly by the virus itself, and indirectly, giving the example of older residents, migrant populations, and people from different ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 4.3.9 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery spoke about the cross-cutting impacts that are informing the response, giving examples of digital exclusion for those with no facility or ability to access online services, people with no recourse to public funds, those who have not been in contact with services previously, those who meet the shielding criteria and the psychological impact of isolation, rough sleepers and homelessness.
- 4.3.10 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the work on poverty reduction in the borough had already begun pre-Covid-19, and it was understood that the response had to take the financial impacts into consideration, but as a result of the pandemic, and looking at the data coming through about those requesting emergency food, data on those who have been furloughed, and in terms of the increase of universal credit users, the council could see the impact on poverty will be significant.
- 4.3.11 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that in the corporate plan refresh there is a lot of detail around the impacts that will start to manifest over time, particularly when the economy starts opening up and there's risk of businesses finding that they're unable to continue.
- 4.3.12 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that there is also an ongoing assessment of impact on different groups, e.g. children and young people, disabled people, groups from different ethnic backgrounds, gender, religion, beliefs and older people.
- 4.3.13 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised they made sure issues that were less talked about were considered, giving examples of the LGBTQ+ community, those finding themselves in a home that isn't a safe-space, and those with learning difficulties or disabled.
- 4.3.14 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised impact on the community was also considered, such as the tensions around social distancing measures and who is given attention in terms of policing.

- 4.4 The Chair thanked Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery for speaking and invited the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources to speak.
- 4.5.1 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources commenced by expressing gratitude towards staff keeping public sector services running through the pandemic, paying special tribute to the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery for her work on the document, and the work on policy insight work, stating that the valuable work toward a response wouldn't be possible without the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery and her team.
- 4.5.2 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources indicated that a copy of the submission to the Women and Inequalities Select Committee was published and is available, stating that the commission has also written to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, made a submission to the Labour party's review of the impacts of coronavirus on ethnic minority communities. The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources also stated she and Mayor Glanville have signed Ubele's open letter calling for an inquiry into inequality & Covid-19. *(The Ubele initiative is derives its name from the Swahili word meaning 'The Future'. It is an African Diaspora led intergenerational social enterprise founded in 2014, with the purpose of helping to build more sustainable communities across the UK.)*
- 4.5.3 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources summarised the work that has taken place, stating that there was knowledge from the outset that there were some communities that had been disproportionately affected, and that housing and homelessness are factors.
- 4.5.4 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources advised fellow Cabinet Members work around nutrition and food, stating that pre-Covid-19 there was already an increase in numbers of those who couldn't afford nutritious food and were in food poverty.
- 4.5.5 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources highlighted that race and ethnicity is a significant factor in terms of numbers of people affected, numbers of death, and Black and minority ethnic (BAME) frontline workers working in the NHS or social care, and across the council.
- 4.5.6 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources referred to the previous full council meeting, stating that she'd given an update on the steps that the council would be taking to protect staff and ensure they're able to safely return to work when social distancing ends.
- 4.5.7 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources advised that in terms of employment, the threat to the economy poses a significant risk which is explored further in the Inclusive Economy strategy which aims to enable local neighbourhoods to thrive, and to enable residents to access quality employment.
- 4.5.8 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources advised that during Full Council, the work of the Hackney Works team was also

communicated in terms of how the team has been reorganised to respond to the pandemic.

- 4.5.9 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources advised there has been an increase in Universal Credit claimants, that increased by approximately 4,000 from the end of March to mid-April, advising that Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply will elaborate in this.
- 4.5.10 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources also spoke on the voluntary sector citing research work carried out by Ubele that showed concerns among ethnic minority-led, micro, and small organisations who were fearful of their future in terms of funding. The Cabinet Member observed that the search isn't specific to London or Hackney, but that Hackney CVS has carried out research to capture the impacts of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector, and the findings echo concerns around future funding.
- 4.5.11 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources paid special tribute to the efforts of the voluntary sector in Hackney for mobilising and training volunteers.
- 4.5.12 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources spoke on the submission to Baroness Lawrence, stating that the content was similar and so the Cabinet Member wouldn't explore it in detail during this meeting, but stated that concerns were shared in the letter to the Equality and Human Rights commission about the disproportionate impact on certain communities, calling on the commission to hold a public enquiry, which has now been agreed.
- 4.6 The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources for her contribution and her work in this area. The chair invited the other attending cabinet members to speak.
- 4.7.1 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply added there is an interconnected nature between poverty and inequality, and therefore the Council tries to respond in a holistic way.
- 4.7.2 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply advised that she is happy to take questions on those without recourse to public funds and benefits, and while questions around how rough sleepers will be supported moving forward were not fully answered at the previous full council meeting, she was happy to field questions on this too.
- 4.7.3 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply observed that Covid-19 has tested existing policies, stating that the council's work around debt, and making sure that there is an emphasis on debt to the council being an indicator of a support requirement is an opportunity that should be taken.
- 4.8 The Chair thanked the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply for her comments and invited the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure to make comment.

- 4.8.1 The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure advised that he would principally be talking about the Food Poverty Reduction Plan, and how the Health and Well-being Board and the integrated commissioning board have decided an approach to take forward aimed at eliminating inequality in health systems and outcomes.
- 4.8.2 The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure advised that the Food Poverty Action plan has 3 main components:
- i. Emergency support
  - ii. Building resilience
  - iii. Prevention
- 4.8.3 The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure observed that these areas of focus were decided upon pre-Covid-19, observing that Members will already be aware of the great work council teams have done delivering parcels during lockdown, and referenced an email he'd sent to Members outlining the next phase of humanitarian assistance, stating that the current week is the final week of food parcels and so the focus will shift to the Community Partnership Network, working with partners across the system delivering meals and emergency food.
- 4.8.3 The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure advised that funding from Investec has been secured for Hackney foodbank for a further 12 weeks from the end of June. This secured a £180,000 Defra grant, and a range of voluntary sector partners are accessing those funds to pay for food. The Cabinet Member stated that storing the food has become an issue due to its increased volume.
- 4.8.4 The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure stated that the emergency and the resilience of the Food Poverty Action plan has been brought forward and tested by Covid-19, also stating that in terms of the prevention aspect of the plan, this was a longer-term aim.
- 4.8.5 The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure advised that the Kings Fund's wider determinants of health called the Population Health Framework is being used by the Health and Well-being Board and Integrated Commissioning Board to tackle wider inequalities in health. The framework looks at 4 overlapping factors: individual health habits such as diet, wider determinants such as quality of housing, integration of health system and how it reaches you, and the places and communities you live in and how they contribute to the success of broader health outcomes. The Cabinet Member advised that the strategy is to act where these 4 factors overlap to combat them all efficiently.
- 4.9 The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure and invited the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector to comment
- 4.10.1 The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector picked up from the comments made by Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources, adding that there's been work around how and whether community grants could be repurposed; the Cabinet Member for Community

Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector advised that members had contributed grants to Hackney Giving which has done rounds of grant funding aimed at Covid-19. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector advised that members have also matched parts of it through the London Community Resilience Fund. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector advised the third wave of that funding is now open and being promoted to those interested in applying for grant rounds.

- 4.10.2 The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector advised that in addition to grants, suspension of rents for the Voluntary Community Sector Portfolio tenants, working with HCVS to understand how that could impact the sector, and lobbying on behalf of the sector in terms of the commission's engagement with the government.
- 4.10.3 The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector highlighted particularly how members have been working with the voluntary sector in terms of the response to Covid-19, stating that both herself and the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure have been working closely with office in terms of the humanitarian assistance and community response to Covid-19, and working with the voluntary sector has been a key element of that.
- 4.10.4 The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector advised that poverty-proofing actions going forward is a key concern and objective of the members working on this.
- 4.11 The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector for her contribution and opened the meeting to questions.

#### **Questions, Comments and Discussion**

- 4.12 Referencing the supplied papers, the Chair referred to the statement about an officer's experience of inequalities. The Chair asked if this has been embedded in the emergency response, asking how that has improved services and going forward is there is any learning to improve responses.
- 4.13 Members posed a question for by Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources, suggesting that the holistic approach would be improved by mapping out what has been achieved so far, what is being proposed as next-steps, what the stretch targets are, and what national government is being asked to do. Members stated that while good work is obviously taking place, effectively developing a holistic strategy would be difficult without an overarching roadmap and identification of where the gaps are.
- 4.14 The Chair of Audit Committee posed a question asking what resources were available, and what out of the ambitious proposed programme is achievable and within what period?
- 4.15 The Chair invited the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery to comment on the questions posed.

- 4.16 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the main learning from the officer that was embedded into the strategic group was around language and access in terms of easy read to overcome communication barriers, and also around the importance of having an offer in the longer term that is culturally specific. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised there were limitations as to what was possible to put in place, particularly around how the standard parcel offer can be flexed when working at scale without running into risks of a parcel not going to the correct person. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the work-around this risk in the interim was to deploy 600 volunteers, 300 of whom could carry out bespoke shopping. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the learning from the officer was useful while developing the community partnerships network in terms of dealing with those two stated issues.
- 4.17 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that in terms of the language barrier issue, a piece of work is being completed to look at how the council can better communicate, that work is being fed into the local outbreak plan. In terms of culturally specific offerings, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery observed that the most important point is that all organisations who are going to carry out offerings are identified and contact as opposed to just the organisations who currently have the capacity for culturally specific support.
- 4.18 In response to the questions about holistic approach, mapping, next steps, resources and timescale for achievements. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the development of the corporate plan need to be formally agreed and they can explore this further during item 5. The officer suggested those questions would be better answered under that item, but noting that continual analysis as the plan is deployed across the council will be required.
- 4.19 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources advised that she had provided Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery with a robust challenge to create a rigorous piece of work with the corporate plan, qualifying that such a challenge isn't necessary for her to do high quality work, and that the range of analysis thus far has been impressive, going further to state that the response to the crisis could always have been improved upon, and hopes for continued improvement.
- 4.20 Members commended the work of council officers, giving examples of the clean local parks and the contract centre aiding with calls related to food parcels.
- 4.21 Members posed a question about the future, expressing concern over a wave of people losing their jobs who may have had little or no experience with the benefit system, asking how those residents will be supported with their applications, and other peripheral issues like debt accumulation.
- 4.22 Members also posed a question to the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure about reports of doctors applying DNR orders to the notes of patients with learning disabilities, asking how the council is going to help ensure this does not happen.
- 4.23 Members posed a question around schooling and the digital divide, asking what provisions are being made, should a second wave of Covid-19 hit, to ensure

that school are prepared in terms of Wi-Fi, devices, and personal demands, asking to be provided with a better sense of what plans are in place.

- 4.24 The Chair directed these questions to Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery and the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources and requested that the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure respond to Members question around DNR orders.
- 4.25 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the chair that there is also a question from a Member in the chat function which she will also respond to.
- 4.26 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery echoed her previous statement that the corporate plan is the official response to a lot of the concerns, and so she will be brief when responding to items that feature in the plan itself.
- 4.27 Responding to the question about new groups accessing the benefit system, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that there are short term measures in place such as a fortnightly meeting to discuss Universal Credit that includes advice providers and DWP representatives, and that this group is looking at the nature of the claimants entering the system and the associated risks. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the work is largely around effective communication and `reorienting the offer for those who may have no knowledge of the advice sector. Flexing the employment support on offer is an immediate consideration.
- 4.28 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the corporate plan addresses the longer-term concerns around the inclusive economy reset and to support the changing skills requirements.
- 4.29 In response to the question around the digital divide and schooling, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised there is work being undertaken with schools to understand how to ensure that devices go out to those that need them, and around access to reliable Wi-Fi and the associated costs with broadband. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised there is also a cross cutting effort to bring partners together to develop a network of organisations working to this goal and looking at how support from voluntary organisations can be scaled up. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised she is only in a position to advise on the high-level aspects of Members question but for further details they would need to speak to the Director of Education from Hackney Learning Trust for a more granular response.
- 4.30 In response to Members question, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised outlined 3 things that happened in response:
- i. A virtual team was convened which brought together the officer who supports Hackney Young Futures Commission, the officers who support the Young Black Men programme and Young Hackney. This group has been active from March, meeting weekly to pick up the impacts of Covid-19.
  - ii. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the Hackney Young Futures Commission had a conversation with the Mayor that was taken into consideration, ensuring that an officer was involved in conversations with Hackney Young Futures Commission to draw out the impact.

- iii. The Hackney Young Futures Commission report itself was also referenced when designing the corporate plan refresh.
- 4.31 The Chair thanked the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery and invited the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure to answer the question around people with learning disabilities and Do Not Resuscitate orders (DNR).
- 4.32 The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure responded by saying he's been asked this question recently in relation to a case of a GP placing a DNR order without consent of the patient's family. The Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure fed it back through the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to the strategic operational command group. There was a clear instruction in response that no health professional should be placing a DNR on anyone's notes without expressed consent from them and their responsible carers.
- 4.33 The Chair posed a final question, asking how the momentum from community campaigns like Black Lives Matter could be harnessed to help remove barriers to structural change.
- 4.34 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources responded to earlier questions, stating that the digital inclusion piece of work is ongoing and that herself and other Members involved in it are trying to make sure that devices are available and quickly, as well as the work with business to recondition computers for that purpose, and a piece of work around connectivity.
- 4.35 In response to the Chairs question, the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources advised the effort to harness the momentum of the movement had already begun, and the audience numbers and interest in the previous full council is a strong indicator of community interest. The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources made a distinction between Hackney's motion and the motion of other local authorities, stating that Hackney's motion transcends lobbying central government and extends to the council making a commitment to act and change, to look inwards, and to work with partners to continue to cultivate structural change. The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources used the example of changing street names and public space names as evidence of the commitment. The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources advised that in the run up to the previous full council meeting, members had been in contact with the Sir John Cass Foundation as well as the halls of residents by Castle and Garden Square, who turned off their lights and made an announcement confirming they would change their name. The announcement was echoed by the John Cass Foundation.
- 4.36 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources went on to say that what is clear from her involvement with the community, is that residents want the names of streets and buildings named after former slave-owners to be addressed. The Cabinet Member added that conversations and protests around the borough have taken place about this. This also serves as evidence that the momentum is already being harnessed, but that the council

will need to continue its work with the Windrush generation, the Black History season programme, and the carnival, all of which are within the Cabinet Member for Planning, culture and Inclusive Economy portfolio. The interest in becoming an anti-racist borough is palpable.

4.37 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery highlighted that the corporate plan contains an approach to tackle racial inequality and anti-racism and is a concept that runs throughout the plan. In terms of how to harness the renewed interest and urgency, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery conveyed that this is an opportunity for everyone to understand what anti-racism means, highlighting that systemic and structural racism is embedded and therefore everyone bears a responsibility to alter their thinking. Work on how to communicate that corporately is ongoing and work with managers and partners will continue in this effort. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery highlighted the opportunity to have wider community conversations about this are being explored, with a message that its necessary for BAME communities or Members to educate people about these concepts.

4.38 The Chair thanked all attendees for this item.

## **5 Covid-19, Corporate and Medium Term Financial Update**

5.1 The Chair welcomed the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, Ian Williams to speak about the financial plan.

5.2 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery would do an overview of the corporate plan first, and then he would speak on the financial plan.

5.3.1 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery prefaced her piece by advising aim was to publish a plan with the direction of travel quickly and that this was an opportunity to hear from Members to feed in any comments before finalising the plan or presenting it for approval.

5.3.2 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the corporate plan focuses on ways of working in addition to what has already been committed to. In addition an important element is to consider the opportunities to engage with residents, learn from Hackney Young Futures Commission and to look at culture.

5.3.3 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the 9 priorities from the existing 2018 corporate plan have been simplified and consolidated. There is an increased focus on a cross-cutting basis to prioritise the most vulnerable and key inequalities, particularly racial inequalities, and the priorities are grouped under the Mayor's Fairer, Safer, Greener priorities.

5.3.4 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the priorities have been looked at holistically as well as consolidated. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery observed that previously the priorities were looked at from the perspective of the corporate issue, but now they've been pulled together with wider priorities in mind such as poverty reduction. There was an increased emphasis on what all partners and departments of the council can do to support these aims.

- 5.3.5 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the corporate plan talks about the community and equality impacts. The first section of the refresh is about specific things that the council is going to do to reset the equality priorities in light of Covid-19; inclusive leadership and workforce diversity, improving outcomes for young black men, the aging well strategy, and an increased focus on tackling digital divide.
- 5.3.6 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that there were also priorities for the Single Equality Scheme that need to be revisited now that there is increased corporate capacity, in particular Turkish/ Kurdish inequalities and that a similar approach to improving outcomes for young black men programme is required.
- 5.3.7 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the Aging Well Strategy had not been adopted by Cabinet because it was due to go out for consultation when lockdown commenced. It will be revisited to look at what is required to sharpen the policy in light of Covid-19 and for further stakeholder engagement with organisations that have been supporting older residents during the pandemic.
- 5.3.8 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery stated that the short, medium and long-term impacts and key points during the reset include highlighting what has been learnt from the network of community organisations and taking more of an asset based approach, connecting together support in a more increased way. Secondly taking into consideration the partnerships they have in terms of DWP. Thirdly the inclusive economy in relation to tackling homelessness, and as Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Policy, and the Voluntary Sector pointed out, poverty proofing. They talked about the need for this to be imbedded within all the work across the council. Part of the corporate plan work is finding out how this can be prioritised across the council.
- 5.3.9 In terms of inclusive economy, the skills issue is going to be an area of particular concern in light of the need for residents to potentially seek different employment and the skills gap that some may face. In addition to the challenges in business and business continuity in high streets and other parts of the economy.
- 5.3.10 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the financial aspect of the plan is going to be a challenge and so the financial plan must support the corporate plan for it to be effective and succeed.
- 5.4 The Chair thanked the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery for outlining the plan and invited the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources outline the financial plan.
- 5.5 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources echoed the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery's sentiment and advised the he, the Chief Executive, Mayor, and Deputy Mayor wanted to ensure that the corporate plan and financial plan were linked together.
- 5.6.1 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources commended the staff and residents for their efforts during the crisis.
- 5.6.2 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised on further updates since the publication of the agenda papers, namely that central

government had announced a multi-year spending review. This was announced by the Chancellor and will be finalised this autumn, to cover the years 21/22 – 23/24 for revenue spending, and 21/22 – 24/25 for capital.

- 5.6.3 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources agreed with the call to lobby for local government funding and for this to be at the fore of that review.
- 5.6.4 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources informed there is an update pertaining to business rates revaluation. The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources observed that in Hackney business rates rose the highest of any borough in London to just over 40%. The new revaluation will take effect on the first of April 2023 based on property prices on the first of April 2021. The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources observed that business rates are challenging for local business, particularly the high business rates relative to other parts of the country. The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources suggested that the council should strongly advocate for business rate reliefs to continue into future years before the revaluation takes place.
- 5.6.5 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources highlighted it was encouraging to see the Chancellor also call for evidence in terms of a business rates review in a fundamental look at business rates.
- 5.6.6 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources updated the commission advising that there has been confirmation on how the third tranche of funding for local government will be distributed. This refers to the £500m that was recently announced which brought the total amount of government support to councils to £3.7billion, which equates to just over £21m for Hackney.
- 5.6.7 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised the council has now received further details on the Compensation Scheme for Loss of Income, which relates to sales fees and charges, this confirmed some of the planning assumptions that The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources' team had been working on, in relation to how local authorities may be compensated for loss of income.
- 5.6.8 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources issued a warning that while the news is welcomed, the specific detail around how and when the money will be paid remains to be announced, nor have there been any arrangements around the audit of this. The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources urged the council to avoid complacency around its calculations in terms of what the compensation level is expected to be.
- 5.6.9 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources informed there has been clarification around the treatment of collection fund deficits in that they would be spread over the three financial years starting in 21/22.
- 5.6.10 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources expressed that it's been encouraging to see that, when under examination by the ministry of housing, the secretary of state suggested that the treatment of collection fund deficits could be looked at again to potentially include something akin to the compensation for loss of income, which would mean a quicker and more immediate alleviation of some of those financial pressures.

- 5.6.11 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery has been doing a fantastic piece of work with colleagues across the council in terms of the Local Authority Emergency Assistant Grant for Food and Essential Supplies of which the Hackney allocation has been confirmed at £427k and should work closely with the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure and other colleagues in relation to how the council can ensure that grant is deployed to provide support for people in need of food and essential supplies.
- 5.6.12 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources urged members to read the Overall Financial Position report to understand the latest position of the council which after all of the government scheme that have been brought forward and the income compensation meant there was still, in the current financial year alone, a shortfall of over £9m. In terms of the housing revenue account, while those numbers are still being looked at, the magnitude is between £6-8m, although the Finance and Corporate Resources' team is working hard to mitigate the impacts of that.
- 5.6.13 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that work is ongoing to better understand the financial position in relation to the forecasts for 21/22. The report details assumptions made as well as the range of forecasts provided. However, uncertainties exist around the level of expected income and the expenditure incurred while combating essential things like reduction of homelessness.
- 5.6.14 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that there are a range of forecasts from the optimistic forecast being an £11m worth of savings for the general fund to ultimately the worst case scenario of £50m; should there be further challenges in relation to Covid-19. There is also a middle figure of just under £33m.
- 5.6.15 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised he commissioned a piece of work to identify the range of saving targets across all the London boroughs. This was helpful because it helped to create an evidence base for lobbying in relation to the challenges ahead for London and other metropolitan boroughs across the country.
- 5.6.16 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources referred to the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply for further comments.
- 5.7.1 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply pointed out for council tax and the collection fund, there has been close work with the Audit Committee and Scrutiny. But effectively the shortfall in council tax this year remains and will follow through into future years. The changes the Government have brought forward gives more flexibility but the shortfall and the gap remain.
- 5.7.2 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply advised that the best case scenario for post-Covid-19 next year looks better than was previously forecast. This is due to the fact that the Government paused the fair funding review rather than the suggestion that the council has come out of Covid-19 better off. The council is expecting to lose £12m because of fair funding.

- 5.7.3 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply advised that sufficient actions have been put in place to get the council through this year with flexibility around things like reserves, but cautioned that essential central government has push the issues into future years.
- 5.7.4 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply urged for sensitivity in relation to how the finances are discussed, noting that staff could become concerned by the large figures and what it means for their employment. The Cabinet Member advised this is a conversation around what tools are needed to address the situation but is not a cause for alarm.
- 5.8 The Chair thanked The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply and opened the meeting up to questions.

### **Questions, Comments and Discussion**

- 5.9 Members asked two questions, firstly asking how much of the projected £9m deficit in the current financial year has been accrued to date, and the actual deficit accruing on a month-by-month basis. In relation to the corporate plan, Members asked whether the council is challenging itself enough in terms of closing the digital divide. Referring to the numbers of young people from ethnic minority communities without sufficient access to online services and the cost of filling that gap.
- 5.10 The Chair of Audit Committee asked about the highest priorities and who would be responsible on the executive side for achieving this plan.
- 5.11 In response to Members question, the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised the figure of £9 million was their estimate up until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources informed the Scrutiny Panel that funding tranches one and two were received but that the third tranche was outstanding and that there are many shifting variables contributing to the month on month figure. Such as the reopening of the economy, changing behaviours etc. Therefore expressing a monthly figure at this point may not be valuable.
- 5.12 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply pointed out in the Overall Financial Plan, the Covid related figures and the existing figures are reported side-by-side for transparency.
- 5.13 In response to the questions about the corporate plan's ambitiousness and the digital divide the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that the commitment made in the plan is quite specific, but not ambitious enough to meet the full scale of the challenge. This is the reason why the Mayor and Cabinet have picked this up to look at what additional measures are needed. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the plan is specific in trying to get as many people online in as skilled a way as possible, and that scaling up is a greater challenge that requires a more holistic community approach.
- 5.14 Members commented that a whole community approach may run the risk of having no specific person to take responsibility to filling the gap.
- 5.15 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that each week the partnership programme is making solutions clearer and that the work is tangible.

- 5.16 In response to the Chair of the Audit Committee's question around priorities, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the plan isn't a straightforward delivery plan. To identify the cross-cutting strands of work requires bringing services together on issues like inequality. The first piece of work is around identifying areas that require stretch. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that taking ownership of these priorities is why ways of working is a central requirement of the refresh.
- 5.17 On the digital divide, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and the Voluntary commented that the plan continues several strands with different cabinet leads which removes the risk of no one becoming responsible for the success emphasising the necessity for the partnership programme approach.
- 5.18 The Chair asked about the cross-cutting, over-arching plan asking where the level of detail exists and if they could be confident that the lines of responsibility will be maintained.
- 5.19 The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and the Voluntary advised the Mayor and Cabinet receive a regular update which provides a collective way of keeping them updated on what is happening with the plan, to ensure everyone understands what's happening with different work streams.
- 5.20 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that in terms of accountability there is an annual review in February. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that when she became responsible for the corporate plan she observed an opportunity to revisit the way we support delivery, and this is not as straightforward as performance management. The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised that there is ongoing work about how to deliver cross-cutting measures, but that it's a complex issue. But overall accountability lies with the Mayor of Hackney.
- 5.21 Members posed a question to Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery as to whether the partnership programme extends outside the council and a further question to Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources around the funding gap and whether there is work to campaign with other boroughs to secure more funding.
- 5.22 The Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources responded by saying extensive lobbying is taking place for further SEND funding, but further lobbying will take place for greater funding, with a greater number of boroughs across London.
- 5.23 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply echoed this and highlighted Hackney is speaking with other boroughs facing similar challenges, noting that the funding issue isn't particular to London, and that lobbying will continue.
- 5.24 The Chair asked if Members can contact them with further questions, and observed how positive it is to see poverty reduction as a theme throughout the plan.
- 5.25 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply commented that plans for rough sleeping have been set out, and those with no recourse to public funds are being considered in future measures. The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply

observed the issue is as much to do with health as housing, and that a flexible approach would be needed from central government to change structures.

- 5.28 The Chair of Audit Committee asked about the time scale for a draft of the plan.
- 5.29 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery advised the work is ongoing, as well as drafting a summary version, but that there would be something more substantial by September.
- 5.30 The Chair thanked the attending guests for their contributions.

## **6 Communications and Scrutiny**

- 6.1 The Chair welcomed the Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement while highlighting the need for openness and transparency in the work of scrutiny, observing that the virtual meetings during pandemic have allowed scrutiny to reach a wider audience.
- 6.2.1 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement opened by expressing the hope was to bring a full communication strategy to Scrutiny Panel earlier in the year which hasn't been possible due Covid-19, and that her team has been concerned with communicating the council's response to Covid-19.
- 6.2.2 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement echoed that virtual meetings has provided opportunities for scrutiny commissions to share their important work.
- 6.2.3 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that Scrutiny is currently advertised through Hackney Today and Hackney Life publications sent to residents in the borough.
- 6.2.4 The Director of Communications pointed out that prior to the pandemic, the publications had a low number of subscribers but now they have more than 6,000 subscribers. These are increasingly having less Covid-19 content. The live streaming is also a tool for promotion and this has seen an increase in the numbers watching live. The current record in for live viewers has been 312.
- 6.2.5 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that the role of the corporate communications team has been to promote the meetings via the available channels, but also to promote calls for evidence or resident participation. The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that the scrutiny team's counterpart role is to keep the communications team informed about upcoming meetings, and to convey the key priorities. The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement went further to say that the responsibility of Chairs is to maintain communications with their link communications officer and raising any requests for additional support through those channels and promoting the meetings through their own channels like social media.
- 6.2.6 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that it is important for scrutiny's work to be transparent and for it to be clear that the corporate communications team doesn't influence the content of that work. That challenge goes beyond a service that promotes meetings The Director of

Communications, Culture, and Engagement expressed that she welcomed discussion with the chairs about the best way to do this.

- 6.3 The Chair thanked the Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement and her team for their work during the pandemic.

### **Questions, Comments and Discussion**

- 6.4 Members asked how the accessibility of virtual meetings can be maintained once face-to-face meetings resume. The Members highlighted there was a lack of clarity on the Hackney YouTube channel's layout calling for a separate section for scrutiny, and suggested that either the link communications officer or scrutiny officers be able to cut highlight clips from meetings in order for chairs to share them. Members acknowledged this role needed training for officers to carry it out.
- 6.5 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement stated that there is no reason why scrutiny officers could not be trained to extract edited highlights but noted that the process can be fiddly and time-consuming. The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement also stated that her team is responsible for the YouTube channel but is unaware how easy it would be to give scrutiny its own section on the uploads page.
- 6.6 Members commented if something noteworthy or remarkable does happen at a scrutiny meeting, the ability to put that clip in a social media post would be useful to attract a wider audience, and called for increasing targeted publicity. Members also expressed an interest in media training.
- 6.7 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that the online content needs to be maintained and that training can be examined. The officer also advised Members that the chairs must maintain relationships with their communications officer, stressing that chairs can provide nuance that the agendas alone cannot.
- 6.8 Members asked about the interplay between the council's communications networks and the personal communications of Members particularly when it comes to controversial content and whether the edited highlight function would be available for content to appear on personal promotional channels. Members also requested further clarification on whether Members had to seek permission from communications officers before publishing scrutiny content.
- 6.9 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that cabinet members are expected to work with the communications team on their communication pieces because they're seen as the executive voice, but for non-executive Members they can use their own channels in whatever way they see fit. The necessity to work with communications begins where the corporate channels are utilised. In terms of controversial content, the Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that she will seek further clarification but that a conversation about the issue would be appropriate.
- 6.10 Members commented the communications would be in their role as chairs rather than simply a non-executive Member.

- 6.11 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised this was still acceptable if done so away from the corporate channel, but if using the corporate channel this would require collaboration.
- 6.12 The Chair posed a question about what information is possible to gather from YouTube analytics.
- 6.13 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement advised that colleagues on the communications team are in a better position to comment, but that there isn't a great level of detail available in terms of geographical analytics.
- 6.14 Members asked if the feedback form attached could be expanded to include scrutiny videos.
- 6.15 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement said she would find out if that was possible.
- 6.16 Members commented that time codes are being used key points in scrutiny commission meetings. These could be utilised for retweeting specific excerpts allowing viewers to skip to bits that relate to them. One Member questioned the future of minutes asking whether they needed to be so detailed, particularly if they transition to recorded meetings.
- 6.17 The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement agreed and noted that different chairs would have different styles when it comes to excerpt content.
- 6.18 The Chair thanked the Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement and commented that the future of minutes would be useful to be discussed further and suggested a refresh of the scrutiny webpage.
- 6.19 The Chair pointed out that media training for Members would be useful, training for scrutiny officers in video editing would be useful, and that chairs need to continue to have responsibility in promoting meetings.
- 6.20 The Chair drew the agenda item to a close.

<b>ACTIONS:</b>	<b>The Director of Communications, Culture, and Engagement to establish or ascertain:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the feasibility of officers creating video highlights from the meetings</li><li>• the availability of training to create video excerpts</li><li>• to discover full extent of information available from YouTube analytics</li><li>• to explore and implement the expansion of feedback form to include videos</li><li>• whether scrutiny's videos on YouTube could be given their own section or be displayed in a more distinct way</li><li>• the feasibility of media training for Scrutiny Panel Members.</li></ul>
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7.1 The minutes were agreed.

<b>RESOLVED:</b>	<b>That the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 were agreed as a correct record.</b>
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**8 Work Programme 2020/21**

8.1 The Chair suggested Members conduct discussed about the work programme offline as events relating to Covid-19 continue.

8.2 The Chair listed dates of future meetings

8.3 The Chair there should be further discussions with the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery to look at the role scrutiny can play in the corporate plan and in so doing form the work programme.

**9 Any Other Business**

9.1 There was no other business.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.30 pm