

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Annual Report 2020/21

Chair's Foreword

“With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020/21 was a particularly poignant and difficult year for all. I would firstly like to highly commend all of our Council staff, partner organisations and volunteers, for their immense efforts in helping to co-ordinate such extensive support for our residents at a time of great difficulty. Their support has been both indispensable and unwavering, and I cannot praise their work highly enough.

I would also like to greatly thank our staff, partners, and Cabinet Members for continuing to support the scrutiny work of the Committee during the pandemic, as well as our ongoing efforts to improve services for the benefit of our local residents. Despite the pandemic, colleagues have continued to attend Committee meetings, provide their input and insights, and take on board any suggestions or concerns raised by the Committee. For this, I must extend my continued thanks.

Whilst reviewing the Council's response to Covid-19 has played a central part in the Committee's work this year, the Committee has continued to scrutinise a variety of issues over the past ten months, ranging from working with residents affected by capital works, through to the Council's Disabilities Improvement programme. I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues in future, with a view to reaching our vision of continuously improving services and amenities for our residents, while also holding the Council to account for its decisions.”

Cllr J Jones

Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership

The OSC consisted of ten Councillors, one co-opted church representative, one co-opted parent governor representative and one co-opted youth representative. There were two vacancies – co-opted church representative (Church of England) and co-opted parent governor representative (Secondary).

- Councillor Jane Jones (Chair)
- Councillor Dorothy Akwaboah (Deputy Chair)
- Councillor Toni Bankole
- Councillor Donna Lumsden
- Councillor Olawale Martins
- Councillor Simon Perry
- Councillor Ingrid Robinson
- Councillor Paul Robinson
- Councillor Bill Turner (until January 2021)
- Councillor Phil Waker
- Mrs Glenda Spencer Church Representative – Roman Catholic
- Mr Baba Tinubu Parent Governor – Primary
- Johami Mutuale Youth Representative

Claudia Wakefield, Senior Governance Officer, and Masuma Ahmed, Principal Governance Officer supported the Committee.

In-Depth Scrutiny Review: Ambition 2020 and its Early Impact

In September 2019, the Committee embarked upon a review of the implementation of Ambition 2020, the Council's service transformation programme. The Committee agreed the following four key lines of enquiry (KLoE) to form the basis of the review, as follows:

- KLoE 1: How well established is the governance of the Council's new wholly-owned companies, to ensure they play their role in delivering the borough's ambition and expected financial returns?;
- KLoE 2: How much impact has the new Council approach had on the improvement in customer service standards, and what are the plans to continue this improvement with the return of Elevate services to the Council?;
- KLoE 3: How well are the new arrangements of the Council managing demand for the Council's statutory services across homelessness, adults' and children's social care?; and
- KLoE 4: How well is the Council's new approach fostering a sustainable place where people want to live?.

As a result of the review, 24 recommendations were reached by the Committee. In approving the final scrutiny report, the Committee requested that an Action Plan be developed, describing how the recommendations would be implemented by Council officers and requesting update reports at future meetings.

The update reports showed progress against the majority of the recommendations made by the Committee, such as through the appointment of a Social Value Co-ordinator and the updating of Contact Centre scripts relating to vulnerable clients, to identify the gaps which could prevent the most responsive service. The Committee also wished to seek

further assurance on certain topics, with items on Reside and Children's Social Care, scheduled for future Committee meetings.

The Barking and Dagenham Response to Covid-19

The Committee received a report on the Barking and Dagenham response to Covid-19. Various Members of the Cabinet and the Acting Chief Executive delivered a high-level presentation, which covered areas such as the range of support provided to the community, personal protective equipment, the financial impact on the Council and how Covid-19 had impacted the Council's service delivery.

The Committee posed questions in relation to a variety of Council services and the impact of the pandemic as to the functioning of these, as well as around finances, additional PPE procured to protect staff and residents from the virus, food parcels, flytipping, support for rough sleepers, the BD CAN network and increases in anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The Committee referred to emergency legislation introduced by the Government which relaxed local authorities' duties towards some vulnerable children and was pleased that the Council had not taken these options up, as this approach was not in line with the Council's priority to protect the most vulnerable children and families.

Members were also critical, with regards to the results of the council staff 'home working, health and wellbeing' survey, that the profile of those who had responded may not always be reflective of staff as a whole. As such, they expressed that the results should be interpreted with caution.

Members of the Committee thanked the Cabinet Members and council staff for their efforts behind the response to the pandemic, which was overall speedy and positive. The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members and officers in attendance for the detailed and informative presentation and stated that the Committee would be re-visiting the Council's response to Covid-19, and its implications over the course of 2020-21.

2019-20 Budget Outturn and Covid-19 Financial Impact

The Committee received a report on the Council's revenue and capital outturn position for 2019/20, which represented the expected final position for the year, subject to external audit. The report was delivered by the Council's Finance Director.

The Director referred to the substantial impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances, including the additional costs incurred to support the community response to the pandemic, the loss in income and the savings previously identified, which could not now be implemented, as to do so would affect service delivery during a crucial time for residents. The Committee provided challenge as to how different areas of the Council had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic financially and sought assurance as to the support being provided by the Council to the local community.

Air Quality Action Plan

The Committee received a presentation on the position in Barking and Dagenham as to air quality, and preparations for a public consultation on an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for the period 2020-2025. Once approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Greater London Authority, the Council would be required to report annually on the progression of its key objectives.

The Committee sought assurance as to the current air quality monitoring network, as report authors noted that this was not currently representative of air quality levels within Barking and Dagenham overall, as well as future plans to relocate monitoring stations and to obtain more representative data on current air pollution from main roads in the Borough. Members also posed questions as to the Council's regulatory powers, plans to influence sustainable transport, and planning policies to regulate air quality emissions from buildings and developments.

The Chair suggested that a progress report into the implementation of the AQAP be scheduled into the Committee's Work Programme. She highlighted the importance of helping schools to implement air quality monitoring programmes, as well as using the Council's Communications team to disseminate information about sustainable transport. The need for additional funding to better monitor pollution levels was also discussed, to support the Council's case when lobbying Transport for London (TfL) and the Government to help the Borough to reduce pollution levels. The Chair suggested that the use of the River Thames for the transportation of more goods be looked into, as well as the further lobbying of TfL to encourage them to use more sustainable public transport methods.

In response to comments, the Air Quality Officer stated that whilst the Borough had a Carbon Offsetting Fund, there was currently no mechanism for ensuring developers made a contribution to offset any local air pollution emissions that they did not meet, unlike several other boroughs in London which had put this mechanism in place through the planning process.

The Committee **resolved** to recommend that as part of the AQAP, developers be required to make a contribution towards offsetting the impact of new developments on local air pollution. The Chair asked that the relevant officers be requested to respond to this recommendation and report back to the Committee at its meeting in September 2021.

Getting Barking and Dagenham Back to Work: Local Unemployment Response after Lockdown

The Committee received a report on the Council's plans for supporting residents back into work, which highlighted a range of positive actions that had been undertaken by the Council and its partners during the pandemic and described the broad support offer put in place by the Council. The Committee was also provided with the latest statistics on unemployment figures and benefits claims which painted a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by the Borough, as a result of the impact of the pandemic.

Members sought assurance as to the work of the Council's Job Shop team and the employment offer to local residents, as well as around the Kickstart Scheme and support to strengthen the resilience of health and social care businesses. They were also advised as to the free support that the Council was providing in conjunction with the Barking Enterprise Centre (BEC) to support new start-ups and existing organisations through business advice seminars.

The Committee was concerned that many of the funding streams available from Central Government were aimed at younger people, with older people proving more excluded from these. As such, it was pleased to note that the Council was speaking to colleagues at the Barking and Dagenham Adult College to try to increase the range of courses that they

offered, with the specific intention to make their offer available to older residents, who may not have felt comfortable learning in a younger environment.

The Chair of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum also noted the struggle that young people were facing in regards to finding jobs without having had prior experience. She suggested that this situation could be improved through creating a job advertisement list specifically for students in colleges and sixth forms. These types of adverts, which schools could produce in conjunction with workplaces to support young people into jobs, could enable the young people to become more independent, progress in the fields that they were working within and have access to jobs which were safe. The Council's Head of Employment and Enterprise Strategy agreed that this idea would be of benefit to many young people within the Borough and that this should be explored in more detail going forward. She noted that the Employment and Skills teams currently ran a general vacancy list, but that this was not advertised in colleges and agreed that this idea should also be taken forward with the Barking and Dagenham Schools Partnership, as well as with the Job Shop and the Chair of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum.

Covid-19 Financial Update: Income and Expenditure

The Council's Finance Director delivered a report on the Council's budget position for 2020/21, as well as updates on the financial impact of Covid-19, and the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) development.

The Chair suggested that an upcoming item relating to the scrutiny of budget savings proposals, instead be brought to an extraordinary meeting in January 2021, before the proposals were presented to Cabinet in February 2021. The Finance Director and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services agreed to this recommendation, stating that they would send this information to the Committee in December 2020 for scrutiny in January 2021, where they would also be able to update the Committee as to suggestions that had arisen from the Budget consultation.

The Barking and Dagenham Response to Covid-19: Part 2

The Committee received a presentation on the response of the BD CAN network and the Citizens' Alliance Network (CAN) to the Covid-19 pandemic, which was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement. BD CAN had been established by the Council and the BD Collective (a group of social sector organisations within Barking and Dagenham) well before the onset of Covid-19 and this had enabled the partnership to respond quickly to residents' needs. BD CAN had involved over 60 different organisations from various sectors and the support of over 400 volunteers, to deliver support to over 2,000 residents. The Cabinet Member gave some examples of positive work to have arisen from BD CAN, such as a network of food banks and the 'Connect' platform, which had provided telephone befriending support services to residents to reduce social isolation.

The Committee praised the efforts of BD CAN and the Cabinet Member thanked the private, social and faith sectors, as well as Council staff and Members for their involvement in the network. The Committee also sought assurance as to online BD CAN services, food parcel distribution, and the preparedness of the Council, partner organisations and BD CAN services in hubs in providing support for a second lockdown.

The Committee then received a presentation into the inequalities within society that had been exacerbated as a result of Covid-19. Different communities had experienced differing negative impacts of the pandemic, with the Council trying to understand and mitigate these. The Council's Head of Insight and Innovation provided an extensive analysis in relation to the impact of Covid-19, which had been undertaken by both the Council and its partners, and the Committee enquired as to the latest shielding datasets, the use of data in enabling the Council to better prepare its response to Covid-19 and the undertaking of an NHS Health Check Uptake project, through the employment of a text message patient booking system.

Progress update on Improving Household Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Recommendations

The Committee received a progress update on the 'Improving Household Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing' scrutiny review recommendations. The scrutiny review had previously been agreed by the Committee at their 4 September 2019 meeting (minute 15 refers).

Progress had been made against many of the 10 recommendations originally put forward by the Committee, however others had been put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Strategic Director of My Place also updated the Committee as to future plans to continue to respond to the recommendations, such as through the SMART Street proposal, which was a cross-council initiative set up to make visible, measurable improvements to the high levels of waste and low levels of recycling in the Borough, as well as to improve its cleanliness and appearance.

The Chair expressed concern that one of the major points to arise from the original scrutiny review was that a lot of waste was being produced by HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) and landlord properties, highlighting the need for more collaborative work to be undertaken. The Committee wished to seek further assurance around this and requested that a further update on Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 be presented at its 12 May 2021 Committee meeting. The Chair thanked the Waste, Enforcement and Communications teams for their work so far, emphasising that this would continue to be an area of interest to the Committee.

The Reviewed Corporate Plan and Single Performance Framework 2020-22

The Committee received a report on the Council's Reviewed Corporate Plan and Single Performance Framework 2020-22. The Committee was informed that whilst there were a lot of deliverables in the Corporate Plan, these had been tested to ensure that they were achievable through existing resources and time. A commitment had been made by the Senior Leadership Team to the Cabinet that these could be achieved and that this was part of the reason why officers had wanted to come back to a revision of the Corporate Plan six months after its approval at Assembly (minute 9 refers, 13 May 2020).

A Member was critical that that some of the information put forward in the Corporate Plan was too vague to enable the Committee to adequately scrutinise it, particularly around workforce empowerment. The Director of Strategy and Partnerships explained the thinking behind this: there had been a previous overemphasis on system and process and residents were often 'chunked' into sections of process for different departments to address, rather than having their whole story listened to. Work had been carried out to

support employees to better engage with and thus provide more tailored support to residents.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing built on the words of the Director, outlining how the Council's Community Solutions service had been established. This had involved questioning the workforce as to why certain processes existed and mapping out resident issues to ensure that these could be addressed by the Council in a more holistic approach. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council had also spoken to staff about remote working and the wants and needs of employees, incorporating these where possible.

Working with residents affected by Capital Works

The Committee received a presentation on how the Council, Be First, and Barking and Dagenham Trading Partnership (BDTP) worked with residents affected by capital works.

The Chair challenged the idea that resident satisfaction surveys completed following works were being returned to the contractors rather than to Be First officers, as this may put residents off from lodging any issues. The Assistant Construction Director for Be First stated that this would be amended going forward, with surveys either being returned to Be First or having an option to be sent back to Be First. The Managing Director on behalf of BDTP stated that BDTP had their own Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) who carried out satisfaction surveys with the customer, who was independent from the contractor and any staff who were delivering the work. My Place also carried out their own spot checks and as such, did not just take the word of BDTP on feedback, adding a further level of scrutiny to the satisfaction results.

The Committee was concerned that whilst Be First was fairly good at sending Ward Members any letters that were due to be sent out to the local community regarding capital works, that sometimes Members received these with too short notice to amend these if necessary, asking that this be looked into going forward.

General progress update regarding A2020 Scrutiny Recommendations - KLOE 1, 2 and 3

The Committee received an update on the progress made regarding Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) 1-3 of the A2020 Scrutiny Review, which was delivered by the Council's Commercial Director and Commissioning Director. The Action Plan, which detailed the 24 recommendations that arose from the review, had previously been agreed by the Committee at their 7 October 2020 meeting (minute 19 refers).

The Committee enquired as to the Council's Business Forum Newsletter, publicly available summary business plans for Council-owned companies, the development of the Council's Social Value policy, contract procurement arrangements, and securing work through local businesses where there was the opportunity to do so. Members were also advised as to the Demand dashboards in OneView (infrastructure management software), which helped frontline practitioners to make more informed social care decisions, as well as to the arrangements for challenging local authorities who placed families in the Borough without informing the Council.

Report arising from recommendation 3 of A2020 Scrutiny Review on Best Value

The Committee received a report arising from recommendation 3 of the Ambition 2020 Scrutiny Review, which was delivered by the Council's Commissioning Director for Inclusive Growth. This recommendation sought assurance that there were systems, principles and strategies in place to ensure that the Council received best value from the companies that it commissioned to deliver services.

In delivering the report, the Commissioning Director set out the Council's obligations in regards to best value and how this was applied across a range of different activities and functions, as well as the services provided by each commissioned company and their governance frameworks. The Committee provided challenge in relation to topics such as HRA rents, commissioning scrutiny and the impact of Covid-19 on the various Council-commissioned companies.

Corporate Parenting Report

The Committee received a report on the Council's Corporate Parenting arrangements, which was presented by the Council's Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration. The report was composed of two elements: an annual report and an update following a visit from Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers at the Department for Education, in November 2020. The Cabinet Member explained the Council's responsibilities in relation to care leavers, the approach that it took to ensure that the best support could be provided to those in its care and its plans for the next 12 months.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member and the Operational Team for their work in supporting the Borough's care leavers. The Committee sought clarification as to how looked-after children placed outside of the Borough were supported, how the Council was considering the issue of mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact that this may have on its young people, and the provisions in place to support young unaccompanied asylum seekers.

A Councillor praised the progress made as a result of the recommendations from the Ambition 2020 scrutiny review, and from Elevate moving back into the Council. Calls from young people in care and care leavers now went directly to Children's Care and Support, and additional training for supporting young people in care and care leavers had been provided to Contact Centre staff. Members also asked how they could be better corporate parents to the Borough's looked-after children and were informed that when undertaking scrutiny, they could assist by questioning whether the various issues they scrutinised took into account the impact on the Borough's looked after children. This could include considering whether employment and apprenticeship schemes were offered to care leavers first and asking whether the 500 looked after children in the Borough were receiving the best access to services.

Disabilities Improvement Programme Report

The Committee received a report on the Council's Disabilities Improvement Programme, presented by the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration and the Head of Commissioning for Learning Disabilities and Health.

The Programme was put into the context of unprecedented challenges facing the Disability Service in relation to a rapidly growing population, the increasing complexity of service user needs and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that much of the improvement work undertaken had been based on consultations with service users and their carers, the gaps that they had identified in provision and their experiences of services. As such, an extensive Improvement Programme had been designed to address the various pressure points within the system and provide service users with a wider range of tailored support that could be flexed according to their needs.

In considering the Improvement Programme, the Committee provided challenge in relation to housing stock and adaptations, a new pilot at Brocklebank to produce Council accommodation tailored to those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the Council's work in supporting those living with dementia, and assisted technology.

Report requested by recommendation 7 of A2020 Scrutiny Review

The Committee received a presentation on the Children's Social Care Workflow. This covered a variety of areas such as referrals, child protection, children in need and looked after children.

The Committee enquired as to risk thresholds involved in deciding whether a child should be looked after by the local authority, placed on a child protection plan, placed on a child in need plan or supported via the early help function, as well as the support in place for care leavers over the age of 18 and information as to the deletion of personal records.

The Chair was concerned that the Borough's population was growing, with the Council needing to undertake a large amount of regeneration to provide more and better housing to accommodate this. The Covid-19 pandemic had also had an impact on demand, and furthermore, the Committee had heard during its scrutiny review on Ambition 2020 that increasingly, families with complex needs were coming into the Borough from other areas, putting pressure on its services and budgets. The Committee sought assurance as to how the Council was managing this increasing and changing demand currently and going forward, with the challenge the Council now faced in commissioning resources being to understand the full impact of the pandemic on families in terms of their long-term socio-economic needs, which would be complex. The Council had started to build this picture; however, it was very early days as the pandemic was not over, and this work would take time.

Budget Change Proposals

The Committee called an Extraordinary Meeting to review the budget scrutiny proposals before they were presented to Cabinet on 15 February 2021. All 51 Members of the Council had been invited to attend this meeting, as well as to submit questions for consideration.

The Committee asked a wide variety of questions in relation to all areas of the Council, holding Council officers and Cabinet Members to account for their finances and scrutinising the feasibility of savings proposals. The final recommendations of the Committee were collated into the 'Budget Framework 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25' report that was presented to Cabinet on 15 February 2021 (minute 81 refers).

Response Times and Clear Up Rates with the Borough Commander

Representatives of the Borough Command Unit (BCU) which provided policing across the boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge and Havering on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Service, delivered a presentation on 'response times and clear up rates', covering areas such as Immediate and Significant (I&S) grade calls, missing persons and total notifiable offences.

The Committee challenged the increases in the number of missing people during the Covid-19 lockdown, whether the levels of crime were in proportion to the three individual boroughs' populations that were covered by the BCU, and resource allocation.

The Committee also received a presentation on "Engagement on East Area BCU". The Committee expressed concern that the presentation did not specifically mention the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) group, which was worrying in its own right, but particularly in the context of the Stephen Port murders. The BCU representative was confident that mechanisms were in place to engage with the LGBT community and confirmed that across the BCU and amongst its senior leadership team, this group was regularly discussed and considered. The Committee wished to seek further assurance around this and requested that this be reflected in its work programme for 2021-22.

Members encouraged the BCU to use a variety of virtual platforms during the lockdown to engage with communities to open up these opportunities to a wider group of people; however, acknowledged the difficulty the BCU faced when choosing which virtual platforms to use, as certain platforms would inevitably be preferred by some groups, and not by others.

The Chair requested that the Committee would like to see, in approximately six months' time, the Borough's response time figures to establish whether there had been any improvement, an update on any further work undertaken to understand the potential reasons for the Borough's high missing people figures, and an update on how the BCU engaged specifically with those who were LGBT.

Predictive Analytics; Approach to Ethics & Transparency

The Committee received a presentation on the Council's approach to ethics and transparency in relation to predictive analytics (the use of data to help identify future outcomes and deliver services). It was noted that the Council was leading the way within local government in demonstrating the importance of being ethical and transparent with residents' data, having received awards for its innovative approaches to using data and technology to support residents and enhance services. The 'Borough Data Explorer' and the 'BD Can' network had also ensured that vulnerable residents across the Borough were supported in a timely fashion to get through the Covid-19 lockdown that was announced in March 2020, which was largely down to the Council's effective use of data.

Members expressed concern around the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implications of predictive analytics and were assured by officers that this work did not involve additional GDPR implications. The data used in predictive analytics was already held by the Council on various systems, such as those used by social workers and housing officers. When these officers took case notes, for example, they obtained residents' consent to holding and utilising their data, and many of the privacy notices used in these processes explained the legal reasons for doing so, as well as the Council's duty

of care in maintaining personal data. Therefore, predictive analytics work did not involve additional GDPR implications, as the Council would have already adhered to GDPR as a part of normal service delivery. Residents could also make a subject access request to check what data the Council held on them, and testing to ensure the data held by the Council was protected was part of the Council's usual corporate IT security processes.

Continuity and recovery in schools during COVID-19 - Interim report

The Committee received an interim report on the continuity and recovery in schools during Covid-19, which provided a detailed narrative of the previous 12 months in relation to the continuity and recovery in schools during the pandemic. Much had been learnt about remote education and schools had carried out extensive work to remain in contact with, and to support their pupils. Partnerships between schools, Children's Social Care, Health, Community Solutions, the Police and the voluntary sector had also strengthened during the pandemic, to the benefit of all.

The Committee was informed by the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment (CMEA), that several local businesses had kindly supported the provision of IT equipment for vulnerable pupils at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the Chair suggested that the Cabinet Member liaise further with the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration, to enquire as to whether this resource could be further utilised to support local families.

In response to a question from a Member, the Committee was advised that the Council had commissioned the Barking and Dagenham School Improvement Partnership (BDSIP) to lead work on its behalf in relation to anti-racism education and the Black Lives Matter movement. This would be undertaken both for and with schools, and would include external advice, as well as be partially led by an experienced, knowledgeable and interested Headteacher. This work would focus on conversations and the input of young people, the current provision and what worked well, and ensuring that the curriculum reflected the voices of diverse communities. This would provide a sustained opportunity for learning and would be an inclusive project going forward.

The Committee wished to put on record its immense thanks to the Education team, the CMEA, all school staff and all of those who had supported the continuity and recovery in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Supporting older residents during the pandemic and beyond

The Committee received a report on how the Council was supporting older residents during the pandemic and its plans for post-pandemic support. This provided a brief outlook in regards to the demographic makeup of older people living within the Borough before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by a more detailed narrative in relation to the work that had been undertaken to provide support to older residents over the preceding 12 months.

The Committee asked several questions relating to the Home First model (whereby discharged residents were assessed in their own homes, rather than in hospital), hospital discharge, communication with health partners and mental capacity. Members were also pleased to note that the Council was looking into different approaches to engage vulnerable residents who needed support, such as through the development of its Community Hubs model, which would enable elderly residents to participate in activities at

their local community hub. This could enable them to potentially begin to have conversations with support workers, realising that their independence would not be lost when they spoke with the Council.

The Committee enquired as to the use of modern technology to better support residents, and the Council's new technology bid that may help to support those who may be reluctant to engage with the Council. It also asked questions about the growing number of Breezie tablets used by residents across the Borough, which were handheld digital devices that could be set up according to the needs and interests of the user. The Breezie devices had also worked particularly well for those with dementia in some of the Borough's care homes, and the Council would pay for both these tablets and the Wi-Fi for a resident to use these, if a social worker thought that a resident could benefit from the device.

The Committee encouraged residents to contact the Council's Intake team or their local Councillor if they believed that either themselves or someone they knew could benefit from a Breezie tablet.

Contact

For further information on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or the Council's scrutiny arrangements in general, please contact:

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