



# Policy Overview & Scrutiny in Hillingdon

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Annual Report  
2013/14

Supported by  
Democratic Services





# Introduction

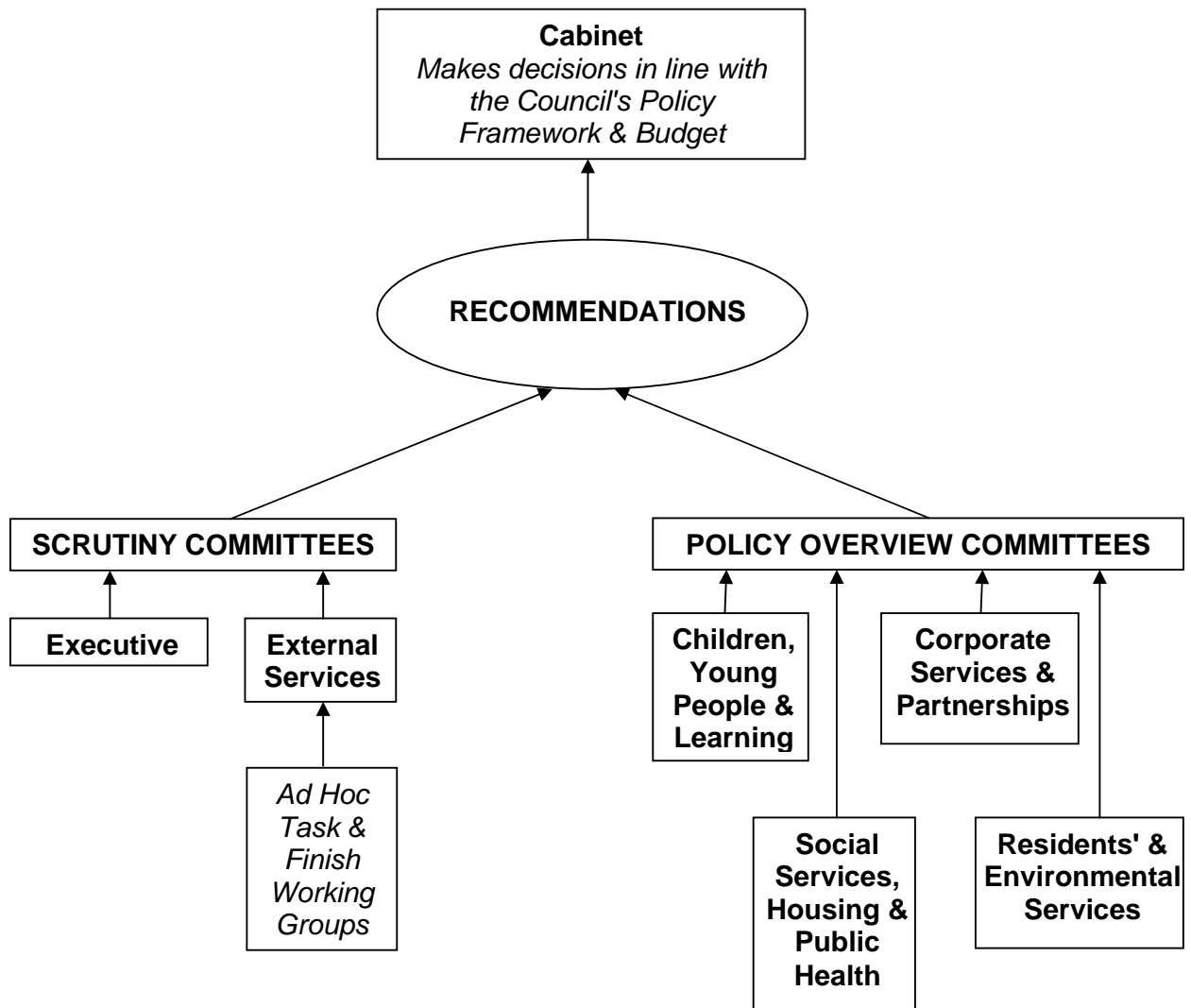
This report provides the opportunity to review the work and achievements of Hillingdon's Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees during the 2013/14 Municipal Year and to highlight key developments.

In Hillingdon, Policy Overview Committees (POCs) are responsible for the monitoring of a specific range of Council services. In addition to these POCs, Hillingdon has an Executive Scrutiny Committee, which is responsible for post executive-decision scrutiny and call-in, and the External Services Scrutiny Committee, which is responsible for scrutinising those services provided by non-Council organisations, including health and crime and disorder related matters.

Each of these Committees undertakes its role through a series of activities which include single meeting reviews and in-depth reviews on specific issues. These reviews provide the opportunity to hear from residents, members of the public and expert witnesses, including officers from other councils and external organisations.

Reviews usually make recommendations to the Cabinet on how the Council could further enhance its work. In addition, the Committees are able to request information in response to particular concerns, comment on reports to Cabinet for decision and provide relevant input on Cabinet's annual budget proposals before they are approved by Council each year. POCs therefore play an important role in ensuring that the Council continues to provide high quality, value-for-money services to our residents.

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Policy Overview Committees can consider 'Councillor Calls For Action' submissions. These powers enable all Councillors to ask for discussions at POCs on issues where local problems have arisen and other methods of resolution have been exhausted. No such Calls for Actions have been considered to date.





# Corporate Services & Partnerships



## **Councillor Richard Lewis (Chairman)**

*Other Members of the Committee 2013/14:*

Councillor Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Lindsay Bliss

Councillor Wayne Bridges

Councillor Beulah East

Councillor Raymond Graham

Councillor Carol Melvin

*Officer support: Khalid Ahmed, Democratic Services*

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The Committee is responsible for the policy overview role for a broad array of Council services provided mainly by the Council's Administration and Finance Directorates. These are primarily strategic policy and internal functions such as finance, property, personnel, democratic services, legal services, ICT and economic development. The Committee has undertaken two reviews this year.

## **Major Review: Crime Prevention Resources**

The review was informed that the Council as a Strategic Partner to the Police provides resources and equipment to help crime prevention within the Borough. The Council has provided funding for two CCTV vehicles, a Crime Prevention Bus, four Speed Guns and 11 police officers, which form the Police Partnership Tasking Team.

The Committee noted that overall this partnership work has worked very well, for the benefit of the Borough's residents. However, the Committee did find that some of the Police resources were not being utilised to their maximum extent due to operational restructuring and changes within the local Police Service. The Committee was given assurances by the Police during the witness sessions that some of these resources were to be given a higher priority and would be re-promoted and used appropriately again within the Borough within the short-term.

The Committee acknowledged the excellent work of the Safer Schools Police Officers within and near schools, together with receiving information about the very high levels of satisfaction that have been received from recipients of the Older Peoples Burglar Alarms Scheme.

The conclusions of the review were that overall there was a good working partnership between the Council and the Police but it was noted that there should be a re-promotion of the use of certain policing resources, which the Council had funded.

The Committee's recommendations were subsequently supported and agreed by the Cabinet.

## **Major Review: Reducing Our Carbon Footprint**

The Committee's second review during this municipal year examined the work which was already taking place within the Council in relation to carbon reduction and looked at other initiatives which could help the Council and residents reduce carbon emissions.

During the review, the Committee was greatly encouraged at the work the Council had already carried out in relation to improving its environmental performance. Savings had been made in energy costs and the move to the procurement of greener energy, and many energy efficiency measures had been undertaken throughout all areas of the Council.

The recommendations of the review centred around four main themes which could place this Council in a stronger position in terms of carbon reduction and the production of more efficient energy. In the long term this could lead to reduced energy and fuel costs and a decrease in the annual carbon tax, which the Council is required to pay.

Two of the major recommendations, subject to detailed feasibility studies, related to potential opportunities around anaerobic digestion projects and heat and power networks which could produce cheaper, greener and locally produced heat and energy for the Council and for residents.

The review concluded that the Council was in a good position in terms of the carbon reduction work which was being carried out. To publicise this, one of the recommendations of the review was for a more detailed carbon balance sheet to promote details of the Council's carbon emissions and the mitigating measures which were taking place to reduce carbon emissions.

The Committee's recommendations were subsequently supported and agreed by the Cabinet.



# Children, Young People & Learning



## **Councillor John Riley (Chairman)**

*Other Members of the Committee 2013/14:*

Councillor Judith Cooper (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor David Benson

Councillor Lindsay Bliss

Councillor Brian Crowe

Councillor Jazz Dhillon

Councillor Dominic Gilham

Councillor John Hensley

Mr Anthony Little, Roman Catholic representative

*Officer support: Steven Maiden, Democratic Services*

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The Committee is responsible for the policy overview role in relation to education, schools, the early-years service, the youth service, and social care services for children and young people. The Committee has undertaken two major reviews during this Municipal Year with a common theme: improving the lives of children and young people who are currently in, or have recently left, the Council's care.

## **Major Review: Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent**

From the outset of this review, Members were aware and concerned that children in care are more likely to have complex needs than those who have never been in care. Sadly, many children entering the care system have been subject to significant trauma in their early years which often has a detrimental impact on their development at a critical stage of their lives. This can increase the likelihood of them going on to suffer from poorer health, lower educational achievement and poverty in their adult lives. Consequently, addressing the needs of this vulnerable group to whom Members act as "corporate parents" was considered to be of paramount importance and one on which the full weight of the Council's resources and expertise should be brought to bear.

With the objective of improving how the Council supports this vulnerable group in mind, the Committee developed recommendations around the following themes:

1. Improving health by working in partnership with health agencies;
2. Supporting care leavers' next steps; and
3. Improving access to sport, leisure and recreational activities.

Although the full range of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities were not covered, these three areas were those that Members and witnesses identified as

being key to improving the lives of those in care. As such, the review achieved a great deal by highlighting immediate work to be undertaken to improve the quality of young people's lives and to identify areas in which longer term improvements needed to be undertaken. The Committee's recommendations were subsequently presented to Cabinet and agreed.

In line with the Committee's annual cycle of business, progress on the implementation of recommendations will be formally reported back to Members in March 2015. If Members are not satisfied with progress, further work will be proposed and action taken as necessary. However, due to the urgency around gathering and acting upon health data, this area was progressed as a matter of urgency by the Health & Wellbeing Board and will be followed up by the Corporate Parenting Board on a regular basis.

### **Major Review: Improving Outcomes for Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training**

Following on from its review into corporate parenting, the Committee highlighted the area of improving attainment for care leavers as one requiring further consideration. Although the number of care leavers who were not in education, employment or training was relatively low at any one time, the Committee believed that putting measures in place to improve outcomes for the current cohort of care leavers would benefit future generations of vulnerable young people. Members also felt that, as good corporate parents, they should be seeking to provide the same level of care and support as they would provide to their own children. The implication of this was that no level of inquiry was too great in seeking to improve their individual prospects.

Consequently, this review was far reaching and considered evidence from a range of charitable, educational and business organisations working with the Borough's looked after children and care leavers. Together these organisations offered an impressive range of opportunities in skills development, gaining qualifications and work experience that supplemented the support already being provided by the Council itself. However, despite this commendable level of existing support, three areas for improvement did emerge:

1. The identification of need and how we monitor progress;
2. An awareness of the support available amongst frontline staff; and
3. The bridging of any gaps in existing and future provision.

After Cabinet's endorsement of the recommendations from this review, they will be monitored regularly by the Committee and, where appropriate, the Corporate Parenting Board through the standard reporting of data and information. Follow up will also be undertaken through the annual cycle of progress monitoring.



# Residents' & Environmental Services



**Councillor Michael White (Chairman)**

*Other Members of the Committee 2013/14:*

Councillor David Yarrow (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Lynne Allen

Councillor Shirley Harper-O'Neill

Councillor Patricia Jackson

Councillor Kuldeep Lakhmana

Councillor Carol Melvin

Councillor David Payne

*Officer support: Steven Maiden, Democratic Services*

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The Committee is responsible for the policy overview role for a diverse range of universal Council services provided mainly by the Residents Services Directorate. These services include libraries, leisure facilities, community safety, highways, planning, waste management, trading standards and others central to residents' quality of life.

In identifying a major review topic, the Committee noted that almost every area of its remit had been covered in its recent reviews in one form or another. Although there were many gaps for further investigation within these areas, the Committee did identify one notable exception to this impressive coverage: the use of water both by the Council itself and by those over whom it has influence.

## **Major Review: Using Our Water: Improving Efficiency and Developing Long-Term Strategies**

Hillingdon is located within the most water-stressed area of the country in which, despite a finite water resource, a growing population is consuming an above-average amount of water. Such a trend has obvious implications on the local environment and emphasises the importance of considering water efficiency in the Council role as a local planning authority and, more generally, as an influential organisation within the Borough.

It was with these key environmental factors in mind that the Committee decided to undertake a review that would cover a wide range of the Council's water-using operations as well as the policies that it applied through the planning function. The intention from the outset was to explore these themes in order to make a positive impact on the Borough's environment and, as a result of proposing water-saving measures, to deliver financial efficiencies in the medium to long terms.



Consequently, the primary achievement of this review was the development of recommendations that reduced the Council's consumption of water across its corporate estate and green spaces. By extension of that, the Committee also proposed measures to improve the water efficiency of those organisations on which the Council has influence through its role as a local planning authority. This would help to bring Hillingdon more in line with the London average for domestic water use as the area was above the average usage for the capital and significantly above the national average.

To achieve these improvements, recommendations were put forward by the Committee in the following areas:

1. Change of Practice - exploring how the Council might better use existing networks (including Thames Water, the Environment Agency, local leisure centres etc.) to improve water-saving practices.
2. Change of Technologies - exploring how the Council could use technologies such as smart metres, boreholes and sophisticated billing to use its water more efficiently.
3. Change of Policies - exploring the policies that the Council currently applies through its planning function and how these might be improved and applied more widely.

Subsequent to the drafting of the report and as part of pre-existing work, officers determined that it would not be expedient to implement a borehole as proposed in the report. This decision was informed by a recent agreement with Affinity Water to improve the mains water pressure available at the proposed site which constituted a cheaper and more efficient option than a borehole. However, all other recommendations were accepted by Cabinet and will be monitored in line with the Committee's annual work programme.



# Social Services, Housing & Public Health



## **Councillor Judith Cooper (Chairman)**

*Other Members of the Committee 2013/14:*

Councillor Peter Kemp (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Patricia Jackson

Councillor John Major

Councillor David Benson

Councillor Sukhpal Brar

Councillor Wayne Bridges

Councillor June Nelson

*Officer support: Charles Francis, Democratic Services*

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The Social Services, Health & Housing Policy Overview Committee is responsible for undertaking the policy overview role in relation to the Council's Adult Social Care, Public Health and Housing responsibilities. In addition to monitoring performance, considering the Local Account and receiving several overview reports on Public Health, the Committee has also completed two major reviews during 2013/2014.

## **Major Review: The Causes of Tenancy Failure and How It Can Be Prevented**

One of the main pieces of work undertaken by the Committee over the last 12 months was a review into the causes of tenancy failure and how it could be prevented. With the sharp escalation of house prices especially in London, more and more families have been driven towards tenancies within the private rented sector. The objective of the review was to examine how, why and when tenancies fail, what was currently being done to prevent failure and investigate what more could be done.

The review highlighted that there were several factors which could help to reduce the risk of tenancy failure and improve outcomes for residents. These included:

- The adoption of an effectively targeted risk-based approach;
- The implementation of cost-effective early intervention strategies;
- Further work to embed interdepartmental working across Council teams, placing tenants and residents at the heart of service delivery; and
- Working with other agencies in the lettings market to develop a consistent approach with a coherent message for tenants and residents about rights and responsibilities.

In order to improve tenancy sustainment in the Borough, and in particular help reduce the social and financial costs associated with tenancy failure, the Committee agreed there was scope to:

- Undertake a review of the existing information, advice and guidance; and
- Explore what might be done through both traditional and digital communications to advertise and make guidance universally accessible.

Finally, the review touched upon the value of developing a pro-forma with all those agencies involved with supporting tenancy sustainment so that this could be used as a tool to monitor outcomes.

The Committee acknowledged that this was a difficult task, given the Council's dual role to address homelessness and its duty as a landlord, but agreed there was plenty of scope to build upon its initial work in a possible future review.

The Committee's recommendations were subsequently supported and agreed by the Cabinet.

### **Major Review: Review of Adult Community Mental Health Services: Update on 2012/13 Review**

The Committee's second major review this year was to review and assess the progress which had been made on the Committee's 2012/13 review of Adult Community Mental Health Services, previously endorsed by Cabinet.

The aim of the original review was to make a series of recommendations to improve the service for service users and carers and enhance partnership working. The report has concluded that further work was needed on: crisis intervention; dementia; improved GP and primary care services; housing and supported housing re-provision; and preventative services.

Reviewing the resultant Action Plan, the Committee was encouraged to learn that most of its recommendations had either been actioned or were being actively pursued. The Committee also welcomed that its report was informing the Mental Health Needs Assessment which was currently being conducted by Public Health. To monitor the progress which was underway, officers proposed that the 2014/15 Committee be provided with a position statement in relation to Adult Community Mental Health Services in the autumn.



# Executive Scrutiny



## **Councillor Henry Higgins (Chairman)**

*Other Members of the Committee 2013/14:*

Councillor John Riley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Wayne Bridges

Councillor Brian Crowe

Councillor Peter Curling

Councillor Paul Harmsworth

Mr Anthony Little - Roman Catholic Diocesan representative (*on education related matters only*)

*Officer support: Mark Braddock, Democratic Services*

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The Executive Scrutiny Committee's role is to scrutinise decisions that have been taken by the Executive but have not yet been implemented. This is known as the 'call-in' power. If the Executive Scrutiny Committee considers any of these decisions to be deficient, they may refer the decision back to the Cabinet or individual decision-maker for further consideration. The Committee use a set of criteria to guide them in this process.

The Committee meets immediately after the conclusion of a meeting of Cabinet to enable Members to review the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting and give consideration to the potential for call-ins of items.

On areas where Members request further information or clarification, officers will be asked to provide a response to the Committee queries by midday on the following Monday following the Cabinet and this Committee meetings. If the Committee is still concerned about the issue, then it may refer the decision back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.

In the Council year 2013/14 the Committee requested further information on a number of Cabinet reports. However, the Committee did not "call-in" any Cabinet decisions.



# External Services Scrutiny



## **Councillor Mary O'Connor (Chairman)**

*Other Members of the Committee 2013/14:*

Councillor Dominic Gilham (Vice Chairman)

Councillor Josephine Barrett

Councillor Shirley Harper-O'Neill

Councillor Phoday Jarjussey

Councillor Judy Kelly

Councillor Peter Kemp

Councillor John Major

*Officer support: Nikki O'Halloran, Democratic Services*

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The External Services Scrutiny Committee has a broad remit to scrutinise all non-Hillingdon Council organisations whose actions affect Hillingdon residents. This Committee also undertakes the health scrutiny role as required by the Health & Social Care Act 2001 and acts as the *Crime and Disorder Committee* as defined in the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

As well as undertaking single meeting reviews (in relation to community cohesion, utility services and the Safer Hillingdon Partnership), and monitoring the performance of the local NHS Trusts (with a view to providing evidence to the CQC), the Committee has also completed two major reviews during 2013/2014.

## **Major Review: Stigma**

One of the main pieces of work undertaken by the Committee over the last 12 months was a review into the mental and physical effects of stigma. The effect that stigma has on those who are stigmatised (as well as on their family and friends) is sometimes perpetuated by the media and can be incredibly harmful. It can put additional pressure on one's mental health and, in doing so, it greatly impacts on one's physical wellbeing.

The review has highlighted a number of areas for improvement and it is hoped that progress will be made over the coming months that will have a positive impact on our residents and staff. One of the effects of stigma is stress and stress related illness was the highest recorded cause of sickness absence at the Council during 2012/2013. A number of support services have been put in place (or are planned) for Council staff to try to get them well and back to work as quickly as possible.

To help raise awareness of stigma and the impact that it can have, the Council will be working with the local primary schools to ask that they include awareness raising of stigma and its effects as part of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and

Citizenship lessons. Similarly, officers are also looking to raise awareness of stigma by attending a range of community wellbeing events taking place across the Borough.

As well as the mental health first aid training that has been organised for frontline Council employees, the Council is also working with Hillingdon Mind to look at the provision of training for frontline staff on mental health related issues as part of a wider training programme.

The Committee's review on Stigma and its recommendations were supported and agreed by the Cabinet.

## **Major Review: Anti Social Behaviour**

The Committee's second major piece of work this year was the review it commissioned on anti-social behaviour. A Working Group, chaired by Councillor Dominic Gilham, was set up to look at the way in which the Council works with its partners to deal with anti social behaviour and sought to build upon work currently undertaken by the Council and partner agencies in relation to anti social behaviour with a view to improving the outcomes for our residents.

Following this review, a range of improvements are planned which include the development of a questionnaire to identify vulnerable residents (which will complement the one already used by the Metropolitan Police Service). It is anticipated that this will enable additional support to be targeted at those most in need and could possibly be rolled out to other front line Council services.

Other planned improvements include the redesign of the electronic training package for officers, the introduction of new portable technology and the extension of the ASB survey to include more Council tenants. It is anticipated that these changes will help to improve the responsiveness of the Council and therefore improve the outcomes for residents.

The Committee's review on this and its recommendations were supported and agreed by the Cabinet.

## **Diabetes**

Towards the end of the 2012/2013 municipal year, the Committee undertook a major review into diabetes which coincided with the transfer of public health responsibilities to local authorities in April 2013. It is anticipated that the resultant report and recommendations will be passed to the relevant Cabinet Member and could possibly form the basis of a future review into the links between childhood obesity and diabetes.



# Policy Overview & Scrutiny Reviews from 2004 to 2014

*Details of all Policy Overview and Scrutiny Reviews undertaken over the last 10 years by the London Borough of Hillingdon. Copies of reviews are available on the Council's website or on request from Democratic Services.*

## **2013/14**

- Stigma: The Effect on Residents' Mental and Physical Health in the Borough
- Review of Anti Social Behaviour Partnership Working in the Borough
- Review of Adult Community Mental Health Services: Update on 2012/13 Review
- The Causes Of Tenancy Failure and How It Can Be Prevented
- Using Our Water: Improving Efficiency and Developing Long-Term Strategies
- Improving Outcomes for Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training
- Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent
- Reducing Our Carbon Footprint
- Crime Prevention Resources

## **2012/13**

- Community Cohesion and the accessing of Council services
- Crime Prevention Resources provided for Hillingdon Police by London Borough of Hillingdon and the free Older Peoples Burglar Alarms Scheme
- Leaving Care Grant
- Safeguarding of Children that go Missing
- Access to Education for Hillingdon's Vulnerable Children and Young People
- Review of the Regulations and Byelaws relating to Cemeteries and Burial Grounds within Hillingdon
- Review of local pest control services and the impact of waste management processes on them
- Review of Adult Community Mental Health Services
- Special Constables
- Diabetes

## **2011/12**

- Effectiveness of the Audit Committee and its Terms of Reference
- Operation and Function of Hillingdon First Card
- Elective Home Education
- Adoption & Permanency
- The Review of Mobile Technology and Telecommunications Equipment in Hillingdon Borough and beyond
- Personalisation and Disabilities with Reference to Transition
- Population Flows and the Impact on Housing Services in Hillingdon
- Re-Offending
- Dementia

## **2010/11**

- Census 2011 – To look at how this Council can contribute to improving the Population data for the Borough
- Personal Safety of Members of the Council when meeting with members of the public
- The Hillingdon Khat Review
- Review of Hillingdon's Town Twinning Relationships
- Review of 14-19 Education & Training
- To examine the use of Assistive Technology by Adult Social Care to Support Independent Living
- Hillingdon Centre for Independent Living (Looking at Efficiencies, Services & Fully Costed Options)
- Health Inequalities – Effect of Overcrowding on Educational Attainment and Children's Development
- Children's Self Harm

## **2009/10**

- Impact of a Pandemic in Hillingdon and the Effects on Council Services
- The Impact of Public Funded Business Support and the Success of New Business Start Up within Hillingdon and how the Council could improve Business to Business Support with the Borough's Industrial Estates
- Reviewing whether current arrangements and future plans to support inclusive practice in Hillingdon schools are effective
- Reviewing current arrangements and future plans for safeguarding children at Heathrow Airport as a port of entry
- A Review of Street Lighting
- A Review of Planning Enforcement ('Homes' in back gardens)
- A Review of Counterfeit Cosmetics and Illegally Imported Foods
- The Transformation Agenda and Direct Payments in Hillingdon
- The Hillingdon Centre for Independent Living
- Parent Abuse – Children & Young People Who Abuse Their Parents & Carers

## **2008/9**

- CCTV Strategy
- Heritage in Hillingdon
- Safeguarding Adults
- Developing the 14 – 19 education provision
- Developing the Short Breaks Provision
- Wireless town centre in Hillingdon
- Child to adult mental health service
- The nature and role of the private rented sector in Hillingdon

## **2007/8**

- Review of highways maintenance
- Community engagement



- Cleanliness of the environment
- Establishing children's trust agreements
- Review of Meeting the Needs of Troubled Young People
- Community cohesion
- Review of Voluntary sector grants
- Review of customer involvement
- Update on the review of Council's support to carers
- Development of a customer focus strategy for Council

### **2006/7**

- Anti-social behaviour strategy
- Hillingdon's strategy for a sustainable economy
- Hillingdon's approach to meeting special educational needs
- Safer Neighbourhoods Team
- The Council's property and estates waste reduction and recycling
- Establishing a Domestic Violence Court
- Hillingdon Independent Living Centre
- Housing support for vulnerable people
- Members' information needs concerning decision-making
- Members' role in Audit
- Transition from primary to secondary schools
- Widening the scope of the Education Service: Hillingdon's approach

### **2005/6**

- Council's housing strategy
- Frontline service delivery
- Impact of Heathrow Airport on the Hillingdon Health and Social Care Economy
- Local strategic partnership – Hillingdon Partners
- Progression from Primary to Secondary school
- Sport & physical education strategy
- Customer Access (complaints)
- Hillingdon Homes' performance
- Information given to residents about Council Tax
- Planning Performance – continuous improvement
- Road safety
- Wider participation in Overview & Scrutiny

### **2004/5**

- Anti-social behaviour
- Business continuity
- Health promotion in Hillingdon
- Recruitment in Hillingdon
- Recruitment and retention in Education Services
- Review of the National Service framework for Older People in Hillingdon
- Budget planning process
- Choice based lettings
- Local development framework

- Regeneration and economic development strategy
- Supporting people
- Town centre partnerships