

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

7 October 2010

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Mike Markham (Chairman), Shirley Harper O'Neill (Vice-Chairman), Janet Duncan (Labour Lead), Judy Kelly and Susan O'Brien.</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Mahamoud Ahmed, EACH Brent. Anab Abdala – Sahan Centre Fatima Abdi – Sahan Centre Trevor Bigg – Hillingdon LINK Graham Hawkes – Hillingdon LINK</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Natasha Dogra – Democratic Services</p>	
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>	Action by
2.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>	Action by
3.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items on the agenda were marked Part 1 and considered in public.</p>	Action by
4.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2010 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.</p>	Action by
5.	<p>REVIEW 1: WITNESS SESSION 2 - SOCIAL EFFECTS OF KHAT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed the witnesses to the meeting which would concentrate on the social effects of the legal high Khat. Witnesses presented their information in five parts:</p>	Action by

The selling of Khat

- Khat entered the UK from Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and Somalia.
- Once the Khat consignment was taken off the plane it was taken by an "Arranger" in large trucks to areas of the borough. Dealers would then approach the truck and buy their bundles of Khat and store it in their cars. The Khat was then distributed to users.
- Khat was distributed in cafes (mafreshi) and Khat houses.
- Khat was sold for £3 for a 125g bundle of short sticks (mainly from Kenya). Longer sticks were sold for about £7 (mainly from Yemen). Yemeni Khat was slightly stronger and slightly better quality. However, the shorter sticks were more widely used as they were cheaper but still good quality.
- All types of Khat were available in the UK within 3 days of it being cut in the countries of origin. Khat must be consumed within 3 days of being cut unless it had been frozen or refrigerated.

Where is Khat chewed?

- Khat was either chewed in mafreshis or private houses.
- It was mainly male users who chewed Khat in mafreshis, as culturally women were not widely accepted as users of Khat.
- Men would gather at mafreshis from 6pm till the early hours of the morning and discuss their problems and general conversation with fellow Khat users.
- Men who chewed a large quantity of Khat would return home to sleep throughout the day while resulted in them being unemployed.
- Women chewed Khat in the privacy of their homes, sometimes with other women.

What is the profile of a Khat user?

- According to witnesses from the Somali community the average Khat user was male, above the age of 20 and unemployed.
- In a survey undertaken by Hillingdon LINK in April 2010 the average user of Khat appeared to be of either sex and could be aged as young as 16.
- Children were beginning to wake up to the notion of Khat chewing, with witnesses claiming to have seen people as young as 15 chewing Khat. However, the Somali community did not accept children chewing Khat and users only chewed Khat in public from the age of 20. If younger people chewed Khat they would do it away from their parents and family.
- Women and children of Somali or Yemeni descent would not admit to using Khat, as it was culturally frowned upon.
- Khat users did not use it as an appetite suppressant, and Khat users tend to eat food after chewing it.
- Older Somalis would chew Khat at family events such as weddings. The elders would sit together and chew Khat while discussing issues affecting them or current affairs. It was seen to be a cultural tradition for the elders to gather together to chew Khat.

What are the social consequences of Khat chewing?

- Some Khat users chew Khat to relax and unwind, while others become more alert and hyper.
- Users had also reported hallucinating while under the influence of

	<p>Khat. This would result in damage their mental health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some male users attend mafreshis to chew Khat throughout the night, which resulted in them sleeping during the day-time. These men would not take responsibility for their families and were unemployed a result of their habit. • The abuse of Khat by some men would lead to a breakdown of their family life and in turn put huge pressure on the women to fend for the family. Women had also reported domestic violence as a result of them trying to lure their husbands off Khat. Men became aggressive and violent towards those who told them to stop using Khat. • Members of the public would be frightened when walking past a person under the influence of Khat. • Khat chewing had led to drug use by some people. Cannabis and Khat had been linked together in some cases. There had been some cases of younger people mixing Khat use with cannabis. <p>How would you address the problem of Khat?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banning Khat would not address the problem, but like Cannabis, may result in Khat becoming available on the black market. • Regulating and educating would be the way forward. • Education should be made available to young people. Education on the effects of drugs and withdrawal symptoms must be made readily available to the public. • Children were turning to using Khat because they did not have other things to do. Opportunities such as employment and college courses would give Khat users something else to do in their spare time rather than chew Khat. • Classification of Khat would be a good start as it would result in tougher regulation when it first arrived in the country and would ensure it was free of pesticides and bacteriological contamination. <p>The Committee thanked the witnesses for their help and for taking the time to share their knowledge with the Committee.</p> <p>Resolved: The Committee noted the information and agreed to use it to form part of their final report.</p>	
6.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Noted: The Committee noted the Forward Plan.</p>	Action by
7.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME 2010 (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Agreed: The Committee agreed the Work Programme.</p>	Action by
	The meeting, which commenced at 5.50 pm, closed at 7.15 pm.	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Natasha Dogra on 01895 277 488. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.