



Notice of Meeting:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Location:

The Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall,
New Broadway, Ealing, W5 2BY

Date and Time:

Thursday, 6 July 2023 at 7.00 pm

Contact for Enquiries:

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Chief Executive:

Tony Clements

This meeting will be held in public. If you would like attend in person and have any special requirements in order to attend, please email democraticservices@ealing.gov.uk or telephone on 020 8825 6253 at least three clear working days in advance wherever possible.

Committee Membership: Councillors

J Ball, P Driscoll, M Rice, C Anderson, Y Gordon (Chair), H Haili, C Tighe, F Conti (Vice-Chair), R Baaklini, H Kaur Dheer, M Hamidi, F Mohamed, K Nagpal, S Padda and B Wesson

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**
To note any apologies for absence and substitutions.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
- 3 Matters to be considered in private**
- 4 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023 (Pages 3 - 8)**
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023.
- 5 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023 (Pages 9 - 16)**
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023.
- 6 Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2023 (Pages 17 - 20)**
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2023.
- 7 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (Pages 21 - 26)**
- 8 2022-23 Final Panel Reports: Scrutiny Panel 1 and Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel (Pages 27 - 74)**

Published: Wednesday, 28 June 2023

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday, 21 February 2023

Venue: The Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway,
Ealing, W5 2BY

Attendees (in person): Councillors

Y Gordon (Chair) J Ball (Vice-Chair), L Brett, D Crawford, P Driscoll, M Rice, C Summers, C Anderson, P Knewstub, I Nijhar, C Tighe, B Hashani, A Kelly, I Kingston and A Young

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kumar, Alexander, Dhindsa and Haili.

The following Councillors were present as substitutes:

- Councillor Young for Councillor Kumar
- Councillor Kelly for Councillor Alexander
- Councillor Kingston for Councillor Dhindsa
- Councillor Hashani for Councillor Haili

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor D Crawford declared that he had sat on the Regulatory Committee that determined the Village Green Application for Warren Farm; and that he was a sports journalist, season ticket holder for Fulham Football Club, on the supporters board for Fulham Football Club and a Member of Middlesex Cricket Club. He did not consider these as pecuniary interests so intended to remain in the room when the Warren Farm item was being considered.

Councillor Kelly declared he sat on the Regulatory Committee that determined the Village Green Application for Warren Farm, but did not consider this a pecuniary interest and therefore would remain in the room when the Warren Farm item was being considered.

3 Matters to be considered in private

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on xxx are agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

5 Call-in: The Future of Warren Farm Sports Ground

Councillor Malcolm presented the reasons the decision had been called in to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The results of the consultation showed that residents overwhelmingly didn't want a sports pitch on the site. Any additional need identified in the borough through the sports strategy could be met at other sites. It was likely any planning application would receive an objection from Natural England due to harm to the species on the site. It was clear that developing the site was against the Cabinet's own policies and if the Council's decision was Judicially Reviewed it would be extremely costly for the Council to defend in court. Any money spent on defending a judicial review would be better spent helping residents in Southall.

Dr Sean McCormack and Dr Mark Spencer spoke in favour of the call in. Reasons for supporting the call in included that the site was as priority habitat and that placing sports pitches on the site would destroy the habitat and the species who lived there, most notably Skylarks; developing the site would breach the Council's biodiversity action plan; any additional land sought from Imperial College would not mitigate loss of already re-wilded land; and a long list of wildlife charities and conservationists were against development on the site.

Councillor Deirdre Costigan, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, responded to the issues raised by the call-in:

- The decision taken by Cabinet was to undertake a feasibility study on the site. This was not a commitment to develop the site but to understand what could be developed there.
- The Sports Strategy had identified an additional need for sports pitches in the borough and health inequalities data showed that 2 in 5 people in Southall undertook less than 30 minutes per week of physical activity. The report was clear that this was the right site in order to try to tackle some of the health inequalities in Southall.
- Surveys of local clubs showed there was demand for football and cricket in the borough which was not being met.
- Local people were consulted, and they made it clear they wanted a nature reserve on the site. The feasibility study due to be undertaken would consider whether it would be feasible to deliver a nature reserve and sports provision on the site. Local people had asked for a nature reserve and this was what was being delivered.

Following the presentations, the Committee asked the following questions of the Cabinet Member:

- What was the process for making Warren Farm a Local Nature Reserve?
- Would the feasibility study consider whether the site would be able to

- provide sports provision without damaging the ecology of the site?
- Was there enough information already available about the species and habitats currently living on the site?
- Would it be possible to negotiate to use the Imperial College land for Sport instead of the already re-wilded Warren Farm site?
- Would transport and equalities be considered as part of the feasibility study, as current transport links weren't great for the site and there were existing inequalities around women's sport.
- What kind of sporting partners would the Council be looking to bring onto the site?

Councillor Costigan provided the following responses to questions asked:

- The remaining site, once the feasibility of sporting provision had been fully considered, would be designated as a local nature reserve. However the three meadows surrounding the site and Imperial College land would also be part of the designated local nature reserve. In order to make the site a local nature reserve, local groups and residents needed to agree the management plan and this had to be agreed by Natural England.
- 62% of the site was already due to become a local nature reserve; however the feasibility study will consider the remaining 38%. An ecological assessment would be carried out as part of any feasibility studies.
- Ecological studies would need to take place as part of any feasibility work to understand what species were already living on the site.
- Imperial College were keen to be involved in re-wilding and not sports provision, however this could always be revisited and discussed with Imperial College.
- Transport and Equalities would form part of any feasibility study.
- An example of a sporting partner might be a club like the London Tigers, who were based in Southall.

Following the presentations, the Cabinet Member left the room and the Committee debated the merits of the call-in. The Committee felt that this wasn't a clear win-win, whatever decision was taken there would be some residents that would be upset. The site had historically been a sports ground and there was a clear need for sports ground provision in the borough. On the other hand, developing on the site would cause a loss to the re-wilded area, and it wasn't clear whether the additional land secured for the nature reserve would mitigate the loss of the land already re-wilded. The argument as to whether the decision could be judicially reviewed wasn't valid as any decision could be judicially reviewed and this would be an argument against taking any difficult or controversial decisions. However there were a couple of issues that needed to be understood further as part of any feasibility study before any final decision were taken. These were whether sports provision could be made on the Imperial College Land instead, and that a full habitat and ecological survey needed to take place to understand the impact of development on the site before any decision was taken.

After the debate, a vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED: That

1. The decision be upheld.
2. Cabinet is recommended to undertake an ecological and habitat survey of the whole site as part of the feasibility study.
3. Cabinet is recommended to engage with Imperial College in order to reconsider whether the proposed sports facilities can be located on their land rather than on the Warren Farm site.

6 2023-24 Budget Strategy

Emily Hill, Strategic Director of Resources, and Councillor Steve Donnelly, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy presented the 2023-24 Budget Strategy.

The Committee heard that 2022-23 had been a difficult time due to turbulent economic times and instability within central government. This meant that setting a balanced budget became an even more difficult task than in previous years as a lot of the economic assumptions and assumptions around grants and settlements were unclear until a very late stage in the budget setting process.

Inflation had caused the Council problems over the previous year, however the budget gap had been closed through a combination of confirmation of final grant settlements from central government, an increase in the Council Tax base, business rates rebates, the increase in Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept and the concessionary fares rebate.

The Council was still in the lower range compared to neighbour authorities in terms of financial resilience and the events of the last 12 months had demonstrated the importance of having adequate reserves. Therefore it was proposed that further funds be transferred to reserves in 2023/24 to protect the Council against potential financial shocks in the future.

Increases in fees and charges were made following the principal of matching inflation or in accordance to any service reviews. Any fees and charges changes made by the Council had to have an Equalities Analysis Assessment to demonstrate the Council had considered the impact on equalities.

Council Tax was proposed to be increased by 2% and the Social Care Precept was proposed to be increased by 2.99%. These were the maximum amounts allowed without holding a referendum, and the government's own assessments of Council spending power worked with the assumption that all

authorities would raise both Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept by the maximum figure.

Following the presentation from the Cabinet Member and Strategic Director, the Committee asked the following questions:

- As around 50% of all funds spent by the Council were on social care, what would the Council be doing to ensure it had in place adequate care services for a growing and aging population?
- What was the overall impact of the Council adopting the London Living Wage on the budget?
- How hard had the last 13 years of austerity, coupled with uncertainty in financial markets, volatility in central government and higher than expected inflation, made the job of setting the budget?
- The Council had a high amount of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board, what risk was there with this borrowing?
- How confident were the Officer and Cabinet Member that the additional Discretionary Council Tax Support fund would be spent? Would it not be more efficient use of resources to issue a greater grant to those already in receipt of Council Tax Support?

In response to the questions asked, it was clarified that:

- Any transformation of social care was difficult as it had been impacted by COVID, as the service was still recovering. There was the added challenge of dealing with discharges from the NHS to ensure their post Covid backlog could also be managed. Care at home was clearly better and lower cost than residential care and transformation programmes for these Council services recognised this.
- London Living Wage accreditation was a priority for this and the previous administration. One of the key difficulties was ensuring contractors paid the London Living Wage, as this included carers working in care homes as well as domiciliary care. One of the changes due to the surge in inflation and labour market difficulties was that many of the providers for these services have had to increase their wages to attract and retain staff so this had helped the Council improve its compliance with paying the London Living Wage. In terms of social impact of this commitment, the report did not contain figures as it was a budget report, but some figures could be provided in the future.
- This year had been more difficult than previous years but the main thing hampering longer term planning was that the Council was required to have a Medium Term Financial Strategy, but as settlements from Central Government have been on a yearly basis over the last few years the MTFs, which should be used to build future budgets,

was lacking in most of the key details required. The new Secretary of State had committed to providing more certainty for the future, and had already announced that Council Tax and Social Care Precept would be allowed to be raised by up to 4.99% next year without holding a referendum.

- The borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board was low risk as it was borrowed while interest rates were low and were long term borrowing. As the borrowing was related to infrastructure and housing projects that did not yet require the full sum of borrowing, some of this money had been temporarily re-invested and as interest rates had now increased this was generating the Council a return on this money.
- Due to pressures on the cost of living it was almost certain the funds in the Discretionary Council Tax Support scheme would be spent. Increasing other grants was considered, but it was felt a more flexible scheme that could be tailored to an individual's circumstances.

The Committee thanked the Officers and Cabinet Member for their hard work in preparing the budget. It was recognised that there were special difficulties faced this year, and the hard work to rise to these challenges was commended.

RESOLVED:

That the 2023-24 budget strategy be noted.

7 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 10.07 pm

Signed:

Dated: Thursday, 16 March 2023

Y Gordon (Chair)

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 20 April 2023

Venue: The Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway, Ealing, W5 2BY

Attendees (in person): Councillors

Y Gordon (Chair), J Ball (Vice-Chair), L Brett, D Crawford, P Driscoll, S Kumar, M Rice, C Summers, V Alexander, C Anderson, H Haili, P Knewstub, I Nijhar and B Wesson

Apologies:

K Dhindsa

Attendees (virtual): Councillors

C Tighe

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dhindsa.

Councillor Wesson was present as a substitute for Councillor Dhindsa.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Matters to be considered in private

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023

An amendment to the minutes was considered in relation to the second recommendation made by the Committee under item 5 and whether a reference should be made to phase 1 and phase 2 ecological and habitat surveys. The Committee discussed the matter, and it was proposed to defer the matter to the next available meeting to allow the recording of the meeting to be reviewed.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023 were deferred to the next meeting.

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 March 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 were

agreed as a true and correct record.

6 Safer Ealing Partnership Annual Report 2022-23

Councillor Raza, Cabinet member for tackling inequalities and Chair of the Safer Ealing Partnership (SEP), introduced the report and explained that it outlined the performance of the SEP for the period 2022 – 23.

Following the introductory remarks of Councillor Raza, the Committee were invited to ask questions of the Safer Ealing Partners.

To the representatives of the Metropolitan Police, Superintendent Anthony Bennett and Chief Inspector James Herring, the Committee asked the following questions:

- To what extent did the findings of the Baroness Casey Review correlate with the experience of police officers? Were police officers feeling changes in their day-to-day work as a result of the Baroness Casey report? What was the timeline for implementing the 9-point plan which had been prepared following the Baroness Casey report?
- What was being done by police to tackle the disproportionate rate of stop and searches on black people in the Borough? What was being done to increase the positive outcomes of stop and searches? Were the police learning from other boroughs which had better outcomes in relation to stop and search? With regards to the Youth Scrutiny Panels which had been set up by police to review stop and search cases, how was the membership for these panels determined?
- What were the opportunities for engaging local communities with police officers? How were the police improving their relationships with diverse communities?
- How were changes in police resources impacting front line services and were new funding packages restoring the levels of funding for policing to past levels?
- Were the police seeing an increase in cannabis farms in the borough?
- Were the police and local authority seeing successes in tackling county line criminal activity and its link to child exploitation?
- What work was being done by the police to reduce reoffending rates?
- What work was being done by the police to combat retail crime and crimes like anti-social behaviour which impacted the business of retailers?
- Were police able to respond to reports of stolen phones?

- Were rates of domestic abuse growing and what was driving the changes?
- What was driving the level of missing children in Ealing and how were authorities tackling this?

Superintendent Bennett and Chief Inspector Herring gave the following responses:

- Police officers were feeling tangible changes in the Metropolitan Police resulting from the Casey report. There was a heightened level of scrutiny of officers' public conduct and officers were seeing colleagues being re-vetted.
- There was more work to be done to communicate the police response to the Casey Review. In terms of timelines, Superintendent Bennett noted that several strategies had already been initiated, for example new outreach programs to recruit underrepresented groups to become police officers and the re-vetting of existing officers for their conduct records. There were some strategies which were due to be implemented in the coming months, for example investment in local policing including increasing the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).
- Superintendent Bennett recognised that the number of stop and searches on black people was disproportionate. He noted that the rates had been coming down in the previous 12 months and outlined some of the measures which the police were implementing to continue this trend. These measures included:
 - The introduction of Youth Scrutiny Panels to allow scrutiny of stop and searches by young people.
 - New training which included showing what police officers what it felt like to be stop and searched.
 - Stop and searches were only conducted by officers when there was reason for doing so. Speculative stop and searches were no longer permitted.
- In constituting the Youth Scrutiny Panels, the police were working with the local Youth Justice Service to try and involve young people who do usually interact with the police.
- Representatives of the West Area Basic Command Unit (WA-BCU) attended Metropolitan Police wide GOLD groups to share best practice on the use of Stop and Search.
- The increased investment in neighbourhood policing was aimed to increase the trust and confidence in police amongst diverse

communities. Another element of their engagement program was with young people. The WA-BCU had restructured their youth engagement site and this was supporting their police cadet program.

- Whilst the police were unlikely to return to the levels of funding seen in the early 2000s, new investments in neighbourhood policing were going to bring about great numbers of neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs. This was likely to lead to increased detection and sanctions for lower levels crimes. The increases in police numbers were going to be demand-led.
- There had been recent arrests in relation to cannabis farms in Ealing, although Superintendent Bennett did not consider that there had necessarily been an increase in their prevalence.
- The WA-BCU had a strong record for its anti-gang work. Preventative work was taking place in schools to stop children being groomed into gangs. Paul Murphy, Safer Communities Operations Manager, added that work in relation to county lines activities formed a significant part of the Council's contextual safeguarding. There was sometimes a sense of tackling the effect and not the cause, although there were some strong examples of preventative work being carried out, including through housing initiatives.
- Superintendent Bennett considered that there was more the WA-BCU could do to reduce reoffending rates. Superintendent Bennett welcomed the suggestion of doing more work with families as part of reducing reoffending.
- Retail crime was not something police officers should be ignoring; Superintendent Bennett confirmed that there was capacity to respond to reports of retail crime, although depending on the details of individual cases there might be some prioritisation which takes place.
- It was hard to comment on police response to stolen mobile phones without knowing the details of specific cases. These cases were sometimes subject to prioritisation.
- Domestic abuse cases were rising, although Superintendent Bennett noted that this might have been the result of increased awareness and reporting. Mr Murphy, Safer Communities, added that many domestic abuse cases were referred to the police by the Council's anti-social behaviour team because reports were often sent to them first.
- The number of missing persons was partly the result of factors such as mental health issues, exploitation of individuals by criminal gangs, and the population of the WA-BCU as a command unit covering a large residential area.

To the representative of the London Fire Brigade (LFB), Commander Tom Moore, the Committee asked the following questions:

- What was the impact of the report into the culture of the London Fire Brigade on staff morale? What other factors were impacting the morale of fire fighters?
- What were the next steps for the London Fire Brigade following the report into their internal culture?

In response to questions, Commander Moore made the following points:

- There were lots of factors which impacted staff morale in the fire service. Individual morale was impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, the difficulties posed by industrial action and the general pressures on public services. There were climate related peaks in demand on fire services, and there had been a physical toll on staff after the major fire related incidents over the summer.
- The LFB had accepted all 23 recommendations of the report into its internal culture. Amongst the immediate responses to the report, the LFB had created a new independent complaints service and it had implemented a new training program for officers which included equality and diversity training and leadership training. The London Fire Brigade was working to support those coming forward with complaints.

To the representatives of Ealing Council Safer Communities Team, Jess Murray, Assistant Director of Safer Communities, Paul Murphy, Safer Communities Operations Manager, and Mehmet Kiranel Violence Reduction Coordinator, the Committee asked the following questions:

- What was the progress of the new Women's Wellness Zone in Ealing and were there prospects for seeing more wellness zones created in the Borough?
- Did the findings of the Baroness Casey report undermine the effectiveness of any of the Council's policies to combat violence against women and girls?
- What was the day-to-day work of a violence reduction coordinator?
- How was the Council tackling the problem of retaining staff for food safety enforcement?
- How was awareness being raised of the upcoming test of the UK emergency text system to ensure that vulnerable individuals using concealed phones were going to be able to change their settings?

In response, Mr Murray, Mr Murphy and Mr Kiranel provided the following responses:

- The Women's Wellness Zone was designed to become a one-stop shop for services for women's wellness. The individuals who were currently eligible to use the services in the zone were those at the highest risk. Instead of looking to create additional zones around the Borough, officers were considering ways to expand the provision in the existing zones to individuals at lower risks.
- In light of the Casey report, council officers still felt confident that they could deliver on the Council's male violence against women and girls strategy. Changes in the way the Council worked with the police allowed more proactive work to take place: the council had increased oversight over crimes as a result of new notification procedures from the police, CCTV teams were proactively identifying predatory behaviour and they were getting fast responses from police teams when incidents were reported.
- Some examples were outlined of the work involved in the violence reduction coordinator role. A key aspect of the role was showing that many officers from diverse departments of the Council had a role to play in violence reduction.
- Food safety was a key issue in the context of Ealing's high number of food manufacturers. 2022 – 23 had seen the highest number of food safety inspections ever conducted by the council and officers were seeing increasing levels of compliance.
- There had been some recent investment in the food safety sector after some years of losses. These had led to professionals leaving the sector resulting in staff shortages. There were schemes to develop graduates, although officers considered this likely to be a long-term challenge.
- In relation to the UK Government emergency text message, officers had been working with agencies working with vulnerable individuals to ensure that people were aware of the upcoming notifications and how to turn them off.

Questions were raised in relation to the accommodation for Ealing RISE (Recovery and Intervention Service in Ealing). Insofar as the SEP was not a decision maker in this matter, it was requested that the matter be taken up separately to the meeting.

Councillor Raza was invited to make concluding remarks following the questions. Councillor Raza welcomed the input of scrutiny members in assessing the work of the partnership.

The Committee commended the report and thanked the Safer Partners for their detailed responses to questions.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Safer Ealing Partnership Annual Report.

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 9.29 pm

Signed:

Dated: Thursday, 27 April 2023

Y Gordon (Chair)

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Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 27 April 2023

Venue: The Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway,
Ealing, W5 2BY

Attendees (in person): Councillors

Y Gordon (Chair) J Ball (Vice-Chair), L Brett, D Crawford, P Driscoll, M Rice,
C Summers, C Anderson, H Haili, P Knewstub and C Tighe

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Crawford and Nijhar.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Matters to be considered in private

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April were not ready for publication and were therefore deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

5 Approach to Scrutiny in 2023-24

The Chair, and Sam Bailey, Head of Democratic Services, introduced an options paper on the Council's approach to Scrutiny in 2023/24. The Committee was asked to consider the options and make a decision on the way in which the Scrutiny function would operate in the following municipal year.

The approach outlined proposed retaining the structure of a Committee and five panels. However the focus of the Committee and panels would become aligned more closely with the Council's strategic priorities. It was important that the advantages of allowing Scrutiny some flexibility in scrutinising important topics that cut across the priorities or that were important to residents. Therefore two of the proposed structures of topics selected included allowing one of the panels to scrutinise a topic as before. These topics were proposed to be either Crime, Disorder and Antisocial Behaviour or the Council's Partnership Working. The way in which the Scrutiny Panels and Committees were proposed to be further aligned to the Council's strategic priorities was to assign each panel or Committee to a Strategic Director's portfolio of responsibilities. There were 6 Scrutiny

Panels/Committees and 6 Strategic Directors, so this fitted well. To accommodate one of the Panels considering a different type of topic the Strategic Directors of Resources and Strategy and Change would be aligned to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Both of these Strategic Directors oversaw services that supported many of the other Council services; including finance, transformation and performance; which made them a good fit for working closely with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which would take some of the more high risk, cross cutting, strategic items in the next year.

In addition to the structure outlined, some proposed changes to the Constitution would be being brought forward for the new municipal year. These changes would empower Panels to make recommendations at the end of their meetings and send them on to the relevant decision makers immediately rather than waiting for them to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee first. This would empower the panels to make their recommendations in a timely manner and would remove the need for a lengthy scrutiny report at the end of each municipal year.

The Committee discussed the various options and came to view that structuring the Scrutiny function by aligning it to the Strategic Directorates would help the Scrutiny function focus on strategic issues that would be facing the Council, residents and the Borough for the next year. However it was felt that the issue of trust and confidence in the Police, and the issue of crime and antisocial behaviour in the Borough were of critical importance to residents and therefore this would benefit in having its own panel.

The Committee commented that although the approach to empowering the panels to make their own recommendations was the right direction, there needed to be some work on ways to feed back the work of the panels to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as all members. Sam Bailey committed to working with Scrutiny Members to work up some options on improving the feedback and communications from Scrutiny to members. It was noted that this year a Scrutiny Annual Report would be taken to Council to update it on the activities of Scrutiny throughout the year, which would help towards this aim.

RESOLVED: That

1. Thanks be noted for the Chair of the Committee for his work chairing the meetings for the municipal year 2022-23.
2. For 2023-24, the structure of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee plus 5 panels be retained. Each of the Council's Strategic Directors will be assigned to a Scrutiny Panel, with the Strategic Directors of Strategy and Change and Resources being allocated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The final Panel will be assigned to scrutinising Crime, Disorder and Antisocial Behaviour in the Borough.

6 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 17 May 2023, but only if a valid call-in of Executive Decisions from April was received.

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 7.32 pm

Signed:

Y Gordon (Chair)

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Report to Scrutiny

Item Number:

| | |
|---|----|
| Contains Confidential Or Exempt Information | No |
|---|----|

Subject of Report: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
6 July 2023

Service report author: Sam Bailey
Head of Democratic Services
baileysa@ealing.gov.uk
0208 825 7497

Scrutiny officer: Sam Bailey
Head of Democratic Services
baileysa@ealing.gov.uk
0208 825 7497

Cabinet Responsibility: None – Scrutiny is not an executive function.

Director Responsibility: Helen Harris – Director of Legal and Democratic Services

The OSC work programme sets out the Committee’s programme of work for the year ahead.

Brief: The draft work programme for the year is presented for approval by OSC. OSC can make suggestions for other topics or key areas to scrutinise.

Recommendations: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (Appendix 1) is agreed.

1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

- 1.1 The OSC work programme is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. This work programme has been put together through picking up key themes emerging from 2022/23 and in consultation with scrutiny members, executive members and the senior leadership team at the Council.
- 1.2 The work programme is kept under continuous review outside of meetings, including at pre-agenda meetings for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the quarterly work programming meeting for all scrutiny panels which all scrutiny chairs and vice chairs are invited to. Any member may suggest an item for a scrutiny panel to consider, including Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and provisional items can be added on to the work programme and discussed at these fora before being presented to the Committee at its next meeting for approval.
- 1.3 The timings of items are provisional and may change throughout the year depending on other workstreams and strategic issues that emerge.
- 1.4 OSC is reminded that every other meeting is assigned to called-in items only, and if no items are called in then the meeting is cancelled.
- 1.5 Members are asked to make suggestions on additional topics, make comments on the current draft work programme and give their views on the topics not yet assigned.

2. Legal Implications

The general scrutiny functions and powers and specific role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set out in the Council Constitution.

3. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Support to Overview and Scrutiny Committee is contained within the allocated budget. Value for money will come from OSC having a well-constructed work programme with each topic for scrutiny having a considered brief and identified outcomes.

4. Other Implications

There are no other implications.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Consultation

| Name of consultee | Post held | Date sent to consultee | Date response received | Comments appear in paragraph: |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Internal | | | | |
| Helen Harris | Director of Legal and Democratic Services | 27 Jun 2023 | 28 Jun 2023 | |
| Cllr Yoel Gordon | Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 27 Jun 2023 | 28 Jun 2023 | |
| Cllr Fabio Conti | Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 27 Jun 2023 | 28 Jun 2023 | |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Report no.: | Report author and contact for queries: |
| | Sam Bailey, Head of Democratic Services |

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| Committee/Panel | Date of Meeting | Item Name | Brief Description | Senior Officer | Lead Officer (s) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|---|---|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 06/07/23 | Final panel reports for SP1 and HASSP | Sign off of panel reports from 2022-23 before submission to Cabinet | Sam Bailey | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 06/07/23 | Terms of Reference, Work Programme and update on Scrutiny | Sign off from the Committee on its work programme for the year | Sam Bailey | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 03/08/23 | CALL IN ONLY | | | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 05/10/23 | Final panel reports for SP 2, 3 and 4 | Sign off of panel reports from 2022-23 before submission to Cabinet | Sam Bailey | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 05/10/23 | Budget Scrutiny - Item 1 | An early formal item considering the delivery of savings in 2023/24, the budget gap for 2024/25, key assumptions including reserves position, and what savings are planned to fill the budget gap (see briefing paper) | Emily Hill | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 09/11/23 | CALL IN ONLY | | | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 30/11/23 | Borough of Sanctuary | To scrutinise the work on working towards borough of sanctuary. | Amanda Askham & Nicky Fiedler | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 30/11/23 | Broadway Living - Risks and Mitigations | To consider the Council's risks regarding Broadway Living, including changes to the business plan due to the fiscal environment changing, exposure to financial and reputational risk and BL's delivery of genuinely affordable homes | Peter George | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 04/01/24 | CALL IN ONLY | | | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 06/02/24 | Budget Scrutiny - Item 2 | To consider the budget, prior to consideration by Cabinet and Council | Emily Hill | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 29/02/24 | CALL IN ONLY | | | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 28/03/24 | Development of Community Hubs | An item to be taken to scrutinise the development of community hubs | Amanda Askham | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 28/03/24 | The Council's Partnership Working | As proposed by Amanda Askham at SLT - to be investigated further at the work programming meeting | Amanda Askham | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 25/04/24 | CALL IN ONLY | | | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 09/05/24 | Annual Review of Complaints | A review of the complaints, and trends of complaints in 2023/24 | Emily Hill | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 09/05/24 | Council Plan Performance Update | An item on the performance of the delivery of the Council Plan | Amanda Askham | |
| Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 23/05/24 | CALL IN ONLY | | | |

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Report to Scrutiny

Item No:

| | |
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| Contains Confidential OR Exempt Information | No |
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| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Subject of Report: | 2022-23 Final Panel Reports |
| Meeting: | Overview and Scrutiny Committee 16 March 2023 |
| Service report author: | Sam Bailey – Head of Democratic Services 020-8825 7497 baileysa@ealing.gov.uk |
| Scrutiny Officer: | Sam Bailey – Head of Democratic Services 0208-8825 7497 baileysa@ealing.gov.uk |
| Cabinet Responsibility: | None – Scrutiny is not an executive function |
| Director Responsibility: | Helen Harris – Director of Legal and Democratic Services |
| Brief: | The reports of the Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel and Scrutiny Panel 1 – Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis are presented to Cabinet for final approval before submission to officers for comments against the recommendations and to Cabinet for approval. |
| Recommendations: | That the final reports are agreed. |

1. Final Reports of the Health and Adults Social Services Scrutiny Panel and Scrutiny Panel 1

As part of the process of submitting final reports to decision makers, the Council's constitution states that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must agree the final reports before they are agreed by Cabinet.

Two panel reports are attached to this report as appendices 1 and 2 for OSC to consider and agree. The reports will then be sent to officers to provide comments against the recommendations.

OSC is able to make changes to the final reports. Cabinet will be considering these reports at its meeting on 13 September 2023.

2. Legal Implications

The general scrutiny functions and powers and specific role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set out in the Council Constitution.

3. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Support to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is contained within the allocated budget. Value for money will come from OSC having a well-constructed work programme with each topic for scrutiny having a considered brief and identified outcomes.

4. Other Implications

There are no other implications.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel Final Report
Appendix 2 – SP1 Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis Final Report

Consultation

Pre-publication sign-off

| Name | Department | Date sent | Date response received | Comments appear in report paragraph: |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Internal | | | | |
| Cllr Daniel Crawford | | 2/6/23 | 2/6/23 | |
| Cllr Andrew Steed | | 2/6/23 | 5/6/23 | |
| Cllr Varlene Alexander | | 21/6/23 | 28/6/23 | |
| Cllr Seema Kumar | | 21/6/23 | | |
| External | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Report History

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Decision type: | a. Urgency item? |
| Non-key decision | Yes/No |

| | | | |
|--|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Authorised by Cabinet member: | Date report drafted: | Report deadline: | Date report sent: |
| Not applicable | | | |
| Report no.: | | | |
| Sam Bailey Head of Democratic Services | | | |
| | | | |

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Health and Adult Social Services Standing Scrutiny Panel Year End Report 2022-23

Councillor Daniel Crawford
Chair of the Health and Adult Social Services Standing Scrutiny Panel



I am pleased to present this year's report from Ealing Council's Health, Adult and Social Standing Scrutiny Panel. I would like to begin by thanking the Panel's Scrutiny Officer, Anna-Marie Rattray, our Vice-Chair Councillor Andrew Steed and all our members – especially those who have been co-opted – who have offered their invaluable insights throughout the year. On behalf of the Panel and the residents of Ealing, I send our immense gratitude to everyone working in the NHS, health care and social services during another tough year.

The Panel's work programme was upended by the cancellation of meetings due to the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II but thanks to the determination of our members and the innovation of the Council's officers – and the cooperation of the NHS, voluntary sector and other local authorities – we have been able to carry out important scrutinising local health services and making clear recommendations about where things can be improved after benchmarking both local and nationally.

The Council and the NHS have ambitious objectives to end health inequality across Ealing and north west London as a whole. It is clear that this will be a goal that can only be achieved through a collaborative approach that designs services and solutions differently and I was delighted to be able to visit so many public health projects across Ealing over the course of the municipal year. The Panel has historically recognised the vital role of the voluntary sector, especially Ealing Community Transport and AGE UK, and only by building closer partnerships will we truly tackle loneliness, isolation and, ultimately, eradicate inequality.

One of the most important aspects of scrutiny is adding value through the policy process. I would like to commend the commitment of Kerry Stevens and his team in bringing important items to the Panel and allowing us to identify ways in which the Council can provide social care fit for the challenge in the years ahead. The Panel will continue this work in the coming years, analysing the Council's progress in fixing social care, as well as examining the key decisions taken by the NHS – as we have this year, particularly in respect of local mental health bed provision.

Scrutiny has a strong history in Ealing and it has never been more crucial in supporting the day-to-day lives of the borough's residents as we look to learn the lessons after the Covid-19 pandemic.

APRIL 2023

1. OVERVIEW OF THE PANEL'S ACTIVITIES IN 2022/23

A brief overview of the Panel's activities follows below. This year the Panel's report for 2022/23, rather than setting out what has been considered on a meeting by meeting basis presents the work of the Panel under the headings of adult social care, public health, health services in Ealing, and North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny.

Further details can be found in the agendas and minutes for the Panel meetings which are available on the Ealing Council website at [Committee details - Health and Adult Social Services Standing Scrutiny Panel \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](https://modern.gov.co.uk/Committee%20details%20-%20Health%20and%20Adult%20Social%20Services%20Standing%20Scrutiny%20Panel)

The Panel's recommendations are presented at the end of this overview. Where requests for further information have been made this information has been provided, and areas for further scrutiny have been suggested for the Panel's work programme for 2023/24.

1.1 The Panel's Work Programme

The Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny Review Panel –

- Met 4 times through the year. The Panel was scheduled to meet 5 times; however the September meeting was cancelled following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.
- The Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel visited Ealing Hospital, took a tour of the site, and thanked the hospital's staff and senior leadership for their unstinting hard work whilst discussing how the Council can provide support.
- Members of the Panel joined the Mayor of Ealing, Cllr. Mrs. Mohinder Midha, at a mayoral reception to honour the selfless service of Ealing's NHS workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Visited adult social care services in neighbouring boroughs, public health and hospital services in Ealing, and community and voluntary services supporting older people in the borough.
- Made recommendations and undertook dialogue with Adult Services, Public Health, NHS North West London, London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust, and West London Health Trust.
- The Chair of the Panel has attended the 4 meetings of the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as Vice-Chair, and hosted one of those meetings in Ealing.

The following officers and external witnesses attended the panel's meetings:

- Kerry Stevens, Interim Strategic Director, Adult Social Care and Public Health
- Anna Bryden, Director Public Health
- Neha Unadkat, Borough Director, Ealing Integrated Care Service
- Dr Vijay Tailor, Borough Medical Director, Ealing, Integrated Care Service
- Roy Willis, Ealing Reclaim Social Care Action Group

- Simon Crawford, Director of Strategy and Deputy CEO, London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust
- Mark Titcomb, Managing Director, Elective Orthopaedic Centre, Ealing Hospital and Central Middlesex Hospital,
- Dr Christopher Hilton, Chief Operating Officer, Local and Specialist Services, West London NHS Trust
- Richard Mountford, Deputy Director of Communications and Engagement, West London NHS Trust
- Sonya Clinch, Clinical Director for Acute Mental Health Services, West London NHS Trust
- Aican Reilly, Power Group Chair Person
- Avtar Mann, Head of Integrated Commissioning
- Alex Cowan, Older Adults, Disabilities and Long Term Conditions Partnership Board

2. SCRUTINY OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

2.1 Quality of Adult Social Care in Ealing

The Panel considered the provision of adult social care in Ealing at two of its meetings 29 June 2022 and 1 February 2023.

At the June meeting, members were informed that the Corporate Plan would set out how the administration planned to meet its ambition to improve adult social care over the next four years. Some of the ambition was around returning to pre-Covid work such as Better Lives, preventing people from needing care homes, preventing delayed transfers of care, and getting people out of hospital and re-abled as quickly as possible. Some of it was a new focus, for example on direct payment users, social isolation, mental health support, and looking at what the care market was and what it should be. Cabinet had recently agreed a £2 million investment in additional funding for care workers to be paid the living wage, but that was only the start, the estimate for domiciliary care workers alone was £4.5 million. The Panel received a presentation outlining the social care reforms, which were due to be introduced in October 2023 and subsequently delayed by the Government.

At the February meeting, members received an overview on the 'state of quality' in Ealing's Adults' Services. Members were informed of the number of contacts and referrals to the Social Care Advice and Referral Centre (ARC), the waiting times for assessments, admissions to care homes, Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating trends for care providers in Ealing, case audit findings, and survey results.

Key Issues Considered

- The challenging recruitment and retention environment in the social care workforce. The importance of a sustainable workforce and staff retention. The Panel heard that as people were being moved from institutional care into

community services more staff were needed because of the time it took to travel around and support people in their own homes. The domiciliary care market in Ealing was very dynamic. There were a lot of registered providers, and the council was very clear in terms of its quality expectations that providers had to be good or outstanding for the council to procure services from them. The council was working closely with providers to improve the quality of services and to implement the real living wage. Social care reform had set out a programme of investment to support the social care workforce.

- The quality of care homes and domiciliary care in Ealing. Some care providers were continually being assessed by the Care Quality Commission as requiring improvement. The Panel heard that Ealing Council was the largest commissioner of services of domiciliary care in the borough and a very clear and definitive step had been taken to only procure new services from home care providers that were rated good or outstanding. The care home market was more complex in terms of how that could be achieved. A care home summit was recently carried out with providers and NHS partners to consider the issues in the sector and how a difference could be made. Being well-led was key to quality, however the average length of stay of a registered manager in a care home was only 18 months, which was inordinately short to change and maintain a culture shift. Strategies were being developed through the commissioning arrangements with the NHS and providers across North West London to target some of the providers that were having difficulties.
- Waiting times for assessments and overdue reviews. In February, the Panel noted that thirty five percent of reviews were overdue by at least 18 months and in June the waiting time for an assessment was on average 35 days. The Panel heard that this was a significant area of focus. Additional resources had been going into the service. Over the last two years it had been difficult to carry out reviews of people in receipt of services, especially people with learning disabilities where it was important to engage people in the review process and their reassessment. The variations in assessment waiting times were due to limited staffing resources and competing demand. However the service was committed to improving this, as people waiting for assessment presented a risk as prior to an assessment the service did not know enough about them.
- Care Quality Commission Local Authority Assessments. The Panel heard that the CQC assessment would drive performance across the sector in terms of quality. Ealing had been developing an internal quality assurance framework prior to the announcement about the inspection programme for local council services. An external review had been commissioned to do a light touch trial inspection and the action plan arising from that could be presented to the Panel.
- Learning from complaints data. An analysis of the trends in complaints about the services that the Council commissioned, and the actions taken would be useful for the Panel. Members heard that internal complaints data was

produced which would be included in the quality dashboard and would be part of the quality assurance framework going forward.

- Learning from benchmarking. Information which provided comparative data regionally and nationally to geographically co-located boroughs and those with similar population distributions as in Ealing would be useful for the Panel. Members heard that this data was gathered through several formats for national reporting, the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) and the Short and Long Term Support (SALT).
- Impact of the cost of living crisis. The Panel heard that the council had been providing a range of support to people experiencing difficulties because of the cost of living crisis. Some of this was targeted support to people with disabilities. If people were having specific challenges meeting the costs, the council offered a disability related expenditure reduction on the cost for services which could be reviewed and expanded upon if costs had increased significantly. People were encouraged to contact the financial assessment team to support that.

2.2 Panel Visits to AGE UK Ealing 16 March 2023 and United Anglo Caribbean Society 23 March 2023

The Chair, Vice-chair and members of the Panel visited the day centre run by Age UK Ealing at Greenford Community Centre and the lunch club run by United Anglo Caribbean Society at Acton Gardens Community Centre.

Members were impressed by what was being provided to support the health, wellbeing, and independence of older residents in the borough. Both groups were warm and welcoming providing service users with both practical assistance and a chance to socialise and take part in a variety of activities promoting health and wellbeing. By bringing people together for social activities the centres were enhancing service users' confidence and helping combat loneliness and isolation.

2.3 Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy

At the 1 February 2023 Panel meeting, members were informed of the priorities for people with learning disabilities identified from the extensive consultation carried out for the Learning Disability Commissioning strategy. These were meaningful lives, feeling and keeping safe, transport, lifelong learning, improving health and lives, the transition from children to adults' services, and good networks, information, and communications. The Panel was also informed of the outcomes aimed to be achieved against each of the priorities.

Key Issues Considered

- Housing. There needed to be a clear plan set out within the strategy to support more people to live independently within the community where they

had grown up and had strong networks. There was an opportunity for the authority through its Local Plan to be cognisant of the changing housing needs of the population as they became less physically able. The Panel heard that this was going to be an area of focus and was in line with the Council's plan to support more people in their own home.

- The quality of health checks, continuity of care for people with learning disabilities, and experiences of contacting NHS services. The Panel heard that there would be some detailed work on health checks, the first step of which would be to hear from local people with learning disabilities on their experience, as well as ensuring that everyone with a learning disability had an opportunity to have a health check and health action plan. The Panel suggested that if an audit was to be done that there might be a role for Healthwatch and the Power Group in designing the questions.
- Funding. Panel members asked if there was funding to support the ambitious strategy and were informed that no additional money had been allocated. The Strategy was the first stage of the work, action plans would be developed through the Learning Disability Partnership Board and the Power Group. The plans would be costed as they were developed and considered within the wider funding requirements.
- Transport. Ealing Community Transport offered to discuss with the Power Group how to make their access to transport better and possibly provide travel training.

2.4 Review of Ealing Adult Partnership Boards

At its meeting on 12 April 2023, members were updated on the progress of a review of the Adult Social Care Partnership Boards, which were viewed as vital in ensuring service users and the wider community were able to influence how health and social care services were provided across the borough.

Members of partnership board shared their experience with the Panel, who heard that the boards were an important conduit for the voices of people with lived experience. It was important that the voice of the service user as well as being heard was taken forward. Service users wanted to be part of the decision making process through co-production rather than be asked to comment on options presented. They wanted to know why choices had been made, which might not have been what they were asking for, so that they could understand why decisions had been reached. It was not enough to be represented by organisations such as Healthwatch, the people with the lived experience needed to be involved as decisions taken directly affected their lives.

The first phase of the review identified how the boards were supported, how strong the governance was and whether there were any gaps. Feedback highlighted the importance of co-chairs, which two of the boards had. Some of the partnership boards did not have very good service user or carer representation and that was a

known gap. In terms of governance there was no formal connection between partnership boards which was also seen as a gap and could lead to duplication. The review had found that the boards were producing some good outcomes in terms of prioritisation, action plans and strategic developments.

The next phase of the review would continue the consultation and engagement in developing a future model, if that was what was required. The service was currently working on an options appraisal with options ranging from merging the boards to creating more boards for example a carers' partnership board or splitting older adults from long term conditions and disabilities. There was also an option to adopt the seven towns approach which would mean having a partnership board based on service delivery in a geographical location.

Key Issues Considered

- Having sub-groups of partnership boards. For example when there were certain health issues that were only applicable to particular groups such as people with sickle cell anaemia.
- The number of groups represented in a partnership board. Members commented that it did not feel as if all the issues that arose within that cohort of the Older Adults, Disabilities and Long Term Conditions Partnership Board could be addressed within that structure and suggested that there should be a separate board for older adults. Consideration should also be given to having a Carers Board.
- The naming of the boards. The term partnership could be viewed as active or passive. Other local authorities referred to co-production boards and this might be a term for Ealing to think about.
- The importance of being able to demonstrate effective working and evidence of success. Partnership boards should result in a tangible change for people with lived experience.
- Diversity of membership. That the review should consider how representative the Boards are in terms of diversity and geographical spread of the participants.
- The importance of having a Chair or Co-chair with lived experience on all the partnership boards.
- Funding. Members asked if there was a budget to support the outcome of the review as presumably additional boards with increased support would increase costs. The Strategic Director said that they would be looking at costed models for the proposals, however there was not a huge amount of money within the service to support this.
- 7 towns partnership boards model. Members were supportive of moving to a

position where there was a 7 towns model, however as many of the service users went outside of their towns to receive services this might not yet be appropriate.

- Access to meetings. Transport was an important factor in enabling service users to attend meetings in person and meetings should be geographically accessible. Members suggested that consideration should be given to providing transportation to Board meetings and an approach made to organisation such as Ealing Community Transport to see what they could offer.

2.5 Panel Visit to Project Search, Hounslow 9 February 2023

The Chair and Vice-chair visited Hounslow Council to hear about Project Search, a work-based programme for young people with learning disabilities, which supported their move from education to employment. The project was run in partnership with Hounslow Council, West Thames College and the supported employment service Kaleidoscope Sabre.

The internship offered young people, aged 17-24, with real-world work experience and a comprehensive support package as they transitioned from education into employment. The interns worked in an array of roles at the Council – ranging from ‘hands on’ jobs with the Park Rangers Team to supporting Public Health’s ‘Winter Ready’ campaign. Along with practical work experience, the interns benefitted from a tutor at West Thames College and were mentored by a dedicated careers coach at Kaleidoscope Sabre.

Key Issues Considered

- Project Search provided invaluable experience of the world of the work for young people with learning disabilities.
- The Chair and Vice Chair were impressed with how the young people were engaged in making their own placements work and the overall success of the scheme.
- The multi-agency approach with Hounslow Council, West Thames College and a multitude of local businesses delivered life-changing opportunities for many students.
- Ealing’s Project Search programme could work closer with Hounslow Council and the West London Alliance in order to expand its operation and adopt best practice.

2.6 Panel Visit to Brent Council 11 April 2023

The Chair and Vice-Chair, along with the Strategic Director of Adult Social, visited Brent Council and met with Andrew Davies, Head of Commissioning, Contracting and Market Manager, and Edwin Mensah, Market Oversight Manager who shared the good practice that Brent Council had undertaken to increase the take up of Direct Payments.

The members heard how empowering direct payments could be for local residents, giving them more flexibility over how their care and support was arranged and provided. Ealing was intending to expand its Direct Payments offer to improve the independence and the health and wellbeing of Ealing residents and would be piloting an initiative around improving take up, which if successful would be applied across the borough.

2.7 Panel's Conclusions

2.7.1 Items for the Work Programme 2023/24

- The Care Quality Commission to be invited to a Panel meeting to discuss the actions taken to improve those care services continually being assessed as requiring improvement.
- The Panel highlighted the importance of learning from complaints and requested that an analysis of complaints data be included in future quality assurance reports.
- The Panel highlighted the importance of benchmarking data in terms of giving an accurate position of where the service was in comparison to neighbouring authorities and asked that this information be included in future quality assurance reports.
- The Panel to receive an update in six months' time on the progress of the action plans for each of the priorities arising from the Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy including clarity on the cost implications and funding available, the outcome of the work with the Power Group and Healthwatch Ealing to understand better the experiences of people with learning disabilities of accessing NHS services and Health Checks, and the outcome of the work with the Power Group and Ealing Community Transport to explore better access to transport. Delivering the outcomes of the Strategy should be led by Adult Social Care but the responsibility should be council wide.
- The Panel should scrutinise the provision and success of Direct Payments going forward and examine the performance of the Council's planned Direct Payments pilot.
- The Panel to receive an update report on the Ealing Adults Partnership

Boards Review, this should also set out how immersed the boards are in the decision making process, what best practice looks like, and includes measures for monitoring progress.

2.7.2 Panel Recommendations

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | The Council should reappraise and continue to improve its social care offer, despite the delay in the Government's plans to reform adult social care. |
| 2 | The Council should ensure and demonstrate its planning for increasing demand on adult social care services in the future, given the ageing population |
| 3 | The Council should prioritise putting the voice of social care users at the heart of any reform programme to ensure that their experience informs future policy. Further consideration should be given into how social care users interact with the local authority, actively listening to what that experience is like for the social care user and ensuring that nobody is discriminated against through the rush to digitalisation. |
| 4 | The Council should look at how to incentivise the building of more sheltered accommodation and prioritise the accessibility of our town centres through the local plan. There should be closer collaboration with the NHS on the co-commissioning of services to deliver this |
| 5 | The Council should adopt the Social Model of Disability as other councils such as Croydon, Hammersmith and Fulham, Wolverhampton and Manchester City Council have done successfully, to achieve equality for disabled people. |
| 6 | That regular best practice reviews of the adult social care referral and assessment process should be carried out and Ealing should benchmark its performance against comparative local authorities. |
| 7 | That all of Ealing's residents are assisted in accessing support that helps prevent their loss of independence and well-being. |
| 8 | The Council should fund as ambitious a programme as possible to support the work plans for delivering the priorities of the Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy. |
| 9 | The Panel recognises the social value of the services provided at both Age UK and UACS and commends the work that is being done for the residents attending. |
| 10 | To encourage Ealing Council to expand its Direct Payments offer to improve independence and the health and wellbeing of Ealing residents where appropriate. |

3. SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING

3.1 Public Health in Ealing

At its 29 June 2022 meeting, the Panel with an overview of the work of public health in Ealing, health inequalities in the borough, and the key strategic priorities for the service. Partnership working for public health was key. To create a healthy society all the right building blocks needed to be place – stable jobs, good pay, quality housing

and education. Ealing's life expectancy gap between those living in the most and least affluent areas was 2.5 years for women and 3.5 years for men. Two thirds of Ealing's life expectancy gap was due to circulatory disease, lung cancer, and chronic lower respiratory disease. People living in areas of multiple deprivation were more likely to have poorer health outcomes.

Strategic priorities for 2022-23 included the new 'Health of the Borough' report, developing the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy, public health input into the Ealing Council Air Quality Action Plan and into school super zones which would involve looking at the different factors around a school that the council might be able to influence such as healthy options at local shops and takeaways, and air quality.

Key Issues Considered

- Response to Covid 19. Thirty percent of people in Ealing still had not taken up the offer of a covid vaccination. Members heard that Government funding had been provided for community vaccine champions which had now broadened out into health and wellbeing champions. The Health and Wellbeing Board was leading on a review of 'lessons learnt' from the Covid 19 response, particularly on how the Council worked together with partners. The focus of the vaccine work now was around engaging with the homeless population. It was also easier to access the vaccine as it was now available in pharmacies and GP practices.
- Meeting the target zero to reduce new HIV transmissions by 80% by 2025. Members heard that there was local and London work that the Council was partially funding. There was a local charity that the Council worked with in terms of HIV awareness testing. The work of the Sexual Health Service also helped to reduce HIV transmission. In Accident and Emergency Services, people now needed to opt out of HIV testing when having a blood test.
- The promotion and take up of sexual health testing through the post. Members were informed that the London e-service was going well, the take up of the service had been good and the feedback was positive. The service had been expanded and there was now some low level contraception available on it. A lot of work had been put in to ensure that there were good safeguarding measures in place.
- Childhood vaccination. The work that was being done to encourage vaccine take up was shared with the Panel.
- Air Quality in respect of Public Health. Some local authorities had looked to enhance their planning guidance over and above the provisions set out in legislation around measures to improve air quality. Members heard that there was a lot of work currently around the Local Plan, which was essentially the policy document for the Council about its planning policy for the next few years.

3.2 Annual Health of the Borough

At its meeting on 12 April 2023, the Panel consider the new annual Health of the Borough report, which was focussing on how all the directorates were contributing to the overarching strategic objective around fighting inequality. The final report was due to be considered by Cabinet in May.

Key Issues Considered

- Context, metrics, and trend data. Members stated that the report should outline what the schemes that were up and running were achieving, the trend directions and the key metrics to be measured annually. It was hard to put context to the report when it did not set out what direction the trend was going in. The Director of Public Health replied that the seven towns profile, which was due to be published shortly, was almost a mini Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of each town which would show some of the geographic inequalities and expand the data.
- Celebrating success. Members noted that the case studies included in the report were very informative providing assurance about the services and asked how that success was celebrated within the council. The Director of Public Health agreed that reporting on success was important and that the administration and the senior leadership team were focussed on recognising achievement. The Chair suggested that awards for programmes which successfully helped to tackle health inequalities might be of value.
- Information on how to support vulnerable residents, sexual reproduction health, cancer screening and how to take up screening was missing from the report. Neha Unadkat, Borough Director, Ealing NHS North West London said that there was an issue around where all of that information was held. Some of that information was in the JSNA's which were available on the website and in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Inclusion of Performance Indicators. Members thought that this was important as performance indicators showed whether the direction of travel was right, whether things were working and where the investment should go. The Director of Public Health agreed that tracking data through time was important, however a lot of the issues were long term and complex and individual projects might not change them. There had to be care taken not to oversimplify the issues with performance indicators as this would be misleading.
- The Annual Health of the Borough report should set out the administration's priorities for tackling health inequalities, what had been done so far, and data to support that. It should be a living document supplemented by census and JSNA data. There should be a snapshot of the current situation so that people could understand the breadth of the challenge. There should also be a mechanism for councillors and residents to feed in to the report either by nominating a scheme worthy of inclusion or by highlighting issues in their

local community. The voluntary sector and health partners should be involved in co-production and the work of the health partners in tackling health inequalities included.

3.3 Panel Visits to Public Health Services TB Outreach Service 24 February 2023 and Ealing RISE 2 March 2023

Panel members attended a Tuberculosis (TB) Awareness Outreach session at the West London Islamic Centre. The aim of the session was to increase awareness of TB in Ealing and reduce the associated stigma with early intervention being key to tackling the infectious disease. Members heard that Ealing had the second highest prevalence for tuberculosis in the whole of London and in Southall, issues like diabetes and homelessness mean residents were more vulnerable to the spread of TB.

Key Issues Considered

- Raising Awareness. Linking the service in with Ealing's Community Champions, the Community Hubs, the Let's go Southall project, Ealing's Community Engagement Team and providing links from the council's website to West London Health Trust's healthier lifestyle and TB awareness pages to promote awareness. For the TB Outreach Service to do a briefing for all councillors, who would then be encouraged to support the work by having leaflets available in their council surgeries.

Panel members visited Ealing Rise, a free and confidential service which helped people to cut down or stop their use of drugs and alcohol. Members heard about the work and met the staff of the Rough Sleeping Team, the Build on Belief Service, and the Criminal Justice Team.

Key Issues Considered

- Relocation of the service. Members were very concerned to hear that Ealing Rise were having to vacate the premises they were currently in and had less than a year to find somewhere else in the borough.
- Opportunities for providing peripatetic spaces in the borough for the rough sleeping team. Members heard that the rough sleeping had a hub at Gainsborough House for self-referrals but wanted to extend the service to other parts of the borough, possibly Acton.
- Raising awareness. Ealing Rise welcomed visits from councillors so that they could inform their residents of the services that were available.

3.4. Panel's Conclusions

3.4.1 Panel Recommendations

| | |
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| 11 | During the adoption of the Local Plan, both Ealing Council’s planners and the Local Development Advisory Panel should give strong regard to air quality in respect of public health |
| 12 | The Council should assist Ealing Rise in locating suitable alternative location in the borough for its service. |
| 13 | That Ealing’s Community Champions, the Community Hubs, and Ealing’s Community Engagement Team should connect with the TB Outreach Service to promote awareness |
| 14 | That there should be links from the council’s website to West London NHS Trust’s healthier lifestyle and TB awareness pages |
| 15 | That there should be links made between the TB Outreach Service and the Let’s go Southall project. |
| 16 | That the TB Service provides a briefing for all councillors, who would then be encouraged to support the work in raising awareness by having leaflets available in their council surgeries |

4. HEALTH SERVICES IN EALING

4.1 Ealing Hospital Update

At the 30 November 2022 Panel meeting, London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWHT) informed the Panel of the changes made to services at Ealing Hospital and the planned service changes and investments for the future. The Trust was considering how to recalibrate what was provided on the Ealing Hospital site, whether it was fit for purpose and opportunities to strengthen it further. Members also heard about the Trust’s plans to establish a Community Diagnostic Centre at Ealing Hospital, which would provide patients with a coordinated set of diagnostic tests in the community, supporting accurate and fast diagnosis.

Key Issues Considered

- Waiting lists. the Trust was now up to over 100% of the pre-Covid levels of activity. The national target was 107%, meeting that would enable the Trust to access elective recovery funds, which it had been doing since October. There were now no patients waiting over 104 weeks for an operation and the focus was on driving down waiting lists to below 78 weeks.
- Plans to reduce the waiting time for medical outpatient appointments. For certain services there were new initiatives around access, for example generating first appointments for those people who had been waiting a long time rather than focussing on follow ups.
- Lessons learned for implementing the Cerner electronic patient record platform at LNWHT. In North West London NHS there were several people who had been involved in the Cerner system implementation whose expertise would be used to help LNWHT. The system was not being integrated across Trusts, but each trust would be running the same system.

- Winter pressures. North West London like the UK was challenged on its emergency pathway, the demand on the front door, and the services that had been put in place to help patients avoid coming in via Urgent Treatment Centres. Given the scale of demand there were still long waits. There was a daily focus on the emergency pathway, the number of patients waiting for a bed and the need to drive discharges throughout the day. Currently no planned elective surgery was being cancelled. A lot of the planned care had been moved to the Central Middlesex Hospital site which did not have an A&E.
- Ambulance hospital hand over delays. Following on from Covid all health organisations were working more collaboratively and sharing intelligence on the pressure on A&E departments and bed pressures within hospitals. Ambulance diversions could be arranged if there were challenges to help with demand. There were times of the week when the whole system was swamped with demand for ambulances. Ealing Hospital was not of the same size or scale of Northwick Park Hospital so could get into difficulties if the arrival of ambulances was bunched up.
- Winter pressures as well as being on hospitals was also felt on General Practice. One of the issues being encountered increasingly was premature discharges from hospital and long waiting times for discharge prescriptions from the hospital pharmacy. Patients who had booked hospital transport were not able to wait for the prescription, which then put pressure on general practice. LWNHT was trying to make the decisions around discharging patients earlier in the day, what could delay the patient going home was confirming the package of care which then delayed the booking of transport and the production of the medication for them to go home with. Too often those decisions were not happening until early afternoon which delayed everything else. The Trust was also trying to improve the booking arrangements for transport and improving the resources in the pharmacy teams to make sure that they had more capacity.
- The importance of health partners, the local authority, and the campaigning groups working with those communities identified as living in areas of multiple deprivation so that their voice was also heard when addressing health inequalities and shaping the future of services.

4.2 Access to Primary Care in Ealing

At its 30 November 2022 meeting, the Panel received an update on primary care in Ealing. Demand for primary care had increased post pandemic. Capacity had also increased but it was difficult for practices to stay on top of demand. Several initiatives had been launched nationally and locally to help practices to manage, including improvements in use of technology, workforce initiatives and support with recruitment and retention.

Ealing had less GPs than the North West London average. 55% of GPs worked on a sessional basis and quite a significant proportion of the workforce were over the age of 60, which meant that the workforce crisis would grow over the next 5 – 10 years unless something was done. There had been significant improvements in expanding the primary care workforce particularly adding roles such as pharmacists, paramedics, and social prescribers. There needed to be a cultural shift so that the GP was not viewed as the only person able to provide primary care.

Findings from Healthwatch's two year comparative review between Ealing, Hounslow, and Hammersmith and Fulham found that Ealing GPs received the most negative feedback around staffing, customer service, and ease of booking appointments. NHS North West London was developing an access specification for every GP practice to provide consistency in how appointments were captured, to remove barriers to patient registration. Based on the patient feedback NHS North West London would be working with practices to improve access.

Key Issues Considered

- The difficulty in accessing GP practices in Ealing was highlighted. The Panel heard that this stemmed back to the pandemic and general practice continued to deliver care with the default of same day access. The shift from that was taking longer than anticipated. Advances were being made in the ability for patients to pre-book appointments but that had to be balanced with ensuring that it did not lead to an increase in missed appointments.
- More information on the workforce was needed, such as where the GP vacancies were in the borough and the number of nursing associates in training. Members heard that NHS North West London needed to drill down further in relation to the workforce. It was quite difficult to get an accurate picture of the GP workforce. Practices would try and fill gaps by using sessional GPs on an ad-hoc basis which was not sustainable.
- The disparity in the number of patients registered with Primary Care Networks and the census data population for Ealing. The Panel heard that some of this was due to patients moving and not re-registering elsewhere and also patients living across borough boundaries. NHS North West London had not been able to get to the bottom of why there was such a discrepancy, however the funding received was based on GP registrations and the workforce and capacity was modelled on the larger number.

4.3 Ealing Adult Acute Mental Health Beds

At the November meeting, West London NHS Trust (WLT) outlined the Trust's proposal and plans for enhanced public engagement regarding the long-term future of Ealing's acute mental health beds on the Ealing and St Bernard's site. West London NHS Trust provided inpatient mental health care to adult residents in Ealing, Hounslow, and Hammersmith and Fulham across a single cross borough inpatient service. Amongst all the sites, the Wolsey Wing was the most antiquated and had

regularly been identified as no longer being fit for the delivery of modern mental health care. During the Covid pandemic, the use of 31 beds in the Wolsey Wing was suspended due to staffing pressures, but also particularly due to the inability to provide safe care, related to infection prevention and control in that environment.

The funding from the suspended beds was diverted to reopen an 18 bedded ward on the Lakeside site next to West Middlesex Hospital. The net change in beds in total was 13 fewer beds. The current engagement process was being carried out to make permanent those arrangements, which was about the quality of care that the Trust was able to provide in the estate available and not about financial considerations. All the investment that would have been spent on inpatient services would be ringfenced for the delivery of acute mental health pathways.

Key Issues Considered

- Adequacy and effectiveness of enhanced engagement. The Panel heard that the most important thing for the Trust was to make sure that it had spoken to the local individuals and communities that were affected in a way that was adequate. There was a degree of flexibility and openness to make sure that the Trust had done the best it could with the Panel's support. The Trust would be reviewing the engagement at its mid-point. There was a further period of engagement planned and it was possible to be flexible with the end date. The Panel requested that the Trust considered extending the engagement both in terms of the end date and the form in which it took place. Members were aware of the concern and disquiet of the neighbouring boroughs that they had not been adequately consulted about these proposals.
- With a service being provided across three boroughs understanding the impact of the proposals on the quality of the service and the money allocated for Ealing residents. The Panel heard that the Trust recognised that this was also a concern for the neighbouring boroughs, and it was committed to working with them to identify ways of measuring and benchmarking this.
- Travel arrangements for patients from Ealing and their family and friends. The Trust was seeking to mitigate the impact on Ealing residents by exploring options to support travel for relatives and patients, looking at how the quality of the environment would be improved, making sure that people with protected characteristics were not being disproportionately impacted, considering the impact on the workforce, and making sure that the facilities being provided in the alternative premises were superior. As part of the consultation suggestions were invited about how to best meet the transport requirements in a way that was fair, robust, and sustainable. There was ring fenced investment available to mitigate the impact of travel on patients and visitors.
- The future resilience of the proposal. Chris Hilton replied that the proposal was not the only work that was being done with inpatient beds. The priorities for the service included working on patient flows and the pathway approach to managing individuals in a mental health crisis that included alternatives to

admission, making sure that there were always available mental health beds within the three borough footprint, and that individuals were receiving therapeutic interventions at the right intensity within the wards. There was a huge amount of joint working, including with the Council, to make sure that when individuals were ready, they were not waiting in beds but could return home and receive support and care post discharge. The view was that the service would manage for a number of years.

- Concerns that this proposal was reducing the provision of mental health care for Ealing residents. The Panel heard that the Trust would continue to deliver a number of services from the Ealing Hospital site, most of which were specialist and for adults in mental health crisis. In addition to re-providing 18 adult inpatient beds in Lakeside, the Trust had enhanced and made permanent the staffing for the health based places of safety, augmented the single point of access, and set aside some investment for addressing additional transport costs that residents from Ealing might be concerned about. The Trust was also investing further in step down provision to support the flow of people through inpatient units. The proposal was about people requiring an inpatient crisis mental health bed, which remained a very small proportion of individuals. The experience was that Ealing residents had access to a sufficient number of inpatient beds in the configuration.

4.4 Panel’s Conclusions

4.4.1 Items for the Work Programme 2023/24

- The Panel to receive a report on the outcome of the enhanced public engagement regarding the long-term future of Ealing’s acute mental health beds on the Ealing and St Bernard’s site. The report to include metrics for success, and ways of benchmarking and measuring the service provided to Ealing residents.

4.4.2 Panel Recommendations

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|----|---|
| 17 | That West London NHS Trust extends the enhanced public engagement regarding the long-term future of Ealing’s acute mental health beds both in terms of the end date and the form in which it took place |
|----|---|

5 NORTH WEST LONDON JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (JHOSC)

The North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) was formed by the London Boroughs of North West London at the request of NHS North West London.

The stated purpose of the JHOSC is to scrutinise the plans for meeting the health needs of the population and arranging for the provision of health services in North West London; in particular the implementation plans and actions by the North West Integrated Care System and their Integrated Care Board, focusing on aspects affecting the whole of North West London. Taking a wider view than might normally be taken by individual local authorities.

Full agendas and minutes for the JHOSC are available on the Ealing Council website at [Committee details - North West London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee \(JHOSC\) \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/committees/jhosc)

In 2022/23 the JHOSC scrutinised the:

- Plans to progress new Community Diagnostic Centres in North West London
- Proposal to develop an Elective Orthopaedic Centre for North West London
- NHS North West London Health Inequalities Framework
- Primary Care Strategy and Performance in North West London
- Emergency Department Pathways & Performance across North West London, with London Ambulance Service Performance
- Community-based Specialist Palliative Care Improvement Programme
- Enhanced Engagement for Ealing Adult Acute Mental Health Beds
- Plans for Elective Recovery in NW London, including Plans to Deal with the Treatment Backlog for Cancer Patients.
- North West London Integrated Care System Winter Planning Programme 2022/23
- NHS North West London Workforce Strategy
- Work of the NHS North West London Integrated Care Service

6 PANEL MEMBERS

Councillor Daniel Crawford (Chair)

Councillor Andrew Steed (Vice-chair)

Councillor Varlene Alexander

Councillor Fabio Conti

Councillor Hodan Haili

Councillor Harbhajan Kaur Dheer

Councillor Faduma Mohamed

Councillor Ghulam Murtaza

Councillor Ben Wesson

Co-optee Alan Cook

Co-optee John Chesters (Ealing Community Network)

Co-optee Daniel Norman (Healthwatch Ealing)

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

| No. | Recommendation |
|------------|--|
| 1 | The Council should reappraise and continue to improve its social care offer, despite the delay in the Government's plans to reform adult social care. |
| 2 | The Council should ensure and demonstrate its planning for increasing demand on adult social care services in the future, given the ageing population. |
| 3 | The Council should prioritise putting the voice of social care users at the heart of any reform programme to ensure that their experience informs future policy. Further consideration should be given into how social care users interact with the local authority, actively listening to what that experience is like for the social care user and ensuring that nobody is discriminated against through the rush to digitalisation. |
| 4 | The Council should look at how to incentivise the building of more sheltered accommodation and prioritise the accessibility of our town centres through the local plan. There should be closer collaboration with the NHS on the co-commissioning of services to deliver this. |
| 5 | The Council should adopt the Social Model of Disability as other councils such as Croydon, Hammersmith and Fulham, Wolverhampton and Manchester City Council have done successfully, to achieve equality for disabled people. |
| 6 | That regular best practice reviews of the adult social care referral and assessment process should be carried out and Ealing should benchmark its performance against comparative local authorities. |
| 7 | That all of Ealing's residents are assisted in accessing support that helps prevent their loss of independence and well-being. |
| 8 | The Council should fund as ambitious a programme as possible to support the work plans for delivering the priorities of the Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy. |
| 9 | The Panel recognises the social value of the services provided at both Age UK and UACS and commends the work that is being done for the residents attending. |

| No. | Recommendation |
|------------|--|
| 10 | To encourage Ealing Council to expand its Direct Payments offer to improve independence and the health and wellbeing of Ealing residents where appropriate. |
| 11 | During the adoption of the Local Plan, both Ealing Council's planners and the Local Development Advisory Panel should give strong regard to air quality in respect of public health. |
| 12 | The Council should assist Ealing Rise in locating suitable alternative location in the borough for its service. |
| 13 | That Ealing's Community Champions, the Community Hubs, and Ealing's Community Engagement Team should connect with the TB Outreach Service to promote awareness |
| 14 | That there should be links from the council's website to West London NHS Trust's healthier lifestyle and TB awareness pages |
| 15 | That there should be links made between the TB Outreach Service and the Let's go Southall project |
| 16 | That the TB Service provides a briefing for all councillors, who would then be encouraged to support the work in raising awareness by having leaflets available in their council surgeries |
| 17 | That West London NHS Trust extends the enhanced public engagement regarding the long-term future of Ealing's acute mental health beds both in terms of the end date and the form in which it took place. |

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SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – 2022/23

Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis

PANEL'S FINAL REPORT

CHAIR'S FOREWORD



Cllr Alexander Varlene
Chair of Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis Scrutiny Panel

In the past 12 months, we have seen a worsening in the cost of living crisis; the Ealing Labour administration recognised the challenges and the significance. The decision was made for a new scrutiny review panel to be established to consider the services and the support needed.

The Panel has carefully considered the work being done to support the council's priorities concerning creating good jobs, tackling the climate crisis and fighting inequality.

The Panel paid attention to ethnicity income data within our seven towns and challenged the council to produce more data. In addition, we considered fuel poverty and the support offered to residents as well as the opportunity for more sustainable growth in Ealing when exploring the opportunities in relation to the Green Economy. The Panel paid close attention on possible barriers that may hinder some residents from accessing, local welfare assistance, education, skills and employment support.

As the chair, I wanted to ensure that support was readily available and responsive to residents' needs. Whilst many residents might be finding the current financial climate difficult, I want residents to feel that they are not alone. Ealing is a vibrant place to live and work, however, most importantly we care deeply, and we look out for one another. I'm confident that our services are providing high-quality support alongside our partners to ensure that anyone in the borough that needs support in relation to the cost of the living crisis will feel that their needs are being met.

It was a privilege working with the vice-chair Councillor Seema Kumar, her knowledge and experience strengthened the panel, and it was also beneficial to have cross-party suggestions and consensus in relation to the council approach to the cost-living crisis which ultimately benefits all the residents in Ealing. I would also like to thank all council staff, external agencies and all my colleagues on the panel for their contributions in ensuring all residents are seen, heard and valued in Ealing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The scope of this Scrutiny Panel was to consider how Ealing was supporting residents in tackling the cost of living crisis in 2022-2023. The current 'cost of living crisis' refers to the fall in real disposable incomes due to high inflation outpacing wage and benefit increases. Families on low income were already experiencing financial pressures because of the pandemic due to extra costs and reduced earnings. The biggest contributor to the galloping cost of living were energy prices. After the increase in the energy price cap in April 2022, the average gas and electricity prices increased by 53.5% and 95.5% respectively in comparison to the previous year.

Panel members considered income inequalities, with a specific focus on personal and household income, low pay, and levels of income deprivation in the borough; the financial help for individuals including statutory benefits, Local Welfare Assistance, and other, one-off funding available at the disposal of the Council; the schemes available to Ealing residents to become more energy efficient and aid in the reduction of utility bills; and the support available to assist the long term unemployed into work and the training offer within the Employment, Learning and Skills Team and Local Welfare Assistance Team.

The Scrutiny Panel was established, and its membership agreed by Council on 24 May 2022. The Panel decided not to co-opt any additional representatives but to ensure that a wide range of external witnesses were invited to Panel meetings to share their knowledge. Further details can be found in the agendas and minutes for the Panel meetings which are available on the Ealing Council website at [Committee details - Scrutiny Panel 1 - 2022/23: Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/committees/scrutiny-panel-1-2022-23-tackling-the-cost-of-living-crisis)

2. STRUCTURE OF REVIEW

The Scrutiny Panel held four meetings in the year and visited Ealing Mencap, two of Ealing's foodbanks at Northolt and Southall, and the Community Hub based at Ealing Central Library.

As part of this review, the following external witnesses and council officers attended the panel's meetings:

- Rajiv Ahlawat, Intelligence and Corporate Performance Manager, LB Ealing
- Joanna Pavlides, Assistant Director, Financial Assessments, LB Ealing
- Joanne Mortensen, Climate Action Programme Manager, LB Ealing
- Tara Jennings, Principal Domestic Energy Officer, LB Ealing
- Daniel Mephram, Domestic Energy Officer, LB Ealing
- Cristi Gonzalez, Learn Ealing Manager, LB Ealing
- Diana Skwarczowska, Partnerships and Performance Officer, LB Ealing
- Gary Buckley, Chief Executive, Action West London
- Davide Bertone and Chloe Rose, Delivery Managers, BEAM
- Paul Nicholas, Head of Employability, Shaw Trust
- Louisa McDonald, Cost of Living Programme Lead, LB Ealing

- Alison Reynolds, Director Customer and Transactional Services, LB Ealing
- Steve Allen, London Community Bank
- Maria Van Ommen and Nicki Crown, Crosslight Advice
- Baljit Badesha, Nucleus Legal Advice

3. INCOME INEQUALITIES IN EALING

At its first meeting on 6 July 2022, Panel members were provided with an overview of income inequalities in Ealing, with a specific focus on personal and household income, low pay, and levels of income deprivation.

Household income had shown a continuous rise over the past two years. For Ealing, there had been a sharp increase of 15.8% between 2021 and 2022. Across London it was an increase of 18%. Median annual household income in Ealing was £34,491, slightly less than the Outer London average of £35,007. Median household income in Ealing wards at the bottom of the scale was nearly half that at the top end. The median annual household income in 2022 for Southfield ward was £49,728, whereas for Southall Broadway ward it was £24,752.

Gross median weekly pay for full time employees in Ealing had risen from £556 to £671 between 2008 and 2021, a rise of 21% over 13 years. Pay rose by 25% in London and 27% in the UK over the same period. Prices in the UK rose by about 32% between 2008 and 2021, inflation was higher than the pay rise.

The year on year percentage change in full time pay was steady for London and the UK. For Ealing there were negative trends in 2012, 2015 and 2019 where pay dipped rather than grew, whereas it kept on growing for the other regions. Since 2015 there had been a fair amount of pay growth across the regions and more so for Ealing in 2018 and 2021. In Ealing, in 2008 men were paid a median weekly amount of £629 whereas women earned £510, a difference of £119. In the past two years the pay gap had fallen, which meant that on average both men and women were paid equally.

In 2021, more than 17% of jobs in London were low paid. In Ealing 26% of jobs were paid below the London Living Wage. 4.3% of the total low paid jobs in London were in Ealing.

Ealing was the 34th most deprived borough nationally and 14th in London, in terms of the scale of income deprivation (i.e. the size of the population that was income deprived) as compared to 28th in 2015. The least deprived areas were in the centre of the borough, Ealing and Hanwell areas. Areas with some of the highest levels of relative income deprivation were Southall, Northolt and Acton.

Ealing had high levels of income deprivation in some areas. 8 out of 23 wards (34.8%) were in the 20% most deprived wards in England in 2019. There were no Ealing wards in the 20% least deprived wards in England. Levels of income deprivation varied widely within most wards in the borough.

Key Issues Considered

- The mapping of data to the new ward boundaries. Members were informed that the Office for National Statistics had not yet released the new geography based on the new wards. The new census geography would be released soon but it would take time before all the data was remapped to the new boundaries. The Greater London Authority had remapped the 2011 census data to the new wards, but more recent data was not yet available.
- How the effect of income and low pay on children and older people was calculated. The Panel was informed that there was a measure that looked at households below average income, which was less than 60% of the median income. Children living in those households were deemed as children in poverty. For older people it was calculated by looking at income by age.
- Whether a breakdown of deprivation by ethnicity could be overlaid across wards to give a better understanding of deprivation by different communities. Members heard that employment rates by ethnicity data was available but only at a borough level. Income deprivation was available at the area level but deprivation and income data was not available by ethnicity. Completing ethnicity information on surveys was not mandatory and it had therefore created this data gap. The census was the only place where this information was available from and the 2021 census data would soon be emerging. From spring 2023 onwards there would be much more detail, and information on occupation and employment by ethnicity should be available.
- Whether information on levels of economic inactivity in different parts of the borough was available, particularly where there were barriers to employment, for example where people were carers or single parents or not proficient in English. Members were informed that the information available might not show why a person was economically inactive, however further work could be done to see what information was available.

4. LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE WITH COST OF LIVING

The Panel received a presentation which outlined the support available for residents with the cost of living crisis, including the social security benefits administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the benefits administered by the council. On 26 May 2022, in addition to main stream benefits the Government announced a variety of measures to provide support to individual households with the cost of living crisis, in particular the cost of energy. Central Government support was in the form of one off payments available to households on means tested benefits administered by DWP and HM Revenue and Customs. Pensioners who normally received winter fuel payments would also in addition receive a one-off £300 payment.

Council targeted support was via the Household Support Fund, a tranche was being administered from April 2022 until September 2022 and another tranche would be available from October 2022 until the end of March 2023. An energy rebate scheme

of £150 was being credited to Council Tax payers in Band A to D properties, and discretionary funds were available. Support from energy companies would be via a credit of £400 from October either to accounts, pre-payment meters or by voucher.

The Household Support Fund was administered by the Council and was dependant on people's circumstances. Support was being provided to families eligible for free school meals where eligibility was based on low income. Supermarket vouchers were being issued to those families, the value of the vouchers were £15 per child in May and £90 per child in July. Currently 13,500 children in approximately 9,000 households were being supported. Families with children under the age of 5 in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit were also entitled to this support, 1,233 households were being supported. Ealing Care Leavers would also receive the same amount in vouchers in May and July. Pensioners on pension credit guarantee would receive a one off payment of £103.79 via the Post Office in July/August.

The other various discretionary schemes operated by the Council were highlighted to the Panel. Residents were assisted to access support via community hubs, which were being piloted. The community hubs were situated in Ealing, Acton, Southall and Northolt libraries. Staff were trained to support residents with accessing online services, establishing the available support to an individual, helping navigate the council website and assisting with the online My Account, liaising with back office staff, and signposting to community support. Telephone support for residents was also available from the call centre including a special line for the energy bill rebate, a special webpage on the Council's website gave information on the support available, and schools were promoting the Household Support Fund vouchers and Local Welfare Assistance.

Key Issues Considered

- That multiple sources of support could be quite confusing. The Panel noted that the Government had decided that rather than delivering support through one channel there were three different channels that people were being supported from. People did not need to apply for the majority of the support as it was being provided automatically. Other departments within the Council, along with community and voluntary groups had been made aware of the support that was available.
- That the information on the council website on the support available to assist with the cost of living should be made more prominent. Officers agreed to liaise with the council's web team to see if there could be a link to the information from the front page of the council's website. A link to a benefits calculator was provided within that information and there was also a link to the cost of living information provided by the Mayor of London, which had details of how to access mental health support. Members added that the financial support for parents during the school holiday should also be available from the front page of the council's website.
- How those households not paying Council Tax by direct debit would receive the £150 energy rebate. The Panel heard that approximately 52% of Council

Tax payments were made by direct debit and 47,223 households had received the rebate into their bank accounts. There had been 3,425 applications from those households which used other methods of payment, but more than 42,000 were expected to apply. There was a communications plan, council tax payers where email addresses or telephone numbers were available were being contacted and advised to go online and apply, social media was being used, and people were being informed through foodbanks and community and voluntary groups.

- Public awareness of the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme. Members noted that the scheme was simplified in 2020, it was made an income banded scheme where people could see what percentage of council tax reduction they were entitled to. From April 2020, once an electronic notification from DWP was received that someone for example had started receiving universal credit, an automatic award of CTR was made. The DWP could take up to 5 weeks to determine universal credit entitlement and then provide notification. The council tried to act on the notifications within 2-3 weeks.
- Public awareness of the community hubs. Members heard that the hubs were pilots and therefore not currently widely publicised. The hubs would eventually be publicised, but the next step was to analyse the data for the last three months and then design the full service. Funding the actual service and how to deliver it in all the towns in the borough had to be considered.

5. PANEL VISITS TO EALING FOODBANKS AT NORTHOLT AND SOUTHALL

The Chair, Vice-chair and Councillor Jassal visited the foodbanks located at Northolt on Tuesday 25th October 2022 and at Southall on Thursday 27th October 2022 and met with Jeremy Hyde, Interim Ealing Foodbank Manager, the volunteers, and some of the people who use the service.

The members were informed that the foodbank was a project founded by local churches and community groups, working together towards stopping hunger in the London Borough of Ealing. The first client centre was opened in Acton, on 18 October 2013, and there were now 8 foodbank centres across the borough. Over 200 agencies were registered to make referrals, and there was a team of around 250 volunteers who helped in a wide variety of ways. Ealing Food bank was a registered charity and had a few paid workers and a Board of Trustees. It was part of the Trussell Trust network of foodbanks and in 2022 fed 39,593 people.

Foodbanks partnered with a wide range of care professionals such as work coaches, health visitors, social workers and housing officers to identify people in crisis and issue them with a foodbank voucher. Foodbank clients brought their voucher to a foodbank centre where it could be redeemed for three days' emergency food. The members were informed that most referrals were from the DWP, General Practices, and Ealing council.

Members noted that the foodbank at Southall was very busy with people queuing to access the service. The foodbank was well supported with volunteers who were compassionate and sensitive, and there was a wide range of food and toiletries being provided. Rice and nappies were in demand.

At many of the centres, clients also had the opportunity to meet with various professionals such as debt advisors, citizen's advice advisors or people offering legal support. Members noted that the debt advice service, Crosslight Advice, which was providing free advice at the Southall foodbank was very busy.

6. SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO EALING RESIDENTS TO AID IN THE REDUCTION OF UTILITY BILLS

At its meeting on 27 September 2022, the Panel considered the support available to Ealing residents to help reduce energy demand through energy efficiency improvements. Ealing was the lead borough for the £40.2m West London Green Homes Grant: Local Authority Delivery Scheme and Home Upgrade Grant, which was open to low income owner occupiers, landlords with eligible tenants, and social landlords in homes with low Energy Performance Certificates. Grants of £10,000-£25,000 were offered for energy improvements, including insulation, low-carbon heating sources, ventilation, solar PV, replacement of single glazed windows, thermostat and heating controls, and more.

So far, £10m of the funding had been spent and the projection was that 50 percent of what was remaining would be spent. The programme had been running since January 2021 and 700 homes had been reached, it was thought that number would be reached again before March 2023 when current funding expired. Options for future funding were being considered such as whether Ealing became part of another coalition bid or joined in with the GLA programme letting them take the lead.

Ealing's Affordable Warmth programmes faced multiple challenges to delivery, including cost of living increases, unrealistic delivery times and unclear messaging from funders, Covid-19, supply chain issues, political disruption (UK's exit from the EU), lack of provision for the 'squeezed middle' and irregular funding patterns.

Healthy Homes Ealing was Ealing's flagship affordable warmth and fuel poverty programme. The scheme was delivered by Groundwork London and offered energy efficiency consultations to low income residents, as well as practical, independent advice to all residents looking to improve the energy efficiency of their homes or to reduce energy costs. The service offered a free telephone advice line and for those residents classified as vulnerable or low income, free consultations. Three hundred consultations were available last year, this had been extended to five hundred for this year.

Key Issues Considered

- The percentage of residents being reached and the length of time it would take to make a serious impact. Officers agreed that the numbers being helped were small. When bids for funding were first made in late 2020 the projection

was that 800 homes would be helped in the first year, and in the second bid it was expected that 1600 homes would be helped. With Brexit and Covid a large proportion of the work force returned to Europe or retired. There was a huge amount of grant funding but not the supply chain to deliver it. 323 people had benefitted from the first phase of the Green Homes Grant and approximately 400 from the second phase. For the final phase 1200 had initially been aimed for, however this had been reforecast to 600 due to supply chain issues. Work was being undertaken to help solve these issues, for example the council's economic growth team were working on reskilling and upskilling people, and there were partnerships in place with West London College and Elmhurst Academy. However these were long term solutions and the supplier network that currently existed were what was being worked with.

- The average cost to optimally insulate a house. Members noted that a grant of £10,000 did not go very far, even the £25,000 that the coldest homes were eligible for was still not enough, especially when considering the cost of air source heat pumps. Efforts were targeted on cavity wall properties and empty lofts. Most people entitled to a grant would be looking for external wall insulation, but it was four to six weeks on site. There were five or six teams delivering for Ealing's programme which meant that they could do 20 per month. There were hundreds of applications requesting it so officers knew that they would be turning away people or referring them on to future schemes.
- The average savings on energy bills by moving from an energy efficiency rating of category D or E to a category C. Members were informed that the service had previously spoken about what energy efficiency measures would save people financially, however with the volatility of energy prices, projections on savings could not be relied on. The message was therefore now about kilowatt hour savings and not financial savings. The kilowatt hour that residents did not have to buy was the cheapest. At some point in the future if prices stabilised then financial savings would be seen.
- Public awareness of the schemes. Members were informed that this was a huge issue, every week this information would need to be in newsletters so that it was impossible to miss and communicated via networks so that people also heard of it by word of mouth. Articles were placed in Around Ealing and on the Council's social media.
- The percentage of housing in the borough below the C energy efficiency rating with low income or vulnerable residents. Officers informed the Panel that there were approximately 145,000 homes in Ealing, 90 percent of those were solid wall properties. Ealing Council owned 4 percent of the homes in the borough. For the Ealing Council properties it would cost approximately £202 million to get all properties up to a B rating. It would require a spend of £28 million a year for the next seven years to hit the climate targets for just the Ealing owned properties. For the whole borough it would cost approximately £4.2 billion.
- The numbers of planning applications approved that met the standards required for energy efficiency. Officers did not have this information but stated

that they were doing a lot of education work with the planning team. The ability to enforce beyond the energy efficiency measures set out in the London Plan and national building standards was very limited.

- The demand for the Green Doctors service. Officers stated that the 300 consultations available last year were exceeded, so the demand was there prior to increases in fuel costs. The consultations available had been increased to 500 and were split between telephone and in home. Should the demand continue, options to increase the number of consultations were being considered. Green doctors who deliver the service were able to provide it in nine community languages.

7. PANEL VISIT TO EALING MENCAP

The Chair and Vice-chair visited Ealing Mencap on 5 December 2022 and met with Steve Poole, Employment Services Manager. Members heard about Mencap's work providing employment support for 18-24 year olds with learning disabilities, and a supported internship called Project Search being provided in conjunction with the Marriot Hotel in Slough.

Ealing Mencap were running workshops providing customer services and IT skills. Prior to the pandemic an arts shop had been run, alongside the Ealing Mencap office, which enabled local people to sell art and Ealing Mencap clients to develop skills by running the shop.

Members heard about Job Start, which was a 12 week training programme for 18-24 year olds. It was funded by Children in Need for 18 months and had received another tranche of funding for a year which would then cease. The programme supported people with drawing up CVs, job searches and interview preparation. There were 40 people in the programme and so far, 55% had been helped into employment.

Project Search was a 1 year training programme for 18-24 year olds. It was a supported internship at the London Heathrow Marriott Hotel with participants having the opportunity to learn different roles in the hotel. They were supported by two work coaches on site and there was part time release to college for training. Applicants had to have a current Education, Health and Care Plan and want to move into paid employment. The project had been run for 7 years and 65% of participants had gone onto paid employment of at least 20 hours pay per week. There were currently 10 people in the programme.

Key Issues Considered

- Staff Recruitment. The cost of living and levels of pay was making it difficult to recruit and retain staff.
- Short term funding for projects. This also added to the difficulties in recruiting staff and planning.

- Support for clients in taking up apprenticeships. Ealing Mencap were concerned that reasonable adjustments were not being made to help clients apply for and take up apprenticeships.
- Lack of funding available to support 25-30 year olds with learning disabilities into work.

8. SUPPORTING THE LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED INTO WORK

8.1 Employment, Learning and Skills Service

At its meeting on 8 December 2023, the Panel received an overview of the strategies that the council's employment, learning and skills service had implemented to support the long-term unemployed into work and from three of the charities and organisations working with Ealing residents.

The service was made up of two teams. Work Ealing which provided employment support, a youth offer and apprenticeships, and Learn Ealing which delivered training qualifications and professional development courses to adults aged over 19. It had targets to deliver 10,000 new jobs, 2,000 new diverse apprenticeship vacancies, and 12,000 qualification and training programmes for residents looking to upskill and retrain. One of the key programmes commissioned was the Borough Support Service (BSS), a voluntary 6-month intensive programme to support long term unemployed and economically inactive Ealing residents into employment. The support was tailored to need, and residents could get help with CV writing, job searches, job applications and interview preparation. Since the project started in April 2022, it had worked with 173 unemployed residents of which 33 had started work.

The Youth Offer addressed barriers to support young people into employment, training, and apprenticeships. Since 2007 the Ealing Council apprenticeship scheme had worked with almost 300 apprentices, almost 50% had progressed into full time council jobs. Horizons pathways was a 5 month programme for care leavers not in education, employment, or training. It was to be delivered over 3 years starting in mid-January 2023.

Learn Ealing was the main provider of adult community education in Ealing. In the academic year 2021/22, 1,285 residents completed a total of 4,079 qualifications and training programmes. The curriculum aimed to support the delivery of Ealing's Council Plan and the Mayor's Skills Roadmap for London. Of those learners who declared a learning disability, 71 attended courses in 2021/22. Achievement rates were high and in line with non-learning disability learners.

Key Issues Considered

- Whether people with disabilities were considered for the apprenticeship scheme, and if additional needs were being supported to help them to take up an apprenticeship. The Panel heard that as part of the youth offer the council was working to develop a programme of internships to support people with disabilities. Progression pathways into apprenticeships could be offered but changing the entry criteria for an apprenticeship was not within the gift of the

council. When working with training providers to support young people into apprenticeship standards the entry criteria had to be met.

- If reasonable adjustments made for adults with long term health conditions to engage with the service. Members noted that attendance could be hybrid, if a resident failed to attend one or two sessions because of ill-health they were given an opportunity to catch up and to have one to one tutorials to go through any work they had missed. If a learning need or disability was declared reasonable adjustments were put in place, for example extra time during exams for learners with dyslexia.
- Support for people having learning or health issues on a course. Members were informed that learners had one to one meetings with their tutor and were encouraged to disclose any needs. At the point of enrolling they were informed of the support available and of how important it was to come forward if they found that they had a learning need.

8.2 Local Welfare Assistance Team

The employment support provided by the Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) Team. was initially targeting residents who were affected by the benefit cap, the support had now been expanded to other residents approaching the council for financial assistance.

Pre-pandemic the team offered four different work clubs across the borough, they were weekly drop in sessions and attendees were offered benefits advice, signposting to work, volunteering and training opportunities, support with CVs and job applications, and interview preparation. During a two year period 650 residents were supported at the work clubs, and the service was aware of 160 people who had moved into employment. During the pandemic the work clubs were closed, and the resources redirected to support residents under the Ealing Together response. The Council was trying to find the right locations to reopen the work clubs in April 2023.

The current support provided by LWA focussed on providing support with the cost of living crisis and prioritised employment support to those people who applied for LWA as they were the most vulnerable being on the lowest incomes and in the greatest need. There were currently 64 residents who were receiving the intensive employment support, which was mainly via one-to-one sessions with local welfare assistance officers.

Key Issues Considered

- Operation of the job clubs. The Panel was informed that they were weekly sessions that had been held in the libraries and publicised on the council's website and Around Ealing magazine. Residents were able to drop in for a session and then decide whether they wanted to attend the work clubs on a regular basis. Some of the LWA applicants were referred to work clubs and awards would be conditional on the understanding that people would start attending and benefit from the support being provided.

- Support for those people who were digitally excluded. Members heard that the digitally excluded were probably missing out on the support available online and that was why the service was increasing the face to face presence in food banks and community hubs.
- Hanwell and Greenford had previously been identified as areas of deprivation; would those areas be prioritised for having a work club? Officers stated that these areas would be considered, however it would depend on whether there were locations available that could be secured free of charge, for example libraries.

8.3 Action West London

Gary Buckley, Chief Executive, Action West London (AWL), informed the Panel that the charity helped disadvantaged unemployed young people and adults across West London to secure employment, improve their education and training, and set up in self-employment, social enterprise, and business.

AWL worked on two Greater London Authority funded programmes, one for young people with physical disabilities and the other for young people with social, emotional, and mental health issues. They worked across several different client groups, currently the emphasis was on supporting needs, particularly with people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. AWL was supported by SEGRO Community Fund, which financed a project based on the community street market in Acton assisting people who wanted to test trading, as well as being an area to engage with the local community. They had found that there were a lot of economically inactive people often on welfare support which was not job seeker based. AWL was having positive conversations with them to suggest ways that they could re-enter the labour market.

The focus of AWL was to act as a job broker. In the last three years they had moved 250 Ealing and over 800 West London residents into work, which they stated was staggering considering the impact of the pandemic. AWL had recently run a pre-employment customer service training course with Westfield which had been well attended by local members of the community.

The Panel was informed that the charity was due to lose half of its current funding with the loss of the European Social Fund, and there was no current clear bid pipeline in place to replace it. AWL was keen to renew its links with the council for closer working. There were data sharing agreements in place and the charity was happy to continue to share information on their work.

Key Issues Considered

- Attracting people onto training courses. Members noted that AWL was not part of the Health and Work Programme or Restart so was attracting people not via the job centre but through social media, and by registering the training opportunity or vacancy on Indeed. In Ealing, there was a great and different demand for services. Free Construction Skills Certification Scheme Cards

were offered which were the gateway to jobs in construction. These were popular with ex-offenders as it meant working outdoors with minimal supervision. Occupationally relevant short courses could make a significant difference and impact in the labour market. These short interventions which were very often financially out of the reach of people were gateways into vacancies that commanded far more than the basic minimum wage.

8.4 Beam

Davide Bertone and Chloe Rose, Delivery Managers, Beam informed members that their organisation empowered residents who had been long term unemployed and affected by homelessness to start stable work and find rental accommodation through the power of people and technology. There was a website where the public could donate directly to residents affected by homelessness which helped them to overcome the financial barriers they might face for example travel costs, child care, work clothes, laptop and offer courses providing a clear road into employment. Each person was matched with a caseworker who provided 13 weeks of one-to-one support aimed towards an outcome of starting work or finding accommodation.

BEAM had been partnered with Ealing since 2019, cross commissioned between employment and homelessness teams. 26 local organisations referred residents to BEAM. There had been over 250 referrals, and 73 Ealing residents had joined BEAM receiving the bespoke support. 35 Ealing residents had been helped into employment. £129,000 had been donated from members of the public. BEAM had calculated that over half a million had been saved for Ealing Council by those who were homeless leaving temporary accommodation because they had obtained work or having been prevented from ever entering temporary accommodation.

Referrals were largely from housing teams at the council, Work Ealing, the jobcentre, hostels in the area, and foodbanks. The crowdfunding element of the service had been operating for over five years. The service had helped over a thousand people into work and housing and had a community of over 20,000 supporters who donated monthly.

8.5 Shaw Trust

Paul Nicholas, Head of Employability, Shaw Trust informed the Panel that the Trust had been commissioned by the West London Alliance to deliver two employability programmes. Jets, which was a direct result of the pandemic and had come to an end, and the core employability programme the Work and Health Programme.

The Work and Health Programme started in March 2018, since then 2,219 Ealing residents had been referred to the programme. 85% of the referrals came from the local job centre plus, participants had to volunteer to join. Currently there were 478 participants active on the programme in the Ealing area. A participant was usually on the programme for 15 months, the average length on the programme was about 7 months before entering work, and there was in-work support of 6 months to aid with sustainability of that employment and that it paid the London living wage.

The referrals were of people that were unemployed for more than two years as well as a range of people including ex-offenders, ex-carers, care leavers and refugees. The Job Centre identified the leading criteria for a person to join the programme when they made the referral. Of the over 400 Ealing participants currently on the programme, 41% were over 50, 50% were BAME, 64% were from jobless households, 6% had a criminal record, 41% lacked basic skills in literacy and numeracy, 35% declared having mental health problems, 8% of participants were homeless, and 61% had been unemployed for more than 2 years. In 2022 of the 490 residents that joined the programme, 293 had entered employment.

Participants received face to face support for over eight and a half hours every fortnight, which did not include any interventions that they attended. An action plan was drawn up and participants were given access to a customer portal so that they could book themselves onto activities run by other charities to build their skill set and give them confidence to manage their lives.

Since 2019 1,009 Ealing residents on the programme had entered work, of which 68% of the roles had been full time and 53% at more than the London Living Wage. 1,177 participants had left with some form of accreditation or qualification. Participants were handed back to the work coach at the job centre in a three way conversation and the Trust would make recommendations as to what further support they might need.

9. PANEL VISIT TO COMMUNITY HUB AT EALING CENTRAL LIBRARY

The Chair, Vice-chair and Councillors Brett and Hersch visited the Community Hub at Ealing Central Library on 9 March 2023. Members had previously heard that four community hubs had been set up at libraries in the borough providing advice on financial support, benefits and council tax, as well as being able to recommend local community organisations who might be able to offer residents other help, depending on their circumstances.

Members heard that most cases seen by the advisors were debt related. Service users would also often build up a rapport with an advisor and would travel to see them, even if they had a community hub that was nearer to them. Currently the data collected by the service was the client's postcode, the query, and if they were referred to another service, and what that service was. Repeat contacts were not recorded. Information on those who were digitally excluded was recorded.

For their mental health and wellbeing, staff were rotated amongst the hubs, as some hubs were less busy than others. The hubs had fixed lunch breaks, which were advertised to ensure that staff got their breaks.

Key Issues Considered

- The opening hours for the community hubs might make them difficult for working people to access.
- The number of referrals to courses were recorded but not whether the referral was taken up.

- The Homelessness team could only be contacted by telephone. Service users often had to leave the library as it closed at 5pm, whilst still on the telephone to the Homelessness team.
- There was no privacy for service users with the way the service was located in Ealing library. Members heard that the service was intending to pilot design solutions to improve privacy, however space was limited.
- Members sought assurances that action was being taken to support the mental wellbeing of the community hub staff, as they were working in a stressful environment.
- Acton Library did not seem to have a high public profile and that might be a reason for footfall to the community hub there being low.

10. WORK OF THE COST OF LIVING TEAM

Louisa McDonald, Cost of Living Programme Lead and Alison Reynolds, Director Customer and Transactional Services provided the Panel with a presentation on the activity carried out by the Council's Cost of Living Team, since it was set up in January 2023. The Panel heard that the team had been established as there was recognition of the need for a coordinated approach to the activity being undertaken by each of the directorates. The Panel heard about progress in key work streams such as finance and money, food poverty, energy efficiency, warm spaces, jobs and training, health and wellbeing, and digital exclusion. The team had also recently developed a cost of living data dashboard.

Key Issues Considered

- The information provided in the cost of living leaflet included in Council Tax Bills. Members noted that the leaflet was a short document which had been sent out with the Council Tax letters. There was a community support directory online that listed all food provision, warm spaces and details on organisations offering financial advice. The Community Hubs also had access to a hard copy service delivery guide which provided information on the support services available.
- Residents who had missed out on the Department of Work and Pensions Cost of Living payment. The Panel heard that some residents may have missed out because although they were in receipt of Housing Benefit they were not on Universal Credit, which was the qualifying benefit. The Government had realised that was a gap and funding and guidance on how to address that had been provided.

11. MONEY ADVICE AND DEBT MANAGEMENT

At its final meeting the Panel heard from organisations providing money and debt advice and supporting residents to take control of their finances.

11.1 London Community Bank

Steve Allen, London Community Bank, which was part of the Hillingdon Credit Union Group, informed the Panel that it was a small credit union with approximately 3,500 members across several boroughs in West London. The bank provided three basic services, there were no joining fees or credit checks required to open a savings account. They offered a pre-paid Visa Card, which meant that people with a poor credit history had access to a contactless card, which was needed for example just to be able to travel. They also provided affordable loans, 80% of which were to unemployed single parent families. People had to pass credit checks for the loans in terms of ability and willingness to repay and a loan could be for up to £500 against Child Benefit. Loans were offered to anyone in the community and payroll schemes were operating with a number of employers including Ealing Council. This was to stop people having to go to payday lenders or loan sharks.

Increasingly London Community Bank was working as a gateway to other charitable debt advice agencies such as Step Change and Turn 2 Us. They were seeing much higher levels of distress across their member base. Key areas tended to relate to food and energy and to a lesser extent rent. Unfortunately quite a few members had taken the view that because they had children and were not on a pre-pay meter that they could not be cut off, so were not paying their energy bills. Some members had £5,000-£6,000 pounds of arrears which might mean that they would have to go into an insolvency process at some point to resolve it.

There were much higher loan volumes for day to day needs as opposed to holidays or home improvements. There were issues when members were being moved from Tax Credit to Universal Credit as there was often a delay with payments coming through causing people to go into arrears with their rent. They were able to get loans from Universal Credit but there was a limit to the amount they could get and they had to be paid back quickly. The biggest concern for members was food price inflation, basic ranges of food had increased considerably. The Council's Cost of Living Website had proved to be very useful as a referral tool to members living in Ealing. London Community Bank was seeing a lot more debt management plans but unfortunately quite a lot of these were commercial plans which had high fees, whereas if people used debt advice agencies such as Step Change there were no fees.

London Community Bank worked with Brent Council on a scheme providing an interest free loan for Brent residents who had been introduced by the Council. They either had rent arrears or high cost debt that had built up during Covid and had the ability to meet the loan repayments. The interest rates that people were paying otherwise were very substantial. This loan scheme had managed to save people quite a lot of money and the justification of the support from Brent had been to try and ensure that people could retain their rented accommodation.

The second scheme was with Hillingdon Council providing Green Loans to support residents with funding insulation, boiler upgrades, and solar panels. The Council funded the interest and it was a way of them hitting internal targets for the uptake of home improvements across the borough. The London Community Bank stated that they would be happy to consider similar schemes with Ealing Council.

11.2 Crosslight Advice

Maria Van Ommen and Nicki Crown from Crosslight Advice informed the Panel that their organisation was a charity, regulated by the FCA, providing free debt advice with the aim of helping people out of poverty and build a better future. Crosslight gave debt and benefits advice and ran money courses, support was tailored to need so one appointment might be enough or long term support might be required. Crosslight started in 2021, it was funded by Ealing foodbank and provided drop in services and appointments at the foodbanks across the borough. Currently demand at the foodbanks was very high. In 2022 Crosslight Advice had supported over 235 people, half of whom now no longer needed to use the foodbank and there had been a financial gain for them of at least £350,000. 85% of those clients who had rent arrears were no longer at risk of eviction.

There was no typical client but they were seeing some common struggles particularly amongst the elderly, people with long term health conditions, people with disabilities, single mothers, refugees, street homeless and asylum seekers. People often had difficulties in managing their affairs due to digital poverty, lack of literacy, language barriers and lack of financial literacy. Since the cost of living crisis they were seeing more people who were unable to pay their bills and an increase in the number of people being evicted. People had multiple debts, more pre-payment meters were being installed, and more people were having bailiffs attending their home.

Crosslight Advice highlighted specific problems seen in the borough. Ealing Council's method of debt enforcement for council tax arrears, with the use of bailiffs, was increasing the financial burden and causing hardship. Bailiffs were adding their own fees which could double the debt and made it difficult to negotiate a truly affordable payment arrangement. Crosslight Advice recommended that Ealing should be prepared to have a less ridged system, some authorities such as Hammersmith and Fulham Council were no longer using bailiffs.

People placed in temporary accommodation were often paying high rents and had multiple debt and benefit problems often born out of poor understanding and communication of the circumstances they were in. Their liability for Council Tax was often not explained to them.

Crosslight Advice had recently seen a lot of clients in Houses in Multiple Occupation. These were often poorly converted properties with numerous individual dwellings with shared facilities, which led to disputes about unpaid energy bills so there was often accruing debt.

11.3 Nucleus Legal Advice

Baljit Badesha from Nucleus Legal Advice informed the Panel that his organisation had been providing debt, housing benefit and employment advice at representation level in Ealing for 14 years. For the last 5 years it had been a member of Ealing Advice Consortium. When Nucleus Legal Advice first started in Ealing the provision of advice was limited. The capacity to carry out case work was also limited, which was down to resources, like other charities they were trying to bring in additional

income from other sources.

Ealing had a high need compared to other boroughs. Even before the pandemic Ealing had higher spending on household bills than average for London. Nucleus Legal Advice stated that Ealing Council was the fourth highest user of bailiffs in London to enforce council debt, which was putting money in the pockets of bailiff companies, chasing small amounts of money, and quite often doubling the debt. Covid and then the Cost of Living Crisis had exacerbated this.

In December the main financial concerns seen by Nucleus had been council tax, rent and credit cards. In January the highest demand was for fuel, followed by rent and council tax. Volumes had increased and so had the amount of debt that people were coming forward with. Rent arrears were in the thousands.

Nucleus Legal Advice was now seeing more people who were employed and coming for one off advice. They were looking for a sticking plaster approach not a holistic assessment of their financial needs which was worrying as they were not considering medium or longer term solutions. Regarding the fuel projects, the most vulnerable people were missing out on government help, vouchers for pre-pay meters were expiring or going to the wrong address or landlords were not passing them over when the bills were in the landlord's name. The more insecure the tenancy was, the fewer rights the tenants had. The main solution was bankruptcy or debt relief orders so that they could write off the debt and start again and in the last few months there had been a greater demand for that. People were coming forward with a lot more debts, pre-Covid debts were on average 2.19 per client, now they were averaging 4.8 per client which made it a lot more complex.

Key Issues Considered

- Helping prevent tenants in temporary accommodation from getting into debt. Nicki Crown, Crosslight Advice informed members that the problem they saw was that often people did not understand the tenancy agreement and the agreements Crosslight Advice saw were often inaccurate. The communication could be better with a clearer explanation to the tenant about what they had to do. They were often the most vulnerable people. Months and years later they would come to Crosslight because they did not realise that they had council tax to pay.
- The use of bailiff action. Baljit Badesha, Nuclear Legal Advice stated that when Hammersmith and Fulham Council stopped using bailiffs, they adopted an agreed ethical approach to collecting debts, which meant improving engagement with clients. Debt recovery was an automated timetabled system, it pushed people away, it did not engage with people to help them come to an agreement instead it pushed money to the bailiffs. Nicki Crown, Crosslight Advice added that Hammersmith and Fulham had a more open conversation about what was affordable for the person, so instead of putting their head in the sand people would engage, they did want to clear their debts but they were scared. Officers stated that a process was followed with Council Tax collection, a lot of documentation was sent including reminders, information on Step Change was included with bills and people in financial

difficulties were encouraged to make contact, bailiffs and enforcement were the last resort. These were the people who failed to make any contact with the Council.

- Access to the Council Tax Support team. Baljit Badesha commented that people found it very hard to get through, this also applied to the debt advisors. A call back was of little use when the client was with the advisor, they needed to be able to speak then as that three way communication was needed to unpick an issue. Having a named officer to contact might help particularly when a client was with an advisor.

12. PANEL MEMBERS

Councillor Varlene Alexander (Chair)
Councillor Seema Kumar (Vice-chair)
Councillor Louise Brett
Councillor Connie Hersch
Councillor Javaid Iqbal
Councillor Sindy Jassal
Councillor Sanjai Kohli
Councillor Dee Martin
Councillor Claire Tighe

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

| No. | Recommendation |
|-----|---|
| 1 | That the data on employment rates by ethnicity at borough level be provided for members when available. |
| 2 | That information on levels of economic inactivity in different parts of the borough, particularly where there are barriers to employment for example where people are carers or single parents or not proficient in English, be provided for members when available. |
| 3 | That the information on tackling the cost of living, including support available during the school holidays, be made more prominent on the council's website and promoted on the council's social media. <i>This recommendation of the Panel made at its first meeting in July 2022 has been carried out.</i> |
| 4 | That there should be a review of the recruitment process for apprenticeship schemes to identify any barriers and to make it more inclusive for residents that might have specific needs. The approach to apprenticeship assessments should be reviewed and thought given to holding some of the assessments at a place where learners felt more comfortable. |
| 5 | Due to being identified as areas of deprivation, that Greenford and Hanwell be considered for work club locations when the service resumes. |
| 6 | That the employment support services provided by the external agencies that the Council works with be promoted on the council's website or the cost of living hub. |
| 7 | That further consideration be given to the location and environment of the community hubs so that they provide privacy for service users whilst maintaining staff safety. |
| 8 | There should be a better access for the professional agencies to the council tax and financial assessment teams, and consideration given to having a dedicated telephone number and email address. |
| 9 | The Council should explore working in partnership with London Community Bank to provide interest free loans for residents who require financial assistance. |
| 10 | The Council should meet regularly with the money and debt advice agencies in Ealing to consider what more could be done to improve engagement with residents earlier in the debt collection process so as to help reduce the use of bailiffs. There should be a yearly target for reducing bailiff use for council tax arrears and other strategies for debt collection considered with the money and debt advice agencies. |

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