

Minutes

SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

3 September 2015

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Teji Barnes (Vice-Chairman) Peter Davis Beulah East (Labour Lead) Becky Haggar Manjit Khatra June Nelson Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana Dominic Gilham Mary O'Connor</p>
	<p>OFFICERS PRESENT: Nigel Dicker (Deputy Director of Residents' Services), John Higgins (Head of Service Safeguarding, Quality and Partnerships, Andrea Nixon (Safeguarding Children and Quality Assurance - Manager) Debby Weller (Residents Services - Housing Strategy Manager), Daniel Kennedy (Head of Performance and Improvement), Ian Anderson (Complaints and Service Improvement Manager) and Charles Francis (Democratic Services)</p>
17.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Jane Palmer. Councillor Dominic Gilham was present as her substitute.</p>
18.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
19.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JULY 2015 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Were agreed as an accurate record.</p>
20.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED IN PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>All items were considered in Public.</p>

21. **SAFEGUARDING ADULTS PARTNERSHIP BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT 2014/5** (*Agenda Item 5*)

The Head of Safeguarding, Quality and Partnerships introduced the report which provided an overview of the safeguarding work which had been conducted in 2014/15.

The SAPB priorities for development for 2015/16 onwards had been built around the eight Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) standards of:

- Outcomes
- Leadership
- Strategy
- Commissioning
- People's experiences of safeguarding
- Service delivery and effective practice
- Performance and resource management
- Local safeguarding Board

The Committee heard the 2015/16 priorities were:

- 1) Resourcing and developing the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board.
- 2) Implementing Making Safeguarding Personal across all safeguarding activity and across all partner agencies.
- 3) Ensuring Care Act compliance across all agencies.
- 4) DoLS – ensuring there is an effective model of practice to build upon including enhancing the functions of the DoLS Supervisory Body.
- 5) Mental Capacity Act – embedding knowledge and skills across all partner agencies.
- 6) Raising public awareness of Safeguarding.

The Chairman thanked officers for a concise report. During discussions a number of issues were raised and the following comments to Cabinet were made:

The Committee welcomed the report which highlighted that services across Hillingdon were supporting residents and safeguarding vulnerable adults.

The Committee noted that the establishment of the Care and Governance Board and the Vulnerable People Panel had created positive bodies which should enhance multi-agency communication and information sharing.

Partnership working was also strong. However, the Committee were concerned about a number of issues. In particular, it was noted that staff were not confident about using the Mental Capacity Act and that further improvements were required in relation to information sharing regarding high risk transition points such as admission and discharge from hospital. The Committee noted that there had been a significant rise in the number of authorisation requests for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards compared to the previous year. In addition, the Committee raised concerns about commissioning processes and the separation of responsibilities across the Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England and noted that NHS England had yet to be represented on the Board.

Given the number of vulnerable adults in the Borough is increasing; the Committee welcomed the approach to develop Teams focussed around the family and a more holistic approach to safeguarding. The Committee also agreed that the implementation of Making Safeguarding Personal across all agencies, as well as raising public awareness of Safeguarding were important aspirations which would contribute to the service currently provided.

Resolved –

- 1. To note the contents of the Annual Report**
- 2. The Committee thanked Lynda Crellin (the out going chair of the Hillingdon Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board) for her work.**

22. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT FOR HOUSING SERVICES AND ADULT'S SERVICES FOR 1 APRIL 2014 TO 31 MARCH 2015 (Agenda Item 6)

The Complaints and Service Improvement Team Manager introduced the Annual Complaint report for Housing Services and Adult's Services from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Officers explained the focus over the past year had been to deal with complaints informally where possible as residents preferred this approach. As a result, the number of informal complaints had risen and the number of formal complaints had fallen.

Housing Service

- The number of informal complaints rose from 405 for 2013/14 to 497 in 2014/15, which was a 23% increase.
- The number of Stage 1 complaints fell from 175 in 2013/14 to 144 in 2014/15, which was a 18% decrease. Repairs and Housing Need accounted for 39% and 43%, respectively, of all Stage 1 complaints.
- The number of Stage 2 complaints also fell from 39 in 2013/14 to 18 in 2014/15.
- The number of Stage 3 complaints for 2013/14 and 2014/15 remained the same for both years at 23.
- Officers reported that 10 complaints had been escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman. Of which 2 were upheld, 1 was partially upheld and 7 were not upheld.
- Whilst the 10 working day target to respond to complaints was being met, 51 of the 144 Stage 1 complaints were responded to outside the 10 working day target. This is an area that Officers will focus on in the year ahead by, for example, requiring draft responses to be provided on the 5th working day to minimise the instances of the 10 working day target being missed.
- The number of Members Enquiries had risen from 1,134 in 2013/14 to 1,212 in 2014/15.

Adults' Services

- The number of informal complaints had risen from 80 in 2013/14 to 104 in 2014/15;
- The number of Stage 1 complaints had decreased from 42 in 2013/14 to 31 in 2014/15. The average time taken to respond to Stage 1 complaint was 13.42 working days against a target of 20 working days.
- In terms of referrals to the Local Government Ombudsman, 10 investigations were concluded in 2014/15 of which 3 were upheld, 3 partially upheld and 4 were not upheld.
- The number of Members Enquiries had risen from 143 in 2013/14 to 182 in 2014/15.

The Committee welcomed that Housing Service had received 40 compliments from residents (this was the first year these had been formally recorded) and 61 compliments for Adults Social Services for 2014/15.

To improve complaint handling, the Committee noted that officers had undertaken a number of steps, including:

- Issuing reminders to individual Officers and Teams about compliance to Customer Service Standards.
- Providing staff briefings.
- A review of the Corporate Complaint Procedure had been conducted by the Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee.
- Workshops for managers and relevant staff are run in investigating and responding to complaints.
- The introduction of a joint Housing and Social Care board to consider cases that cross over both Housing and Social Care Jurisdictions.

Resolved -

- 1. That the report be noted.**

23. **MAJOR REVIEWS IN 2015/16 - RAISING STANDARDS IN PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR ACCOMMODATION - WITNESS SESSION 1** (*Agenda Item 7*)

The Housing Strategy Manager introduced the report which provided a profile of the private rented sector in Hillingdon, as well as information about how this had changed, the impacts of recent benefit changes and an insight into the accessibility of the sector.

During the course of presentation, the following points were noted:

The size and composition of the private rented sector and its occupants

- Nationally, the private rented sector had grown significantly.
- In 2011, the private rented sector made up 18.2% of the 100,214 households in Hillingdon. The Annual Property Survey suggested that by 2014 the proportion may have grown to as much as 28.2%.
- There had been a shift from owner occupation to private renting.

- Outright owner occupation had increased, but the number of households buying with a mortgage had reduced by almost 6,000 households (in Hillingdon) over this period.
- Results from the Survey of English Housing showed the following comparisons between the private rented sector and other housing tenures:
 1. During 2013/14, 35% of private renters moved home, compared to 9% of those in the social rented sector and 5% of home owners.
 2. Just below 80% of private sector residents had been in their current home for less than five years and almost 70% had been in their home for less than three years.
 3. In the private rented sector, the age of household was considerably younger than in other tenures.

The differences within the private rented sector in different parts of Hillingdon

- The number of households renting privately had increased in all wards in Hillingdon
- The wards with the largest numbers of private renters were Heathrow Villages, Townfield, Uxbridge South, and Yiewsley.
- Between the census years, the largest percentage increase was in Brunel (166%), owing in part to the continued expansion of the university.
- Within wards, the percentage of households living in the private rented sector, at the time of the 2011 census ranged from 8.8% in Eastcote and East Ruislip to 35% in Heathrow Villages.

The various sub-markets within the sector

- The private rented sector had expanded beyond its traditional student and young professional, single person and couples market and now houses a wide range of people.
- There were many more families with children than was previously the case.
- Competition in the housing market came not just from groups of households that previously entered owner occupation, but also from other borough Councils.
- LB Hillingdon works with landlords to encourage them to make their properties available to the Council for use through the 'Finder's Fee' or direct leasing scheme.

Current market trends and the effect this has had on the private rental market?

- The private rented sector in London forms a larger proportion of dwellings than it does in other parts of the country.
- Reasons for renting property included: the increased flexibility this tenure offered, the ability to invest capital in areas other than property.
- Other factors included: The availability of high loan to value lending (LTV) was still a long way from pre-2008 levels and the relatively high levels of deposits required meant house purchase remained relatively

expensive. This meant that those who in the past would have been purchasers were remaining longer in the parental home or moving into the private rented sector.

Welfare reform

- Welfare reform was a key issue in current housing policy.
- The cap on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates means that welfare benefits will not cover the rental costs in the more expensive parts of inner London.
- At the beginning of August 2015 there were 247 benefit capped households in LB Hillingdon. This number has remained fairly static although individual households move in and out.
- The majority of these are private sector tenancies.
- The total LHA caseload for London has begun to fall slightly, however this masks a picture of a shift in the caseload from out-of-work claimants to in-work claimants, and from inner London to outer London.

Welfare Reform and Work Bill

This Bill covers:

- Provision about social mobility; to make provision about the benefit cap.
- Provision about social security and tax credits.
- Provision for loans for mortgage interest.
- Provision about social housing rents. It includes measure that impact directly on housing including lowering the benefit cap.
- If passed, the new legislation would lower the benefit cap, so that the total amount of benefits to which a family on out of work benefits can be entitled to in a year will not exceed £20,000 for couples and lone parents, and £13,400 for single claimants.
- The legislation removes the link between the level of the cap and average earnings and the requirement for the Secretary of State to review the cap each year, replacing it with the requirement that the Secretary of State must review the cap at least once in each Parliament and allowing the Secretary of State to review it more regularly at their discretion.

Accessibility of the sector including the impact of rental costs and of welfare reform

- The cost of private renting correlated with average house prices.
- Areas with the highest median house prices also had the highest median rents. Hillingdon has one of the highest rates of property price growth in London. Land Registry data records that lower quartile house prices increased from £111,000 in 2001 to £235,000 in 2014.
- In July 2015, Rightmove suggested that the average price of property in Hillingdon of £444,266 and an annual increase of 17.9%. This index is based on asking prices. The most recent sales data from the Land Registry House Price Index, for June 2015, shows an average price of £342,662 and an annual increase of 15.2%. Knight Frank argues that transport is particularly important in the London property market and Crossrail is driving increased prices near stations along

the east/west route which includes Hayes and West Drayton.

- Office for National Statistics analysis for 2014 showed a median monthly rent in Hillingdon of £1,138 alongside a median salary of £2,216. Median monthly rent as a % of median gross salary was 51.35%. Comparative percentages for other London boroughs range from 40.39% in Bexley to 78.30% in Westminster. Other West London comparators include Hounslow 58.33%, Brent 65.33% and Ealing 58.34%.

Likely future trends

- With house prices expected to remain high relative to incomes for some time, it is likely that Hillingdon will continue to see the private rental market expand with people living in it for longer.
- It is expected that the new pension rules which came into force in April 2015 giving retirees the freedom to spend their pension pot as they wish, will see some investing in rental property.
- Kent Reliance forecasts that by 2020 the total number of rented homes will have soared from 4.8m currently to 5.5m, representing about one in five households.

Forecast

- The over 65 are the only age group where numbers of private renters are forecast to fall.
- Homes in the private rented sector are more likely to be in poorer condition than other tenures.
- With the prospect of growing demand, there has been a welcome increase in interest in the sector from institutional investors and this should help improve the quality of the sector.
- Government have introduced protection for tenants against “retaliatory eviction” where they have a legitimate complaint, and have introduced measures to ensure fairness for landlords, making the eviction process more straightforward in appropriate circumstances such as the persistent non-payment of rent.
- These changes will also come into effect in October 2015.

Housing conditions - complaints about standards in the private rented sector

- The Housing Standards Team is well placed to deal with complaints about standards, in:
 1. private rented single dwellings
 2. houses of multiple occupation (HMOs)
 3. temporary accommodation, such as bed and breakfast hotels
 4. mobile homes and caravan sites
- Where the Council provides the accommodation, such in properties leased direct from landlords or through agents such as Orchard and Shipman, the Standards Team will make sure that adequate standards of accommodation are provided.
- Where the tenant has a tenancy agreement with the landlord independent of the Council, the Council's primary role is to respond to complaints from tenants about hazardous conditions, rather than quality or value for money issues which are matters between the tenants and the landlord.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazards are assessed under the government's Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme, introduced to support the enforcement measures in the Housing Act 2004. • Enforcement options include a Hazard Awareness Notice, an Improvement Notice or in extreme cases Emergency Remedial Action, Prohibition Notice or prosecution for non-compliance with the regulations for HMOs. • Council officers are obliged to notify landlords when visiting their properties and cannot prevent a landlord from being present. In most cases, conditions can be improved by informal action and landlord agreement. <p>Resolved -</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>
24.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Resolved -</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>
25.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>The Committee discussed the Work Programme.</p> <p>Resolved -</p> <p>That the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.45 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Charles Francis on 01895 556454. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.