

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2023

- Councillors Present:** Cllr Penny Wrout in the Chair
- Cllr Sarah Young (Vice-Chair), Cllr Michael Desmond, Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr Sade Etti, Cllr Jon Narcross, Cllr Steve Race, Cllr Ali Sadek, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge and Cllr Jessica Webb.
- Apologies:** Cllr Clare Potter, Cllr Fliss Premru, Cllr Clare Joseph, Cllr Ifraax Samatar and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof
- Absent:** Cllr Eluzer Goldberg, Cllr Michael Levy, and Cllr Ifraax Samatar
- Gerry McCarthy, Head of Community Safety, Enforcement and Business Regulation
- Officers in Attendance:** Sandra Farquharson, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Kate Faxen, Head of Organisational Development Workforce and Inclusion
Josephine Sterakides, Legal Officer
Gareth Sykes, Governance Officer
Meryl Wade, Human Resources Policy Manager
- Also in Attendance:** Cllr Carole Williams, Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Clare Joseph, Cllr Clare Potter, Cllr Fliss Premru and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof.
- 1.2 Apologies for lateness was received from Cllr Sarah Young.
- 1.3 Cllr Eluzer Goldberg, Cllr Michael Levy, and Cllr Ifraax Samatar were recorded as absent from the meeting.
- 1.4 No Committee members joined the meeting remotely.

2 Declarations of Interest - Members to Declare As Appropriate

- 2.1 None.

3 The Terms of Reference of the Corporate Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24

- 3.1 The Committee were asked to note their newly formatted terms of reference at appendix three of the Hackney Council Constitution, as approved at the 24 July 2023 Hackney Council meeting.
- 3.2 The Committee were to note the new section, Questions to the Committee in their Terms of Reference. The Governance Officer briefly outlined the procedure and deadlines for the submission of questions. Public questions were to be submitted four clear work days before the meeting date and eight clear working days for Councillors.
- 3.3 The Chair of the Committee read out the new section in the Terms of Reference, questions to the committee;
- A member of the public who lives, works, or studies in the Borough can ask a question of the Committee with one supplementary question relating to an item on the agenda.
 - A Councillor may ask a question of the Committee with one supplementary question relating to an item on the agenda.
 - The total amount of time for questions with notice at the Committee will be no more than 15 minutes.
 - If the Chair agrees, a member of the public can ask a question at the Committee without having given notice. If a question without notice is asked, the Chair will explain that it might not be possible to give a full answer at the meeting and that a written response will be provided.
- 3.4 Councillor Alastair Binnie-Lubbock highlighted that in relation to deadline for Councillors in which to submit questions, they might not know at point at that time what was on the up and coming meeting agenda. The Governance Officer Corporate Committee meeting agenda and papers were published five clear working days before the meeting date. The Governance Officer highlighted that a Councillor could ask a general question about a piece of work that was within the remit of the Corporate Committee. If the relevant officer was not at the subsequent meeting to provide an answer or a question was asked at the meeting, then a written answer would be provided shortly after the meeting.

Resolved:

The Corporate Committee noted their newly formatted terms of reference at appendix three of the Hackney Council constitution, as approved at the 24 July 2023 Council meeting.

4 Consideration of Minutes Of The Previous Meeting and actions list

- 4.1 The Committee considered the minutes of their previous meeting, held on 7 June 2023, and sought clarification on the following points:

- Checking the accuracy at paragraph 6.3 the use of the job title 'Street Population Co-ordinator';
- Checking the accuracy at paragraph 9.3 of the use of the term 'organogram'.

Matters arising

4.2 The Governance Officer had provided written updates on the following:

Green flag

(From the Council's Head of Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces):

The Leisure, Parks and Green Spaces Service develops, manages and maintains - through an in-house team - 58 parks and green spaces across the borough totalling some 282 hectares, ranging from major parks and green spaces such as Hackney Marshes, London Fields and Clissold Park to small gardens such as Hoxton Square and Church Street Gardens. In 2023, twenty nine of the sites were recognised with Green Flag Awards – the quality standard for parks - already one of the highest totals in London. However, the Council is working towards securing thirty two Green Flag Awards by 2026. Whilst all of the Council's 58 parks and green spaces are maintained to the same standards, not all would be suitable for a Green Flag Award given the type of green space they are. In addition, a significant amount of additional work would be required to increase the number of applications for Green Flags beyond current levels - this is beyond existing staff resources.

Carbon monitoring:

(From the Council's Strategic Director Customer and Workplace)

- We do not currently have routine CO monitoring
- We have had the HSC airflow checked by external experts, which has confirmed that airflows are well within the parameters required if the building
- is fully occupied (noting that we are typically at c 40% - 50% capacity, so there is a lot of headroom)
- During the earlier stages of opening up as the lockdown restrictions eased,
- we carried out additional CO checks and these confirmed that the levels were well within the required limits

4.3 The Governance Officer was continuing to look into the issue of executive pay. On the issue of Hire Bikes, Councillor Binnie-Lubbock clarified that the action was for officers to provide an update on their obstruction of the pavement and also the rollout of more hire bike bays and docking stations and their current usage levels.

4.4 The Governance Officer reported that they had made initial contact with the Council's Strategic Director Customer and Workplace to arrange a tour for the Committee members of the Council's buildings off campus. It was suggested that the first step was to identify those buildings that would encompass that tour, who the main contact was at those buildings, and arrange a date and put that date to the Committee.

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- 4.5 The Chair of the Committee suggested a group of buildings that the committee could visit at one time but to ensure at the same time that it would not cause any disruption to staff.
- 4.6 The Governance Officer clarified that the off campus tour came out of the previous Hackney Service Centre tour that had taken place in May 2023.
- 4.7 The Governance Officer agreed to seek updates from officers on those outstanding actions from the 7 June 2023 meeting.
- 4.8 Cllr Desmond commented that a tour for members of the Council's off campus buildings would be useful, he added that it would be helpful to have some empirical statistics about the usage of those buildings. It would be useful to have that data prior to the visits so members knew what they were looking at. It would also be useful to know if the Council was the leaseholder, the context of the Council's involvement and to determine if the Council's use of the building was cost effective.
- 4.9 The Chair of the Committee suggested that it would be useful to arrange a visit of one building before the next Committee meeting.

Action:

The Governance Officer to seek updates from officers on those outstanding actions from the 7 June 2023 meeting and update the committee before the next committee meeting.

Action:

The Governance Officer to check with the Council's Strategic Director Customer and Workplace whether there was available for circulation to the committee empirical statistics on the following for Council buildings:

1.Occupancy levels

2.Usage levels; and

3.Details on who the freeholder or leaseholder was for each Council building.

Resolved:

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on the 7 June 2023, subject to some minor points of accuracy, be approved as an accurate record of the those meeting's proceedings.

5 HR Policy Review

- 5.1 The Council's Director Of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the Paid Domestic Abuse Leave report was part of a wider Human Resources policy review across the Council and relate to people. There was plan to look at overall policies such as the strategic plan, equality plan, commitments to anti-racism and ensuring that any Council changes was in a more structured way going forward. The HR policy review would be a standing item on the Committee agenda. An overview of the plan would be presented at the next Committee meeting.

- 5.2 Committee members recommended for Council Officers, for future Committee meetings, that it was made clear with a series of sub headings which parts, of the overall HR Policy Review, were coming to the meeting for consideration and to gauge progress.
- 5.3 Responding to a question from the Chair of the Committee, the Council's Director Of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that if the Committee was required to sign off a recommendation, where there was a change in policy, then the Committee's endorsement was required and the expectation was that there would be a report on each of the subjects under the HR Policy Review item coming to Committee.

6 Paid Domestic Abuse Leave report

- 6.1 The Council's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report, as published, giving a brief overview of the policy, the definitions and some of the statistics contained within the report.
- 6.2 The review had been undertaken jointly with Hackney's Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS). Work force staff and trade union representatives had been included in this work. It was recognised that the Employers play a powerful role in tackling domestic abuse, by supporting employees, raising awareness, and tackling the cultural barriers that exist around disclosure.
- 6.3 Through consultation it was being recommended to the Corporate to approve an increase in paid Domestic Abuse leave for employees leaving an abusive relationship:
- (up to) 20 days for employees with dependents
 - (up to) 10 days for employees without dependents.
- 6.4 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities gave her thanks to all those involved in developing and updating the policy and bringing the paper to the meeting. The trade union were thanked, who had been instrumental in raising the issue with the Council as their employer and stressing the importance for their members as well as all the staff across the Council. The DAIS were also thanked early last year on International Women's Day the Council held an online event with staff where the impact of domestic abuse was discussed and its impact on staff and their families and heard of the real impact on staff members. All of the staff were investing in ensuring that the best support was there for those members of staff who were experiencing domestic abuse. The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities also thanked the Council's HR Policy Manager and Head of Organisational Development, Strategic Workforce and Inclusion for their work and the Council's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development in updating the Council's HR policies and working with the trade unions with a collegiate approach.
- 6.5 Following the submissions made, the Committee members asked questions which were responded as follows;
- Responding to a question on whether the policy would apply to men employees as well, the Director of Human Resources and

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Organisational Development confirmed that it would apply to Council employees;

- Replying to a question about the communication of the policy both for Council staff in particular line managers, the Council's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development responded that a communication strategy was not yet in place, and would need sign off by the committee. However, the Council does have some internal communications that could be shared with the members. It was important that these messages are not a one off and the various programmes available to staff looking for support. It was about a continuous process;
- Replying to a question about communicating to those work colleagues who were not necessarily linked into the relevant network, the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development responded that the Council would ensure that those colleagues were covered with members of staff who were 'change champions' to assist in getting the message across to reach out to those colleagues and reach out more widely to staff;
- The business case and the inclusion of the safeguarding, as set out in the report, was commended by the committee;
- Responding to question about the section of the report citing that 'the approach to perpetrators is a key area of expansion', the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that area did not necessarily fall directly in line with the work of the HR department, as the policy was more about supporting individuals with a safe place and making sure they had sufficient support. The focus would be on continuing to reflect on and help employees;
- Replying to question to what was meant by the term used 'cultural barriers' in the report, the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development responded that the term referred to did also cover those contractors used by the Council. The term would cover community as well corporate culture and that the Council would seek to ensure that staff were not isolated. In relation to external contractors, the Council could look at sharing their domestic abuse policy with them and to communicate the Council's expectations and to make clear to them that in Hackney where there was no tolerance for domestic abuse;
- The Chair of the Committee recommended whether the Council could check with its contractors to determine if they had a domestic abuse policy in place before engaging with them. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that they could look into this area to see if that work had already been undertaken in Procurement and Contracting and report back to committee. If that was not already in place the Council could look at ensuring that was a requirement going forward;
- Responding to a question about training, the the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that they could require all contractors have in place a domestic abuse policy;
- Replying to a question about the level of leave proposed compared to other organisations and also how the policy was tied

in with more proactive support reaching out to support services, the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development responded that the Council had a very similar policy to what was in place in Schools. Comparing to other local authorities it was acknowledged that there was always going to be a discretionary element by managers based on individuals circumstances. The policy before the committee now raised the level for manager to think about where they need to provide support. The pre-approved part had now been increased and was more significant. It was a strong level of support and providing help as quickly as possible whilst avoiding any lengthy discussions about the amount of leave required.

- 6.6 The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities explained on the issue of benchmarking, that both leading officers and Council Members had a forum through the London Councils, the local government association for Greater London, to discuss benchmarking with other local authorities in London. That forum was seen as being in a better position to provide that benchmarking. The London Councils undertook this work for a number of policy areas. This in turn would be beneficial in pulling up the level of policy across London. The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities could take this matter to the HR forum at the London Councils and also consult with the Council's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development in relation to HR officers.
- 6.7 Responding to a question from the Committee Chair, the Council's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that the policy had expanded the remit and was not specific about whether a member of staff, could take half a day off for example. It was about having a human and supportive approach to what staff need. The messaging and embedding was important and to make it clear to managers that it was a more supportive approach.
- 6.8 Responding to a question from the Committee Chair about a situation where a member of staff was undertaking a prolonged level of leave and issues around confidentiality, the Council's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that this partly about how the policy was communicated but also the level of support provided to managers to assist them in their discussions with staff and the impact on them. Any cost ramifications were not necessarily clear from the outset and in some cases might be difficult to track certain trends because some issues may not be necessarily in the open.
- 6.9 The committee members encouraged staff to undertake the necessary training and to be mindful of the level of sensitively involved around such a serious matter as domestic abuse.

Action:

The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development would:

- I. Clarify, in relation to contracting and procurement, that all the Council's external contractors had in place a domestic abuse policy; and**
- II. If they did not to ensure that they did so going forward;**
- III. Report back to the Committee on their findings in relation to i) and ii).**

Action:

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities to report back, via the Council's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, the outcome of their discussions at the HR forum of the London Councils, on benchmarking on the level of leave granted in relation to domestic abuse throughout the London's local authorities.

Resolved:

To approve an increase in paid Domestic Abuse leave for employees leaving an abusive relationship:

- (up to) 20 days for employees with dependents
- (up to) 10 days for employees without dependents.

7 Human Resources and Organisational Development Update

7.2 The Committee noted that this item had been added in error.

8 Draft Corporate Committee Work Programme 2023/24

8.1 The Committee noted their draft work programme for 2023/24. The Chair of the Committee highlighted in the absence work programme items on the agenda for the meeting that the next meeting in December as a result would have a more substantial agenda.

8.2 Responding to a question on the items on the work programme for September 2023, the Governance Officer replied that with the exception of the HR Policy Review, the other two items scheduled for the September Committee meeting, Update on the Public Realm and policies for tables and chairs on pavements and the Regulatory Services Service Plan Update 2022/23 no papers were submitted and therefore were not considered at the meeting. The Governance Officer reported that in relation to the public realm the relevant officers had informed him that an update paper on Street Trading was imminent for circulation. Committee members noted that an update on the Public Realm was now due at the March 2024 Committee meeting.

Action:

The Governance Officer would contact the relevant officers as to the current status of the following work streams on the Committee's Work Programme 2023/24:

- i. **The Public Realm and policies for tables and chairs on pavements:**
- ii. **The Regulatory Services Service Plan Update 2022/23**

8.3 Councillor Binnie-Lubbock expressed their concerns about the likelihood of items on the work programme for September being pushed back to December in light of Strategic Plan being on the work programme for that meeting. Committee members also recommended that it would be useful if they could have early sight of the Strategic Plan before the December Committee meeting.

8.4 Replying to a question about the Annual Report of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) 2023/24, as included on the Committee's work plan and

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scheduled for the March 2024 meeting, the Legal Officer for the meeting responded that it would cover two areas; alcohol and dogs. The order relating to dogs was currently in place and the other order, relating to alcohol, was currently out for consultation. The legal officer would check with the Council's Head of Community Safety, Enforcement and Business Regulation as which Public Spaces Protection Order would be considered at the March 2024 Committee meeting as part of the Committee's work programme for that meeting.

- 8.5 Councillor Binnie-Lubbock queried whether the review of polling stations would be included as part of a future work programme, in light of the consideration Polling District and Place Reviews being a key area of responsibility as set out in the Committee's Terms of Reference. The Chair would check with the Council's Assistant Director, Business Intelligence, Elections & Member Services as to the status of the Council's work on Polling District and Place Reviews.

Action:

The Chair would check with the Council's Assistant Director, Business Intelligence, Elections and Member Services as to the status of the Council's Work on Polling District and Place Reviews.

Action:

The legal officer to check with the Council's Head of Community Safety, Enforcement and Business Regulation as which Public Spaces Protection Order would be considered at the March 2024 Committee meeting as part of the Committee's work programme.

- 8.6 Councillor Desmond suggested whether the issue of Homerton Hospital and the issuing of Car Parking discs to staff during Covid-19 could be considered by the Committee. It would be helpful if an update could be provided by the Enforcement team in conjunction with the hospital. The Chair of the Committee queried whether that would necessarily fall under the remit of the Committee. The Legal Officer added that it was likely a query that should be raised with the relevant officer in this case the Council's Head of Parking and Markets.

- 8.7 Councillor Webb highlighted that several of the reports that came to the Committee were annual reports with limited space to move them around. It was highlighted that the item on food safety it was understood was a statutory item. It would be helpful to get from officers further details on the deadlines for the items on the work programme. The Chair was of the view that it would be useful to get a timetable for those items on the Committee's work programme. Committee members suggested adding to the work programme an additional column outlining the status for each item.

Action:

The Governance Officer would

- i. check with the relevant officers on the timetable for each of the items on the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/2024;**
- ii. Add an additional column to the Work Programme outlining the deadlines for each item.**

The Committed noted the latest draft of their Work Programme.

9 Any Other Business the Chair Considers to be Urgent

9.1 Members noted their next Committee meeting was on 12 December 2023.

Duration of the meeting: 6.30 - 7.42 pm

END OF MEETING

NEXT MEETING – 12 December 2023.

Cllr Penny Wrout
Chair of the Committee

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