

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2025

Councillors Present:	Cllr Richard Lufkin in the Chair
	Cllr Michael Desmond, Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr Jon Narcross, Cllr Sharon Patrick (Vice-Chair), Cllr Ian Sharer, Cllr Jessica Webb and Cllr Penny Wrout.
Apologies:	Cllr Michael Levy, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Clare Potter and Cllr Faruk Tinaz.
Officers in Attendance:	Natalie Broughton, Assistant Director Planning and Building Control Tina Dempsey, Assistant Director of Human Resources/Organisational Development Sandra Farquharson, Director of Human Resources/Organisational Development (virtual) Nkencho Okonta, Lawyer John Tsang, Development Management (virtual)
Also in Attendance:	Cllr Carole Williams, Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities
Absent:	Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Clare Joseph, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge, Cllr Ali Sadek, and Cllr Ifraax Samatar.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ozsen, Potter and Tinaz.
- 1.2 Councillors Garasia, Joseph, Suso-Runge, Sadek and Samatar were recorded as being absent from the meeting. Councillors Sadek and Suso-Runge joined the meeting remotely, under the Local Government Act 1972 the Councillors would not be counted as being present at the meeting.
- 1.3 Councillor Levy had been granted dispensation, as agreed at 14 May 2025 meeting of Full Council, from the statutory requirement to attend meetings of the Council.

2 Declarations of Interest - Members to Declare As Appropriate

- 2.1 None.

3 Consideration of Minutes Of The Previous Meeting and actions list

- 3.1 The committee considered the minutes of its previous meeting held on 19 September 2025.

There were no updates on actions.

Resolved:

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 19 September 2025, were agreed as an accurate record of those meeting's proceedings.

4 Questions/Deputations/Petitions to the Committee

4.1 No questions, deputations or petitions were submitted in advance or at the meeting of the Corporate Committee.

5 Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers 2026/2027

5.1 The Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers Statement was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities and the Council's Director of Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD). The Director HR and OD explained that the pay policy statement was produced annually and was published to ensure transparency regarding the pay of all colleagues, with approval needed from the Corporate Committee before going to full Council.

5.2 The Council's Assistant Director HR and OD explained that there were no substantial changes from previous years in the pay policy statement. Key highlights from the statement included a forecasted 3% pay increase, although negotiations were ongoing, and the Council anticipated challenges if nationally negotiated pay exceeded the Council's assumption. The Committee noted that there was a slight decrease in the Chief Officer's pay gap compared to lower-paid staff, this was partly attributed to the increase in the London living wage.

5.3 The Council did not provide bonuses to Chief Officers and would not increase total pension scheme membership or award additional pensions. Redundancy payments applied equally to all staff, based on actual weeks' pay up to a maximum of 30 weeks' pay, with a discretionary severance payment of 70% of the redundancy payment value also possible. Any severance payments exceeding £100,000 required approval by a resolution of the full Council.

5.4 Responding to a question from a Committee, the Director HR OD clarified that the published annual salaries included any allowances, and the Direct agreed to provide a link to the latest published figures. The Director HR OD also stated they were not aware of any special discretions around the published format, which had been consistent for many years across public authorities. Committee members also requested details of additional payments to senior officers, possibly by directorate, to enhance transparency.

5.5 The Director HR OD stated that they were not aware of any market supplements paid at the senior chief officer level, and the Council received sufficient applicants for these roles. The Director HR OD acknowledged that roles like social workers and some ICT staff may face challenges due to national shortages, and offered to find out if any market supplements were being paid for specific skills.

5.6 The Committee noted that there were 75 members of staff earning over £100,000 and that the Council must annually publish all salaries over £50k. The Director HR OD explained that these details are part of the existing publication.

The Assistant Director HR OD added that Hackney's senior officer pay was similar to other inner London boroughs, and that for like for like roles pay was benchmarked with London Councils.

- 5.7 On the issue of discretionary Compensation Payments and Scrutiny, the Director HR OD explained that these were uncommon, reserved only for exceptional circumstances, and require an internal business case reviewed by finance, HR, and senior management. The Committee noted that the decision rested with the head of paid service. The Committee requested details on the specific number of enhanced payments for the 75 individuals earning over £100,000. The Director of HR OD agreed to seek the overall number, emphasising that any payments were published.
- 5.8 The Director HR OD confirmed that the ratio calculation included permanent and fixed-term Council employees but excluded agency workers. The Director HR OD added that the Council's most senior colleagues are in the bottom quartile of pay compared to many London councils, and the council is committed to paying the London living wage, even for apprentices.
- 5.9 Some of the committee members suggested that the pay policy report, being largely unchanged from the previous year, should be reviewed to potentially include additional information to improve transparency and accountability. The Committee Chair agreed that this was a sensible approach. The Cabinet Member for Employment, Human Resources and Equalities, added that they supported the idea of reviewing the report with professional guidance and aiming for best practice.

Action:

The Director HR OD would provide:

- 1. The latest published figures for chief officers pay, including details of any allowances;**
- 2. Details of any additional payments to senior officers.**

Action:

The Director HR OD would provide details of the overall number of enhanced payments for those 75 members of Council Staff earning over £100,000.

Resolved:

To approve the Pay Policy Statement for Chief Officers 2026/27.

6 Planning Code of Conduct

- 6.1 The Council's Assistant Director Planning and Building Control introduced the report on the new planning code of conduct for members. The recommendation before the committee was to approve the new code, which would replace the existing planning code of practice as set out in Council's constitution. The Council's Constitution Committee had already recommended approval at its 28

- October 2025 meeting. The new code reflected current and best practices and was a collaboration between planning, legal, and governance services
- 6.2 There were three key objectives of the code: 1) to provide clarity and advice to all elected Councillor members; 2) to ensure that planning decisions are made impartially and for justifiable reasons; and 3) to protect the council and individual members from allegations of unfairness. Committee members noted that the code was seeking to embed existing good practice training for the Planning Sub-Committee, such as annual and thematic training. The section on lobbying was also updated to clarify that lobbying was a normal part of the political process but requires caution to avoid compromising Councillor's impartiality. The new code was also more extensive and provided guidance for all Councillors, not just Planning Sub-Committee members.
- 6.3 Responding to a question from Committee members on the difference between Licensing and Planning, specifically with the latter regime, where Planning Sub-Committee could consider planning applications in their ward, the Assistant Director Planning and Building Control replied that a Planning Sub-Committee member being a ward member did not automatically prevent them from considering and voting on an application. It would be up to the individual Sub-Committee member, which guidance from the Governance Officer and Legal Officer advise members to decide whether they have any interests, such as pecuniary ones. To ensure transparency at Planning Sub-Committee meetings, the Governance Officer stated that when a Planning Sub-Committee member made such a declaration at a Planning Sub-Committee meeting, they would refer to the specific section of the planning code outlining that Sub-Committee members could hear applications from within their particular ward.
- 6.4 Committee members noted that fire safety was generally covered by building regulations. A key consideration for Hackney Council was maintaining a clear separation between planning and building regulation requirements. Any future changes would need to be scoped out as part of a local plan review, ensuring the local plan remained sound.
- 6.5 Committee members sought clarification from the code on the definition of a lobbyist and the protocol for meetings, specifically whether residents counted as lobbyists and if planning officers should attend such meetings. The Assistant Director Planning and Building Control stated that the definition of a lobbyist remains broad and could include a resident, and the code provides guidance on how to deal with approaches from developers and other lobbyists.
- 6.6 Some of Committee membership raised concerns about the potential burden of requiring the Assistant Director Planning Building Control, or a planning officer, to attend every meeting with a resident about a planning application. The Assistant Director Planning Building Control agreed to review and potentially amend the wording in the code to ensure a difference between the approach for the elected Mayor and Councillors, and for Planning Sub-Committee members, and to make it less onerous for Councillors to speak with residents.
- 6.7 The Committee Chair suggested deferring the formal change to the wording until issues around lobbyists could be explored further.

- 6.8 Some of the Committee members highlighted the issue of members balancing advocacy for residents with maintaining impartiality, especially since the majority of planning applications were decided by delegated authority. It was suggested providing more detail in the training for members (on and off the Planning Sub-Committee) through case studies to guide them on how to positively engage with the process. The Assistant Director Planning Building Control confirmed that this matter had been previously raised at the Constitution Committee and they agreed to take forward the provision of further guidance to Committee members on how to actively and positively support residents and businesses in the planning process as part of rolling out the new code.
- 6.9 A committee member asked if it was inappropriate for them to walk constituents through the planning application process. The Assistant Director Planning Building Control suggested that advice on planning process and application submission should ideally come from planning officers to maintain clear boundaries between officer and Councillor roles. The Assistant Director Planning Building Control added that this should be the process. They added that the planning service was doing well with staffing levels and capacity, with plans for further customer service improvements.
- 6.10 The committee considered deferring the adoption of the code due to the question of whether they could delegate authority to an officer to amend the wording after the meeting, which the Legal Officer suggested may require returning to the Constitution Committee.
- 6.11 On government reforms around planning, the Planning Service's Development Management and Enforcement Manager explained that a further round of consultations following the initial government paper. The Planning Service understood that further consultations were expected in November 2025.
- 6.12 The Committee noted that elements of the code were already monitored and enforced through processes, for example ensuring members undertake annual planning committee training. Which was monitored by the Planning Service, Member Services and Governance Services.
- 6.13 The Committee Chair recommended that the Committee should note the code but approval should be deferred because it was subject to changes requiring clarification. Committee members noted that would also need to be reconsidered by the Constitution Committee. The Governance Officers stated that the Constitution Committee was scheduled to next meet on February 4 2026, while the Corporate Committee was to meet for the last time for the 2025/26 municipal year on 18 March 2026.

Action:

Assistant Director Planning and Building Control would:

- 1) Provide further guidance to Committee members on how to actively and positively support residents and businesses in the planning process as part of rolling out the new code;**

2) Amend the section on lobbyists in the new Planning Code of Conduct, following comments and suggestions from the Corporate Committee.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to defer approving the Planning Code of Practice. A number of minor amendments were to be made to the code. The code would then be reconsidered at the next Corporate Committee meeting on 18 March 2026.

7 Fees and charges review

7.1 Committee members noted that the Fees and Charges Review had been deferred until the next meeting on 18 March 2026.

Decision:

The Fees and Charges Review was deferred until the next Corporate Committee meeting on 18 March 2026.

8 Corporate Committee Work Programme 2025/26

8.1 Committee members noted the latest draft of their work programme for the municipal year 2025/26. The work programme would be amended to reflect the Planning Code of Conduct and the Fees and Charges Review being deferred and considered at the next committee meeting on 18 March 2026.

Decision:

The latest draft of the Corporate Committee work programme for the municipal year 2025/26 was noted.

9 Any Other Business the Chair Considers to be Urgent

9.1 Committee members noted that their next meeting was on 18 March 2026.

CLOSE OF MEETING

Duration of the meeting: 6.30pm - 7.36pm.

Next meeting: 18 March 2026.

Chair of the Corporate Committee, Cllr Richard Lufkin.