



London Borough of Hackney
Scrutiny Panel
Municipal Year 2022/23
Date of Meeting Thursday 14 July 2022

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

Chair	Councillor Margaret Gordon
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Sharon Patrick and Cllr Sophie Conway
Apologies:	Cllr Polly Billington, Cllr Clare Potter and Cllr Clare Joseph
Co-optees	Error! No document variable supplied.
Officers In Attendance	Sonia Khan (Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery) and Jackie Moylan (Assistant Director of Finance CYPS and LHRR)
Other People in Attendance	Councillor Christopher Kennedy (Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure)
Members of the Public	
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Councillor Margaret Gordon in the Chair

1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

1.1 Councillor Gordon was duly elected as Chair for the 2022/23 municipal year.

1.2 The position of Vice-Chair was reserved for the majority opposition party. The position had not been filled by the opposition party and therefore remained vacant.

2 Apologies for Absence

2.1 The Chair updated those in attendance on the meeting etiquette and that the meeting was being recorded and livestreamed.

2.2 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Billington, Councillor Potter and Councillor Joseph.

2.3 Apologies were also received from Councillor Maxwell, Mayoral Advisor for Older People.

2.4 Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Hayhurst.

2.5 Councillor Adejare was in virtual attendance.

3 Urgent Items / Order of Business

3.1 There were no urgent items, and the order of business was as set out in the agenda.

4 Declarations of Interest

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5 Ageing Well Strategy 2020-2025

5.1 The Chair opened the item by explaining that it would look at the implementation of the Ageing Well Strategy to achieve the Council's broader objectives and aspirations to support residents to grow old in Hackney.

5.2 Attending for this item was:

- Councillor Chris Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care, Voluntary Sector and Culture
- Sonia Khan, Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery

5.3 The Chair invited the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery to give a short verbal presentation to compliment the reports received and included in the agenda pack. The main points from the presentation are outlined below.

5.4 It was explained that the commitment to being an age friendly borough was made in the last administration's manifesto, and it represented an opportunity to understand and respond to the needs and interests of older people.

5.5 The strategy aimed to ensure that council services, policies and practices were age friendly, to create a culture shift in how older people were perceived and supported and influence partners and the community and voluntary sector to support the shared vision.

5.6 In producing the strategy, the Council took stock of local data and national and international research about older people, before holding informal focus groups exploring what it meant to grow old in Hackney.

5.7 The Council recruited trained older peer facilitators through HCSV Connect Hackney to codesign the consultation and engagement with older population in Hackney. Stakeholder engagement also took place with services being asked how they felt they could adapt and change based on the findings of the consultation.

5.8 Stakeholders and the peer facilitators came together to produce the recommendations following the consultation and engagement, and the peer facilitators led on the drafting of the strategy.

5.9 A roundtable was then held with umbrella older people's groups to discuss the draft strategy, and a formal online and offline consultation was held from September - October 2020. The strategy was adopted by Cabinet in December 2020.

5.10 There were a number of priority areas for ageing well in Hackney, and a number of conditions that needed to be put in place in order to meet those priority areas and make the strategy successful.

5.11 This included ensuring that older people were involved proactively in the delivery of the strategy, not only in terms of monitoring and oversight but also in the co-design and co-creation of programme activity, and ensuring that opportunities for better joined-up working between services were actively explored.

5.12 Some of the key achievements so far were outlined. This included Hackney joining the UK network of age-friendly communities, joining the World Health Organisation's global network of age-friendly cities and continued co-production with stakeholders and older people through working groups themed around the six priority areas.

5.13 There had been challenges in progressing officer level governance of the strategy due to the pandemic, resource constraints and the refugee crisis but it was a priority to establish and progress the strategy by the autumn.

5.14 The main focus so far had been about building the older person's voice into council mechanisms and influencing culture and transformation, advising and providing insight into older people's needs and interests.

5.15 There were a number of examples of work where ageing well principles had been applied. This included the link work model in the Customer Services team which aimed to ensure that vulnerable residents were supported early on and prevented from reaching crisis.

5.16 As part of that pilot, people aged 70 and over who had not logged a repair in two or more years with the Council were prioritised. The repairs service was used as a route to speaking about the other wellbeing issues people may be facing.

5.17 The Hackney Older Citizens Committee fed into the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Public Health heavily engaged older people's groups beyond the Hackney Older Citizens Committee to attain feedback and insight.

5.18 Adult Social Care had redesigned their resident involvement work including adding new groups such as the Carers Partnership Board and recommissioning services such as homecare using a co-design approach with residents.

5.19 The Council had also worked closely with Hackney Social Radio, through the Culture team, including on intergenerational conversations being recorded with older and younger people around the experience of ageing, ageism and climate change.

5.20 The Planning team were organising intergenerational forums for the child friendly supplementary planning document, ensuring that the guidance referenced older people and age friendly spaces.

5.21 The Parks team were also working to ensure that older people's needs were being considered within the Parks Strategy. For example, a 'Chatty Corner' was to be piloted in Shoreditch Park with benches that had been co-produced by the Hackney Older Citizens Committee.

5.22 The Hackney Older Citizens Committee had participated and provided input into the Libraries Review, and had been invited to contribute to early discussions on what needed to be included in the Housing Strategy and what needed to be included in the consultation process.

The Council was successful in its bid for the Government's Shared Outcomes Fund, which was a fund that had been committed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for a Partnerships for People and Place project focusing on place-based initiatives, which created better cross-government coordination.

5.23 As part of the bid the Council pledged to focus on preventative approaches to health inequalities through community engagement, integration and neighbourhoods with a specific focus on ageing well.

The overall outcome of the programme was to reduce health inequalities by increasing the wellbeing of older adults through investing in local voluntary and community sector capacity via a flexible grants programme.

The next steps for the strategy were then outlined. These included a review of the governance and officers group, establishing a provider forum which would ensure a link into the wider voluntary and community sector and the Council's dementia work and reviewing membership of the Hackney Older Citizens Committee.

5.24 The Chair then invited the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care, Voluntary Sector and Culture to make any closing remarks. The main points are outlined below.

5.25 He highlighted the importance of co-production in developing the strategy, particularly through the Hackney Older Persons Citizens Committee which, as previously mentioned, had been involved in developing the Libraries Review, Parks Strategy and early stages of the Housing Strategy.

5.26 The Council had taken strides in building the older person's voice into mechanisms and influencing culture and transformation, despite the challenges that had been presented by the pandemic, resource constraints and the refugee crisis.

5.27 The 'Chatty Corner', which was to be piloted in Shoreditch Park with benches that had been co-produced by the Hackney Older Citizens Committee, was seen as a particular highlight of the work thus far. It showed the value of co-production and ensuring that services were tailored to the needs of the communities that they serve.

5.28 Looking forward, the Partnerships for People and Place project would broadly focus on two strands of activities in the Hackney Marshes neighbourhood (Homerton and Kings Park):

- The co-production and implementation of a flexible grants programme to engage older people not already involved in local activities, fund gaps in local activities, and add value to existing activities
- To maximise the impact of local activities, including intergenerational activities, to tackle health inequalities and help people age well.

5.29 Following feedback during the consultation process, employment was highlighted as an area of difficulty for some older people who were unemployed or who had taken a career break. The Council would undertake a pilot to support older people struggling to get back into work.

Questions, Answers and Discussion

5.30 *A Commission Member asked how the Council would monitor and evaluate the progress of the Ageing Well Strategy against its desired outcomes.*

5.31 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery explained that the Ageing Well Delivery Plan would be used to track and monitor progress, both in relation to what the Council had committed to and what the Council would influence through its partners.

5.32 The Council was keen to quantify what sustained change it had made or influenced by understanding how each commitment was being implemented and what the outcomes of those were. Within this, the Council would seek resident and stakeholder feedback to help determine how these outcomes were felt across communities.

5.33 A Commission Member asked how the Ageing Well Strategy would interact with other cross-cutting pieces of work being undertaken by the Council such as on anti-racism and carbon net zero.

5.34 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery explained that an important aspect of the strategy was to ensure a diverse range of voices were involved in its development and delivery, and it was felt that this would help it to influence the wider agendas and priorities of the Council.

5.35 The strategy sought to imbed the voices of older people throughout services across Hackney. For example, there were specific strands of work with the Windrush Generation which tied in with the Council's wider work on anti-racism, and to ensure low traffic neighbourhoods were age friendly which tied into the Council's wider work on net zero.

5.36 *A Commission Member asked how the Council was tailoring its ageing well approach across different communities of older people, and specifically how it would tailor the approach to different age groups within the older people cohort.*

5.37 In response, the Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery explained that through resident feedback and engagement it became clear that the concept of ageing was different for different people. It was therefore important to see age as a process and look at what can be done across services to make them more age friendly.

5.38 For example, the Partnership for People and Place project sought to learn through intergenerational dialogue what could be done to get residents to think about

ageing whilst they were younger, and what could be done on a preventative basis to help with the ageing process.

5.39 *A Commission Member asked how the Council would ensure that the resident voice was heard throughout the delivery phase of the Ageing Well Strategy and how this would shape policy.*

5.40 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery explained that the Hackney Older Citizens Committee would feed into the delivery of the strategy and provide challenge to the Council's decisions.

5.41 Regular engagement had been a challenge due the pandemic with older people more likely to get involved when there was a live opportunity to influence something rather than through regular conversations. However, there was a commitment to broadening that engagement, reviewing the membership of the Hackney Older Citizen's Committee and increasing its membership.

5.42 *A Commission Member asked whether it was possible to ensure that age friendly approaches were embedded into planning policy in the same way that child-friendly places were through the child-friendly places supplementary planning document.*

5.43 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery explained that there was a manifesto commitment by the current administration to co-produce a new design guide with disabled and older people to ensure that streets, parks, estates, public buildings, high streets and public spaces are inclusive and accessible for all.

5.44 *A Commission Member asked whether there would be scope for involving the Hackney Older Citizen's Committee in discussions and reviews across Hackney Council's Scrutiny Commissions.*

5.45 The Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery recognised that the Hackney Older Citizen's Committee could add value to the work of scrutiny and that it would consider the ways in which it could do so when reviewing its role and responsibilities.

5.46 The Chair then invited the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care to give any closing remarks.

5.47 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care emphasised the importance of intergenerational dialogue with young and older residents coming together to co-produce work under the strategy.

6 Finance Update

6.1 The Chair opened the item by explaining that it was a fixed item on the agenda which enabled Members to retain oversight of the Council's overall budget. Two reports were provided for review:

- Overall Financial Position July 2021
- Capital Report July 2021

6.2 Attending for this item was:

- Jackie Moylan, Director of Financial Management

6.3 The Chair invited the Director of Financial Management to give a short verbal presentation to compliment the reports received and included in the agenda pack. The main points from the presentation are outlined below.

6.4 The first forecast of 2022/23 would be presented on 18th July 2022 which forecasted a £7.4 million overspend.

6.5 The impact of inflation was seen particularly on services with significant energy, fuel and contract costs, for example Environment Operations, SEN transport and inflationary pressures for care providers. Further pressures were also expected in respect of pay negotiations.

6.6 Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's directorates remained a pressure, although some reduction in high cost residential placements in Children's and Young People's was welcomed. Pressures were also assumed in areas such as commercial rent where wider economic conditions may impact on ability to pay.

6.7 The cyber attack remained a significant cost, although that was being offset by provisions set aside as part of the 2022/23 budget set and reverse set aside as part of the 2021/22 closing process.

6.8 Services were working with finance to offset service pressures as far as possible, and in the previous financial year the Council managed to bring overspend down from £7.3 million in August to £4.6 million.

6.9 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was forecast to come in within budget even though operating expenditure was forecasting an overspend of £5.7 million.

6.10 This overspend was being offset by a reduction in the forecast Revenue Contribution to Capital, which was possible due to the delay in the procurement of building maintenance contracts.

6.11 The main areas of overspend were in:

- Reactive repairs - due to the need to deal with backlogs largely driven by the pandemic & delay in procurement of building maintenance contractors.
- An increase in utilities costs, estate cleaning and lift servicing and repairs.
- A forecast increase in bad & doubtful debts.
- Costs of Council Tax & business rates on void properties.

6.12 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the General Fund indicated a budget gap of between £14 million & £29 million for next year. Assumptions behind these figures were being updated.

6.13 The HRA Business Plan expected to find savings of £1.6 million for the next four years reducing down to £1 million per year for the following three years.

6.14 At the last Scrutiny Panel meeting some of the risks associated with these figures were highlighted, for example around inflation, Fair Funding, recovery from the cyber attack and increasing demand.

6.15 Since these plans were drafted the economic position has worsened not least the increasing inflationary pressures now at 9.1% with forecasts at greater than 10% for later in the year.

6.16 The MTFP & HRA Business Plan were currently being recast taking on board these conditions as well as assumptions around timing of Fair Funding being pushed back.

6.17 The Council had contributed to various surveys on inflation and lobbying on the impact of these pressures which exceeded forecast conditions when the Local Government Survey was published.

6.18 Based on 25 returns the estimated cost of General Fund pay inflation in 2022/23 budgets for London overall was £91 million, and based on 24 returns the estimated cost of the General Fund running costs inflation in 2022/23 budgets for London overall was £155 million.

6.19 At the recent Local Government Association Conference, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities stated that in 2023/24 there would be a two year settlement which would be likely consulted on in the Summer.

6.20 This likely meant that Fair Funding would not be introduced in 2023/24 nor 2024/25 although there may be some tinkering with the formula in both years.

6.21 The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities also committed to Fair Funding by the end of the calendar year, but this likely meant either starting off the process for delivering it in two years' time, or badging the above tinkering as delivering the fair funding reform.

6.22 The Council was legally required to set a balanced budget each year, so the Strategic Plan development and transformation needed to be delivered against some fixed dates and within available resources.

6.23 The cost of living crisis continued to impact residents. The Council's Poverty Framework formed the basis of its response and prioritises. Key aspects of work underway included:

- Simplifying access to financial support to increase take up (e.g. single point of entry, reducing evidence threshold and proactively approaching residents)
- Building on learning from initiatives during the pandemic - working closely with the Community Partnership Network in building a whole system of support; and
- Developing support for people to maximise their income through wider benefit take up as well as money management advice.

6.24 Direct financial support the Council offered through these processes included:

- Discretionary Housing Payments - £553k paid out by the end of June 2022
- Hackney Discretionary Crisis Support Scheme - £33k spend as at the end of June 2022
- Fuel rebates - Standard £150 Council Tax Rebate paid to 41,268 households (£6.2m) and discretionary top up £30 Council Tax rebate paid to 6,363 households (£191k) as at 27th June.

6.25 Updates would be provided on a routine basis through the monthly budget report to Cabinet.

6.26 Through the continuation of the Household Support Fund, the Council had been allocated £2.8m for the period through from April 2022 to September 2022. The support provided would be:

- Children and families 0-19: Support primarily via vouchers for children on free school meals or those identified by local providers in the statutory and voluntary and community sector or Children's Centres (including the Orthodox Jewish community) and in local colleges - £65 will be awarded per child, £15 in May and £50 in summer.
- Pensioners: package of cash support for pensioners to help with food, fuel and essentials, designed with and working with a range of partners and also linked into the single point of entry mentioned previously.
- Help with housing costs and bills for people at risk of homelessness or homeless: in temporary accommodation, supported living or hotels - identified by Benefits and Housing Needs - support averages £244.

Questions, Answers and Discussion

6.27 *A Commission Member asked whether reductions in the forecast Revenue Contribution to Capital to offset the expected operating expenditure of the HRA was sustainable in light of continued pressures on housing across Hackney.*

6.28 The Director of Financial Management explained that the reduction was only a measure that could realistically be taken for a year or two, and was only possible due to the delay in the procurement of building maintenance contracts as a result of the pandemic.

6.29 *A Commission Member asked for a breakdown of the costs associated with the cyber attack and whether any further costs were anticipated in the next financial years.*

6.30 The Director of Financial Management explained that the Council was forecast to overspend £4.2 million in relation to the cyber attack.

6.31 A Revenue and Benefits overspend of £1.8 million in relation to the cyber attack related primarily to the increase in the bad debt provision required as a result of the overpayment of benefits which were unlikely to be recovered.

6.32 ICT alone had incurred £3.3 million of additional costs necessary to restore and rebuild systems and additional costs had been incurred by Housing Services as a result of their systems being down.

6.33 *A Commission Member asked what the estimated cost of General Fund pay inflation may be in the 2022/23 budget for Hackney Council under anticipated pay award scenarios.*

6.34 The Director of Financial Management responded by explaining that the typical historic pay award increase would be around 2% but a higher pay award increase was expected this year.

6.35 For each percentage increase in pay award the Council would be looking at an increased cost of around £2 million which it would need to offset.

6.36 *A Commission Member asked how the Council was planning to offset the overspend forecast for the 2022/23 General Fund due to inflationary pressures, in particular with energy and fuel costs.*

6.37 The Director of Financial Management explained that inflationary pressures were forecast in the previous years' budget but its full extent was not known at the time. It would be forecast in the 2022/23 budget and the position would be reported to Members on a regular basis.

6.38 The current and high levels of inflation forecast for the next financial year would impact the Council's expenditure but it was unlikely that it would need to use reserves to cover that gap as it did with the pandemic and the cyber attack.

6.39 *A Commission Member asked why there had been some reduction in high cost residential placements in Children and Education, whether that could be sustained and whether further reduction may be seen in subsequent years.*

6.40 The Director of Financial Management explained that less young people in Hackney had gone into residential care which meant that there had been a reduction in those high cost placements.

6.41 Although the total number of young people going into residential care had reduced compared to last year there was still significant pressure. It was anticipated that savings could be sustained should the number of young people going into resident care continue to decrease.

6.42 Updates would be provided on a routine basis through the monthly budget report to Cabinet.

6.43 *A Commission Member asked whether the Education overspend being rolled over to the next financial year would have any impact on services and support for schools.*

6.44 The Director of Financial Management explained that rolling over overspend was not unusual and money tended to move between years as projects were prioritised in the Capital Programme.

6.45 Risks within the capital budget related primarily to projects not being delivered on time or to budget and such risks were constantly monitored via the regular capital budget monitoring exercise and reported to Cabinet.

6.46 *A Commission Member asked for further information on the procurement process for energy and fuel contracts.*

6.47 The Director of Financial Management explained that the Council tended to buy its energy and fuel upfront and costs were relatively stable for the current financial year as most was bought last October.

6.48 This did mean that there would be a bigger rise in energy and fuel costs in the 2023/24 financial year which would have to be monitored carefully.

7 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

7.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th February 2022 would follow in the next meeting agenda.

8 Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2022/2023

8.1 The item would cover the work programmes of the Scrutiny Panel and the individual Scrutiny Commissions for the 2022/23 municipal year.

8.2 The work programmes of the respective Scrutiny Commissions were currently in development and in the process of being agreed and finalised.

8.3 The Chair invited each Scrutiny Commission Chair to give a brief update on the development of their work programmes.

8.4 Councillor Hayhurst, Chair of the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission, outlined the progress of the Commission's work programming process thus far and potential issues it was looking to explore.

8.5 The Commission would likely look at the following issues amongst others:

- North East London's Integrated Care System arrangements
- The future of GP services in Hackney
- Tackling the surge in demand for mental health services by children and young adults
- Tackling health inequalities - Air Quality Action Plan, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, Marmot 10 years on

8.6 Councillor Conway, Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission, outlined the progress of the Commission's work programming process thus far and potential issues it was looking to explore.

8.7 The Commission would likely look at the following issues amongst others:

- Behaviour management in schools
- Race, racism and children's social care
- Update of education, health and care plans and demographic analysis
- SEND Restructure and Better Value Review
- Children missing education following the pandemic

8.9 Councillor Adejare, Chair of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission, outlined the progress of the Commission's work programming process thus far and potential issues it was looking to explore.

8.10 The Commission would likely look at the following issues amongst others:

- Building affordable and accessible homes in Hackney
- Policing of drugs in Hackney
- Neighbourhood housing office closures
- Equality, diversity and inclusion in arts & culture sector

8.11 The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny Commission had sent their apologies for the meeting.

8.12 Councillor Gordon, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, outlined the items that were currently scheduled for discussion in upcoming Scrutiny Panel meetings as set out below.

October 2022

Chief Executive Question Time

Finance Update

Annual Complaints and Member Enquiries Report

February 2023

Mayor's Cabinet Question Time

April 2023

Finance Update

8.13 The Panel would likely also consider the following cross-cutting issues for its work programme:

- Climate Action Plan
- Cost of living crisis
- Anti-racism

8.14 The Chair then invited Panel Members to make any comments or suggestions for the 2022/23 Scrutiny Panel work programme.

8.15 Any suggestions from Panel Members this evening, as well as suggestions made in the public survey, by officers and by Cabinet Members would be collated into a shortlist and presented at the next meeting for agreement.

8.16 A Panel Member supported the suggestion to look at the Climate Action Plan but felt that it would need to be reviewed at the next meeting in order to add value before the consultation process began in the autumn.

8.17 A Panel Member supported the suggestion to look at the Council's anti-racism work in a broader, cross-cutting sense rather than only through individual Commissions.

8.18 Panel Members suggested additional work programme items as outlined below.

8.19 To look at the Council's commissioning arrangements and value for money work.

8.20 To look at the proposals put forward by the Constitutional Committee for changes in relation to the role of scrutiny.

9 Any Other Business

9.1 None.

Thursday 14 July 2022

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 8.50 pm