

London Borough of Hackney
Scrutiny Chairs Group
Municipal Year 2015/16
Date of Meeting Wednesday, 14th October, 2015

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

Chair	Councillor Ann Munn
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Rick Muir, Cllr Rebecca Rennison and Cllr Carole Williams
Apologies:	Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Cllr Clayeon McKenzie, Cllr Sharon Patrick and Cllr Tom Rahilly
Co-optees	
Officers In Attendance	Tim Shields (Chief Executive) and Joanna Sumner (Assistant Chief Executive)
Other People in Attendance	Mayor Jules Pipe (Mayor of Hackney)
Members of the Public	
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Councillor Ann Munn in the Chair

1 Election of Chair

- 1.1 Following formal nominations for the position of Chair, Councillor Ann Munn was elected as Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs Group.

2 Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence from Cllrs: Tom Rahilly, Sharon Patrick, Clayeon McKenzie and Chris Kennedy.

3 Urgent Item / Order of Business

- 3.1 None.

4 Declarations of Interest

4.1 Cllr Williams declared she worked for a local authority that was doing work on the London devolution proposals.

5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

5.1 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 4th March 2015 were agreed.

5.2 In reference to action 2 on page 7 Members discussed having a small training session for Members before the next meeting.

RESOLVED	Minutes	were
	approved.	

6 Cabinet Question Time - Mayor Pipe

6.1 The Chair welcomed Mayor Jules Pipe to the meeting for Cabinet Question Time (CQT) and present for this discussion was the Chief Executive, Tim Shields from London Borough of Hackney.

Members were informed the information provided in the agenda related to the CQT discussion areas submitted to Mayor Pipe in advance of the meeting. The discussion areas were noted on page 11 of the agenda.

6.2 Discussion, Questions and Answers

(i) **Members enquired about the discussions held at London Councils and how they related to The London Proposition document submitted to the Government with devolution proposals for London.**

Mayor Pipe explained all discussion held were linked to the document produced. The London proposition is a snap shot of the work and discussion as of the 4th September 2015, to be able to submit an offer to the Government.

It was noted all the areas proposed for devolution come with some degree of risk. However, the health proposition was the most advanced. London boroughs have now entered into a dialogue with the NHS about health reforms.

Successful devolution will rely on the amount of expenditure and influence devolved from Central Government to local areas. It is anticipated this will be in small phases.

The least developed devolution proposal for London was Housing. This was due to the different housing needs for each borough.

(ii) **Members enquired if London Councils aimed to develop London wide proposal or would regional proposals be the best option.**

Mayor Pipe explained a sub-regional framework was being developed to help build on the offer in the proposition document. In relation to housing the challenge was getting all boroughs to agree to one plan for London. All the plans have implications for the wider infrastructure of all Boroughs.

The aim of The London Proposition is to retain as much funding for London, in London, to contribute towards the house building required for the Capital. The policy change implemented - enabling commercial property to be changed into residential property - has impacted on the local economy of areas. The London Proposition aims to give London more control over situations like this.

The Chief Executive for LBH pointed out there are a number of levers being used by Government, these might bring London together, to enable London to take more control over its resources and the impact on the infrastructure.

Mayor Pipe explained the Governments housing policy is aimed at starter homes, but this policy does not fulfil the needs of LBH because Hackney needs more social housing not starter homes.

- (iii) **Members referred to the health proposals and enquired if the advanced development would include public health, primary and secondary health care services.**

The Chief Executive for LBH explained all boroughs were being asked to group together and submit pilot offers that combine health and social care. This is developing coterminosity between health care, GPs and social care. The challenge for London is health services do not have a neat geographical fit to boroughs. Many pilots are likely to have quite a complex geography, therefore they will need to find the right balance.

For London they are asking for ideas on pilots for coterminous services. Members were informed Hackney is planning to make a submission. Pilots were to be submitted by November 2015. It was highlighted that Hackney was in a unique position – having primary and secondary care health services located in the borough. Hackney planned to submit a borough pilot covering the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group area (CCG) for the hospital trust and social care. This will require putting all the funding for the services into one pot. Long term this could lead to consolidation of estates. The pilot provides a range of opportunities and risks – taking on overspends and budget cuts, in addition to the challenges facing local authorities with their own budgets.

- (iv) **Members enquired where this type of joint service provision would be monitored, managed and reviewed.**

The Chief Executive from LBH explained it would be the Health and Wellbeing Board. There would be a joint body holding the funding for all the services and this body would commission services. This would create one organisation responsible for the whole care pathway. This would enable services to be managed more efficiently and effectively.

- (v) **Members enquired how comfortable Hackney was about taking on such a huge risk and having one budget. In addition Members enquired what safeguards would be put in place to protect other services?**

Mayor Pipe acknowledged the risk associated with the devolution proposals. It was explained this was at the forefront of all leaders minds throughout this process. It was highlighted that many boroughs are aiming to keep risks low. They are looking at making this a shared risk as opposed to managing the risk alone. It was essential that consideration was given to how the resources would be managed in relation to the challenges faced.

- (vi) **In response to Members enquires about the need to change behaviour to reduce costs.**

The Chief Executive from LBH pointed out the separate systems to date have not managed to change behaviour in patients. The hope is having one system will affect the behaviour change required.

- (vii) **Members enquired about Hackney's confidence that the local health pilot would be selected.**

The Chief Executive from LBH was confident if they submitted a good offer it would progress to a live pilot. The view was health devolution was likely to be at sub regional level and not at pan London.

- (viii) **Members referred to London's unique set up and enquired if the Government would be incentivised to announce a devolution deal for London?**

Mayor Pipe advised the Government's focus was on building up the North of England. London's narrative is about creating growth and putting in place measures to cope with the growth it is experiencing. This is not currently on the Governments agenda.

- (ix) **Members enquired if the Government was looking for a pan London framework that would build more homes in London.**

Mayor Pipe agreed the Government's goal was for more housing. London's housing plan aimed for 48,000 homes to be built. In the last 7-8 years there have been 14,000 -17,000 homes built. There are a number of challenges to overcome to get to an agreed proposition. Mayor Pipe explained Hackney Council did not agree with building properties in other boroughs for its residents like other boroughs have proposed. The current cap in relation to house building is hindering the council's ability to build properties within the borough for their residents.

The Chief Executive from LBH notified Members that London is a key economy and focus for business growth. There is a push to resolve the South East region housing crisis up to the North of England.

- (x) **Members referred to the skills and governance model for funding and enquired if this would be the best way for delivery of skills and jobs for Hackney.**

Mayor Pipe explained currently the money follows the student and that there is a mismatch with the skills required to the skills acquired by students. London would like to change its funding model to help shape the skills needed. Members were reminded that further education colleges were experiencing funding cuts to their budget too.

- (xi) **Members referred to the national push on apprenticeships and highlighted the government's proposals would put employers interests first as opposed to the interest of the employee. Members pointed out currently apprenticeships were not delivering in relation to the gender gap, disability and that the access criteria to secure an apprenticeship was high – entry requirements wanted applicants to have excellent Maths and English.**

The Chief Executive informed Members there is a review on apprenticeships and the Government's aim is to push funding for this programme to the private sector - businesses for training and skills required.

It was highlighted that skills and employment have experienced cuts to funding for further education and to apprenticeship funding for businesses.

- (xii) **Members pointed out a number of young people would not be able to access apprenticeships because the access criteria is too high. Members commented the low skill apprenticeships being offered would continue to fuel the equality gap and keep people in low skilled, low paid and insecure employment.**

Mayor Pipe informed Members the view about apprenticeships has been to have a range of levels that match academic abilities, this included degree level (University) and A level.

- (xiii) **Members referred to the Hackney campaign to reinstate 100 police officers. Members enquired if this was possible to achieve.**

- (xiv) **In light of the slight increase in crime figures it was noted the general feeling was Hackney may be becoming less safe. Members wanted to know if there was the possibility that Hackney could slip back to its old levels of crime with less officers.**

Mayor Pipe advised there has been some proactive policing work to tackle spikes in crime for particular crime areas. It was acknowledged this could mask other events. The loss of local resources resulted in a reduction of officers to engage in work areas like the Gangs Unit.

The Chief Executive explained people may be expressing they feel less safe because there is less visibility of police officers on the streets. It was pointed out the number of gun discharges in the borough is still lower than it was 12 years ago.

- (xv) **Members enquired if the current number of police officers listed for Hackney included PSPOs.**

Mayor Pipe confirmed it did.

- (xvi) **In discussions Members talked about there being no evidence to confirm there is a link between less visibility of police officers and an increase in crime. It was noted the crimes people worry about the most – physical crime- has decreased. Internet crime was increasing and police resource was being shifted to cover this area. There is real concern about the proposed changes to the police funding formula. This could result in policing being only responsive and no local relationship with the neighbourhood. Members raised concern that this type of policing could take back to having tensions between the community and the police.**

Mayor Pipe agreed neighbourhood policing had a positive effect in Hackney. It was pointed out a number of young people also raised concern about their relationship with the police under the proposed changes. However having more police officers will not stop crime.

The Chief Executive updated the Commission about other impacts such as the reduction to Borough Commanders across London. The best change would be to revise the formula for London to rebalance resources. London's boroughs will need to have conversations with the Metropolitan Police Service about managing resources.

- (xvii) **Members referred to Hackney no longer being at the bottom of the index for crime and enquired if this impacted on the resource allocation.**

Mayor Pipe could not confirm if the index for crime was used. Mayor Pipe informed Members at the time the police office resource allocation was calculated, the snapshot of data used was at the point in time when Hackney's crime rate was at its record low.

- (xviii) **Members enquired about the difference between the resources allocation formula and the finance formula for policing.**

Mayor Pipe explained one did not use IMG data, it used other sources of data.

The Chief Executive advised Members consideration was not given to factors like deprivation, instead it focused on single issues like child poverty.

- (xix) **In response to Members query about the Council's ability to accommodate Syrian refugees following the government's commitment to take into Britain 20,000 refugees.**

Mayor Pipe advised there has been no further information released from central government about the funding support being provided to councils to help support these families. There was a vague commitment to provide funding for 4 years but no further information beyond this.

- (xx) **Members referred to Hackney's housing shortage and enquired if the Council was housing residents outside of the borough.**

Mayor Pipe pointed out Hackney has been a borough that has absorbed countless migrant populations and it has the capacity to absorb different

groups. The challenge is physically housing families. Currently Hackney has 2,300 families in temporary accommodation, some are housed outside the borough and approximately 15-20 are housed outside of London.

The key question to be asked is what resources will be provided to support the refugees e.g. paying for housing above the current cap level. In Hackney there is a short supply of property below the housing allowance rate. The government needs to be willing to pay above the cap rate for these families and they will need to be supported until they become self-sufficient. It was pointed out these will be vulnerable families and the question is will they be able to be self-reliant in 2 years or will they need support for a longer period of time.

7 Governance Services Review

- 7.1 The Chair welcomed Joanna Sumner, Assistant Chief Executive to the meeting and present for this discussion was Chief Executive, Tim Shields from London Borough of Hackney.
- 7.2 Members were informed that the Council had undertaken a review of all staff resources providing services to Councillors. This included the Overview and Scrutiny team.
- 7.3 The review involved conducting an activity audit to identify the key areas of work carried out by the various teams. This information was in the process of being used to inform the structure for multidisciplinary functions.
- 7.4 Members were informed the initial restructure for the teams will involve management changes within the Chief Executive's Directorate. The next phase will be consultation with Members for a systematic review of the scrutiny function and a review of support models for the scrutiny function.
- 7.5 **Discussion, Questions and Answers**
- (i) **Members commented it was important in the current climate to look at their function to contribute to the efficiency work being conducted across the Council.**
- (ii) **Members acknowledged the scrutiny model in Hackney has not been reviewed since the function was created by legislation. Members discussed embarking on a review processes to enable them to review the delivery of scrutiny.**
- (iii) **Members enquired about other scrutiny models in different boroughs.**

In response they were informed not many scrutiny teams remained in other boroughs. It was explained Hackney's scrutiny team was relatively large in comparison to the trend across London. Members were informed boroughs have either reduced their scrutiny team to 3 members of staff or removed the stand alone function completely.

- (iv) **Members pointed out Hackney's scrutiny has a strong policy review function that they would like to preserve. Members commented they**

should conduct an activity audit of the Commissions to review the work and consider what balance of work they would like to retain.

The Assistant Chief Executive explained the Council wishes to strengthen the scrutiny function and from the initial activity audit work it would appear the scrutiny function would be better aligned to the policy and insight function. This included being able to access community insight information from Ward Forums, harnessing this information in the scrutiny work.

- (v) **Members raised concern about creating a conflict of interest for the scrutiny team. Members were concerned about policy officers working in the function and how they could provide challenge to a policy they developed. Members enquired about the work of the policy team in the Council.**

The Assistant Chief Executive explained the policy team was a small team that was inward facing. The scrutiny team would be a separate team working alongside the policy team.

The Chief Executive informed Members the Council was embarking on a whole organisation restructure. This started with the senior management restructure recently announced.

- (vi) Members requested for the following in relation to the Governance Review work:
- a) The cost details of the scrutiny function
 - b) To be involved in the review of the function.

The Assistant Chief Executive agreed to provide this information.

ACTION	The Assistant Chief Executive to provide details of the costs for the scrutiny function.
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8 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16

- 8.1 Scrutiny Chair's outlined their review work.
- 8.2 The Chair of Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission advised they had completed their review and they were in the process of finalising the report. This would be agreed at their Commission meeting in November and they would like the report to progress to Full Council for a wider discussion.
- 8.3 The Chair of Health in Hackney advised the commission had commenced its review looking at TB services in Hackney.
- 8.4 The Chair of Community Safety Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission advised they had just completed their review on ASB and would be embarking on their next review looking at apprenticeships.

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8.5 In the absence of Member representation, there was no update from Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission on their review work.

9 Any Other Business

9.1 None

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.00 pm