



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Residents' Services Select Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Councillor Wayne Bridges (Chair)
Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Darran Davies
Councillor Ekta Gohil
Councillor Scott Farley (Opposition Lead)
Councillor Janet Gardner
Councillor Kamal Preet Kaur

Date: TUESDAY, 22 APRIL 2025

Time: 7.00 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 5 -
CIVIC CENTRE

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Terms of Reference

Residents' Services Select Committee

To undertake the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following Cabinet Member portfolio(s) and service areas:

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas
Cabinet Member for Community & Environment	Place	Green Spaces (incl. Woodlands, Colne Valley)
		Crematorium Services
		Waste Services
		Flooding & watercourses
		Environmental Projects (incl. Chrysalis, Street Champions, Alleygating & Ward Budgets)
	Homes and Communities	Climate Change (incl. air quality) – cross-cutting brief
		Library Services
		Theatres, Museums & Cultural Services
		Leisure Services and Centres
		Community Safety & Community Cohesion (incl. CCTV)
		Trading Standards, Environmental Health & Licensing (incl. Safety of Sports Grounds)
		Imported Food Office
		Anti-Social Behaviour and Localities
		Street Scene Enforcement
		Parking & Parking Enforcement
		Emergency Response
		Mortuary
		Planning Services (incl. planning policy, building control, planning enforcement, specialist planning & conservation areas)
		Regeneration (incl. town centres, master planning)
		Economic Development (incl. growth strategy, business engagement, inward investment & worklessness)
		Local Impacts of Heathrow Expansion (cross cutting brief)
		Local Impacts of High Speed 2 (cross-cutting brief)
Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing & Growth	Place	Housing Strategy & Commissioning (incl. housing policies & standards, assessment of housing stock size & condition and the
	Homes & Communities	

		commissioning of housing stock repairs and housing stock acquisitions)
		HRA Strategy and delivery plan (operational delivery in Place and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Property)
		Housing Management (incl. tenancy management)
		Housing Options and Homeless Prevention
		Private Sector Housing

STATUTORY COMMITTEE	<u>Statutory Crime and Disorder Scrutiny</u>
	<p>This Committee will act as a Crime and Disorder Committee as defined in the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 and carry out the bi-annual scrutiny of decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.</p> <p><u>Duty of partners to attend and provide information</u></p> <p>The Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 permits this Select Committee to make a request in writing for information to bodies who form the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (Safer Hillingdon Partnership), which includes the Police. The Committee should scrutinise the work of the partnership at least once a year and may also require the attendance before it of an officer or employee of a responsible authority or of a co-operating person or body in order to answer questions. The Committee may not require a person to attend unless reasonable notice of the intended date of attendance has been given to that person.</p>

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of interest in matters coming before this meeting
- 3 To receive the minutes of the previous meeting 1 - 8
- 4 To confirm that the items of business marked as Part I will be considered in public and those marked Part II will be considered in private

Part I - Members, Public and Press

- 5 Budget and Spending Report 9 - 14
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Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

13 March 2025

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chair), Peter Smallwood (Vice-Chair), Darran Davies, Ekta Gohil, Scott Farley (Opposition Lead), Janet Gardner and Kamal Preet Kaur</p> <p>Others Present: Councillor Eddie Lavery Joanne Howells – Street Scene Enforcement Service Manager Natasha Norton (Community Projects Officer) Neil O'Connor (Community Projects Officer) Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer) Richard Webb (Director Community Safety & Enforcement) Chief Inspector Ben Wright – Metropolitan Police</p>
58.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
59.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
60.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING DATED 19 FEBRUARY 2025 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that there were a number of outstanding action points from the previous meeting's minutes. It was agreed that these would be followed up on outside the meeting and updates circulated to Committee Members. The minutes were agreed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 19 February 2025 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
61.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items of business were in Part I and would be considered in public.</p>
62.	<p>SAFER HILLINGDON PARTNERSHIP REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Richard Webb, Director of Community Safety and Enforcement and Chief Inspector Ben Wright were in attendance to present the information in the report and respond to Members' questions.</p>

Members were provided with an overview of recent activities under the Safer Hillingdon Partnership, which focused on practical improvements such as a cuckooing protocol to support vulnerable residents and a crime and disorder survey to inform the community safety strategy.

The Chief Inspector provided a police update, highlighting key issues affecting policing, including a budget deficit leading to paused recruitment and reduced officer numbers, challenges with prisoner releases, court backlogs, and increased demand from immigration removal centres and hotels.

Members were informed that the figures set out in the report were somewhat skewed as Heathrow airport data had been included in the Hillingdon crime figures. This was an IT blip which would be rectified for future reporting.

Despite these challenges, it was noted that there had been successes in reducing homicide, violence with injury and violence against women and girls. The Committee heard that there had been a short-term spike in knife crime and burglary particularly in Ruislip and West Drayton; 3 people had now been charged with 45 aggravated burglaries. The Chief Inspector also mentioned the significant reduction in theft from motor vehicles, hate crime and the high detection rate for shoplifting. It was reported that there was a focus on driving down bike thefts.

Members asked about the statistical impact of prisoner releases and policing cuts in Hillingdon. The Chief Inspector replied that Government research indicated that 25% of people released from prison reoffended within one year and 55% within three years. Anecdotally, the Chief Inspector confirmed that released prisoners were reoffending, and the range of crimes varied.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the crime figures included any institutions within the Hillingdon footprint, including Hillingdon Hospital, Riverside, and the Immigration Centre.

Councillors asked about the number of current vacancies in the BCU and the adequacy of officer numbers. The Chief Inspector replied that the resourcing picture was healthy, with vacancies being held elsewhere, and emphasised the prioritisation of frontline BCUs.

The Committee enquired about the expected loss of officers over the next 12 to 18 months due to retirement, sickness, or injury. It was clarified that the 1800 officers were for Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon BCU, and Borough resourcing would be prioritised despite the budget gap.

Members raised concerns about the decrease in reporting of violence against women and girls and the lack of trust in the police. The Chief Inspector acknowledged the challenges and emphasised the importance of prioritising public protection and improving victim care. It was confirmed that outreach work in local communities was being undertaken to increase police visibility.

Councillors asked whether officers emphasised that rape was a crime during community engagements. In response, it was confirmed that officers delivered that message during engagements.

Reassurance in relation to the high crime figures in Heathrow Villages Ward was

	<p>sought by the Committee noting that local residents had raised concerns about this. It was explained that the majority of crimes recorded in Heathrow Villages were technical issues related to Heathrow Airport figures.</p> <p>Members asked about the effectiveness of ward panels. The Chief Inspector replied that ward panels ranged from good to very good and emphasised the importance of driving learning among chairs and officers.</p> <p>The Committee noted that some residents had lost trust in the police and questioned the accuracy of crime statistics. The Chief Inspector acknowledged the complexity of the issue and emphasised the importance of public understanding of the broader criminal justice system. He noted that reporting of crime in Hillingdon was increasing, and public confidence in the Police was higher than in many other boroughs.</p> <p>Members asked about the impact of closure orders. It was explained that closure orders had a positive impact and could be extended if necessary.</p> <p>Councillors sought further information about the Community monitoring groups mentioned in the report. The Chief Inspector explained that these groups were run by the Independent Advisory Group and that they reviewed body-worn video footage of stop and search incidents. Members asked about the advertising of community monitoring groups and the impact of the £200 threshold for shoplifting. The process was clarified, and the importance of criminal behaviour orders was highlighted.</p> <p>Further to Members' questions regarding the local crime prevention fund, the grant process was explained, and it was confirmed that the funding had been sustained at the same level for the next four years.</p> <p>Members enquired about the increase in cuckooing cases and the crime survey. The Director of Community Safety and Enforcement explained the new protocol for reporting cuckooing and the ongoing crime survey which was open until the end of March 2025. It was reported that approximately 500 responses had been received to date and this information would help officers focus their efforts accordingly to achieve the biggest impact.</p> <p>Councillors asked about youth engagement and crime statistics. The Chief Inspector explained the youth advisory group and confirmed that Hillingdon had less crime per head of population compared to other areas in London.</p> <p>The Committee raised concerns about educating residents about cuckooing. In response, the Chief Inspector and Director of Community Safety and Enforcement emphasised the importance of reporting concerns and the mechanisms in place for sharing information.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the contents of the reports and asked questions in order to clarify matters of concern or interest in the Borough.</p>
63.	<p>COMMUNITY PAYBACK SCHEME (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Joanne Howells, Street Scene Enforcement Service Manager, was in attendance to answer Members' questions in respect of the Community Payback Scheme. Apologies were received from Richard Copeland, representative of the Probation Service, who</p>

had been invited but was unable to attend.

Members asked if there were any payback schemes planned for the north of the Borough, as all listed projects seemed to be in the south. The officer replied affirmatively, stating that the Community payback scheme was open to all areas of the Borough. It was noted that at present there were 11 projects across the Borough with 13 sessions per week, completing 1185 hours of community service in February 2025 alone.

In response to Councillors' questions regarding ideas for community payback schemes, such as painting bridges in Ruislip, it was confirmed that both Members and residents could report projects centrally through the Government website or directly to the Streets Scene Enforcement team.

Councillors asked for the number of participants in the payback scheme. It was explained that each project involved a maximum of five people supervised on-site, with repeat projects arranged as needed.

Councillors asked if the payback scheme covered canals. It was confirmed that it did, provided officers engaged with the Canals and Rivers Trust.

The Committee sought further clarification regarding the rehabilitation rates of participants. Officers did not have the information to hand but agreed to follow this up with probation services.

Members suggested that community payback participants should work in areas where they had committed crimes. **It was agreed that officers would follow this up with the Probation Service.** Members heard that the scheme was currently utilised for both private and unregistered alleyways.

The Committee enquired why Councillors now had to go through the Government website in order to submit project nominations. It was clarified that, if preferred, Members could still submit their nominations directly to the Street Enforcement Team who would in turn engage with the Community Payback team. Regarding the delay in reintroducing the scheme post-COVID, it was explained that officers had been approached by the Probation Service in April 2024 and had since reintroduced the process.

In response to further questions from Members, it was confirmed that the scheme had been used to maintain empty properties in the past 12 months, following legislative procedures and risk assessments. **Officers had access to a live list of empty properties across the Borough and would explore the possibility of planning ahead.**

It was confirmed that no adverse reports or concerns in respect of the Community Payback Scheme had been received to date.

In respect of savings to the Council resulting from the use of the Community Payback Scheme, Members heard that it was not possible to confirm this at present given the newness of the scheme. **The scheme would be reviewed in approximately 12 months' time to establish its cost effectiveness.**

	<p>Councillors asked if any form of training or job opportunities had been offered to payback participants to date. Officers confirmed that they were not aware of any such initiatives, noting that the project was relatively new.</p> <p>Finally, Members asked about transportation issues between Harrow and the Borough. It was confirmed that the scheme was now more locally based and had not encountered any transportation problems.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the information in the report and provided any feedback to officers.</p>
64.	<p>THE HILLINGDON COUNCIL CHRYSALIS SCHEME <i>(Agenda Item 7)</i></p> <p>Natasha Norton and Neil O'Connor were in attendance to answer Members' questions regarding the Chrysalis Scheme. Councillor Eddie Lavery, Cabinet Member for Community and Environment was also in attendance.</p> <p>Members asked about match funding and whether opportunities to work with local businesses had been explored for projects costing over £100,000. It was confirmed that the responsibility to raise additional funds lay with the applicants, and the Council would not have the resources to find additional money.</p> <p>Councillors enquired about feedback mechanisms for rejected applications, and it was explained that applications outside published criteria were rejected, while those with potential for future funding were held in reserve.</p> <p>The Committee asked how the match funding concept was advertised to community groups. Officers responded that applicants were asked to provide estimates of required funding, and the Council investigated options if more funding was needed.</p> <p>Members questioned how the scheme was advertised and suggested more publicity in the southern part of the Borough. The Cabinet Member noted that the scheme had been widely promoted in Hillingdon People. However, it was agreed that more could be done to publicise the scheme and ensure all communities were aware of it.</p> <p>The Committee asked if inflation was considered in the funding amounts. It was confirmed that the budget had not increased, and it was rarely possible to make exceptions regarding the £100,000 limit.</p> <p>In response to queries about diversity data on applicants, Members were informed that, while detailed diversity data was not collected, information on community usage was considered. It was confirmed that information about the scheme was available in other languages.</p> <p>Members sought further clarification regarding the criteria for selecting projects. The Cabinet Member detailed the process, which included reading all applications, considering recommendations, and ensuring a spread of projects across the Borough. It was confirmed that data detailing previous funding provided to organisations was also taken into consideration.</p> <p>The Committee asked how applicants knew the cost of projects when filling in their applications. It was explained that applicants provided estimates, and the Council</p>

	<p>conducted research to verify costs.</p> <p>With regard to lead times for projects, Members were informed that applications were reviewed annually, and projects were generally completed within the financial year. It was confirmed that S106 monies could not be used for Chrysalis projects.</p> <p>At the request of the Committee, it was agreed that a briefing note for Councillors to help them engage with community groups would be prepared by officers.</p> <p>The need for more information to be provided to communities that might be missing out was emphasised. Officers highlighted the criteria for funding Council-owned assets only.</p> <p>It was noted that Ward Budget allocations were also available to Members. It was confirmed that some Councillors were using these good effect while others were not.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the information provided and submitted any comments to the Cabinet Member for consideration.</p>
65.	<p>MONITORING - UPDATE ON THE RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF ALLEY GATING IN HILLINGDON <i>(Agenda Item 8)</i></p> <p>Natasha Norton and Neil O'Connor, Community Projects Officers, were in attendance to answer Members' questions further to the Committee's review of the Council's alley gating scheme.</p> <p>Members sought further clarification regarding the promotion of the alley gating scheme in Hillingdon People. It was confirmed that one article had already been published (as set out in Appendix C to the report). Another article was in the pipeline. The corporate communications team was preparing to release the next article in the near future.</p> <p>In response to Councillors' questions regarding fly-tipping it was explained that fly-tipping within the gated alleys was likely to have emanated from residents, as these were privately owned alleyways. It was clarified that residents were responsible for maintaining these areas. With regard to flytipping outside the gates, residents were encouraged to report any such incidents to the anti-social behaviour team.</p> <p>Members sought further clarification in respect of feedback from residents regarding the two schemes installed six months ago. It was explained that, while the Council could chase feedback, residents often did not provide it after the gates were installed. The Council was waiting for the schemes to reach the six-month or twelve-week mark to gather feedback.</p> <p>Members suggested that officers could engage with local SNT teams to gather feedback on the success of the schemes. It was agreed that this was a viable option, and it was noted that the Council had close connections with SNT during the initial installation of the gates.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the updates regarding the Alley Gating Scheme following the Select Committee review that</p>

	took place in 2023.
66.	FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>) RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.
67.	WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>) Members requested specific information from the previous year's parking annual report for comparison at the next meeting in April. Democratic Services to follow up. The Committee discussed the need for more regular updates on the budget to ensure costs were kept under control. It was confirmed that senior officers would provide monthly reports on cost savings and efficiency progress. RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.47 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer on epenny@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, officers, the press and members of the public.

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BUDGET & SPENDING REPORT - SELECT COMMITTEE MONITORING

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Corporate Director(s) responsible	Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director – Homes & Communities Karrie Whelan, Corporate Director – Place
Papers with report	N/A
Ward	All

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Committee agrees the proposed approach to financial monitoring at this Select Committee as set out in this report.

HEADLINES

2. This monitoring report will provide an overview of financial performance relevant to the Select Committee. The proposed structure and approach to this report is detailed in the Supporting Information section below. Corporate Directors, supported by their Finance Business Partners, will attend the meeting to provide further details and clarifications.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3. APPROACH

4. The establishment of this select committee is part of our commitment to transparency and ensuring rigorous scrutiny of the council's finances.
5. Table 1 below provides a detailed breakdown of the Residents' Committee's budget by portfolio and service area. It includes adjustments made to the 2024/25 budget for inflation, corporate adjustments, growth and savings.
6. Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the 2025/26 savings by portfolio, and Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the 2025/26 growth by portfolio.
7. Tables 4, 5 and 6 provide a breakdown of the HRA budget for 2025/26.
8. In the next select committee meeting on 12th June and in future meetings, we will report on the 2025/26 budget as shown Table 1. These reports will cover:
 - How much has been spent during the year to date against the profiled budget.
 - The Area's delivery against the savings that are expected of it and any forecast variance.
 - Where there are variances against the budget as a whole and what is being done to mitigate any adverse variances.

9. OVERALL FINANCIAL POSITION

10. Future reports will deal with the issues as set out in section 8 above.

11. SAVINGS

12. It is essential that the select committee increases the ability for the council to deliver its services within budget. The report will provide an update on the £9.949m savings to be achieved by the end of 2025/26.
13. Table 2 also outlines the cross-cutting savings proposals that are being jointly led by corporate directors. These include initiatives such as the Target Operating Model, Procurement Savings, and the Review of Employee Terms and Conditions.

14. RISKS & MITIGATIONS

15. The report will identify key risks, along with the actions being taken to mitigate these risks.

Table 1: 2025/26 Budget Position

Portfolio	Service	24/25 Budget	Inflation	Corporate Adjs	Growth	Savings	Budget Transfers	25/26 Budget
		(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)
Community & Environment	R32 Head of Direct Care Provision (HSC)	43	7	0	0	-3	0	47
Community & Environment	R74 Director Environment and Leisure (Residents)	28,620	763	0	1,643	-3,019	0	28,007
Community & Environment	R76 Head of Transport & Town Centres Projects	536	12	0	230	-234	0	544
Community & Environment	R78 Corporate Director Place	361	-57	0	0	0	0	304
Community & Environment	R82 Community Safety and Enforcement	-3,147	318	0	335	-2,321	0	-4,815
Community & Environment	R83 Community Services	3,927	174	0	0	-168	0	3,933
Community & Environment	R9A A Health & Safety and Emergency	143	4	0	0	-1	0	146
Community & Environment Total		30,483	1,221	0	2,208	-5,746	0	28,166
Planning, Housing & Growth	R81 Housing	7,036	91	0	5,021	-3,634	0	8,514
Planning, Housing & Growth	R82 Community Safety and Enforcement	21	13	0	0	-4	0	30
Planning, Housing & Growth	R9B B Director Planning, Regeneration and Environment	1,641	168	0	0	-565	0	1,244
Planning, Housing & Growth Total		8,698	272	0	5,021	-4,203	0	9,788
Residents' Total		39,181	1,493	0	7,229	-9,949	0	37,954

Table 2: 2025/26 Savings Proposals

Portfolio	Savings Proposal	2025/26 (£'000)
Community & Environment	Charging for Green Waste (subject to consultation)	-2,500
Community & Environment	Christmas Lighting sponsorship model	-230
Community & Environment	Fees & Charges Uplifts	-705
Community & Environment	Review Green Flag Award Scheme	-43
Community & Environment	Hillingdon in Bloom and the Autumn Show.	-17
Community & Environment	Increase MVF by 1%	-195
Community & Environment	Review Seasonal Hanging Basket Displays	-92
Community & Environment	Review of Burial Fees	-200
Community & Environment	Review of Crematoria & Cemetery Charges	-300
Community & Environment	Beck Theatre Parking	-50
Community & Environment	Review Hillingdon Voluntary Centre Grants	-30
Community & Environment	Increase in Car Park Revenue from increased demand	-50
Community & Environment	Review Library Stock Budget	-30
Community & Environment	Meeting Room Hire Revenue in Libraries	-40
Community & Environment	Review Out of Hours Noise Nuisance Service	-220
Community & Environment	Review & Charge Parking penalty level banding	-600
Community & Environment	Pay and Display Machine Cash Collection	-66
Community & Environment	Review Domestic Support Contracts	-79
Community & Environment	Platinum Jubilee Leisure Centre Management Fee	-80
Community & Environment	Increase in Parking Enforcement Charges	-140
Community & Environment	Review of Stronger Communities Service	-79
Community & Environment Total		-5,746
Planning, Housing & Growth	Increase MVF by 1%	-109
Planning, Housing & Growth	Environmental Specialists Staffing Costs Realignment	-66
Planning, Housing & Growth	Residents' service Vacant Post review	-39
Planning, Housing & Growth	Building Control Fee Uplift	-16
Planning, Housing & Growth	Discretionary Planning Fees Uplift	-13
Planning, Housing & Growth	Fast Track Planning Service	-60
Planning, Housing & Growth	Statutory Planning Fee Increase - Householders	-300
Planning, Housing & Growth	Increase Leased temporary accommodation	-1,600
Planning, Housing & Growth	Temporary Accommodation - re-negotiate to reduce rates with all B&B / private sector providers	-500
Planning, Housing & Growth	Temporary Accommodation Commissioning – Review Zero / Low Subsidy Accommodation	-1,500
Planning, Housing & Growth Total		-4,203
Residents' Total – excluding cross-cutting		-9,949
Cross-Cutting	Target Operating Model	-5,000
Cross-Cutting	Procurement Saving	-600
Cross-Cutting	Employee Terms and Conditions Review	-100
Cross-Cutting Total		-5,700
Residents' Total - including cross-cutting		-15,649

Table 3: 2025/26 Growth

Portfolio	Growth	2025/26 (£'000)
Community & Environment	Christmas Lighting Growth	230
Community & Environment	Waste Disposal Levy & Contracts	1,643
Community & Environment	Imported Food Office	335
Community & Environment Total		2,208
Planning, Housing & Growth	Homelessness Prevention	5,021
Planning, Housing & Growth Total		5,021
Residents' Total		7,229

Table 4: 2025/26 Budget Position – HRA

Portfolio	Service	24/25 Budget	Inflation	Corporate Adjs	Growth	Savings	Budget Transfers	25/26 Budget
		(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)
Housing Revenue Account	R61 HRA Operating Budgets	39,454	4,070	0	1,935	-1,000	0	44,459
	R62 Capital Programme Financing	41,309	0	-262	00		0	41,048
	R63 HRA Rental Income	-80,662	-4,743	0	00		0	-85,405
	R64 HRA Contribution to / from Balances	-101	0	0	00		0	-101
Housing Revenue Account total		0	-673	-262	1,935	-1,000	0	0

Table 5: 2025/26 Growth – HRA

Portfolio	Growth	2025/26 (£'000)
Housing Revenue Account	Gas Servicing backlog on additional stock	250
Housing Revenue Account	Extractor Fans/Ventilation Servicing - Due to change in legislation	250
Housing Revenue Account	Legal Disrepair in tackling increase in cases anticipated	175
Housing Revenue Account	Materials Purchases - price uplifts	150
Housing Revenue Account	Housing Management Restructure	110
Housing Revenue Account	Corporate Recharges related	1,000
Housing Revenue Account Total		1,935

Table 6: 2025/26 Savings - HRA

Portfolio	Savings Proposal	2025/26 (£'000)
Housing Revenue Account	Corporate Recharges related	(1,000)
Housing Revenue Account Total		(1,000)

PERFORMANCE DATA

N/A

RESIDENT BENEFIT

Regular monitoring of financial performance ensures that spending and savings targets are met, which supports the efficient delivery of services to residents. By closely tracking expenditure and identifying variances, the council can take timely corrective actions to address overspending and mitigate risks. This also enhances public transparency and accountability, providing residents with confidence that their Council is managing finances prudently and prioritising their needs. Overall, regular monitoring supports safeguarding the Council's finances and the delivery of quality services to residents.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This is primarily a finance report and the implications are set out in the main body of the report above.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from regular monitoring of the council's finances by select committees.

Democratic Services advise that effective overview and scrutiny arrangements require access to the information under the committee's purview and, in accordance with the 2024 Statutory Scrutiny Guidance, such information includes finance and risk information from the Council, and its partners where relevant.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

APPENDICES

NIL

Annual Landlord Service Complaints submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Rod Smith – Housing Landlord Programme Manager
Papers with report	Appendix A – Template Housing Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report Appendix B - 'Effective involvement of governing bodies' – Housing Ombudsman Service Appendix C - Annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Appendix D – Updated Complaints Action Plan 2024/25
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report presents to Residents' Services Select Committee the outcomes from the management of formal complaints by the Landlord Service during 2024/25. The Service is required to manage formal complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman 'Complaint Handling Code'. This annual process culminates in the production of an annual 'Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report' which is submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by June each year. This submission must include comments from the governance structure in place for the Landlord Service. This report therefore provides the opportunity to include comments from the Select Committee within the final report prior to its publication. Complaints handling within the Landlord Service will continue to form part of the wider annual corporate complaints report which is submitted each autumn to Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee. Compliant complaint management is an integral part of the Social Housing Regulatory framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1. Comments on the data, learning and feedback captured by the Landlord Service during 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A – Template Housing Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report**
- 2. Notes the Housing Ombudsman Service Guidance set out in Appendix B on 'Effective involvement of governing bodies'**
- 3. Endorses the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code set out in Appendix C**
- 4. Notes the updated Complaints Action Plan – Appendix D which was produced following the 2023/24 self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code and published in June 2024**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

The new proactive regulatory regime for social housing providers came into force from April 2024. Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017 and the death of Awaab Ishak in 2020, the government has been working with the social housing sector and tenants to strengthen the voice of residents and introduce new legislation to ensure the quality of homes. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 forms a new era of regulation for the social housing sector, aiming to give tenants greater powers and improve access to quick and fair solutions to problems. Further information on the full regulatory framework can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing>

Key to the objective of driving up standards has been the development of a set of four new consumer standards. These outcome based standards apply to all social landlords, including the Council. Under the new standards landlords will need to:

- ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs

The four consumer standards are:

- The **Safety and Quality Standard** which requires landlords to provide safe and good-quality homes for their tenants, along with good-quality landlord services.
- The **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** which requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so they can access services, raise concerns when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.
- The **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** which requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.
- The **Tenancy Standard** which sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes, as well as requirements for how tenancies are managed by landlords.

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard makes specific reference to complaints including the following expectations:

'Registered providers must ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple, accessible and publicised.'

Registered providers must provide accessible information to tenants about:

- *how tenants can make a complaint about their registered provider*

- *the registered provider's complaints policy and complaints handling process*
- *what tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled, and*
- *the type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services'.*

The Code of Practice, which seeks to amplify aspects of the Consumer Standards and how they should be interpreted, goes on to say in relation to complaints that:

Addressing complaints fairly, effectively and promptly is essential for registered providers to build trust with tenants. Registered providers should make every effort to ensure that tenants are aware of their complaints process. Tenants should be able to raise a complaint easily and should be listened to by their landlord when they do so.

In addressing complaints, registered providers should ensure that they provide regular updates to affected tenants about the progress they have made to resolve the complaint fairly and the next steps they plan to take, with clear timescales.

In meeting this outcome, registered providers are expected to consider relevant requirements of other bodies, including those of the Housing Ombudsman and specifically their Complaint Handling Code.

Complaints present registered providers with valuable insight into tenants' experiences of interacting with their landlord. Registered providers should make good use of this learning in order to improve services for tenants, bringing about change at a service or organisational level where appropriate. As part of this learning, registered providers should analyse trends and themes from complaints data.

Working alongside the Regulator of Social Housing is the Housing Ombudsman Service. Further information on the Housing Ombudsman Scheme can be found at <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk> The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 empowered the Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures members of the Scheme should have in place for considering complaints. This is mandatory for social housing landlords. This statutory code came into effect from 1st April 2024 alongside the Ombudsman's duty to monitor compliance. The Code Compliance Framework sets out the requirements placed upon social landlords as part of making its statutory annual submission by 30th June each year. The Code Compliance Framework can be found at <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>

The Landlord Service is now actively progressing completion of its second annual submission. The Council's 2023/24 [first] annual submission was uploaded to the Housing Ombudsman in June 2024 and, in line with requirements placed upon social landlords, the following documents were published on the Council's website:

- Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report
- Self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Governing body's response to the 2023/24 Housing Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report

In relation to the 2024/25 submission and to better align the Council's approach to governance in this area of compliance, the Landlord Service will report into the Residents' Service Select Committee each year ahead of the annual submission date of 30th June. This provides the opportunity to include comments from the Select Committee within the final report, prior to publication. Complaints handling within the Landlord Service will continue to form part of the wider annual corporate complaints report which is submitted each autumn to Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee.

Effective involvement of governing bodies

Housing complaints should perform a strategic role providing an essential source of intelligence on evolving risks and performance. They have the potential to identify issues which are not being identified elsewhere and provide insight and learning to help improve resident services.

A landlord's governance structure has a critical role to play in making this happen and ensuring a positive complaints culture within their organisation. The Compliant Handling Code sets the standards for compliant handling. It is a condition of membership that landlords comply with the Code and landlords are required to self-assess against it, reporting the outcome to their governing body. In summary terms complaints can help governing bodies effect change. They can help manage risks, enrich resident insight and engagement, reduce the cost of failure and evidence compliance. In organisations delivering high quality services complaints are valued as an opportunity to learn, an early warning of flawed processes, policies or behaviours, and to identify areas for improvement. Further information from the Housing Ombudsman Service on the effective involvement of governing bodies is included as **Appendix B**.

As part of its approach to scrutiny the Landlord Service has adopted a standard template for reporting purposes in order to 'build-up' the annual report via a series of rolling quarterly updates. These updates include documented feedback on the preceding quarters complaints from the tenant 'special interest group' on complaints and are reviewed by Corporate Management Team and Cabinet Member leads for the Landlord Service. This report and associated feedback cover the period April 2024 to March 2025. The template report is attached as **Appendix A**.

National Context

In January 2025, the number of complaints recorded across the UK topped 30,000 for the first time. By the end of March, Housemark [the leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector] estimate that the sector will have recorded 345,000 formal complaints in 2024/25. This increase of 20% from 2023/24 comes amid signs that previously 'masked' informal complaints are now being formally recorded.

These figures are still low compared to the number of Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) survey respondents who felt they had made a complaint to their landlord. [TSMs are a statutory data set including management data and tenant perception data which social landlords have been required to capture and submit to the Regulator annually since April 2023]. With Regulator of Social Housing data suggesting that almost 3 in 10 English social housing tenants believe they made a complaint in 2023/24, the annual volume of complaints could be over one million in England alone.

Housemark qualitative and cost data is uncovering examples of landlords making significant investment in complaint handling – with an increase in specialist complaints staff accompanied by a higher profile within the organisation structure. For example, elevating complaints coordination from an administrative role to a dedicated managerial role. The approved restructure of the Housing Management Service includes such a new dedicated role which has been evaluated at ‘Principal Officer A’ grade. This role will work across the Landlord Service with a particular focus on ‘learning’ as a direct result of complaint handling from 2025/26.

Raising the profile of complaints handling is not only related to ‘learning’ and increasing the volume of recorded complaints but is also linked to satisfaction. Latest Housemark analysis has found that landlords with higher complaints volumes also tend to have better than average complainant satisfaction rates. Where satisfaction rates are below average, the number of recorded complaints is also much lower. The message is that better complaints recording feeds through to higher satisfaction as landlords learn from complaints and address root cause issues.

Figure 1- National Compliant Trends

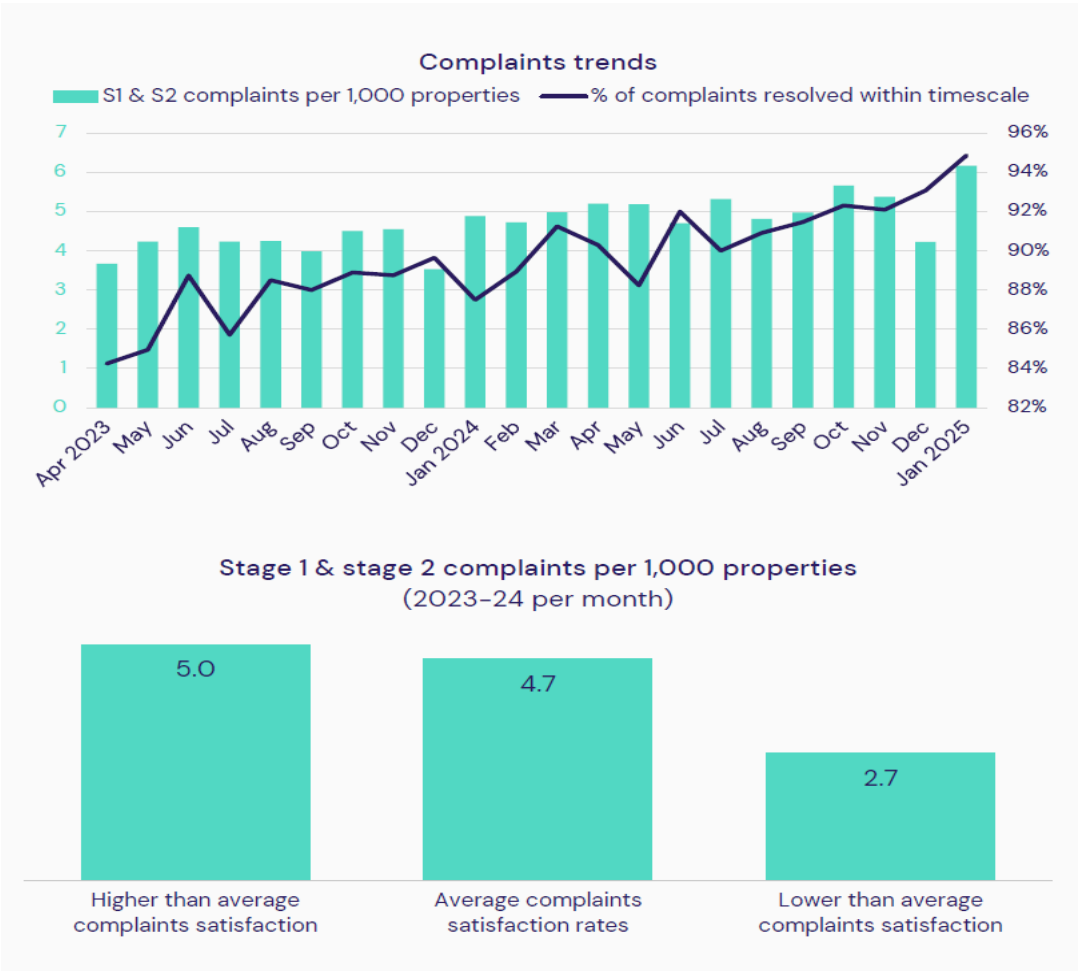


Figure 1 above shows the national trend for all English social housing providers to January 2025. For the ‘base year’ [2023/24], higher than average complaints satisfaction was associated with landlords recording 5 or more complaints per 1,000 properties in management and lower than

average compliant satisfaction was associated with landlords recording 2.7 or less complaints per 1,000 properties in management.

Figure 2 below shows the Council's position relative to peers within its London and ALMO benchmarking group. This data shows that levels of formal complaints recorded by the Council has increased over the rolling 12 month period and peaked in October 24. Complaints received per 1,000 properties in management was 5.7 in March 25 which was still well below the median position of 9.94 and the lower quartile position of 7.72 in February 2025.

In relation to the Council's TSM perception feedback from tenants on complaints; 'Satisfaction with approach to complaints handling', 23.50% of tenants were satisfied in 2023/24 compared to 25.44% in 2024/25. Based upon the Housemark analysis, the clear message for the Landlord Service is to improve tenant access to the complaints process, boost the total number of complaints captured and maximise the potential for learning from outcomes generated.

Figure 2 – Formal Complaints – London & Arm's Length Management Organisation Benchmarking Group

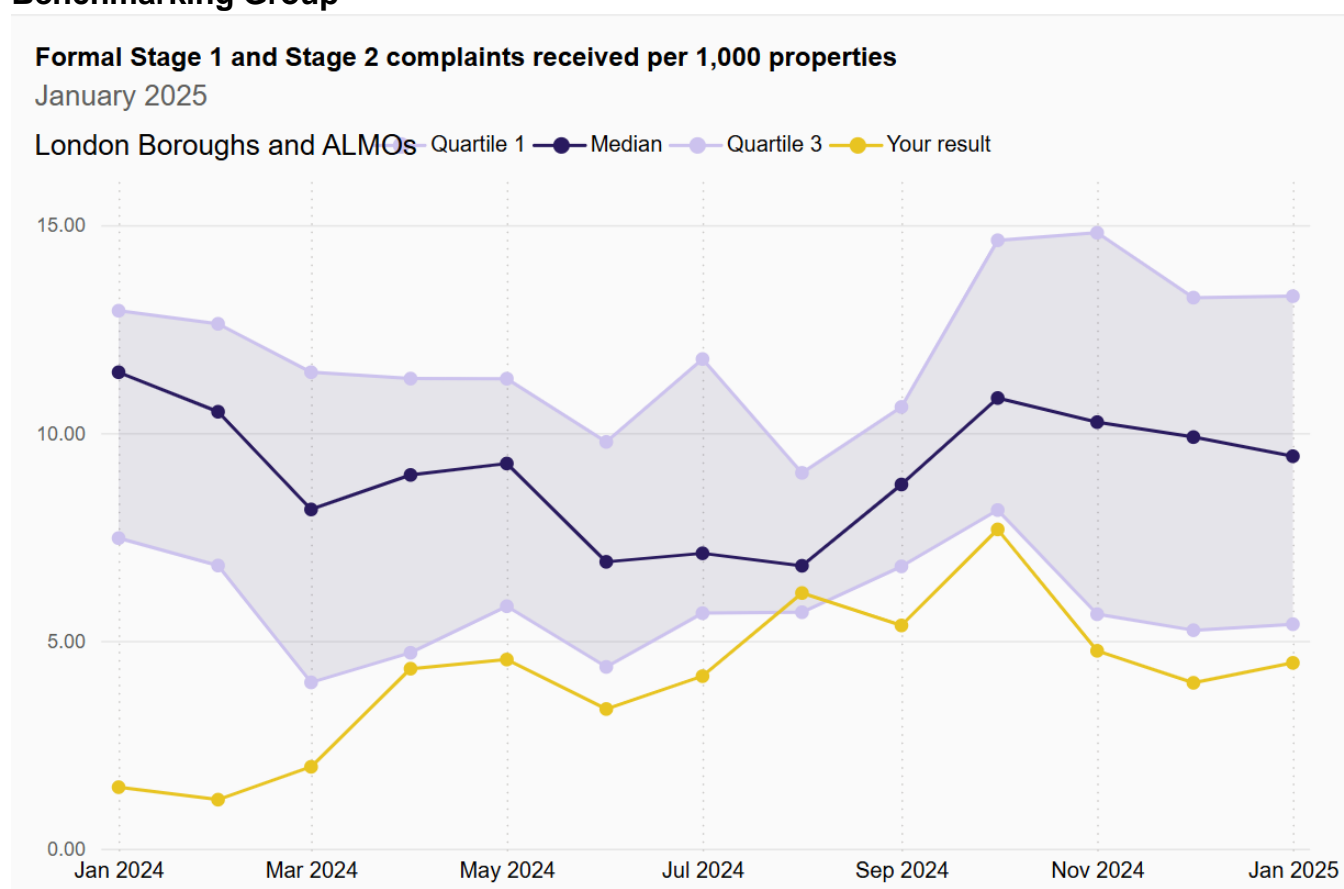


Figure 2 above demonstrates that the number of formal complaints received by the Landlord Service has been low compared with its London benchmarking group. In April 2024 the definition of complaints was aligned with the Complaint Handling Code and further promotional work with tenants undertaken in relation to accessing the complaints process. This has had a positive impact on overall complaint numbers but in relative terms they still remain low on a comparative basis. The Housing Ombudsman has clearly articulated that, as a single measure, an increase in

overall complaint numbers should not be viewed negatively by landlords but can demonstrate a more 'open' and positive complaints culture. The value of complaints can also be seen in terms of:

- An unfiltered source of insight
- An insight in terms of what is important to residents and
- A way of identifying if policies and practices are generating unfair outcomes for residents.

Moving forward the Services must, in conjunction with residents, continue to explore alternative approaches to promote access to the Council's complaints handling process.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Headline outcomes - Housing Complaints – April 2024 to March 2025

As set out in **Table 1** below, the number of stage 1 complaints received each quarter has remained fairly consistent with an average of just under 104 per quarter. The number of corresponding stage 2 complaints gradually increased during the course of the year with a notable slow down during the final quarter after a 'high' during the third quarter. The proportion of stage 1 complaints progressing to a stage 2 complaint was approximately 1 in 5 during the first half of the year, increasing to 1 in 2 during the third quarter and falling back to 1 in 4 in the final quarter. Overall, with a 1 in 3 conversion rate from a stage 1 to a stage 2 complaint, this would indicate that tenants remain dissatisfied with outcomes communicated to them and or the resolutions proposed or delivered. Moving forward, underlying reasons for the conversion rate from stage 1 to Stage 2 requires further investigation by Services with outcomes being reported to tenants.

The Repairs Service is already addressing this 'conversion rate' challenge by having a clear focus on providing stage 1 responses which are both comprehensive and readily understood by the complainant. This necessitates providing responses in 'plain English' and moving away from technical jargon and related text which may not be readily understood by the tenant and detracts from the core message of complaint resolution being shared. The Housing Management Service is ensuring that every complainant is personally contacted to ensure that the underlying reason for the complaint is fully understood and so that a tailored resolution can be proposed. During the final quarter of the year there were 111 stage 1 complaints and only 29 progressed to stage 2. This conversion rate of 26% reversed the trend for the preceding two quarters. The number of complaints escalated to / considered by the Housing Ombudsman remain relatively low and fell during the second half of the year. Of the 11 complaints a total of 8 were upheld. Details of cases upheld are set out in the template report attached as **Appendix A**.

Table 1 – Complaint summary by quarter

Quarter 24/25	Stage 1	Stage 2	% movement stage 1 to 2	Considered by Ombudsman	Upheld by Ombudsman
1	99	23	23	4	2
2	106	29	27	3	3
3	99	49	49	1	0
4	111	29	26	3	3
Total	415	130	31%	11	8

Table 2 – Complaints response times

Quarter 24/25	Stage 1 % within 10 working days	Stage 2 % within 20 working days	No of Extensions granted Stage 1 - 2	
1	52	70	N/A	N/A
2	20	90	N/A	N/A
3	72	80	N/A	N/A
4	83	69	19	4
Overall compliance	*57%	*78%	19	4

*Based upon 415 stage 1 and 130 stage 2 complaints.

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code sets stage 1 complaint response times at 10 working days and stage 2 response times at 20 working days. **Table 2** above shows that, for stage 1 complaint response times, there has been a notable improvement in the second half of the year but overall compliance remained at 57% by the end of March 2025. The overall number of stage 2 complaints was lower and compliance with the 20 working day target was much higher with an overall compliance rate of 78% by the end of March 2025. This is an area of complaints handling where performance needs to improve. This will necessitate a better understanding of any particular areas of the Service which are under-performing, the setting of improvement targets, and to share this information with tenants.

Under the Complaints Handling Code it is legitimate to agree an extension to the 10 / 20 day target response time with the complainant. This would be the case where the complaint is particularly complex, involving a number of service areas and collation of information. From the last quarter of the year it has been possible for data on extensions to be captured and recorded. With 19 stage 1 extensions granted in the last quarter, this represents 17% of total stage 1 complaints. With 4 stage 2 extensions granted in the last quarter, this represents 14% of total stage 2 complaints. Moving forward there is a clear need to better understand the reasons for these extensions and to report the outcomes to tenants. Of the 23 extensions granted in the final quarter of the year, 12 related to the need for additional evidence and 11 were associated with the complexity of the case. The distribution of extensions granted by function are set out in **Table 3** below:

Table 3 – Extensions by service function in quarter 4

Service area	No of Extensions
Heating	4
Tenancy Management	8
Repairs & Maintenance	7
Planned works	2
Property & Estates	2
Total	23

During 2024/25 the Complaints Team have also been maintaining a central log of all 'reasonable adjustments' made to facilitate complaints by tenants. A total of 15 reasonable adjustments have been recorded this year. All make reference to members of the team taking the complaint by telephone and on one occasion it was agreed to read the final complaint response back to the tenant.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The template report for 2024/2025 contains feedback from tenants who participated in the 'Special Interest Group - Compliments, Complaints and Learning'. This section of the report contains valuable insight and feedback from residents. Where appropriate, management responses have been inserted alongside issues raised by tenants. The group has met on three occasions during October 2024, January 2025 and March 2025.

The **Appendix A** Template Report, which has been updated by Service Teams throughout the year, contains documented references to key areas of learning and associated change which have been implemented following complaint analysis. All changes made seek to improve outcomes for tenants. A selection of learning and change is set out below:

Learning captured	Impact of change
Dissatisfaction with levels of communication associated with planned works	Residents more engaged and informed in relation to the delivery of planned works contracts
Concerns associated with 'drift' linked to the need for 'recall works'.	Target introduced to on recall works orders for contractor to attend within 10 days.
Challenge associated with the keeping of pets.	Review of Pets Policy to make outcomes clearer and fairer.
Dissatisfaction with complaints handling / responses.	<p>Template letter introduced requiring the understanding of the complaint to be clearly set out and the associated resolution to project consistent communication.</p> <p>Mandatory requirement for all complainants to be contacted as an integral part of complaint handling.</p> <p>All responses to include what action has been taken rather than what the Council will do, based upon feedback regarding failures to deliver agreed actions.</p>
Recurrent theme associated with 'delays' in progressing service requests leading to complaints.	<p>Q4 workshops arranged with tenant representatives and Services to document core service standards.</p> <p>Housing Management business case restructure approved to result in smaller</p>

	patch sizes and a more personal and responsive service to residents once implemented.
Dissatisfaction with ASB case handling.	Joint training undertaken with Tenancy Management and ASB Localities Team staff.
Concerns regarding 'drift' in completing repairs.	Monthly toolbox talks with Repairs Operatives include a clear focus on service improvement including reminders on arranging return visits to tenants whilst still on site.
Disconnection between learning from complaints and service delivery by contractors.	Learning outcomes and compliant issues incorporated into monthly contractor review meetings to ensure outcomes are embedded into their service provision.
Poor / delayed response to concerns raised by tenants occupying the two HRA temporary accommodation sites.	Service review resulting in ending our management out-sourcing arrangements / management brought in-house to improve responsiveness of service provision and response to concerns raised.
Concerns regarding the management of 'low level' ASB.	Production of a good neighbour guide and an associated toolkit to support staff and residents in better managing neighbour related issues.
Rent payments being assigned to the wrong rent account when paying 'over the phone'.	All payment references are now confirmed to the tenant before taking payment to avoid mis-posting of rent monies.
Tenants entering into rent arrears repayment arrangements which are not sustainable.	Income and expenditure forms are now completed as an integral part of entering into repayment arrangements.
Re-occurring issue within the responsive Repairs Service regarding 'house-keeping issues'	Issues associated with a lack of notes on job histories and outdated telephone numbers on job orders addressed with the team via toolbox talks and 'spot checks' introduced.
Resident concerns regarding ongoing ASB presenting in a number of tower blocks including rough-sleeping, drug taking and damage to property.	Initiative rolled out culminating in a number of Closure Orders secured which have secured a positive impact on presenting issues and positive feedback from residents.

The management team have also made increased use of the resources which are available to landlords from the Housing Ombudsman. This includes a range of courses / webinars and access to the following published reports:

- **Insight reports** – The Housing Ombudsman publishes insight reports every three months. These reports provide insight into complaints data, a selection of valuable case studies and key learning points and recommendations for the sector. The aim is to help landlords to make improvements and deliver better services for residents.

- **Spot-light reports** - These reports concentrate on an area of service provision where the Ombudsman sees a high amount of failure through their casework. They examine the issues within a theme and set out recommendations.
- **Special investigation reports** – these reports follow an investigation carried out under paragraph 49 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, which allows the Ombudsman to conduct further investigations beyond an individual complaint to establish whether any presenting evidence is indicative of a systemic failing.
- **Quarterly compliant handling reports** – Complaint Handling Failure Orders are issued in relation to failings in an individual case where the Ombudsman has taken reasonable steps to seek engagement from a landlord, but the resident remains unable to progress a complaint. Orders are used, along with other information from cases handled, to generate insight about individual landlords. This can be used as the basis of discussions if there are continued concerns over a sustained period.
- **Learning from severe maladministration** – this relatively new report looks at recent severe maladministration findings. The report groups together several cases, potentially involving different landlords, to examine related themes and lessons, including where vital opportunities were missed to improve outcomes for residents.

The management team have made particular use of 'insight reports'. In relation to issues of dampness, condensation and mould [DCM], this included a 'self-assessment' against the themes and recommendations brought forward by the Housing Ombudsman and the subsequent production of an action plan and a DCM Policy document. The influential spot-light report on 'attitudes, respect and rights – relationship of equals' was used in January 2025 to bring forward a draft Policy on 'Vulnerable Residents and Reasonable Adjustments' which will be discussed further with tenant groups. Moving forward officers will be evaluating more of their work and practices against the output provided by the Housing Ombudsman to support 'learning' and the delivery of better outcomes for tenants.

Next steps

The Service will complete the Housing Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report, incorporating feedback from tenants, Landlord Board, CMT and Cabinet Member leads and Residents' Services Select Committee to enable the final report to the Housing Ombudsman to be uploaded and incorporating the necessary 'governing body response' along with the completed self-assessment – **Appendix C**.

As part of supporting and embedding a culture of change across the Landlord Service workforce in relation to managing and learning from complaints, a monthly 'complaints panel' has been established where Service leads can bring forward and discuss complaint related matters including:

- Complaint numbers and themes
- Understanding regarding 'avoidable escalation triggers' to stage 2 complaints
- Understanding regarding 'avoidable escalation triggers' to review and determination by the Housing Ombudsman
- Housing ombudsman judgements
- 'Learning', 'change' and 'improvement' captured as a result of complaint management

- Good practice which will positively influence tenant satisfaction associated with compliant handling
- Discuss any current or new 'spot-light reports' issued by the Housing Ombudsman and how this might impact service delivery following 'self-assessment' against any Ombudsman recommendations

The clear priority tasks for 2025/2026 are to improve the depth and breadth of complaints data which is brought forward and shared with tenants and the Landlord Service governance structure to better evidence the impact on tenants from our learning. We will work with tenants to understand what matters to them and what data will support them in reviewing and scrutinising the Council's approach to complaints handling. From a review of complaints undertaken in 2024/25, this data set could include, but not be limited to:

- Identifying and understanding where issues associated with 'fairness' and 'respect' are underlying within complaints raised
- Improved identification and analysis of trends and themes
- Complaint volumes by Service area
- Equalities data associated with complaints captured including; ethnicity, age group and gender.
- Complaint outcomes by Service area [Not upheld, partially upheld, upheld]
- Underlying reasons for complaints progressing from stage 1 to stage 2 complaints
- Compliance with the Complaints handling code target response times by Service area
- Reasons for the granting of extensions to complaint response times by Service area
- Resident satisfaction with complaint handling
- Housing Ombudsman Service casework including numbers against the full list of possible findings e.g. Maladministration, service failure, reasonable redress or whether the case is out of jurisdiction.
- The values of compensation paid
- An overview of training delivered to positively influence the culture of staff working on Complaints

Based upon its experience and performance during 2024/25, the Landlord Service has embraced the expectations set down by both the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Regulator of Social Housing. Embedding a more positive culture in relation to complaints handling across all staff groups is key in this context along with working jointly with tenants to identify and learn from this aspect of tenant feedback to improve services and outcomes for tenants. To support this continuing journey, the Landlord Service will work with tenants to develop a suite of measures which will be more widely reported and help to drive improvements in performance and changes in behaviours.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Template Housing Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report

Appendix B – Housing Ombudsman guidance on 'Effective involvement of governing bodies'

Appendix C - Annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Appendix D - updated Complaints Action Plan which was produced following the 2023/24 self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code and published in June 2024

**Housing Complaints Performance
and Service Improvement Report for the period
1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025**

1. Introduction

Hillingdon Council is required by the Housing Ombudsman Service to demonstrate compliance with the Complaint Handling Code. This is the document that we will be using to provide information showing our performance against the Complaint Handling Code along with service changes, improvements and learning which has been made throughout the year. It will be used to provide quarterly performance, activity and outcome data to Landlord Board, the two Corporate Management Team Leads, Cabinet Member Leads with responsibility for Housing, our Complaints & Complements Special Interest Group and Residents' Services Select Committee.

2. Background information

a. Definition of a complaint

In general terms a complaint can be considered as: *"an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals."*

b. Definition of a Service Request

A Service Request is defined as a request from a resident/people to the Council requiring us to take action to put something right. Whilst Service Requests are not complaints, they may contain expressions of dissatisfaction, and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman advise that we should have the opportunity to deal with a Service Request before a complaint is made.

c. Who can complain?

Anyone who uses our services, including services provided on our behalf by a third party such as a contractor, can complain to us.

d. Exclusions

- although a complaint can be submitted against Council **policy**, it should be noted that Council policy cannot be overturned through the complaint process as this can only be done through the statutory decision-making procedure;
- we will not deal with issues through the complaint procedure where a claim has been made in a court such as a disrepair claim; and
- issues relating to employment or application for employment with the Council cannot be addressed through the complaint procedure.

e. Accessibility and Awareness

Complaints can be made quickly and easily 24 hours a day, seven days a week via our website at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints. If a reasonable adjustment is needed to facilitate access to our complaint process, complainants are asked to call the complaint team.

f. Complaint Handling Staff

All staff within the team are experienced and fully trained to deal with complaints, including any reasonable adjustments required by vulnerable residents. They have also been provided with additional training by a member of staff from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on 16 May 2024.

g. The Complaint Handling Process

The complaint procedure that applies to the Housing Ombudsman Service is the corporate complaints procedure which was revised on 1 April 2024 to fully align with the Complaint Handling Code operated by the Housing Ombudsman Service and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Our procedure:

- allows managers to address issues of unsatisfactory service and seek improvements in service delivery;
- ensures that customers are treated fairly and consistently;
- ensures that a proper and adequate investigation takes place before any action is taken;
- requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered in line with the Equality Act 2010 and appropriate training is provided for staff; and
- safeguards the integrity and good reputation of the Council.

h. Complaint Stages

The Council has a two-stage complaint process which is in line with the Complaint Handling Code.

i. Putting things right

Where we have identified injustice or hardship suffered, we will always try to put the complainant back to the position they would have enjoyed before the situation went wrong. Types of redress include:

- an apology;
- providing the service that should have been received at first;
- taking action or making a decision that should have been done before;
- reconsidering an incorrect decision;
- improving procedures so that similar problems do not occur again; and
- if after an investigation by Council staff or the Ombudsman, it is concluded that because of maladministration there is no practical action that would provide a full and appropriate remedy or if the complainant has sustained loss or suffering, financial compensation may be the most appropriate approach.

j. Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent complaints

If we consider that a complainant is unreasonable or unreasonably persistent, we will refer the matter to a senior manager, who will consider whether restrictions should be placed on their contact with the Council.

k. Compliments, Complaints and Learning – Special Interest Group

Following on from the Tenant & Leaseholder Conference in June 2024 a commitment was made to develop 'Special Interest Groups' (SIG) for each service area. 'Compliments, Complaints and Learning' was one of these groups. A database of residents who expressed an interest in this subject area was collated. The first meeting was held on 22 October 2024 and 8 residents attended. The meeting was chaired by the Customer Engagement Team. Also in attendance was the manager and representatives from the Complaints Team. The purpose of the initial meeting was to review current policies and procedures. Attendees were shown how the compliments and complaints system operated, including how to register an issue, how these feed into the Council's back-office system and an overview of the complaints system dashboard was demonstrated.

The numbers of compliments and complaints received was outlined, as well as the different stages within the policy, expected timescales for responses and performance against the timescales. Residents were asked for feedback on how the current system works and what can be done to improve it. The next meeting was scheduled for mid to late January where an action plan will be drafted along with agreed terms of reference for the group. Minutes from the meeting will be posted on the Council website and can be requested in other formats. Please see **Appendix 2** for issues raised from the 22 October 2024 meeting and the associated management responses.

Update from Special Interest Group - Compliments, Complaints and Learning

Feedback and response from action points raised at the Developing Service Standards session on 17 January 2025

Feedback	Response
Have a call back telephone system so people are not on hold for a long period.	CET to refer to ICT/Resident Hub
Improve telephone response time, to reduce the time people are waiting for the calls to be answered.	As above – query over whether this relates to general calls or calls to the Complaints team number.
The website to be more user friendly and easier for residents to navigate, instead of having to search or scroll through multiple pages and get more frustrated and/or give up.	CET in process of setting up a working group to review website.
Website to have a complaints option on the landing page or the report it page, with clear instructions on what	CET to address with Complaints & Web team

constitutes a complaint.	
Residents would be interested to attend a Focus Group on the Hillingdon website and work with the Comms Team to make it easier to use, including videos to show to do things.	CET in process of setting up a working group to review website.
Consider whether AI could be used to develop a digital assistant to help residents with queries on the website	<p>Chat option now introduced on council website.</p> <p>Council has recently announced details of a new partnership with ICS.AI to deliver a £1 million initiative to deploy Artificial Intelligence technology to transform resident contact and service efficiency as part of our Digital Strategy.</p> <p>The two-year contract will see us deploy a new AI digital assistant across our website and call centre to help resolve resident enquiries quicker and provide self-service options to help free up staff to support residents with complex issues.</p> <p>Through our adoption of new technologies, we're making great strides in the digital space, which, at its heart, is about giving you the capacity to focus on high-value tasks and making it easier for local people to use our services.</p>
There should be a unified approach from the entire council, where automatic response is sent to resident and a response time scale explained along with a reference number to enable a tracking system.	CET to address with ICT
Currently residents often receive an email to say a case is closed but no reference number or description is given so residents don't know what case they are referring to.	CET to address with ICT
Not all residents can report issues online and there is a need for a face-to-face option or a place where residents can go to receive support to make a complaint, for example, libraries or in the Civic Centre, or from other Council staff who visit residents/estates etc. This is also	<p>CET to address with Complaints team/Resident hub/Senior Management</p> <p>Suggestion of upskilling resident volunteers to support others in making complaints.</p>

relevant to vulnerable residents, those with communication issues or language barriers.	
Clear process for residents to request a face to face or online appointment (Zoom/Teams) with a reference number and confirmation of the appointment	CET to address with Complaints team
Service standards and KPI's to be published clearly on the website or give details of how/where residents can obtain this information in writing or another preferred format.	TSM data published on website. CET to follow up with Complaints team & Management
Information on how to make a complaint or service standards should be routinely advertised to residents, for example on rent/service charge letters or Council Tax bills, in Hillingdon People Magazine, libraries, notice boards, pharmacies, GP's etc.	CET to note and take forward
Any changes in processes should also be communicated in a variety of ways to ensure all residents are aware.	CET to note and cascade to service areas to use web, social media, e-newsletters, other outlets suggested above to notify residents of any changes.
Council to ask and record how residents would prefer to be contacted, across the board and not just in one department and have an opt in/out option for receiving information or updating their preferences.	Wider council project needed. Across Housing services, project planned in Q1 to update resident data and store in systems for easy use in future.

Update following SIG meeting on 19 March 2024

Meeting was attended by 8 residents, 5 of which were tenants, 3 leaseholders.

Members reviewed the log of actions from the previous meetings and were grateful for and acknowledged the updates received. It was noted that positive changes had already been made, including updates to the council website and it was understood there is a solid plan in place for progress and appreciated that some changes take time to implement.

It was noted that feedback from the session will be passed to Senior Management/Landlord Board for review and the intention for this to be formalised into the council's standard way of working, to ensure the residents voice is captured and that the council, as the landlord, can be held accountable. Attendees welcomed this step and were keen to be a part of the process and the opportunity to review progress. It was noted that this would form part of the requirements of the Regulator and Ombudsman for landlords to engage with residents and involve them in all areas of service delivery, including complaints handling, as well as the Regulator's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standards.

Q4 complaints data available was reviewed and the following points noted for clarification:

Number and % of Stage 1 complaints where extensions have been granted.	19
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Query raised if this is a total of 19 complaints and not 19% of Stage 1 complaints. Final report to clearly state the number and associated percentage.

Members would like to see a list of reasons as to why extensions had been granted and which service they relate to.

For all complaints related data, members would like to see which service the complaints relate to (i.e. not just repairs) and the breakdown between tenants and leaseholders, if possible.

Learning actions were noted and recent feedback from Repairs team was shared that repairs staff are being encouraged to report any issues of concern, repairs related or not, when they are in a resident's home. Members felt a holistic approach was positive, as well as contact details being updated and follow up appointments being booked directly, addressing the issue of any potential un-booked follow-on works.

SIG members were advised that the Engagement strategy was currently being reviewed and a new strategy was due to be drafted, in co-production with residents. Extracts from the HQN report on 'Resident involvement in complaints' were shared with the group and the following opportunities for resident involvement were welcomed. All members felt this was a step in the right direction and were willing to be involved.

Resident involvement opportunities

How and when landlords involve their residents in complaints is not prescribed by the Ombudsman or the Regulator and so is left up to each landlord and varies significantly. The most common forms of involvement are:

- **Scrutiny:** resident or customer panels reviewing and commenting on draft complaint procedures, formal complaint responses, complaint handling data etc. They may also listen to the experiences of other residents and look at the landlord's learning from complaints. Some panels sit under and report to the board/committee, giving them more influence over service improvements
- **Stage two complaint panels:** residents taking part in the final, stage two, decision panel following a complaint investigation. Historically, these panels were often convened at stage three, but are now far less common as complaint procedures are limited to two stages (since April 2024)
- **Satisfaction surveys:** eg, residents telephoning recent complainants to ask survey questions and explore the reasons for their answers
- **Mystery shopping:** eg, residents making 'test' complaints through different channels (telephone, email, online etc) to assess the speed and quality of responses. Mystery shoppers often work closely with scrutiny panels to provide more comprehensive feedback
- **Peer-to-peer support:** landlords sometimes train residents to act as peer advocates or 'complaint champions' who support or assist other residents with making a complaint, understanding their rights and communicating with the landlord. This creates a more approachable and supportive environment for residents who may be less able or confident when raising complaints. It can also reduce any intimidation or fear associated with the formal complaint process.

Training and upskilling of residents to empower them to be involved in these types of opportunities were discussed and suggestions made including how to navigate the council website, how to find out information about council services and how to analyse data etc. Resources were discussed including support from council staff, training provided by the council and other organisations such as TPAS and 'Four Million Homes'.

A discussion on incentives for residents to be involved took place and this idea was welcomed, however, members felt that other incentives, such as having access to training which would not only help them to be involved in these types of groups, but which would support or empower them in other areas of their lives was preferred.

Members agreed that most of the discussions that took place aligned with the points set out in the forward planning for the council's approach to complaints handling for 2025/26. This included improvements in the extent of data shared.

Several members volunteered to co-chair future meetings and be involved in producing and shaping the presentation slides.

Next meeting is scheduled for 21 May where the action plan will be reviewed and co-produced with residents and the Terms of Reference signed off.

Quarter 1 – 1 April to 30 June

Number of Service Requests received.	101
Number and % of Service Requests responded to within 10 working days.	101
Number of Stage 1 complaints registered.	99 (86 for repairs)
Number of Stage 1 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	99
Number of Stage 1 complaints where extensions have been granted.	Data not currently available
Number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days?	51
Number of Stage 2 complaints registered.	23
Number of Stage 2 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	23
Number of Stage 2 complaints where extensions have been granted.	Data not currently available
Number of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days?	16
Number of Housing Ombudsman complaints concluded within this quarter.	4
Number of Ombudsman complaints upheld and not upheld – see annex 1 with information of the complaint and outcome.	2 Upheld 1 Outside of jurisdiction 1 Not Upheld
Number of tenancies and leases managed (housing stock)	10,333 tenancies 3,000 leases
Lessons Learnt / themes	Improve communications with residents in relation to Planned Works.
Service Improvement(s) made	Regular updates with contractors and resident liaison. (Planned Works)

Quarter 2 – 1 July to 30 September

Number of Service Requests received.	87
Number and % of Service Requests responded to within 10 working days.	87
Number of Stage 1 complaints registered.	106 (For repairs 73)
Number of Stage 1 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	106
Number of Stage 1 complaints where extensions have been granted.	Data not currently available
Number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days?	21
Number of Stage 2 complaints registered.	29
Number of Stage 2 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	29
Number of Stage 2 complaints where extensions have been granted.	Data not currently available
Number of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days?	26
Number of Housing Ombudsman complaints concluded within this quarter.	3
Number of Ombudsman complaints upheld and not upheld – see annex 1 with information of the complaint and outcome.	3 Upheld
Number of tenancies and leases managed (housing stock)	10,333 tenancies 3,000 leases
Lessons Learnt / themes	Top 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional staff training needed in 95 complaints • Delays complained of in 39 complaints • Poor communications in 10 complaints
Service improvement(s) made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates with contractors and resident liaison. (Planned Works)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Interest Group for Compliments, Complaints and Learning established, and first meeting held on 22 October 2024. • Operatives are being given additional information through the monthly toolbox talks to help improve the service to customers • The recall system - If a works order is raised the contractor needs to attend within 10 days • Complaints Board set up within Housing Management service 09/09/2024 - Ensuring allocation and response to complaint are on time. • Operatives are being given additional information through the monthly toolbox talks to help improve the service to customers • Review of Pets policy based on complaint made with regards to keeping Pets – this will be completed with residents and to Cllr once completed. • The recall system - If a works order is raised the contractor needs to attend within 10 days • Amendments made to the template for complaints clearly setting out understanding of the complaint is and our resolution to it, improving clear and consistent communication. • Proposing restructure to address numbers of frontline officers and reduce patch sizes – residents' complaints about delays in response linked to staffing numbers. • All complainants are called to discuss their complaint before a response is made to ensure we have the full understanding. • Complaints are written stating what action has been taken rather than actions we will take, this is based on feedback of failing to complete actions agreed to complete in complaints • Training completed <u>ombudsman findings August 2024 - Values - 22-23.pptx</u> • Localities and Housing have undertaken case management training provided by Janine Greene associates
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities <u>report weekly</u> on caseloads, new cases, and performance standards regarding timeliness of customer contact and risk assessment
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Quarter 3 – 1 October to 31 December

Number of Service Requests received.	131 (86 for repairs)
Number of Service Requests acknowledged within 5 working days.	131 (86 for repairs)
Number of Stage 1 complaints registered.	99 (75 for repairs)
Number of Stage 1 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	99 (75 for repairs)
Number of Stage 1 complaints where extensions have been granted.	Data not currently available
Number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days?	71
Number of Stage 2 complaints registered.	49 (33 for repairs)
Number of Stage 2 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	49 (33 for repairs)
Number of Stage 2 complaints where extensions have been granted.	Data not currently available (Repairs 4)
Number of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days?	39 (29 for repairs)
Number of Housing Ombudsman complaints concluded within this quarter.	1
Number of Ombudsman complaints upheld and not upheld – see annex 1 with information of the complaint and outcome.	1 – Did not investigate
Number of tenancies and leases managed (Housing stock)	10,333 tenancies 3,000 leases
Lessons Learnt / themes	Top Learning Themes:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communications providing regular updates to residents • Regular feedback to operatives to ensure service provision remains consistent. • Proactive ASB Prevention and Resolution
Service improvement(s) made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Repairs</u> - Operatives are provided with monthly information at toolbox talks providing additional information to aid in continuous improvement to the service we provide to residents. This includes process reminders for arranging return visits with residents while on site. • <u>Repairs</u> – Incorporated learning outcomes and complaint issues into monthly contractor review meetings to ensure learning outcomes are incorporated into their service provision. • <u>Localities Team</u> Weekly reports (noted at Q2) augmented with whole team case management meetings where national developments (E.g. Ombudsman reports) are shared to provide greater context • <u>Localities Team</u> building on national best practice engaged with Leeds Community Safety Partnership (West Yorkshire Police, Leeds City Legal) and as a result were successful in securing partial closure notices for persistent ASB at two Tower Blocks. Impact to be assessed but was a result of persistent complaints and disquiet to local response. • <u>Street scene Enforcement Team</u> - Review of current Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) 2023 – public consultation January/February 2025 • <u>Street scene Enforcement Team</u> - Introduction of a new PSPO 2025 specifically for private hire vehicles. In response to residents' complaints/service requests related to anti-social behaviour and impact on local environment. • <u>Street scene Enforcement Team</u> - Targeted approach to areas identified as 'hot spots' for rubbish accumulation/fly tipping. Engagement with residents/businesses, joint working with waste services, CCTV and community payback scheme (probation service).

	<p>Enforcement actions and processes reviewed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Council owned hostels</u> used for temporary accommodation for homeless households bought back in house, dedicated Housing Management Officer managing both blocks providing direct personal contact daily with residents resulting in reduction of complaints and delays in information being received by housing management to action. • <u>Tenancy Management</u> – review of training to all Tenancy Management officers on the back of a complaint regarding tenancy changes • Good Neighbour Policy/PN and Toolkit implemented to reduce complaints and improve performance in relation to non ASB nuisance issues. • <u>Tenancy Management</u> – Conversations regarding succession where there is a long standing and emotional connection to the property, with the possibility of a hardship panel that will review the case to submit for senior management new tenancy approval. • <u>Rent Collection & Arrears Recovery</u> – ensuring accuracy of taking payments & payment references are confirmed with the customer before taking payment. • <u>Rent Collection & Arrears Recovery</u> – completion of income & expenditure form on cases where payment arrangements are being entered into or being set up.
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Q3: Repairs demand: 10,567 repairs reported

This means that we undertook 1.02 jobs per property (10,333 total stock) within three months of which 1.02% were complaints (108).

Of the 108 complaints 20.37% (22) were fully upheld, 37.96% (41) were partially upheld and 41.67% (45 the largest proportion) were not upheld.

Of those complaints upheld or partially upheld (63), 50.79% (32) resulted in learning outcomes to improve the service potentially preventing these issues becoming complaints in the future.

As part of the Council's commitment to continued engagement with tenants and leaseholders to seek feedback on our performance and work with residents to improve services, a series of

Developing Service Standards Sessions were organised for January and February 2025. These followed on from the Tenant & Leaseholder Conference in held in June 2024, along with the Special Interest Group meetings that were held from August to October 2024.

Residents who had previously registered an interest in working with the Council to improve services were invited to these sessions and a Complaints focused group met on 17 January 2025. 8 residents attended consisting of 5 tenants and 3 leaseholders. The Customer Engagement team organised, facilitated and chaired the meeting along with the manager and monitoring officer from the Complaints Team. The session aimed to go through the current service standards, identify which elements were set in stone by the Regulator and Ombudsman and encourage residents to comment on and suggest improvement for parts they could influence.

Most attendees had already attended the Special Interest Group meeting for Complaints, so the session was aimed at building on what had already been covered and identifying some key deliverable and achievable action points.

These are summarised as follows:

- Have a call back telephone system so people are not on hold for a long period.
- Improve telephone response time, to reduce the time people are waiting for the calls to be answered.
- The website to be more user friendly and easier for residents to navigate, instead of having to search or scroll through multiple pages and get more frustrated and/or give up.
- Website to have a complaints option on the landing page or the report it page, with clear instructions on what constitutes a complaint.
- Residents would be interested to attend a Focus Group on the Hillingdon website and work with the Comms Team to make it easier to use, including videos to show to do things.
- Consider whether AI could be used to develop a digital assistant to help residents with queries on the website.
- There should be a unified approach from the entire council, where automatic response is sent to resident and a response time scale explained along with a reference number to enable a tracking system,
- Currently residents often receive an email to say a case is closed but no reference number or description is given so residents don't know what case they are referring to.
- Not all residents can report issues online and there is a need for a face-to-face option or a place where residents can go to receive support to make a complaint, for example, libraries or in the Civic Centre, or from other Council staff who visit residents/estates etc. This is also relevant to vulnerable residents, those with communication issues or language barriers.
- Clear process for residents to request a face to face or online appointment (Zoom/Teams) with a reference number and confirmation of the appointment.
- Service standards and KPI's to be published clearly on the website or give details of how/where residents can obtain this information in writing or another preferred format.

- Information on how to make a complaint or service standards should be routinely advertised to residents, for example on rent/service charge letters or Council Tax bills, in Hillingdon People Magazine, libraries, notice boards, pharmacies, GP's etc.
- Any changes in processes should also be communicated in a variety of ways to ensure all residents are aware.
- Council to ask and record how residents would prefer to be contacted, across the board and not just in one department and have an opt in/out option for receiving information or updating their preferences.

The Customer Engagement team will pick up these key points and arrange to meet with internal staff including the Complaints team, Corporate Comms/Web team, ICT and Contact Centre/Resident Hub to take forward and report back to residents at the next Special Interest Group meeting, as well as include progress in Q4 of this report.

Quarter 4 – 1 January to 31 March

Number of Service Requests received.	195 (30 with Repairs)
Number of Service Requests acknowledged within 5 working days	100%
Number of Stage 1 complaints registered.	111 (85 with Repairs)
Number of Stage 1 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	100%
Number and % of Stage 1 complaints where extensions have been granted.	19 (17%)
Number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days?	92
Number of Stage 2 complaints registered.	29 (23 With Repairs)
Number of Stage 2 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.	100%
Number and % of Stage 2 complaints where extensions have been granted.	4
Number of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days?	20

Number of Housing Ombudsman complaints concluded within this quarter.	3
Number of Ombudsman complaints upheld and not upheld – see annex 1 with information of the complaint and outcome.	3 Upheld
Number of tenancies and leases managed (housing stock)	10,333 tenancies 3,000 leases
Lessons Learnt / themes	Lessons Learned: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to Continuous Improvement: Staff will recognise the value of continuous improvement through regular toolbox talks and direct resident appointments. 2. Effective Response to Community Concerns: Staff will learn to effectively address community concerns through transformation efforts, enforcement measures, and annual surveys.
Service improvement(s) made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Localities Team:</u> The team continues its transformation, securing three further partial closure notices (Tower Blocks) and two full closure notices in response to persistent complaints and disquiet to local response. The efficacy of these measures has been subject to positive feedback and will require full evaluation. <u>Community Safety:</u> The borough wide Crime and Disorder Survey is due to go live that includes an opportunity to comment on ASB. This will be repeated annually and will enable progress about concerns to be measured at a population level. <u>Repairs:</u> Team Leaders will conduct one-on-one meetings with staff members to provide additional support and training. They will continue to emphasize the importance of updating job notes and contact information to ensure better communication and efficiency in future repairs. This approach ensures that key expectations

	<p>are consistently embedded within the Service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Repairs</u>: A reminder to all staff to make appointments with residents directly, addressing the issue of any potential un-booked follow-on works. Although occurrences of this nature have significantly reduced, general awareness needs to continue. Toolbox talks will continue to highlight our commitment to continuous improvement.
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Q4: Repairs demand: 10,520 repairs reported

This means that we undertook 1.02 jobs per property (10,333 total stock) within three months of which 1.03% were complaints (108).

Of the 108 complaints 24.07% (26) were fully upheld, 31.48% (34) were partially upheld and 44.44% (48 the largest proportion) were not upheld.

Of those complaints upheld or partially upheld (60), 55.56% (4) resulted in learning outcomes to improve the service potentially preventing these issues becoming complaints in the future.

Appendix 1 – Investigations undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HoS)

HoS ref and complaint details	Outcome of complaint
202324088 The complaint is about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The landlord's management of the kitchen works. b. The landlord's record keeping. c. The landlord's handling of the resident's complaint 	Upheld The Council is to apologise in writing for the delays in kitchen renewal and pay the resident a sum of money for the distress caused by the delays, plus an additional sum for mishandling her complaint
202307805 The complaint is about the resident's Right to Buy application, including the landlord refusing to communicate with the resident's representative. □ The representative's subject access request and request for a copy of the tenancy agreement.	Outside of Jurisdiction The Ombudsman advised the complainant that his complaint is outside the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman and is not one they can investigate
202225990 The complaint is about the landlord's	Upheld The Ombudsman found that the

response to a request for assistance to repair the damage caused to the interior doors in her home	Council's approach in this case was insensitive and lacked empathy and failed to recognise that the resident and her young family were vulnerable and required some flexibility in the way the landlord applied its policies. There was maladministration in our response to the request for the doors to be repaired or replaced.
202209354 The landlord's handling of: a. The reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB). b. the request for permission to erect a fence. c. The subsequent complaint	Not Upheld There was no maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's reports of antisocial behaviour and in its response to permission regarding a fence. There was a service failure by the landlord in relation to its complaint Handling (time taken to respond to complaint).
202334242 The complaint is about the way the landlord responded to the resident's reports that it had sold land belonging to her property.	Upheld The Ombudsman noted the Council's attempts to put things right by offering a sum in compensation, make a direct offer of like for like accommodation when a suitable property becomes available, pay for the resident's removal costs, pay the resident for the cost of the driveway she had installed and meeting the cost of installing a driveway if it could not find a suitable property with a parking space. There was a finding of maladministration as it did not go far enough to restore the position for the resident.
202310021 The complaint is about the landlord's handling of the resident's reported damp and mould in his flat.	Upheld The Ombudsman determined that the Council should apologise, offer a sum of money in compensation, ask the complainant whether they wish to make a public liability claim, contact the resident whether they wish us to record the health conditions on their records and compile an action plan to complete a self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Knowledge and Information Management report.
202310109 The complaint is about the landlord's handling of repairs to the heating system	Upheld The Ombudsman determined that the Council apologise, pay an amount in

	compensation and undertake a review of its record keeping system and takes steps to establish a system of record keeping that ensures all contact from a resident (including service requests and complaints) is recorded and retained so that it can be provided to this Service upon request, in response to a complaint.
24012834 The complaint is that the Council failure to take enforcement action against one of its tenants for erecting a building which is not in accordance with the associated planning permission.	Did not investigate The Ombudsman did not investigate this complaint as there was not enough evidence of fault by the planning enforcement team, and they have no power to look at the actions of the Council in its role as a social housing provider.
202346988 Ms R complained about the Council's handling of repairs required in her home.	Upheld The Ombudsman found failing in the Council's handling of repairs in relation to the window Sils and kitchen cupboards and that proper records were not kept when telephone contact was received. The Council agreed to apologise, update its procedure and pay a sum of money in compensation.
202402457 Ms B complained about the Council's handling of outstanding repairs and damp and mould in her property.	Upheld The Ombudsman found delays in completing outstanding repairs and in our handling of damp and mould. The Council agreed to apologise and make a payment in compensation.
202341070 Ms J complained about the Council's handling of repairs to her roof, the car driveway, damp and mould in her property and our handling of her complaint.	Upheld The Ombudsman found maladministration in our handling of the repairs to Ms J's property, not providing information on how to make an insurance claim and that we did not respond to all the issues in the complaint response. The Council agreed to complete all the work, apologise and make a payment in compensation.

Appendix 2 – Feedback from complaint Special Interest Group meeting 22 October 2024

Feedback	Response
Issues with the current online complaints system had been experienced including sessions timing out or there not being	It was established that this related to the old online complaint form that complainant used prior to 3 July 2023. The current

enough space available for lengthy submissions.	system allows for 4,000 characters of information to be included and attachments to be added.
Changes/improvements have been made to the online reporting system in the last year but not communicated to residents. The Council needs to be better at communicating changes and improvements to residents by using all channels available to them such as newsletters, publications and social media.	Feedback noted by Service Leads and the recently established Special Interest Groups will serve as a further opportunity to feedback on relevant changes and improvements.
Residents had experienced issues in making complaints via the telephone, including calls not being answered.	There is a direct line telephone number that residents can use to complain (01895 277800) – Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm and this is advertised on our website.
Complaints are not centralised within the Council, there are complaints staff in different service areas and not all complaints are being logged via the central online reporting system.	There is a central complaint team that process complaints and manage complaints that are received. Calls taken by the Contact Centre staff follow a different path and these calls would not be logged as a complaint, although they will be logged as an enquiry.
The Complaints Manager does not have oversight of all complaints being logged due to the above point and there are inconsistencies with how complaints are dealt with.	The point being made here was that any staff dealing with complaints (investigating and responding) would fall under the management of the Complaint Manager. This is not practical, but the Complaint Manager would see all Stage 2 complaint responses before they are sent to ensure consistency of approach.
Gap in training for staff, especially for those not working in the main Complaints team.	As part of improving the timeliness and quality of responses, the Landlord Service will be developing and rolling out mandatory 'Complaint Management' training for staff groups across the Service in 2024/25. The training outline will be shared with the SIG before implementation.
Not all residents can report issues online and there is a need for a face-to-face option or a place where residents can go to receive support to make a complaint, for example, libraries or in the Civic Centre, or from other Council staff who visit residents/estates etc.	<p>The Council's website makes it clear that if you need advice or guidance on submitting a complaint, please call 01895 277800 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).</p> <p>As part of the mandatory training on complaints for all staff groups, it will be made</p>

	clear to staff how they can advise, guidance and support tenants in relation to making complaints.
Lack of joined up approach from different Council services/departments in addressing/dealing with complaints.	The Council's approach is to provide a single response to all enquiries raised in one complaint. Where there are several departments involved, the complaint team will often pull the draft response together for the relevant manager.
Assumption from residents that Council services/departments share information, however, data protection rules do not always allow this.	It was suggested that information provided by residents should as a matter of routine be shared with every service within the Council. It was explained that we need to be mindful of the General Data Protection Regulations and that is why information submitted to one department would not routinely be shared with all other departments.
Residents are not routinely given a reference number when logging complaints or provided with one when requested. Again, this links back to not all complaints being logged via the central system.	<p>There is a misunderstanding here – this relates to people calling staff in the Contact Centre who are not complaint handlers. Generally, if they say they want to complain they are put through to the complaint team.</p> <p>If someone calls the complaint team, it must be logged onto the system and if this is being done by an officer it can take 5/10 minutes to do, and we would not want to keep people on the phone. However, once logged, it will generate an email to the complainant informing them of the reference number and details of who is investigating it and when they can expect a response.</p>
Residents using old/defunct Council email addresses to make complaints and no bounce back messages being received so they are unaware their complaint has not been received.	<p>The Council stopped handling complaints via emails on 3 July 2023 and if an email is sent to this address, they will usually get an out of office message advising them to submit their complaint online via the Council's website</p> <p>https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints</p> <p>Further work is underway to promote to tenants the various ways they can make a Complaint in relation to a service provided by their landlord.</p>

Perception/experience of leaseholders is that they get less help/support than tenants.	Tenants and leaseholders share the same landlord and, in many areas, share the same services. In the context of promoting access to the formal complaints handling process and investigating and responding to complaints, leaseholders should not receive a different service. This extends to help and support. This feedback will be considered as part of the ongoing promotional work linked to accessing the complaints handling procedure and in relation to the mandatory staff training being developed.
Residents would like to see stats on the number of complaints that are satisfactorily resolved, however, this is not logged, only response times are logged.	The Council publishes its complaint performance on our complaint web page at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints . What we cannot do is provide data showing whether a complaint has been resolved or not. All we can do is provide data to show how many complaints were responded to and within the timelines set. This is because without asking a complainant after each response whether they consider the complaint resolved or not, it is not possible to say. What we can say is that if 100 complaints are responded to and 20 escalate to Stage 2, that it is likely that 80 complainants are satisfied with the response they received and consider their complaint resolved.

Appendix B – Housing Ombudsman guidance on ‘Effective involvement of governing bodies’

Governing bodies can support learning from complaints by:

Compliance

- Ensuring their organisation is compliant with membership obligations under the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and meets the standards set out in the Complaint Handling Code through continuous self-assessment and implementation of adjustments. This self-assessment process can also be an opportunity for resident involvement and scrutiny, something we have seen many landlords successfully do.
- Ensuring their organisation complies with Complaint Handling Failure Orders and orders made where maladministration has been found.
- Cooperating with Ombudsman investigations when they are referred to the governing body.

Awareness

- Tasking the organisation to raise awareness of the complaint process, making sure it is accessible and effective to build confidence in complaint handling among residents as a core part of a positive resident and landlord relationship.
- Ensuring every employee supports effective complaint handling, ensuring complaint handlers have the authority within the organisation to help put things right when they go wrong.
- Ensuring openness and transparency with residents about complaints.

Learning

Encouraging cross-organisational learning and sourcing learning from other organisations.

Using intelligence provided by the Ombudsman to develop and improve services, ensuring recommendations are actioned and, where necessary, reviewing policies, procedures and approach following Ombudsman reports.

- Reviewing the Ombudsman's annual landlord complaint performance report and considering performance against peers.
- Demonstrating learning from complaints through the commentary in the annual Financial Statements.

Governance Reporting

- The Complaint Handling Code requires one member of the governing body to have lead responsibility for complaints. This role is responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight and learning on the landlord's complaint handling performance. As a minimum, the governing body should receive:
- Regular updates on the volume, categories, and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders.
- Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling.
- The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable.
- Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales.
- The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge.

Other information that is helpful for governing bodies is:

- Resident feedback – to enable discussion of key themes or concerns for residents, recognise success and identify further actions that may be required.
- Horizon scanning – this should include key changes in the social housing sector that will impact on residents and the delivery of housing services. This will include legislation and regulation.

Member landlords will govern their services differently and the Housing Ombudsman has a diverse membership. Where information on complaints is reported will vary, whether to the main board or cabinet or delegated to a committee, and how the main governing body seeks assurance is a matter for individual landlords.

Good questions to ask

In supporting, challenging, and seeking assurance from executive teams, board members and councillors can enable high quality debate and reflection by asking critical questions such as:

- How are we raising awareness of our complaint procedure?
- How would we know if particular groups within our residents were finding it hard to complain, or to achieve a satisfactory resolution of their complaint?
- What assurance do we have that we comply with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code?
- Why did we receive a Complaint Handling Failure Order and what have we done to avoid a recurrence?
- How does our complaint performance compare to other similar landlords?
- How do we use the Ombudsman's thematic reports and determinations to improve our own services?
- How do we triangulate our complaint information, other sources of customer feedback and service quality indicators by geography and other characteristics to inform our strategies?
- What does the annual self-assessment tell us? What actions need to be taken?
- What did we learn from complaints last year/quarter?
- How is this learning being disseminated to staff? And to residents?

Tools for governing bodies

The Ombudsman provides several tools to support board members and councillors.

- **Landlord performance reports** – these online reports provide data, information, and insight on complaint handling performance
- **Complaint Handling Failure Orders** – we publish the total number of failure orders issued, the names of the landlords and the reasons for the orders.
- **Spotlight reports** – thematic reports on issues identified through complaints the Ombudsman has investigated and resolved such as heating and hot water, leaseholders, and shared ownership.
- **Annual complaint performance report** – this will provide an overview of complaints handling performance in the sector, with analysis and insight. These reports are usually published in the autumn and cover the previous financial year.

- **Governing bodies webinars** – these webinars focus on the role of governing bodies in delivering effective complaint handling services.
- **Insight reports** – these provide insight into the Ombudsman's casebook and contain information on complaint handling data and trends.
- **Published decisions** – we publish our investigation decisions every two weeks.
- **E-newsletter** – the Housing Ombudsman Service have a regular e-newsletter that you can subscribe to.

Hillingdon Council Self-Assessment Form: Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code – Completed March 2025

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'</i>	Yes	The Corporate Complaints Procedure can be downloaded from this page Complaints - Hillingdon Council This definition is included in Section 1.	This precise wording is used in Hillingdon Council's Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure.
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Yes	Presentations were delivered virtually to all staff involved in the handling of complaints that the word "complaint" did not need to be used for us to progress by way of a complaint but where dissatisfaction is expressed it needs to be brought to the attention of the complaint team for advice. Complaint handling Masterclasses are delivered four times a year for all staff that handle complaints.	
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	Yes	The definition of a Service Request has been included in the Council's Corporate complaints procedure. They are logged, monitored and processed in the same way as complaints and Officers in the complaints team have oversight on whether a complaint has been responded to or not. We keep records of Service Requests submitted.	The Council makes a distinction between a service request and a complaint.
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	This is part of the Council's Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes	We will advise someone responding to a survey where and how they can submit a complaint.	The Council recognises that survey responses may contain a 'complaint'. We ensure that appropriate signposting to the complaints service takes place, and we raise awareness of how to complain while conducting surveys.

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint, they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	This is included in the Council's Corporate complaints procedure in which we set out what complaints we can and cannot progress and this is also set out on the complaint web page: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	The Policy and Procedure includes the following text: "If we consider that a complainant is unreasonable or unreasonably persistent, we will refer the matter to a senior manager, who will consider whether further investigation of the complaint will be carried out."
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court. Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy. 	Yes	This is included in the Corporate complaints procedure and contained within the complaint page: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	The Complaints Policy includes the following text: "We will not deal with issues through the complaint procedure where a claim has been made in a court such as a disrepair claim"
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	This is contained within the Corporate complaints procedure which can be found on the following web page: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	<i>It states within our policy that "Anyone who uses our services and is dissatisfied with the standard of service we have provided or our lack of action. The Council will also accept complaints by an advocate on behalf of a resident, with appropriate consent. However, any complaint should be made within 12 months of the issue/incident complained of."</i>
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to	Yes	Included within the Corporate complaint's procedure which can be found on the following web page: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	In practice a letter is sent if a complaint is not accepted and the policy states "If we do not intend to

	the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.			<i>progress your complaint, we will inform you of this in writing, tell you why we will do this and give you the contact details of the Ombudsman to whom you may escalate your complaint to for independent review.”</i>
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Each complaint received is considered on its own merit	

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	This is set out within the Corporate complaints procedure which can be found on the following web page: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, via our website or email. In addition, the policy document also states that “If you need an adjustment to be made, please call the complaint team.” We keep a log of all reasonable adjustments requested and our response to each request.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	Information is available on Complaints and our handling of it is available on the Staff portal, setting out what they need to do and who to contact	
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	Volumes of Service Requests and formal complaints has risen when comparing 2023/24 with 2024/25 figures.	For 2023/24 we recorded 4,240 Service Requests and Formal complaints and so far for 2024/25 we have recorded 5,197 Service Requests and formal complaints. Data is benchmarked and shared with the Tenant Special Interest Group. We recognise that high volumes of complaints is positive and used to improve the service we already provide.
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two-stage	Yes	Published on our website and it sets out the 2 Stage Corporate complaints procedure –	We have also been meeting with residents to discuss how else to advertise and we are

	process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.		www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	exploring other options such as including complaint details on Council Tax demands, rent statements and our e-newsletter.
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	The Corporate complaints policy is published on our website and advertised in our E-newsletter/. The policy contains information about how to submit a complaint, the contact details of the Ombudsmen and the Complaint Handling Codes are also published on our web page.	
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	The Corporate complaints procedure sets this out and it can be found at: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	The policy states that " <i>The Council will also accept complaints by an advocate on behalf of a resident, with appropriate consent.</i> "
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.	Yes	Included within the Corporate complaint's procedure and it can be found at: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	There is a dedicated Complaint and Members Enquiry Team that processes all complaints. The annual complaint report is put before the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee for scrutiny and then published on the complaints page, which can be found at: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	We have a corporate complaint handling team and a complaint manager responsible for processing complaints and providing advice and guidance to staff. An annual complaint report is provided for the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee. The report contains information about complaints, compliments and Members Enquiries submitted. From 2024/25 scrutiny will also be provided prior to the annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service by Residents Services Select Committee which has a clear focus on the Landlord Service.
4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt	Yes	A centralised complaint team is responsible for engaging with staff at	We have a Corporate complaint handling team that is

	resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.		all levels and where there are issues, they have access to senior managers for support and resolution.	responsible for processing complaints, providing advice and guidance, delivering training sessions for officers across the Council and in attending management meetings to provide information and advice on the handling of complaints.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	A centralised complaint team is in place, where staff have been trained to process complaints, with most staff having worked in the team for over 8+ years. The complaint portal has categories to capture learning, and this is reported on in the annual complaint report, which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	

Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Corporate complaints procedure is the policy that we use, and it can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	The Council's Corporate complaint procedure complies with the requirements set out in the Complaint Handling Codes namely a 2 Stage complaint process. www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	The Council's Corporate complaint procedure sets out our 2 Stage complaint process. www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
5.4	Where a landlord's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	Yes	The Corporate complaint procedure states that we will progress by way of a complaint expressions of dissatisfaction in relation to " <i>or those acting on its behalf</i> " through our own procedure. The Corporate complaints procedure can be accessed via	

			our web page at: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	We will process complaints in accordance with the Corporate Complaints procedure. www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	Where appropriate we will ask our contactor to respond to a complaint using their own complaint procedure but where a complainant is dissatisfied with the response they receive, we will log it as a formal complaint, investigate and respond to the complainant.
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	Within the acknowledgment we send to a complainant it will contain a summary of our understanding of the complaint and what they want by way of a resolution.	We will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days and inform the complainant of the reference number, who will be investigating, when they can expect a response to be sent to them, set out details of the complaint, etc. If anything is unclear, we will always ask for clarification before beginning the investigation.
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	We will set out in our letter of acknowledgment our understanding of the complaint and what the complainant is seeking by way of a resolution. As part of the triaging of complaints, acknowledgement responses must confirm which aspects of the complaint will be considered.	We will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days and inform the complainant of the reference number, who will be investigating, when they can expect a response to be sent to them, etc. If anything is unclear, we will always ask for clarification before beginning the investigation.
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: 1. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; 2. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; 3. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and 4. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.	Yes	This is set out within the policy statement in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed	Yes	In our letter of acknowledgment, we will advise complainants the date we aim to respond by and if this is not going to be met, we will always	

	about their complaint.		contact them again to advise them if more time is needed.	
5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	From April 2024 we keep a log of any reasonable adjustments requested which is held on our Sharepoint	
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	All complaint data is stored on our complaint portal called GOSS including pictures, surveys, reports, etc	We also hold a record of the complaint and our responses on Sharepoint
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	Our aim is to resolve a complaint, where we can, either at a Service Request or formal complaint stages. This is set out in the Corporate complaint procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	We have our “Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent complainant” policy which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	Where restrictions are put in place this information is held on the Council’s Restricted Persons Register
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	We are required to follow the “Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent Complainants” Policy	This is set out in the ‘Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Policy’ and if someone is placed on the Restricted Persons Register (RPR) they are informed of the reason, how long they are on the RPR, how they can appeal

				it, etc. The Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure review process will include consideration of specific reference to the Equality Act 2010.
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Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	Corporate complaints procedure sets this out which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	This is set out in the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure <u>within five working days of the complaint being received</u> .	Yes	Corporate complaints procedure sets this out which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Corporate complaints procedure sets this out which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Corporate complaints procedure sets this out. www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	Since 1 January 2025, we have a log recording all extensions granted, at what complaint stage and the reason why the extension has been granted.
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Staff in the complaint handling team ensure that when an extension is granted, the communication to the complainant provides them with the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman Service.	
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the	Yes	The complaint response will set out the actions we have taken or if they are due to be taken, when that will happen. Services have in place	For complaints concluded by the Housing Ombudsman Service it is the Complaint and Enquiries Team that tracks

	issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.		procedures to follow up on outstanding actions	actions/orders due for completion. The complaint is only closed once all the actions have been completed and the Ombudsman informed.
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Where additional issues are raised after a complaint has been submitted, we will always add these in and ensure that it is responded to within the original response and if more time is needed to do this, we will inform a complainant of this. If new issues are raised after a response has been sent, we will treat as a new complaint.	
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.	Yes	This is included in the response that we send.	

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	The formal complaint responses at Stages 1 and 2 will inform a complainant how to progress their complaint to the next stage of the process.
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaint's procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at	We will always ask a complainant for clarification otherwise the response that is

	make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.		www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	sent at Stage 2 will mirror that sent at Stage 1, if we do not know what they are dissatisfied with.
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	At Stage 1 a Team Leader or Head of Service will investigate and respond and at Stage 2, this will either be a Head of Service or Director, depending on who has investigated and responded at Stage 1.
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	This is set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	A log is kept of all extensions granted since 1 January 2025 and this includes the reason why an extension was granted.
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Staff in the complaint handling team ensure that an extension communication provides the Housing Ombudsman contact details	
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	The complaint response will set out the actions we have taken or if they are due to be taken, when that will happen. Services have in place procedures to follow up on outstanding actions	
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	This is included in the response that we send.	
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; 	Yes	The letters that we send at each stage of the process sets out our findings, the decision, the remedy (where appropriate) and to whom a complainant can request an escalation to including the Ombudsman at the final stage.	

	f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.			
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	The Investigating officer will collate information from all relevant staff before issuing our final response	

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices. 	Yes	This is included in the response that we send	
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	This is included in the response that we send	
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	This is included in the response that we send	
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	The Complaint Handling Codes are available and key staff have received additional training from an officer in the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.	

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. 	Yes	An annual complaint report is provided for the Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee . From April 2025, the Resident Services Select Committee will additionally scrutinise an annual report relating to complaints managed by the landlord service during 2024/25.	
8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	This is reported to the Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee. The report is published on the following website: London Borough of Hillingdon - Browse meetings - CABINET	For 2024/25 a separate report will be provided to the Residents' Services Select Committee ahead of the annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes	A submission is required to Cabinet where any changes are made to the Corporate complaints procedure. We will undertake self-assessments when required.	
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	As a result of decisions made by the Ombudsman, senior managers are made aware of the decision and actions are monitored to ensure that they are completed. Changes made are then noted and the self-assessment is then changed/added to when next reviewed.	
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances,	Yes	This has not happened, but it is noted.	

	such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.			
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Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	Set out in the Corporate complaints procedure www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	Once a complaint has been responded to, officers will identify any learning and set out what has gone wrong and what is being done to put this right. This includes the identification of any underlining themes and where there are issues associated with perceptions around fairness and respect.
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes	Set out in the Corporate complaints procedure which can be accessed at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints	We are using Power BI to provide a suite of reports for staff to access which provides all staff with real time data on complaints received, lessons learnt, compensation paid, etc. This data is then used to make changes to operational practice, the review of services and to inform staff training and development.
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	New complaint portal has been introduced as of 3 July 2023.	Our new complaint portal has been introduced in July 2023 and together with the use of Power BI it enables much more flexible and comprehensive reporting. This will increase the extent to which the council is able to learn from complaints, share the learning and institute improvements. We have a complaint and compliment special interest group and complaints data is reported into our governance structure.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must	Yes	There is a dedicated complaint manager at a senior level that produces the annual complaint report	Quarterly and annual corporate reports show themes and what action was taken to address

	assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.		for the Select committee. This has been enhanced by the new role covered by the Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee, which will act as the Member Responsible for Complaints.	them. A new IT based system for complaints handling is being installed which will enable much more flexible and comprehensive reporting. This will increase the extent to which the council is able to learn from complaints, share the learning and institute improvements
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').	Yes	Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee, which will act as the Member Responsible for Complaints	From 2024/25 this will be added to by a timelier report into Residents' Services Select Committee ahead of the submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	A quarterly report has been developed that provides the Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee, with regular updates.	A rolling quarterly report is also produced for the landlord board, Corporate Management Team leads and lead Cabinet member for the landlord service.
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	Yes	A quarterly report is being used to provide the Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee with regular updates.	This process was approved by Cabinet on 27 June 2024. Rolling quarterly report is also produced for the landlord board, Corporate Management Team leads and lead Cabinet member for the landlord service
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; 	Yes	"The Council is committed to putting people at the centre of everything we do and aims to provide the best possible service to residents. However, sometimes things can go wrong and if you are not happy with the service you have received from the Council then please tell us so that we can,	We have a standard housing objective in relation to complaints which is also incorporated in our procedures and explains that staff involved in the management and response

	<p>b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and</p> <p>c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.</p>		<p>where possible, sort out the problem.</p> <p>We will carry out enquiries fairly, deal with your complaint as quickly and effectively as we can while maintaining confidentiality and keeping you informed of progress. We want to reassure you that the service you get will not be affected if you raise concerns or make a complaint.</p> <p>The policy and procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• allows managers to address issues of unsatisfactory service and seek improvements in service delivery;• ensures that customers are treated fairly and consistently;• ensures that a proper and adequate investigation takes place before any action is taken;• requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered in line with the Equality Act 2010 and appropriate training is provided for staff; and• safeguards the integrity and good reputation of the Council.”	<p>to complaints are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• working collaboratively to resolve resident issues• taking shared responsibility for addressing areas of development identified through complaints• Acting in accordance with any relevant professional registration that they hold.
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Appendix D - updated Complaints Action Plan which was produced following the 2023/24 self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code and published in June 2024

Task / Code reference	Lead	By	Update	RAG
Introduce a dedicated ‘complaints resource’ within Housing Management as part of a phase approached to supporting improved outcomes and learning from the management of formal complaints.	SS	2025/26	Housing Management restructure approved, including dedicated complaints resource. Restructure Project Plan in development.	A
Self-Assessment Sect 9 – Scrutiny & oversight; continuous learning and improvement. Non- compliance regarding specific wording within relevant JDs – task to include standard objectives / form of words relating to complaint handling into the JDs of all Officers who deal with complaints. HoS references include: I. Have a collaborative and cooperative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments II. Take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others III. Act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body Revised standard objectives – October ’24. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Foster a collaborative and cooperative approach towards resolving complaints by working with colleagues across teams and departments in an open and honest way.Take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than attributing blame to others.Adhere to professional standards when engaging with complainants.Ensure that deadlines are consistently met.Demonstrate integrity when interacting with complainants and colleagues.To attend the complaint handling masterclass, which is offered four times annually.	SS	2025/26	Work on new / revised Job descriptions / Person Specifications to be incorporated within the Restructure project – see above. Corporate Management instruction issued in April 2025 to all staff who management complaints and requirements to also be embedded into 2025/26 staff and manager PADAs.	A
Make clear and include in the STAR survey that the survey is not a channel by which complaints are collected/processed. Repairs and other Services to also incorporate this in their surveys – option to signpost them to the appropriate channels.	MF GP/SS	Aug 24 Oct 24	Surveys updated.	G
Code provision 3.5 - Publicising policy – we publicise this in a limited way in that our policy and code is on our website; we will be exploring how to publicise more widely through presentations and newsletters – The first edition of our new quarterly e-newsletter (May 24) referenced complaints processes.	MF/IA	Ongoing	Initiatives to increase overall compliant numbers to be rolled forward into Complaints Improvement Plan 2025/26	A
Code provision 5.6 – acknowledgement letter – Review and increase the scope of the letter to include not only receipt of a complaint but sets out our understanding of the complaint in summary form.	IA	Oct 24	Updated text [GOSS] to insert into template. Templates updated 2.9.24 and compliant	G
Code provision 5.7 - When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	IA	Oct 24	Updated text [GOSS] to insert into template. Templates updated 2.9.24 and compliant	G
Code provision 5.10 - set up a log or a register of complaints where reasonable adjustments have been made (ref Equality Act) – disabled/vulnerable residents.	IA	Aug 24	Register established in SharePoint - Completed	G

[illegible]

Code provision 8.1 – An Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes: a. The annual self- assessment against this Code to ensure the complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements b. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Landlord’s complaint handling performance – this must include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept c. Any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the ombudsman d. The service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints e. Any annual report about the landlord’s performance from the ombudsman f. Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the ombudsman in relation to the work of the Landlord	RS/DW	June 25	Final 24/25 report to be uploaded to the Housing Ombudsman Service by 30 June 25. Report to be ready in advance to ensure prior consideration and scrutiny by ‘governing body’. Timeline to be documented for consideration by; Landlord Board, CMT Housing Leads, Cabinet portfolio holders, Residents Services Select Committee. NB – Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee now formally recognised as the ‘Member Responsible for Complaints’ and will consider the Corporate Complaints Report each Autumn. This will include prior consideration by Residents Services Select Committee in April each year.	A
Code provision 8.2 – Requirement to define our governing body. To be documented as an integral part of the annual timeline for Complaints and must include ‘tenant scrutiny’.	IA/DW	17 Sept 24	Annual timeline ‘signed off’ by LL Board on 17.9.24.	G
The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord’s governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body’s response to the report must be published alongside this.	SS/GP	30 June 25	See above.	A

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Anti Social Behaviour Report

Committee name	Residents Services Select Committee
Officers reporting	Richard Webb; Director of Community Safety and Enforcement Jo Howells; Street Scene Enforcement Manager Donna Cooper; Safer Communities Manager
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) encompasses a wide range of behaviours that cause nuisance and harm to others. Local authorities have statutory responsibilities for tackling ASB at a local level. Local authorities also have statutory responsibilities to address certain types of environmental crimes which affect the areas people live in. Anti-social behaviour and environmental crime are often very closely linked and the Council receives large numbers of reports of both ASB and environmental crime each year. The response to both issues requires the Council to have officers who understand the relevant legislation, the powers available to the Council and the processes necessary to utilise those powers effectively.

This report provides an overview of reported ASB and environmental crime in the area and the Council's work to prevent and respond to anti-social behaviour and environmental crime through 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Residents' Services Select Committee notes the contents of the report and asks questions in order to clarify matters of concern or interest in the Borough.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. The Council has statutory responsibility to investigate reports of ASB and environmental crime and has a range of enforcement powers available to it when seeking to prevent and reduce ASB and environmental crime. This report provides information on the nature and volume of ASB and environmental crime reports received by the Council from residents, Elected Members and businesses, and the way the Council responds to those reports.
2. ASB is defined in the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 as:

- behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person,
 - conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or
 - conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.
3. A wide range of behaviours could be antisocial or constitute environmental crimes and are reported to the Council for investigation. These include:
- Abandoning a vehicle in a public space (e.g. abandoning old cars that are no longer useable).
 - Inconsiderate behaviour in public spaces which causes distress or alarm to others or stops them using those public areas (for example, drinking in groups outside shops and blocking footpaths, preventing access to benches and leaving litter).
 - Using a vehicle in a way which causes a nuisance to others (e.g. loud engine revving during the night, using e-bikes on footpaths or in busy pedestrian areas).
 - Behaviour which has a negative impact on a neighbours' ability to enjoy their property (e.g. regular fires or noise which prevents them using their garden).
 - Dropping litter.
 - Out of control dogs or persistent dog barking in residential areas.
 - Trespassing on private property or limiting someone's access to their own property.
 - Not controlling a dog in a public place so that others feel unsafe or unable to use that same public space.
 - Fly-tipping.
 - Aggressive begging.
 - Making loud noises at night (e.g. playing music loudly).
 - Allowing waste to accumulate on private property.
4. The Council has powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to introduce orders, called Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO), to ban specific acts in designated geographical areas. A PSPO may be introduced when there is evidence to show that the behaviour of some people is, or could be, detrimental to a local community's quality of life and that it is necessary to introduce additional prohibitions on certain acts to prevent that behaviour occurring or to stop it reoccurring.
5. In 2025 the Council reviewed the Borough wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), for introduction from 1st May 2025. This new PSPO retained most of the prohibitions in the previous PSPO and added new prohibitions covering:
- a. Smoking/Vaping within children's play areas
 - b. Exercising dogs within children's play areas
 - c. Driving E scooters/E bicycles or motor vehicles within public green spaces
 - d. Placing of tables/stands/signage in town centres
 - e. Street Selling of financial agreements in the street in town centres (Uxbridge, Hayes and Ruislip)
 - f. Street trading without proper consent
 - g. Holding car meets or street racing events

- h. Use of amplification at Ruislip Lido and other green spaces

PERFORMANCE DATA

6. The Council receives daily reports of different types of anti-social behaviour and environmental crime incidents from residents and members. The following table provides a summary of the total number of reports received by the Council's Street Scene Enforcement, ASB Localities and Environmental Protection Teams between January and December 2024.

	Street Scene Enforcement	ASB Localities	Environmental protection (Noise nuisance)
Total number of reports received	11360		
Actionable reports (per team)	3657	624	2051
Total misdirected/unactionable reports	5028		

7. In addition, Council tenants contact the Housing Service to report issues related to ASB concerning our social housing functions. These reports are recorded separately and not included in the data within this report.
8. Several teams within the Council have responsibility for preventing and reducing Anti-social behaviour. The main teams with a role in investigating ASB and Environmental Crime are
- Street Scene Enforcement Team - Responsible for investigation of fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, fly posting, waste accumulations, pest infestations, etc.
 - Environmental Protection – Responsible for investigations of statutory nuisance (e.g. noise, smoke, dust or light adversely impacting on people within their properties) including the out of hours noise service.
 - ASB and Localities – Responsible for coordinating multi-agency action on persistent or complex ASB affecting the wider community, which includes long standing issues and emerging trends.
 - Tenancy Management – Within the Housing Service and responsible for investigating ASB where the behaviour concerns an identified Council tenant and could be a breach of their tenancy agreement.
9. The average first response time for enquiries to the Community Safety and Enforcement teams varies.

Team	Average Response-Service Requests	Average Response-Member Enquiries
Street Scene Enforcement Team	8 days	5 days
ASB and Localities	4 days	4 days
Environmental Protection	4 days	12 days

RESIDENT BENEFIT

Introduction to the ASB Localities Team

10. The ASB Localities Team, established in June 2023, manages complex ASB cases requiring a collaborative approach from multiple teams and agencies. The team's primary goal is to lead a locality-based problem-solving approach to address identified issues and hot spots, enhancing multi-agency engagement and finding long-term solutions to community problems.

Key Responsibilities:

- Addressing issues involving groups rather than single households or businesses.
- Tackling problems affecting entire localities or areas.
- Managing issues with multiple elements requiring actions from various teams/partners.
- Facilitating community engagement and involvement in solutions.
- Handling persistent or recurring problems that have been unresolved by previous efforts.

Role in the Community: The team may represent the council in locality-based meetings, identifies local issues needing council action, and serves as a communication channel between the community and the council. They also support police by attending local Ward Panel meetings.

Examples of Work:

- Addressing ASB in communal or public areas, such as drug dealing and street drinking, which lead to noise and littering.
- Collaborating with the Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team for targeted patrols and crime-related issues.
- Working with the Environmental Enforcement Team to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and other breaches.
- Coordinating with the Noise Team to monitor locations and address public order offences.
- Engaging with Licensing to enforce alcohol sale regulations.
- Obtaining partial closure orders for communal areas to reduce ASB and empower police action.

By identifying problems within localities and coordinating key agencies, the Localities Team ensures a better response and service to the community, supporting and working effectively with

partner agencies.

Holistic Approach of Localities Team differing from Other ASB Approaches:

11. The Localities Team adopts a holistic approach to addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB), focusing on comprehensive solutions rather than solely enforcement-led actions.
12. Following are summaries of some recent cases led by the Localities team.

Case Example:

- **Initial Reports:** ASB reports received from a resident in April 2024, with similar reports dating back to February 2023.
- **Identification:** Partnership work with police identified the perpetrator as CM, a 10-year-old boy with special educational needs.
- **Family Liaison:** The Stronger Families team advised the family was known to them but not currently receiving direct support.
- **Mother's Input:** Contact with CM's mother revealed both CM and his mother have ADHD. She declined a referral to Stronger Families, citing past experiences.
- **Behaviour Contract:** An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) was discussed to give CM autonomy over his actions. The mother refused the ABC and grounded CM indefinitely.
- **Referral Consideration:** Despite the mother's refusal, advice was sought on making a referral without consent due to the risk to CM and wider community impact his behaviour was having.
- **Referral Made:** A referral to Stronger Families was made.
- **Outcome:** Following the referral, police continued patrols, and no further reports were received.

This case illustrates the Localities Team's ability to coordinate multiple agencies and adopt a holistic approach, ensuring better outcomes for both the individual and the community.

Case of ASB in Supported Living:

- **Initial Reports:** In July 2024, reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) from a supported living property included items being thrown onto neighbours' property and racial abuse. The reporter suggested the alleged perpetrator might have mental health (MH) issues.
- **Service Checks:** Checks with MH and Adult Social Care (ASC) confirmed the alleged perpetrator was not open to services.
- **Visits and Warnings:** The property was visited twice with the police, and verbal warnings were given. Staff used inappropriate language such as "loony bin" during visits.
- **Additional Reports:** Reports emerged about other residents, including footage of people urinating in the garden and young children left unattended.
- **CQC Report:** The property was reported to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) after

receiving a video of a visitor defecating in the street in daylight.

- **Quality Assurance:** CQC liaised with Quality Assurance, who sent an officer to the property. The officer described it as one of the worst facilities they had seen.
- **Professional Meetings:** Meetings arranged by Localities, with Quality Assurance, and the premises owner identified inconsistencies.
- **Outcome:** The property was closed as a supported living residence, and the Quality Assurance team is working to revoke the company's licence.

Hayes Town Action Day to Address ASB:

- **Event Coordination:** A multi-agency action day was organised and coordinated by Localities, involving the following teams:
 - Licensing
 - Police
 - Street Scene Enforcement Team (SSET)
 - Private Sector Housing
 - Parking Enforcement
 - Environmental Enforcement Team (EET)
- **Illegal Brothel:** During the event, an illegal brothel was discovered. The Localities Team is investigating and proceeding with enforcement action.

These cases highlight the Localities Team's comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing ASB, ensuring community safety and well-being.

Tower Block Partial Closure Orders

Overview: Sutcliffe House, Harding House, Skeffington Court, Fairlie House, and the Gouldings are tower blocks managed by the London Borough of Hillingdon. These blocks have faced significant anti-social behaviour (ASB) and criminal activity, impacting residents and the broader community. Concerns have been raised about non-residents accessing the blocks and causing ASB, making residents feel unsafe.

Background: Many individuals entering the buildings are rough sleepers or involved in drug-related activities, using communal areas to sleep, loiter, and consume drugs. Reports include:

- Rough sleepers in stairwells and basement floors.
- Fires in communal areas/bin chutes.
- Loud, aggressive, and disruptive adults.
- Drug use and discarded paraphernalia.
- Urination and defecation in lifts and communal spaces.

- Alcohol consumption and discarded bottles/cans.
- Theft of personal items.
- Criminal damage (broken doors, graffiti).

Steps Taken:

- Partnership with housing, repairs, caretaking team, and police.
- Deactivation of main trade buttons to reduce non-resident access.
- Regular patrols with the Metropolitan Police Service.
- 'Walk-arounds' by Localities and Housing teams to identify issues.
- Tenancy enforcement action for problem properties.
- Collaboration with police and rough sleeper's team to identify vulnerable individuals.
- Consultation with residents, police, housing teams, and senior management led to the agreement that partial closure orders would be the quickest way to address ASB. Closure orders prohibit access to premises at specified times or by specified persons, for up to three months, extendable to six months.

Outcome: The Localities Team successfully obtained closure orders for all five tower blocks. Collaborative patrols and reporting between Localities and Housing teams are in place.

Next Steps:

- Daily site visits by Localities and Housing Teams.
- Resident engagement and reporting to the LA and police.
- Support from Uxbridge BID team to remove loiterers.
- Increased police patrols and arrests for breaches.
- Thames Reach engagement with rough sleepers for support and accommodation.

Summary: Residents have reported feeling much safer, and the closure orders have significantly reduced ASB in Sutcliffe and Harding House.

Introduction to the Street Scene Enforcement Team (SSET)

13. The Street Scene Enforcement Team actively supports the day-to-day delivery of Public Protection, Community Safety and Enforcement Services to local communities and businesses. The primary function of this work is to protect the public, the environment, residents, businesses and visitors to the area, while carrying out enforcement functions in an equitable, practical and consistent manner.
14. The aim of this team is to deliver responsive, professional, and legally compliant services, with streamlined processes, effective customer service, working practices and consistent standards. The team seeks to prevent, intervene and enforce legislation for street scene

and environmental protection/health offences within the Borough and to deal with instances of non-compliance robustly through a range of enforcement and non-enforcement methods.

15. The vast majority of the work of SSET is the reactive response to individual complaints/service requests. However, the team also arrange proactive multi-agency operations to address persistent local environmental issues. Below are some examples of this proactive work undertaken by SSET officers between 1st January 2024 to December 2024.

Date	Ward	Issues	Actions
09/05/24	Yiewsley/West Drayton	Aggressive beggars outside Tesco's	Joint action day with homeless prevention/SSET/ASB Localities/CCTV/Police. Individuals identified and details shared with Police. Formal court action ongoing.
13/05/24	Northwood Hills Briarwood Drive Tolcarne Drive (Rear of Esso Petrol Station) - Ryefield Crescent - Windsor Close/Fairfield Church -	Rubbish/waste accumulation	Joint work between SSET officers, Waste Services and EET including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resident and business engagement. - Installation of signs. - Duty of care waste checks. - Waste letters/information provided to residents and businesses.
14/05/24	Harlington	Taxi/PHV drivers	Joint operation – SSET/TFL/Police/Licensing and Parking services. Breaches of PSPO identified. 18 drivers were dealt with. 36 reports for various offences such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not displaying badges, - 1 vehicle condition advisory, - 1 regarding incorrect camera specifications, - 1 smoking/vaping. All were advised in relation to causing ASB.
20/05/24	Berwick Avenue, Barnhill Road.	Rubbish/waste issues	Joint work with SSET/Waste Services/Councillor Farley. Resident engagement/distribution of leaflets/increased

			signage.
07/06/24 and 12/06/24	Bourne Court Ruislip	Multiple complaints have been received involving the incorrect disposal of domestic waste attracting rats/vermin/foxes	Joint work with SSET/Waste Services/EET. Specific addresses identified and leafleted. New signage installed. Resident engagement. One FPN for littering was issued to a non-resident. Ongoing monitoring by waste services/SSET. Landowner contacted in relation to the location of the common site for waste (2 Bourne Court)
26/06/24	Sipson Road, Mondial Way and Doghurst Drive	Private hire vehicles and vehicle idling	SSET/TFL/EET/Parking services operation. TFL compliance checks. FPN's issued for Idling/Breach of PSPO
26/07/24	Wyre Grove/North Hyde Road	Longstanding issue of rubbish accumulation and incorrect storage and disposal by residents and businesses	Joint SSET/EET/Waste Services operation. New signs installed. S46 EPA 1990 Notices issued Rear access road inspected to clear obstructions. Engagement with businesses and waste duty of care checks carried out.
25/07/24	2 nd site visit Fairfield Church/Windsor Close/Tolcarne Drive Northwood Hills	Rubbish accumulation - Business and residential	Joint SSET/EET/Waste Services/Church representative operation. Notices sent to residents and businesses and spot checks conducted.
06/08/24	Coldharbour Lane	Rubbish accumulation. Storage of waste.	Joint visit between SSET/Councillor Lavery/Waste Services/Corporate Comms/EET

			<p>Visited residents door-to-door to advise them about disposing of their waste in the correct manner and on the right location/day. Leaflets were posted where resident could not be seen.</p> <p>SSET met the owner of the land, and he has advised us this has been an ongoing issue for many years. There will be further engagement between Hillingdon Council and the owner of the land moving forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “NO DUMPING WASTE” signs have also been installed around Coldharbour Lane / Hunters Grove • Local businesses have been spoken to regarding where they are disposing of their waste and the impact of this to the environment and local residents. • A Fixed Penalty Notice under The Environmental Act 1990 for fly tipping has been issued to a resident of Hunters Grove.
13/08/24	Doghurst Drive/Egerton Way/Mondial Way	Hot spot for Private Hire Vehicles waiting for new jobs, leading to issues with vehicle engine idling, littering, parking in resident bays or on double yellow lines.	<p>Joint operation between SSET/EET/TFL.</p> <p>Compliance checks on Private Hire Vehicles with the Environment Enforcement Team</p> <p>6 x FPN's issued for various offences</p>

Legal Case results for 2024

16. Following is a summary of the prosecutions supported or led by SSET and concluded in 2024:

30/07/2024 Coleridge Way, flytipping. LBH V L.Bartholemew– successful prosecution, court costs and compensation awarded.

08/08/2024 - New Years Green Lane – Making off without payment/Unlawful deposit of waste. LBH V A Coker, 11 months' imprisonment, suspended 2 years, Supervision order 18 months 120 hours unpaid work, Compensation order to named witness £1000

10/12/2024 - Manse Close – SSET Officers attended High Court London to present evidence in support of the Planning Enforcement application for a High Court injunction. The injunction was granted. Community Protection Warning and a Community Protection Notice were issued by SSET officers in connection with the same matter.

3/12/2025 Breach of Remedial Notice, ASB crime and Policing Act 2003. LBH V Peabody Housing. Fine and court costs awarded (concluded 11/03/2025).

17. As stated above, the majority of work undertaken by the Street Scene Enforcement Team is reactive to individual service requests and complaints. The table below provides an overview of the volume of reports received about ASB and environmental crime, by geographical ward areas, between January and December 2024.

DEMAND FOR ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PER WARD	
WARDS	SR'S/ME'S SUBMITTED
Belmore	581
Charville	491
Colham & Cowley	664
Eastcote	457
Harefield Village	215
Hayes Town	770
Heathrow Villages	597
Hillingdon East	628
Hillingdon West	250
Ickenham & South Harefield	382
Northwood	359
Northwood Hills	335
Pinkwell	609
Ruislip	687
Ruislip Manor	282
South Ruislip	488
Uxbridge	1014
West Drayton	789
Wood End	705
Yeading	473
Yiewsley	533
Unknown Location	51

18. The top 3 case types most reported during this period are:

Noise	-	2171
Waste/Rubbish (Fly tipping)	-	1831
Abandoned Vehicles	-	1792

19. Enforcement actions taken in response to these complaints and service requests include informal advisory letters, formal enforcement notices, multi-agency collaboration, removal of abandoned vehicles and engagement with the Community Payback scheme. SSET have recorded consistent increase in positive enforcement actions in recent years, with a total of 8650 actions recorded in 2024. Officers conducted 1086 site visits and in the last quarter of 2024, 65% of all reported ASB issues were resolved.

20. Our case management systems do not currently have the capability of providing a breakdown of enforcement actions by ward.

Environmental Enforcement (EET)

21. The Council contracts with APCOA Parking Limited for the provision of on-street Environmental Enforcement Officers (EEOs). These EEOs are authorised to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for contraventions of environmental legislation that the Council can enforce, including the Hillingdon PSPO.

22. The total number of FPNs issued in 2024 exceeded the number issued in 2022/23. This is due to improved single deployment of EEOs, improvement in tasking assignments, inclusion of wider legislative enforcement powers (including fly posting and highway obstruction) and the introduction of a PSPO in March 2025 relating to taxi and private hire vehicles waiting near Heathrow Airport. Improvements have been made to the quality assurance process with the submission of court case files reviewed and assessed by case officers within Street Scene Enforcement Team. This has resulted in a 99% prosecution success rate (prosecutions are required when fixed FPNs are not paid), with associated compensation and court cost recovery.

23. EET Officers are assigned specific taskings from several teams within Hillingdon Council on issues ranging from the installation of advisory signs to enforcement against dog fouling and business waste disposal duty of care checks. Improvements to how these are actioned and monitored have resulted in a 100% achievement of completion of the tasking within specific timescales.

A breakdown of tasking requests in 2024 follows:

Installing signs	105
Dog Fouling patrols	73
Obstruction	65
Duty of Care	43
PSPO	29
Street Trading	27
Fly posting	23
Idling	18
Fly tipping	17
Littering	16
Community Nuisance	13
Urinating	1
Total requests	430

EET Deployment

24. 10 uniformed officers are deployed from Monday to Sunday and patrols are strategically deployed with dynamic adjustments based on compliance trends and emerging concerns. Patrols are conducted on foot and via mobile units, focusing on areas known for environmental issues such as the vicinity surrounding Heathrow, Ruislip Lido, Cranford Park, as well as High Street and shopping centre locations like Uxbridge, Hayes, Uxbridge Road, Ruislip, Eastcote, Joel Street, and West Drayton.
25. Approximately 45% of patrol hours are dedicated to 'hot spot' areas and as we move into the summer months patrols encompass parks and open spaces, with a specific focus on ensuring compliance with the PSPO.
26. To ensure maximum coverage and service efficiency, a weekly rota is produced, accommodating action days and enforcement requirements. Additionally, deployment strategies are regularly reviewed in collaboration with the SSET to maintain a focus on priority areas, minimize unnecessary patrols in low-risk zones, and optimize officer presence on the streets.
27. The implemented structured shift pattern is aimed at optimizing coverage during peak times while maintaining the flexibility required for targeted operations. It enables the team to adjust resources based on intelligence led priorities, and seasonal events, markets and festivals. The shift pattern is summarised below:

Shift Type	Start	End	Focus
Early Shift	07:00	16:00	Parks, open spaces, schools, commuter routes
Late Shift	10:00	19:00	Town centres, shopping parades, late complaints

28. Throughout October 2024, EET officers distributed over 2,000 leaflets to support the implementation of the revised PSPO that came into effect at this time. This outreach effort included distribution to shops, and greater engagement with residents in specific areas. In February 2025, activity included the distribution of 455 formal warning notices related to the new PSPO prohibiting taxi and private hire vehicles parking near Heathrow Airport. From 1st March 2025 to 31st March 2025 a total of 947 FPN's have been issued for offences under this new PSPO.

29. The total numbers of FPN's issued between January to December 2024 categorised by ward areas is shown below:

Wards	FPNs issues January - December 2024
Belmore	318
Charville	346
Colham & Cowley	64
Eastcote	144
Harefield Village	34
Ickenham & South Harefield	169
Hayes Town	1516
Heathrow Villages	2537
Hillingdon East	104
Hillingdon West	22
Northwood	53
Northwood Hills	50
Pinkwell	364
Ruislip	190
Ruislip Manor	103
South Ruislip	236
Uxbridge	257
West Drayton	302
Wood End	136
Yeading	72
Yiewsley	128
Total	9435

30. A breakdown of the FPNs issued by category of offence is shown below:

Offence and fine amount	FPNs issued
Engine Idling (£50)	3401
Littering (£85)	1782
Spitting (£50)	704
Painting/ inscribing/ affixing on a tree structure (£100)	605
Resisting/ obstructing an officer (£150)	545
Display of advertisements in contravention (£100)	501
Urinating/ defecating (£50)	325
Smoking in a smoke free place (£50)	259
Motorised electric vehicle PSPO (£50)	223
Drinking/ Drugs PSPO (£50)	189
Unlicensed street trading (£150)	162
Car meets/ racing PSPO (£50)	142
Waste duty of care (£300)	135
Wilful obstruction on the highway (£100)	124
Dog fouling (£50)	65
Fly tipping	52
Contravention of a street trading licence condition (£100)	30
Failure to comply with waste documents (waste transfer notes) (£100)	29
Footpath blocking PSPO (£50)	26
Being verbally abusive PSPO (£50)	26
Abatement notice	24
Non-compliance with a condition of the PSPO (£50)	12
Distribution of free printed matter (£100)	11
Abandonment of vehicle PSPO (£50)	9
Feeding birds (£50)	8
Depositing on a highway (£50)	7
Builders skip without permission (£100)	6
Erecting scaffold/ other structure without licence (£100)	5
Failure to secure marking of skip (£100)	5
Dogs of lead (£80)	4
Failure to comply with CPN	3
Parked in a prohibited area PSPO	3
Commercial vehicle parked in a council operated car park (£100)	2
Fishing (£100)	2
Graffiti (£100)	2
Failure to produce street trading licence on demand (£300)	2
BBQs/ Fires (£50)	1
Inadequate lighting of a builders skip (£100)	1
Having more than 4 dogs in a persons sole charge for non-commercial purposes (£80)	1
Fly posting (£100)	1
Amplification PSPO (£50)	1

Begging (£50)	0
Learner driver with instructor in car park where not permitted (£80)	0
Having more than 6 dogs in a persons sole charge for commercial purposes without a licence (£80)	0
Total	9435

Trading Standards Service to tackle underage sales of alcohol and vapes

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Martin King, Trading Standards Manager
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To inform the Residents' Services Select Committee of the work being carried out by the Council's Trading Standards Service to tackle the underage sales of alcohol and vapes.

To inform the Residents' Services Select Committee of the work being carried out by the Council's Trading Standards Service to tackle the importation, sale and supply of unsafe and non-compliant e-cigarettes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. **Notes the important work being carried out by the Trading Standards Service in relation to underage sales of alcohol and vapes; and**
2. **Notes the important work being carried out by the Trading Standards Service in relation to the importation, sale and supply of unsafe and non-compliant e-cigarettes.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Trading Standards Service is responsible for enforcing over 200 pieces of trading standards and consumer protection legislation. This includes the sale of age restricted goods including alcohol, tobacco, knives and e-cigarettes (vapes).

The Service also has a statutory duty to enforce product safety legislation ensuring that consumer goods being sold in the Borough are safe and comply with all relevant product safety legislation.

Underage Sales

The Licensing Act 2003 makes it a criminal offence to supply alcohol to a person under the age of 18. The Children & Families Act 2014 makes it a criminal offence to supply an e-cigarette (nicotine inhaling product) to a person under the age of 18.

Upon receipt of an underage sales allegation, a Trading Standards Officer will visit the business and offer the necessary advice and provide guidance on good practice. A Hillingdon Council produced underage sales booklet will also be left with the owner of the business. The booklet includes guidance on the legislation, staff training information, staff training logs and a refusals register.

This initial advice visit will then be followed up by a test purchase using volunteers under the age of 18. In the event that a sale is made, both the person who sold the product and the owner of the business will be invited to attend an interview under caution at the Civic Centre. An infringement report will be completed by the investigating Trading Standards Officer and a decision made as to the most appropriate course of action. This could be a written warning, a formal caution, or prosecution. Due regard is given to the Code for Crown Prosecutors including whether it is in the public interest to prosecute. In the majority of cases, the public interest criteria are met and legal proceedings instituted.

Test purchasing operations are typically carried out quarterly, during evenings and weekends or in the school holidays.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill, currently going through Parliament, will give Trading Standards Officers the power to issue £200 fixed penalty notices to persons and businesses who sell cigarettes and e-cigarettes to persons below the permitted age of purchase. Other measures in the Bill include:

- prohibiting the sale of tobacco to persons born on or after 1 January 2009;
- provisions concerning the licensing of retail sales and the registration of retailers.

The Bill gives the government the ability to introduce a new licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco products, herbal smoking products, cigarette papers, vapes and nicotine products. The scheme will be introduced in regulations and will cover online and retail sales. Once the scheme is introduced, selling relevant products not in accordance with the correct licenses and their accompanying conditions could result in criminal prosecution or civil financial penalties. Further details are awaited from the government. There will be consultation ahead of introducing the regulations. Applications for a tobacco licence will be made to the licensing authority (Hillingdon Council). Exact details are unknown at this point, but the new law will allow for regulations to impose conditions on licence holders. The Bill will also control the advertising, promotion, and display of tobacco and vapes.

Many persons under the age of 18 who purchase vapes tend to purchase disposable ones as they are cheap and readily available. The Environmental Protection (Single Use Vapes) (England) Regulations 2024 will ban disposable vapes from 1 June 2025. The ban affects all products that are intended for one use, typically providing around 600-650 puffs in a single device. The only products that will be legal from 1 June 2025 must be both rechargeable and refillable with a maximum tank size of 10ml. Trading Standards Officers will have the power to issue £200 fixed penalty notices for shops stocking and supplying disposable vapes after this date.

Unsafe and non-compliant vapes

Operation Joseph is a national trading standards initiative targeting the sale and supply of unsafe and non-compliant vapes. Hillingdon Council's Trading Standards Service actively participates in this operation.

Trading Standards Officers act on intelligence received and will visit retailers suspected of selling unsafe and non-compliant vapes. Infringing product is seized, detained and disposed of at an approved waste facility.

Recognising that Hillingdon has Heathrow Airport within its boundary, National Trading Standards provide additional funding to Hillingdon Council. Regular cargo inspections are carried out at Heathrow and non-compliant vapes are seized, detained and disposed of at an approved waste facility.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Underage sales

Since 1 January 2024, the Trading Standards Service has received 35 complaints alleging that retailers are selling vapes to persons under the age of 18, and 12 complaints alleging that retailers are selling alcohol to persons under the age of 18. Some of these were multiple complaints about the same retailers.

During this period, the service conducted 40 test purchases at those retailers complained about using volunteers under the age of 18. On five occasions the volunteers were able to make a purchase. This represents a 12½ % failure rate. On all five occasions, the volunteers were sold vapes.

The Metropolitan Police Service also carry out test purchases using police cadets under the age of 18. They have provided the following figures for Hillingdon Borough:

- Since 1 January 2024, police cadets were able to purchase alcohol on 11 occasions and vapes on five occasions.

It is believed that, due to issues with the collating of figures, further test purchases were made by the Metropolitan Police Service in Hillingdon.

Since 1 January 2024, the Trading Standards Service has successfully prosecuted four businesses for selling vapes or alcohol to persons under the age of 18. Three prosecutions related to vapes and one related to alcohol. It is usual to prosecute both the person who made the sale and the owners of the business. Fines imposed by the court varied between £150 and £440.

Unsafe and non-compliant vapes

Since 1 January 2024, Trading Standards Officers have made the following seizures of unsafe and non-compliant vapes:

- At Heathrow Airport (during importation): 545,851 vapes seized
- From Hillingdon businesses: 3,838 vapes seized

All seized vapes were subsequently destroyed at an approved disposal facility.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The protection of children from harm – underage sales continues to be an issue across the London region. Tackling the sale of vapes and alcohol to persons under the age of 18 continues to be a local priority and may help contribute to a reduction in anti-social behaviour as well as providing long-term population health benefits.

Removing unsafe products from the marketplace ensures Hillingdon residents are kept safe. They are less likely to sustain an injury by using an unsafe product.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of underage sales test purchasing operations are met from the general Trading Standards budget. The volunteers are not paid; instead, they receive a thank you letter and a gift card (typically £20). The only other cost, apart from officer time, is the cost of the alcohol or vapes should a sale be made. Excluding officer time, the cost of underage sales operations in 2024 was in the region of £200.

The seizure, detention and disposal of non-compliant vapes at Heathrow Airport is funded by an annual grant from National Trading Standards. In 2024-2025 the grant was £750,000. The grant is used to employ a full time Trading Standards contractor to carry out the cargo inspections at the airport and to cover the disposal costs of the seized products at an approved disposal facility. Hillingdon Council invoices National Trading Standards quarterly in relation to this expenditure meaning that there is no cost to Hillingdon Council for this airport work.

Disposal costs for non-compliant vapes seized from other Hillingdon businesses are currently met by our regional body, London Trading Standards, meaning there is no cost to Hillingdon Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

APPENDICES

Nil.

DRAFT FINAL REPORT: “Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey”

Committee name	Residents’ Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny – Democratic Services
Papers with report	Draft Final Review Report
Ward	All Wards

HEADLINES

Background

Further to the Select Committee’s review of Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey in Hillingdon, the draft final report will be circulated for Members to review and agree its submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Select Committee:

- 1. Notes the recommendations previously agreed and agrees in principle the final review report and for its submission to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity; and**
- 2. Delegates any minor textual changes required prior to submission, to the Democratic Services Officer, in consultation with the Chair.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Committee held four main witness sessions, throughout which feedback was obtained from a range of stakeholders with a view to improving the homelessness service. The sessions featured testimonies from key stakeholders, including Council officers, representatives from voluntary sector organisations, and experts in homelessness and domestic abuse support.

1. The first session on 13 March 2024 focused on the increasing demand for homelessness services and the Council's strategy for prevention and housing supply. The importance of empathy and improved staff training were emphasised.
2. The second session on 16 April 2024 highlighted the challenges of unaffordable private rental accommodation and the need for better communication and support for residents. At this session the importance of a welcoming environment at the Civic Centre was also discussed.
3. The third session on 13 June 2024 featured representatives from Thames Reach and P3, who shared their experiences in supporting rough sleepers and young people. The need for effective communication and collaboration among services was underscored.
4. The final session on 18 July 2024 focused on the support for victims of domestic abuse. Additionally, the challenges of accessing housing support and the importance of consistent communication and empathy were highlighted.

The final report is now prepared for consideration.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The aim of the review was to consider how the current service and customer journey could be improved, in addition to what was currently working well.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any recommendations, if agreed by Cabinet, will need to be funded through existing resources.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

Review of Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey in Hillingdon - Draft Final Report



A Review by the Residents' Services Select Committee

Councillors on the Committee: Councillors Wayne Bridges, Colleen Sullivan (Member until May 2024), Scott Farley, Janet Gardner, Ekta Gohil, Sital Punja (Member until May 2024), Peter Smallwood, Darran Davies (Member from May 2024) and Kamal Kaur (Member from May 2024)

2023/2024

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Chairman's Foreword



On behalf of the Residents' Services Select Committee, I am pleased to present this report further to the Committee's Review of Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey.

The Review was undertaken with a clear focus on understanding the challenges faced by residents and identifying practical, cost-effective solutions to enhance their experience. Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a coordinated and compassionate approach.

Throughout the Review, Members were acutely aware of the increasing demand for homelessness services, driven by factors such as evictions from private rental accommodations and the reduction in affordable housing. The testimonies and evidence gathered during witness sessions provided invaluable insights into the current state of homelessness in Hillingdon and the effectiveness of existing services.

The Review highlighted the importance of prevention and early intervention in addressing homelessness. Members noted the positive impact of partnerships with voluntary sector organisations like Trinity and Thames Reach, which provide essential support for rough sleepers and those with complex needs. These partnerships are crucial in ensuring that residents receive the help they need at the earliest possible stage.

The Committee identified the need for improved communication and empathy from housing officers, noting that training in trauma-informed issues and the use of appropriate language is essential to ensure that residents feel understood and supported throughout their journey. The reconfiguration of the Housing Reception Centre to create a more welcoming environment is a key recommendation that Members believe will significantly enhance the resident experience.

Furthermore, the Committee's Review underscored the importance of better systems and technology for case handovers, in addition to the need for continuous feedback from residents to drive service improvements.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank officers and partner organisations who have given up their time to help the Committee in reviewing this topic and commend them for their continued hard work to support residents in the Borough. Their insights and dedication have been instrumental in shaping the Committee's recommendations.

In conclusion, the recommendations set out in this report are designed to enhance the resident experience, manage expectations, improve staff support and training, and foster stronger partnerships and collaboration. It is anticipated that these actions will lead to a more effective and

compassionate homelessness service in Hillingdon, ultimately improving the lives of residents.

Councillor Wayne Bridges
Chairman of the Residents' Services Select Committee

Summary of recommendations to Cabinet

Through the witness sessions and evidence received during the detailed Review by the Committee, Members have agreed the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1

Enhancing Resident Experience

1. All staff to refer to those applicants who approach the service for help as 'residents' rather than 'customers' or 'clients'.
2. Create a clearer Residents' Charter: a more accessible guide explaining each stage of the homelessness support process for new applicants, from intake to case closure. This guide will set expectations, reduce confusion, and address common questions. Consider new technologies for instant translation requirements.
3. Reconfigure the Housing Reception Centre to provide a more welcoming and empathetic environment within existing budget plans.
4. Continue unannounced random checks/management oversight of calls and correspondence to ensure a high-quality, professional, empathetic, and resident-focused service.
5. Continue to gather feedback from residents regarding homelessness services using a simple anonymous feedback form.
6. Actively promote the current suggestion box system to encourage staff to submit suggestions for improving service efficiency and resident interactions.

2

2. Managing Expectations and Process Efficiency:

1. Consider incorporating ways to help applicants check their eligibility on-line for assistance before applying formally. Preventative avoidance can stop unnecessary applications from those who are not entitled, saving time and resources for both the applicants and the Council.
2. For applicants in the process, to avoid processing delays, to explore the possibility of using automated text reminders for appointments and deadlines.
3. Explore the feasibility of introducing a self-check-in system for applicants at reception linked to service transformation.
4. Continue to review and update current documentation, guides and resident facing processes in relation to eligibility, case preparation and action planning.

3

Staff Support & Training

1. Ensure all Housing staff receive regular casework supervision and promote current Staff Welfare policies.
2. Consider implementing a comprehensive peer support and training programme in collaboration with a partner organisation. This programme

should include access to peer mentors with lived experience of homelessness and offer refresher training to staff. The training should also incorporate 'walk-in-my-shoes' sessions to build understanding and connection with residents.

3. Create a learning set of resources for staff to encourage the sharing of good practice.

4

Partnerships and Collaboration

1. Build on existing partnerships and further develop these with local organisations to create a wider support network for residents to access.
2. Assign named officers to be liaisons for relevant partner agencies for accountability and, to aid effective communications going forward, introduce a generic email as the primary contact and communication tool between them and the Council.

Background to the Review

Aim of the Review

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Residents' Services Select Committee agreed to undertake a major review of the Council's Housing Advice and Homelessness Service, with a particular focus on the residents' journey through the system and experience of customer service.

The Review aimed to consider ways in which the customer journey could potentially be improved to better support residents during this process and improve residents' satisfaction with the way in which they accessed advice and support to prevent homelessness.

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference were agreed for the Review:

- To gain a thorough understanding of the Council's Homeless Prevention Service and the resident's journey through this process.
- To scrutinise the service delivery and review its effectiveness.
- To review service users' feedback to explore the challenges faced by residents accessing the service.
- To look at other local authorities that may have different models of service delivery for best practice, including research and findings from charities, housing bodies, regional bodies and organisations, e.g. GLA.
- Subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose practical and deliverable actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

Context and Key Information

National Context

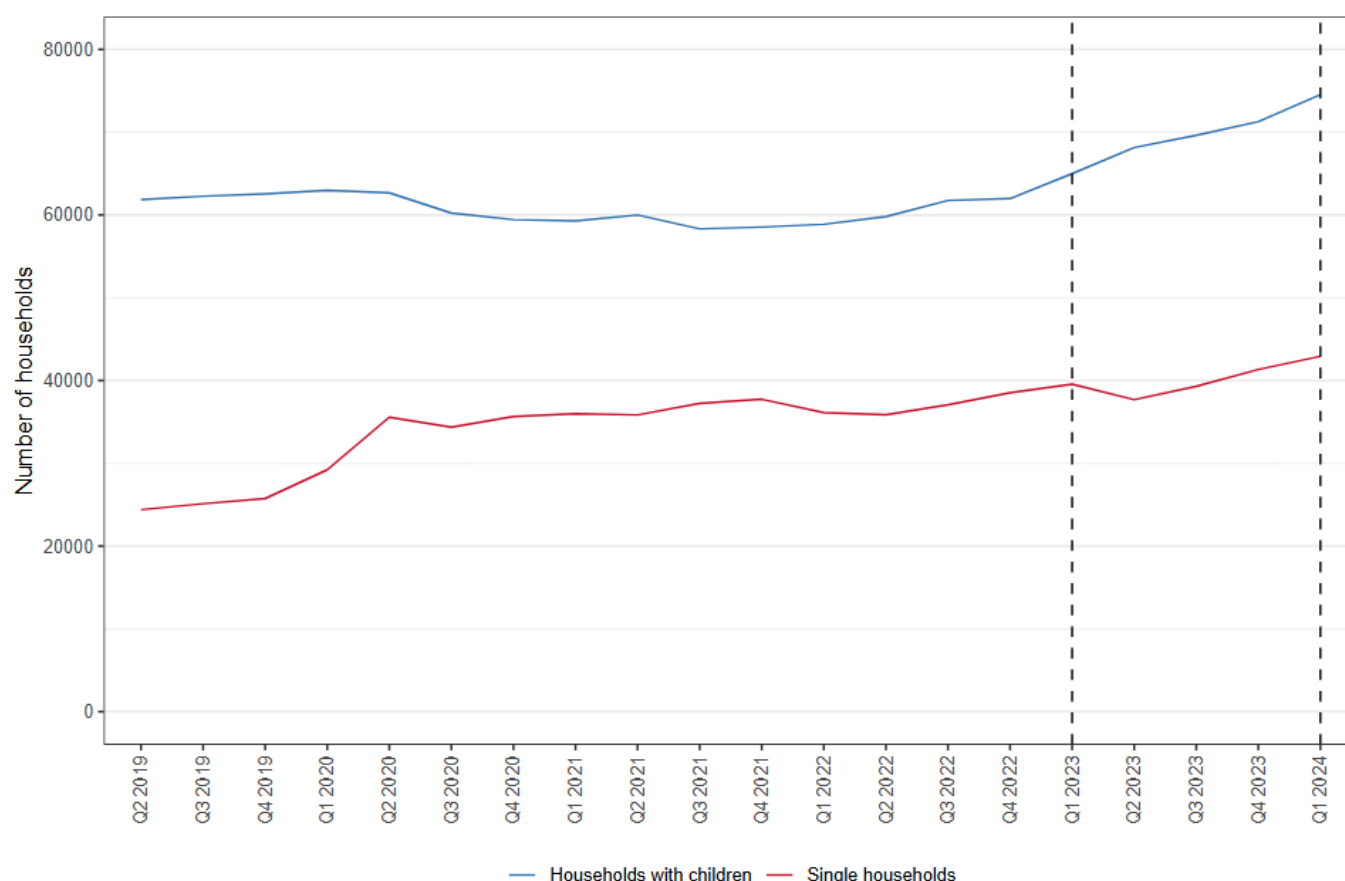
The quarterly data published by the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) shows that, across England, demand for affordable housing has risen sharply in recent years, with homelessness presentations to local authorities a particular pressure. At the end of June 2023, nearly 139,000 families with children were living in temporary accommodation across the country – 7,430 more than at the end of March of the same year.

Moreover, a report by Crisis dated 29 February 2024, titled ["Rough sleeping rises by 27% as the homelessness crisis deepens across England"](#) states that there has been an exponential increase in the number of people sleeping rough across the country. As highlighted in said report, on a given night in Autumn 2023 it was found that:

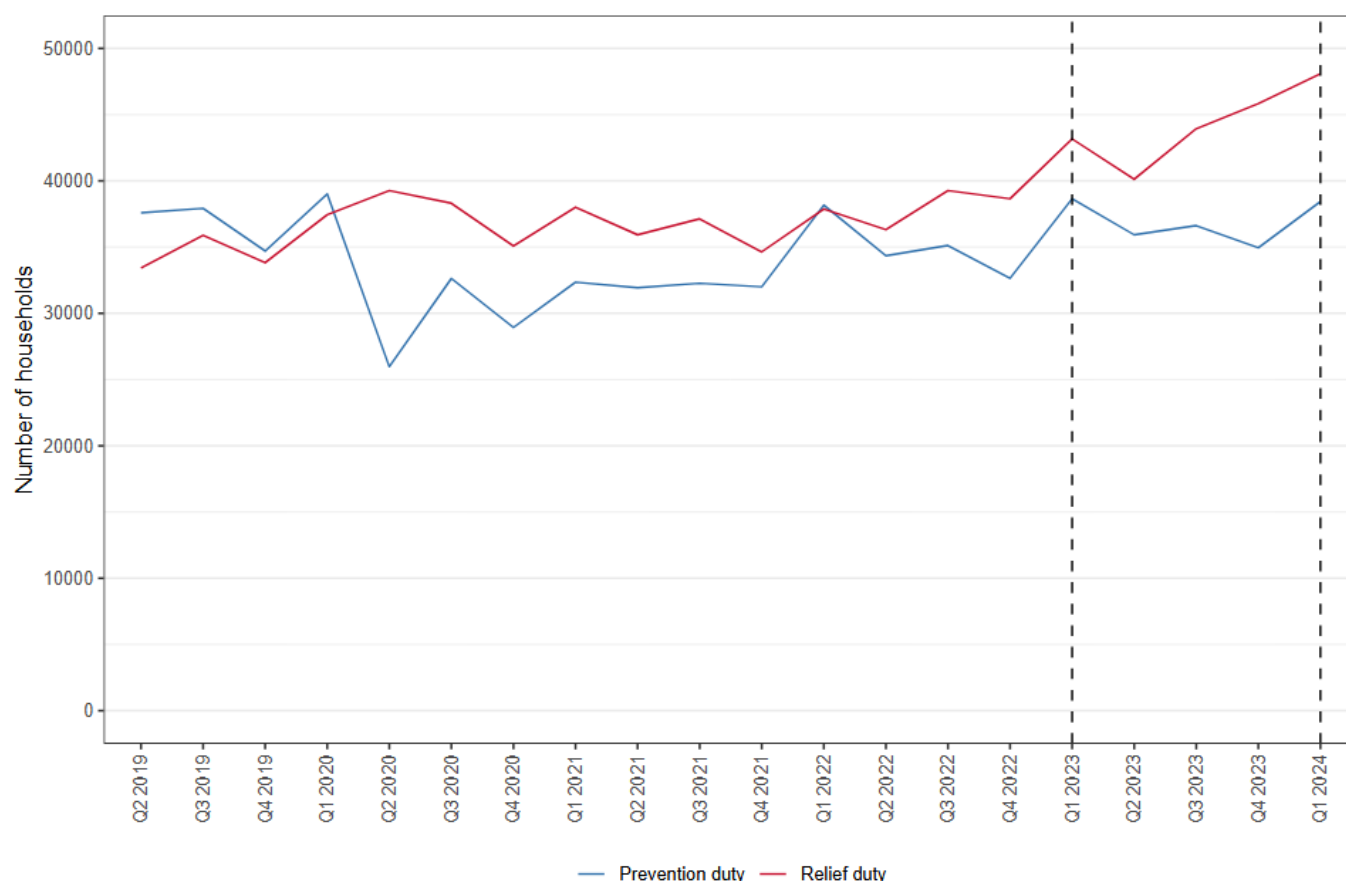
- 3,898 people were sleeping rough across England, an increase of 27% on the previous year.

- The number of people sleeping rough was 61% higher than it had been ten years previously and 120% higher than when data collection began in 2010.
- Street homelessness was rising among women with 568 seen to be rough sleeping that autumn; up from 464 – a rise of 22%.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's quarterly statistics release ["Statutory Homelessness in England: January to March 2024"](#), emphasises the dramatic increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation from Q2 2019 to Q1 2024:



Additionally, the aforementioned report highlights the time series for the number of households owed a prevention or relief duty since Q2 2019. Once again, a significant increase is apparent as set out in the chart below:



With regard to London figures, in August 2023 170,000 Londoners were found to be homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged by their local authority. Turbulence in the private rented sector is a critical factor behind the growing numbers of homeless Londoners. A Shelter article titled [“At least 354,000 people homeless in England today”](#), emphasises the problem both nationally and regionally and considers the areas across England where homelessness is most acute. In this analysis, “London comes out worst, with one in 47 people homeless in the capital. The total number of people homeless in the city has risen 12% in a year, to a total of 187,000 people.”

The table below highlights the extent of the challenge in the capital:

Estimated number of people who are homeless as at a given night in 2024, by type of homelessness, by region of England	Est. no. of people homeless and living in TA arranged by them or homeless at home as at 30th June 2024	No. of people sleeping on the streets on a given night	Est. total no. homeless children	Est. total no. homeless people (adults and children)	Rate of homelessness (1 in X people)
North East	2200	19	89	810	2308
North West	20440	1017	369	10050	21826
Yorkshire and the Humber	7560	767	270	3350	8597
East Midlands	10090	452	287	4930	10829
West Midlands	26420	1562	256	14790	28238
East of England	23030	567	337	11490	23934
London	184080	1681	1132	91050	186893
South East	36460	392	670	17230	37522
South West	12610	548	488	5750	13646

Local Context

The London Borough of Hillingdon reflects the national picture having also experienced a

significant increase in Homeless presentations in recent years. This issue is highlighted in an article by Hillingdon Vision News published on 7 March 2024 titled "[Rising Tide of Homelessness: Hillingdon Faces Soaring Numbers Despite Government Pledges, Advocacy Groups Urge Urgent Action.](#)" The London Borough of Hillingdon's [Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2019 to 2024](#) reports that "accessing affordable housing in both the private rented sector and the social housing sector is a key underlying issue in relation to homelessness, exacerbated by the competition our residents face in accessing these scarce resources." The Council has also seen an increase in households leaving asylum accommodation following receipt of their status.

Legislative Context

Homeless decisions must be made in line with the [Homeless Reduction Act 2017](#) and the [Housing Act 1996 Part VII](#) amended in 2002. To be entitled to a full homeless duty, residents must meet five criteria: homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, eligible, priority need, not intentionally homeless, and have a local connection.

Continuous Service Improvement

The Council has a homeless service improvement programme (Project Neptune) in place, implementing change across twelve workstreams. The Council has improved the customer journey through the reinstatement of the triage function. At the time of the Committee's Review, work was also ongoing to review the website and ICT systems to reduce the administrative burden on staff. Additionally, a fresh training offer for staff was being developed.

Evidence & Witness Testimony

The Select Committee held a number of witness sessions at which Members had the opportunity to receive testimony from Hillingdon Council officers and from a wide range of external witnesses and experts.

Overview of Witness Sessions

The witness sessions conducted as part of the Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey Review provided valuable insights into both the challenges faced in Hillingdon's homelessness services and potential improvements thereto. The sessions featured testimonies from key stakeholders, including Council officers, representatives from voluntary sector organisations, and experts in homelessness and domestic abuse support.

1. The first session on 13 March 2024 focused on the increasing demand for homelessness services and the Council's strategy for prevention and housing supply. The importance of empathy and improved staff training were emphasised.
2. The second session on 16 April 2024 highlighted the challenges of unaffordable private rental accommodation and the need for better communication and support for residents. At this session the importance of a welcoming environment at the Civic Centre was also discussed.
3. The third session on 13 June 2024 featured representatives from Thames Reach and P3, who shared their experiences in supporting rough sleepers and young people. The need for effective communication and collaboration among services was underscored.
4. The final session on 18 July 2024 focused on the support for victims of domestic abuse. Additionally, the challenges of accessing housing support and the importance of consistent communication and empathy were highlighted.

For ease of reading, the detailed minutes and accounts of these witness sessions are available as background papers. They are briefly summarised below to provide a comprehensive understanding of the discussions and findings.

Witness Session 1 - 13 March 2024

The first witness session focused on the challenging situation regarding homelessness in Hillingdon. The Corporate Director of Central Services acknowledged a 27% increase in demand, driven primarily by evictions from private rental accommodation. It was noted that the Council's strategy emphasised homelessness prevention and boosting housing supply, including the purchase of 500 new homes. The Head of Housing Needs provided an overview of the customer pathway, detailing the stages from initial contact to case closure. Partnerships with voluntary sector organisations including Trinity and Thames Reach, which provided support for rough

sleepers, were also discussed. Finally, the session addressed the need for improved staff training, particularly in trauma-informed issues, and underlined the vital importance of empathy when dealing with residents.

In summary, the following key issues were raised during this first witness session:

- **Homelessness Increase:** There had been a 27% increase in homelessness, with 100 people presenting as homeless each week, primarily due to evictions from private rental accommodations.
- **Affordable Housing Supply:** Over the last five years, there had been a 41% reduction in affordable privately rented accommodation supply.
- **Customer Pathway:** The process for customers seeking assistance involved multiple stages, including an initial online form, triage team assessment, and assignment to a case officer.
- **Temporary Accommodation Challenges:** Temporary accommodation for larger families was difficult to source and very expensive, leading to families sometimes being encouraged to remain in situ until a bailiff warrant was secured.
- **Partnerships and Support:** The Council had established partnerships with the voluntary sector, including Trinity and Thames Reach, to assist rough sleepers and provide support services.
- **Staff Training and Wellbeing:** There were concerns about staff training and wellbeing, with reports of officers being overloaded with work and the introduction of new training programmes to address trauma-informed issues and domestic abuse.

The full account of this session can be found in the meeting minutes [here](#)

Witness Session 2 - 16 April 2024

During the second session, the Corporate Director of Central Services discussed the reduction in private rental accommodation and the increasing unaffordability. Carys Hedley from Trinity detailed the organisation's support for families and individuals, highlighting challenges such as stagnant service due to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. The session emphasised the need for better communication and empathy from housing officers, in addition to improvements in the Civic Centre environment. The importance of correct referrals and comprehensive support to prevent a cycle of homelessness were also discussed. The session concluded with recommendations for better systems and technology for case handovers and the need for a more welcoming environment at the Civic Centre.

In summary, the following key issues were raised during this witness session:

- **Homelessness Challenges:** The Corporate Director of Central Services highlighted the

reduction in private rental accommodation and increasing unaffordability, making it difficult for non-priority individuals to access affordable housing.

- Support from Trinity: Carys Hedley from Trinity discussed the provision of supported spaces and long-term unsupported accommodation, emphasising the challenges faced due to Local Housing Allowance rates and the reluctance of people to move away from their support network.
- Specialist Housing Needs: Trinity planned to create a new service offering a specialist housing programme with full-time live-in support for individuals with complex needs, including drug, alcohol, and mental health issues.
- Empathy and Communication: The session highlighted the need for better empathy and communication from housing officers, suggesting retraining on language used with clients and creating a more welcoming environment at the Civic Centre.
- Staff Wellbeing: Concerns were raised about the mental health of housing staff, recommending well-being measures such as regular team meetings, flexible working hours, and enforced rest periods.
- Prevention Strategy: The Corporate Director emphasised the need for a strong prevention strategy and a healthy supply of affordable housing, acknowledging the challenges faced in achieving this.

The full account of this session can be found in the meeting minutes [here](#)

Witness Session 3 - 13 June 2024

The third session featured representatives from Thames Reach and P3, who shared their experiences and perspectives on homelessness. Sophie Murray from Thames Reach outlined the team's work with rough sleepers and collaboration with various agencies. P3 representatives, including Zara Street, Laura Lawson, and Nicola Tallon, discussed their support for young people and families, highlighting challenges in moving young people to appropriate accommodation. The session emphasised the importance of communication and the need for a platform for all services to communicate effectively. The challenges faced by housing officers due to high demand and the need for better support for tenants to sustain tenancies were also highlighted.

In summary, the following key issues were raised during this witness session:

- Homelessness and Accommodation: The session highlighted the challenges faced by Thames Reach and P3 in supporting rough sleepers and young people. The lack of options for accommodation and high support needs of many rough sleepers were significant issues.
- Collaboration and Communication: There was an emphasis on the importance of communication between the Council and partner organisations. The need for a platform where everyone could communicate effectively was highlighted, as well as the challenges

faced due to changes in case work without the knowledge of partnership workers.

- Support Services: P3 discussed their supported accommodation services and the challenges of moving young people on to appropriate accommodation due to the limited supply of affordable housing. They also highlighted their work with various partners within the Borough.
- Staff Wellbeing: Concerns were raised about the mental health of housing staff, recommending well-being measures such as regular team meetings, flexible working hours, and enforced rest periods.
- Prevention Strategy: The Corporate Director emphasised the need for a strong prevention strategy and a healthy supply of affordable housing, acknowledging the challenges faced in achieving this.
- Service Improvement: The Corporate Director of Central Services acknowledged the need for continuous improvement in the service, including the implementation of an improvement plan and a workforce plan.

The full account of this session can be found in the meeting minutes [here](#)

Witness Session 4 - 18 July 2024

The final session included testimony from Sonia Stewart and Sultana Ahmed, who provided an overview of the Hillingdon Domestic Advocacy Service. They highlighted the evolution of the service to support victims across all levels of risk. Concerns were raised about the approach to housing for victims of domestic abuse, particularly the requirement for documentation and the impact of relocating victims far from their support systems. The need for consistent communication and updates for clients, better training for housing officers, and the importance of empathy and understanding in dealing with victims of domestic abuse were emphasised. The session concluded with recommendations for improvements in communication, support services, and streamlined processes to better serve residents.

In summary, the following key issues were raised during this witness session:

- Housing for Domestic Abuse Victims: Concerns were raised about the approach to housing for victims of domestic abuse, including the requirement for police involvement and documentation, which could be challenging for victims fleeing emergency situations.
- Relocation Challenges: Victims fleeing domestic abuse were often offered accommodation far from their support systems, exacerbating their vulnerability and impacting their jobs, families, communities, and children's schools.
- Inconsistencies in Housing Services: There were inconsistencies reported by clients when approaching housing services for assistance, particularly regarding the advice given about remaining within the Borough.
- Sanctuary Scheme: The scheme assesses properties to implement additional security

measures for victims of domestic abuse who wished to remain in their homes. There was a lack of clarity around time frames for referrals and responses.

- **Staff Turnover and Communication:** High turnover of staff within the housing team lead to missed communications and unresolved issues. Consistent communication and updates for clients were essential.
- **Housing Reception Environment:** The environment at the Housing Reception was not welcoming, with victims spending the whole day there without amenities for them and their children.

The full account of this session can be found in the meeting minutes [here](#)

These sessions provided valuable insights into the challenges and potential improvements in respect of Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey in Hillingdon. The recommendations focused on enhancing resident experience, managing expectations, improving staff support and training, and fostering partnerships and collaboration.

Site Visits

During May 2024, and as part of the ongoing Review, Members of the Committee conducted unannounced visits to the Council's Housing Reception. These visits presented an invaluable insight into the experience of the resident and enabled Members to witness firsthand how individual customers and situations were handled by housing staff. Further to these visits, a number of areas for improvement were recommended; particularly in relation to staff training, and the Housing Reception environment.

Additionally, as part of the Review, Councillors undertook visits to the contact centre where they had an opportunity to listen in to live housing-related calls. Members reported that it was enlightening to witness first-hand the challenging work of the contact centre staff. They were particularly impressed with their dedication, professionalism, how they handled complex situations, and their ability to engage effectively with residents. It was noted that the call handlers were found to be excellent, but contacting back-office staff was challenging at times. An improved handover plan when housing officers were on leave or had left the Council was suggested.

Moreover, in collaboration with the Council's Counter Fraud Team, Members attended unannounced visits to two of the B&Bs in the Borough which are used to temporarily house residents. The Committee Members reported that these visits were both extremely useful and informative.

The Committee's Findings

General conclusions

Having heard from a variety of interested parties and having given due consideration to the entirety of the evidence presented to them, Councillors reached the following key conclusions:

1. **Increased Demand and Challenges:** The Review highlighted a significant increase in demand for homelessness services, driven primarily by evictions from private rental accommodation. It was noted that the reduction in affordable private rental housing had exacerbated the situation, making it challenging for the Council to meet the needs of residents.
2. **Importance of Prevention and Collaboration:** The Council's strategy focused on homelessness prevention and increasing housing supply. Collaboration with voluntary sector organisations such as Trinity and Thames Reach was crucial in providing support for rough sleepers and those with complex needs.
3. **Communication and Empathy:** The Review emphasised the importance of better communication and empathy from housing officers. Training in trauma-informed issues and the use of appropriate language were identified as essential to improve interactions with residents.
4. **System and Process Improvements:** The need for better systems and technology for case handovers, in addition to a more welcoming environment at the Civic Centre, were highlighted. Suggestions included the use of automated text reminders, self-check-in systems, and continuous feedback from residents.
5. **Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse:** The Review underscored the challenges faced by victims of domestic abuse in accessing housing support. The need for consistent communication, better training for housing officers, and a more empathetic approach were emphasised.

The Committee's recommendations to Cabinet

Further to the Committee's Review, the Chair and Opposition Lead met with officers to work up the final recommendations detailed below.

The Review highlighted the importance of referring to applicants as "residents" rather than "customers" or "clients" to foster a sense of community and belonging. The need for a clearer Residents' Charter was emphasised to guide residents through the homelessness support process, reducing confusion and addressing frequently asked questions. Witnesses from Trinity and Thames Reach stressed the importance of empathy and understanding in interactions with residents, particularly those with complex needs. The reconfiguration of the Housing Reception

Centre to create a more welcoming environment was recommended based on feedback about the intimidating atmosphere of the Civic Centre. Unannounced random checks and management oversight of calls and correspondence were suggested to ensure a high-quality, professional, and empathetic service. Continuous feedback from residents through anonymous forms and promoting the suggestion box system were also recommended to improve service efficiency and resident interactions.

On that basis, it is recommended:

1	<p>Enhancing Resident Experience</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All staff to refer to those applicants who approach the service for help as 'residents' rather than 'customers' or 'clients'. 2. Create a clearer Residents' Charter: a more accessible guide explaining each stage of the homelessness support process for new applicants, from intake to case closure. This guide will set expectations, reduce confusion, and address common questions. Consider new technologies for instant translation requirements. 3. Reconfigure the Housing Reception Centre to provide a more welcoming and empathetic environment within existing budget plans. 4. Continue unannounced random checks/management oversight of calls and correspondence to ensure a high-quality, professional, empathetic, and resident-focused service. 5. Continue to gather feedback from residents regarding homelessness services using a simple anonymous feedback form. 6. Actively promote the current suggestion box system to encourage staff to submit suggestions for improving service efficiency and resident interactions.
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The Review identified the need for applicants to check their eligibility online before applying formally to prevent unnecessary applications and save time and resources. Automated text reminders for appointments and deadlines were recommended to avoid processing delays. The feasibility of introducing a self-check-in system at reception was explored to streamline the process and enhance service transformation. Witnesses emphasised the importance of clear and updated documentation, guides, and resident-facing processes related to eligibility, case preparation, and action planning. The Review also highlighted the need for better communication and empathy from housing officers to manage residents' expectations effectively.

On that basis, it is recommended:

2	<p>Managing Expectations and Process Efficiency:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider incorporating ways to help applicants check their eligibility on-line for assistance before applying formally. Preventative avoidance can stop unnecessary applications from those who are not entitled, saving time
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| | <p>and resources for both the applicants and the Council.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. For applicants in the process, to avoid processing delays, to explore the possibility of using automated text reminders for appointments and deadlines. 3. Explore the feasibility of introducing a self-check-in system for applicants at reception linked to service transformation. 4. Continue to review and update current documentation, guides and resident facing processes in relation to eligibility, case preparation and action planning. |
|--|--|

The Review underscored the importance of regular casework supervision and promoting current staff welfare policies to support housing staff. Witnesses from Trinity and Thames Reach highlighted the challenges faced by housing officers due to high demand and the need for better support. A comprehensive peer support and training program in collaboration with partner organisations was recommended, including access to peer mentors with lived experience of homelessness. Refresher training and "walk-in-my-shoes" sessions were suggested to build understanding and connection with residents. Creating a learning set of resources for staff to share good practices was also recommended to enhance staff support and training.

On that basis, it is recommended:

3

Staff Support & Training

1. Ensure all Housing staff receive regular casework supervision and promote current Staff Welfare policies.
2. Consider implementing a comprehensive peer support and training programme in collaboration with a partner organisation. This programme should include access to peer mentors with lived experience of homelessness and offer refresher training to staff. The training should also incorporate 'walk-in-my-shoes' sessions to build understanding and connection with residents.
3. Create a learning set of resources for staff to encourage the sharing of good practice.

The Review emphasised the importance of building on existing partnerships and developing new ones with local organisations to create a wider support network for residents. Witnesses from Trinity, Thames Reach, and P3 highlighted the value of collaboration in providing comprehensive support for residents. Assigning named officers as liaisons for relevant partner agencies was recommended to ensure accountability and effective communication. Introducing a generic email as the primary contact and communication tool between partner agencies and the Council was also suggested to streamline communication and improve collaboration.

These recommendations were formed based on the insights and evidence gathered during the witness sessions, aiming to enhance the overall experience and support for residents, improve

process efficiency, provide better staff support, and foster stronger partnerships and collaboration.

On that basis, it is recommended:

4

Partnerships and Collaboration

1. Build on existing partnerships and further develop these with local organisations to create a wider support network for residents to access.
2. Assign named officers to be liaisons for relevant partner agencies for accountability and, to aid effective communications going forward, introduce a generic email as the primary contact and communication tool between them and the Council.

About the review - witnesses and activity

The following Terms of Reference were agreed by the Committee from the outset of the Review:

1. To gain a thorough understanding of the Council's Homeless Prevention Service and the resident's journey through this process.
2. To scrutinise the service delivery and review its effectiveness.
3. To review service users' feedback to explore the challenges faced by residents accessing the service.
4. To look at other local authorities that may have different models of service delivery for best practice, including research and findings from charities, housing bodies, regional bodies and organisations, e.g. GLA.
5. Subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose practical and deliverable actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

Witnesses

1. Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director of Central Services) – LBH
2. Melissa Blower (Housing Improvement Programme Manager) - LBH
3. Debby Weller (Head of Housing Strategy and Policy) - LBH
4. Maggie Nelson (Head of Housing Needs) - LBH
5. Carys Hedley (Director of Services) - Trinity
6. Sophie Murray (Lead Manager of the Hillingdon Outreach Team) - Thames Reach
7. Zara Street - P3
8. Laura Lawson - P3
9. Nicola Tallon – P3
10. Sonia Stewart (Independent Domestic Violence Manager) - LBH
11. Sultana Ahmed (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) - LBH
12. Rachel Bulley (Social Prescribing Link Worker) - Colne Union PCN, NHS

References

Appendices

Full minutes of the Review witness sessions.

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE - CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer
Papers with report	Appendix A – Latest Forward Plan
Ward	As shown on the Forward Plan

HEADLINES

To monitor the Cabinet's latest Forward Plan which sets out key decisions and other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet collectively and Cabinet Members individually over the coming year. The report sets out the actions available to the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Residents' Services Select Committee notes the Cabinet Forward Plan.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Cabinet Forward Plan is published monthly, usually around the first or second week of each month. It is a rolling document giving the required public notice of future key decisions to be taken. Should a later edition of the Forward Plan be published after this agenda has been circulated, Democratic Services will update the Committee on any new items or changes at the meeting.

As part of its Terms of Reference, each Select Committee should consider the Forward Plan and, if it deems necessary, comment as appropriate to the decision-maker on the items listed which relate to services within its remit. For reference, the Forward Plan helpfully details which Select Committee's remit covers the relevant future decision item listed.

The Select Committee's monitoring role of the Forward Plan can be undertaken in a variety of ways, including both pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny of the items listed. The provision of advance information on future items listed (potentially also draft reports) to the Committee in advance will often depend upon a variety of factors including timing or feasibility, and ultimately any such request would rest with the relevant Cabinet Member to decide. However, the 2019 Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet Relations (part of the Hillingdon Constitution) does provide guidance to Cabinet Members to:

- Actively support the provision of relevant Council information and other requests from the Committee as part of their work programme.
- Where feasible, provide opportunities for committees to provide their input on forthcoming executive reports as set out in the Forward Plan to enable wider pre-decision scrutiny (in addition to those statutorily required to come before committees, *i.e. policy framework documents – see para. below*).

As mentioned above, there is both a constitutional and statutory requirement for Select Committees to provide comments on the Cabinet's draft budget and policy framework proposals after publication. These are automatically scheduled in advance to multi-year work programmes.

Therefore, in general, the Committee may consider the following actions on specific items listed on the Forward Plan:

	Committee action	When	How
1	To provide specific comments to be included in a future Cabinet or Cabinet Member report on matters within its remit.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide its influence and views on a particular matter within the formal report to the Cabinet or Cabinet Member before the decision is made.</p> <p>This would usually be where the Committee has previously considered a draft report or the topic in detail, or where it considers it has sufficient information already to provide relevant comments to the decision-maker.</p>	<p>These would go within the standard section in every Cabinet or Cabinet Member report called "Select Committee comments".</p> <p>The Cabinet or Cabinet Member would then consider these as part of any decision they make.</p>
2	To request further information on future reports listed under its remit.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to discover more about a matter within its remit that is listed on the Forward Plan.</p> <p>Whilst such advance information can be requested from officers, the Committee should note that information may or may not be available in advance due to various factors, including timescales or the status of the drafting of the report itself and the formulation of final recommendation(s). Ultimately, the provision of any information in advance would be a matter for the Cabinet Member to decide.</p>	<p>This would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting. Alternatively, information could be circulated outside the meeting if reporting timescales require this.</p> <p>Upon the provision of any information, the Select Committee may then decide to provide specific comments (as per 1 above).</p>
3	To request the Cabinet Member considers providing a draft of the report, if feasible, for the Select Committee to consider prior to it being considered formally for decision.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide an early steer or help shape a future report to Cabinet, e.g., on a policy matter.</p> <p>Whilst not the default position, Select Committees do occasionally receive draft versions of Cabinet reports prior to their formal consideration. The provision of such draft reports in advance may depend upon different factors, e.g., the timings required for that decision. Ultimately any request to see a draft report early would need the approval of the relevant Cabinet Member.</p>	<p>Democratic Services would contact the relevant Cabinet Member and Officer upon any such request.</p> <p>If agreed, the draft report would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting to provide views and feedback to officers before they finalise it for the Cabinet or Cabinet Member. An opportunity to provide specific comments (as per 1 above) is also possible.</p>
4	To identify a forthcoming report that may merit a post-decision review at a later Select Committee meeting	<p>As part of its post-decision scrutiny and broader reviewing role, this would be where the Select Committee may wish to monitor the implementation of a certain Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision listed/taken at a later stage, i.e., to review its effectiveness after a period of 6 months.</p> <p>The Committee should note that this is different to the use of the post-decision scrutiny 'call-in' power which seeks to ask the Cabinet or Cabinet Member to formally re-consider a decision up to 5 working days after the decision notice has been issued. This is undertaken via the new Scrutiny Call-in App members of the relevant Select Committee.</p>	<p>The Committee would add the matter to its multi-year work programme after a suitable time has elapsed upon the decision expected to be made by the Cabinet or Cabinet Member.</p> <p>Relevant service areas may be best to advise on the most appropriate time to review the matter once the decision is made.</p>

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet relations adopted by Council 12 September 2019](#)
- [Scrutiny Call-in App](#)

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Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ref

Ward(s)

Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly							
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	Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	P - Richard Webb / Stephanie Waterford	Dan Kennedy	TBC	NEW ITEM	Public
	Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Nicola Herbert	Karrie Whelan	Service led consultations	NEW ITEM	Public
&	Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Nicola Herbert / James Raven	Karrie Whelan			Public
	Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Nicola Herbert / Allison Mayo	Karrie Whelan			Private (3)
	Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	Lee Robinson / Sally Offin	Dan Kennedy			Private (3)
	Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Ian Thynne	Karrie Whelan	Public Consultation / Residents' Services Select Committee		Public
	Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Ian Thynne	Karrie Whelan	Public Consultation / Residents' Services Select Committee		Public

SI = Standard Item each month/regularly

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ref Ward(s)

Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
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SI = Standard Item each month/regularly

270	Local List of Architectural and Historical Importance	Cabinet will consider a proposal to locally list The Orchard Pub in Ruislip and the North Hayes Telephone Exchange. This will follow feedback from a public consultation and interested stakeholders.	Ruislip / Hayes Town		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	Antonia Whatmore, Mathieu Rogers	Karrie Whelan	Public Consultation		Public
260b	Early review of current Public Spaces Protection Order 2023	Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) are reviewed every 3 years, the last being in 2023. Subject to Cabinet agreeing to consult on a revised PSPO in January, this report will consider the outcome of that, before a final decision on PSPOs is approved.	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Joanne Howells / Stephanie Waterford	Dan Kennedy			Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public

Cabinet Member Decisions expected - April 2025

283	Outcome of consultation on Garden Waste Collection Charging	Following Cabinet agreement on 20 February 2024 to invite the views of residents and consult on proposals to charge for the garden waste collection service, the Cabinet Member will duly consider the outcome of the consultation, along with any environment and equalities impact assessments, before making any decision.	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment, / with Cllr Martin Goddard, Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation	Residents' Services	Nicola Herbert	Karrie Whelan	Public consultation	NEW ITEM	Public
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Cabinet meeting - Thursday 22 May 2025 (report deadline 30 April)

186b	Uxbridge Town Centre Vision	Following Cabinet approval in October 2024 to commence full public and stakeholder engagement on a proposed draft new masterplan / vision for Uxbridge, Cabinet will consider the outcome of the engagement exercise and receive the final vision for consideration. The Vision will form the basis for a consensus on the future redevelopment and prosperity of the town.	Uxbridge / all wards		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	Julia Johnson	Karrie Whelan	Public engagement and also select committee		Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	Various		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	Various		Public

Ref	Scheduled Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet meeting - 26 June 2025 (report deadline 4 June)											
SI	Annual Performance Report	Cabinet will receive an annual report performance report, setting out how the Council is delivering on key service metrics and the Council Strategy.	All		All Cabinet Members	All	Ian Kavanagh	Matthew Wallbridge	Select Committees will also consider the annual report at their meetings.	NEW ITEM	Public
SI	Temporary Accommodation Action Plan Monitoring	Cabinet will receive a quarterly update, or at a frequency as determined by the Cabinet Member, on progress on the delivery of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan presented to Cabinet in February 2025. This will be aligned with the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which is to include details of actions taken to bring empty homes across the Borough back into occupation.	All		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	Debbie Weller	Dan Kennedy		NEW ITEM	Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	TBC		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet meeting - 24 July 2025 (report deadline 2 July)											
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	TBC		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - July 2025											
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All		Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 18 September 2025 (report deadline 27 August)											

SI = Standard Item each month/regularly

Ref	Scheduled Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly											
SI	Temporary Accommodation Action Plan Monitoring	Cabinet will receive a quarterly update, or at a frequency as determined by the Cabinet Member, on progress on the delivery of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan presented to Cabinet in February 2025. This will be aligned with the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which is to include details of actions taken to bring empty homes across the Borough back into occupation.	All		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	Debbie Weller	Dan Kennedy		NEW ITEM	Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	TBC		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 23 October 2025 (report deadline 1 October)											
Page 124	SI Strategic Climate Action Plan	Hillingdon Council passed a Climate Change Declaration at its full Council meeting on 16 January 2020 which set out the ambition to become carbon neutral across the Council's services by 2030. Cabinet will receive a progress update on it's latest Action Plan.	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Residents' Services	Residents' Services	Ian Thynne	Karrie Whelan	Public Consultation / Residents' Services Select Committee		Public
	SI Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	TBC		Public
	SI Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 20 November 2025 (report deadline 29 October)											
286	Tender contract for the collection & treatment of Co-mingled dry mixed recycling	Cabinet will receive an update on the current position within the dry mixed recycling materials market and potential legislative changes which may impact the way that the Council operates its recycling collections in the future. In considering this, Cabinet will consider a supplier for such services, after competitive tender.	N/A		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Residents' Services	Residents' Services	Daniel Long	Karrie Whelan		NEW ITEM	Private (3)
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	TBC		Public

Ref	Scheduled Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly											
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 18 December 2025 (report deadline 26 November)											
SI	Temporary Accommodation Action Plan Monitoring	Cabinet will receive a quarterly update, or at a frequency as determined by the Cabinet Member, on progress on the delivery of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan presented to Cabinet in February 2025. This will be aligned with the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which is to include details of actions taken to bring empty homes across the Borough back into occupation.	All		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	Debbie Weller	Dan Kennedy		NEW ITEM	Public
SI	Infrastructure Funding Statement	Cabinet will receive an annual report setting out the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement, a document it is required to publish which also monitors spending on section 106 (developer contribution) monies along with the Community Infrastructure levy over the past year.	All		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing & Growth	Residents' Services	Andrew Tebbutt	Karrie Whelan	Residents' Services Select Committee		Public
SI	2026/27 Budget and Future Medium-Term Financial Strategy (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)	This report will set out the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2026/27 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration and Council Tax Reduction Scheme proposals following consultation.	All	Proposed Full Council adoption - 26 February 2026	Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance & Transformation	All	Andy Goodwin	Richard Ennis	Public consultation through the Select Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 15 January 2026 (report deadline 12 December 2025)											
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 19 February 2026 (report deadline 28 January 2026)											

SI = Standard Item each month/regularly

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ref

Ward(s)

				Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly											
SI	2026/27 Budget and Future Medium-Term Financial Strategy (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)	Following consultation, this report will set out the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2026/27 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration.	All	Proposed Full Council adoption - 26 February 2026	Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council / Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance & Transformation	All	Andy Goodwin	Richard Ennis	Public consultation through the Select Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 19 March 2026 (report deadline 25 February 2026)											
SI	Temporary Accommodation Action Plan Monitoring	Cabinet will receive a quarterly update, or at a frequency as determined by the Cabinet Member, on progress on the delivery of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan presented to Cabinet in February 2025. This will be aligned with the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which is to include details of actions taken to bring empty homes across the Borough back into occupation.	All		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing Growth	Residents' Services	Debbie Weller	Dan Kennedy		NEW ITEM	Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 23 April 2026 (report deadline 1 April 2026)											
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer
Papers with report	Appendix A – Work Programme
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To enable the Committee to note future meeting dates and to forward plan its work for the current municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Residents' Services Select Committee considers the Work Programme report and agrees any amendments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- The Committee's meetings will start at 7pm and the witnesses attending each of the meetings may include representatives from external organisations, some of whom travel from outside of the Borough. Forthcoming meeting dates are as follows:

Meeting Date	Room
13 June 2024	CR5
18 July 2024	CR6
24 September 2024	CR6
27 November 2024	CR5
14 January 2025	CR5
19 February 2025	CR5
13 March 2025	CR5
22 April 2025	CR5

Site Visits

Members of the Residents' Services Select Committee have undertaken a number of site visits to include the CCTV room in the Civic Centre, Harlington Road Depot, Heathrow Imported Food Office, Hillingdon Fire Station, Botwell Leisure Centre, Breakspear Crematorium, the Recycling Centre at Edmonton and visits with the Traffic Wardens and the Noise Team.

Implications on related Council policies

The role of the Select Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet, who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Select Committees directly engage residents in shaping policy and recommendations and the Committees seek to improve the way the Council provides services to residents.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

MULTI-YEAR WORK PROGRAMME 2022 - 2026

2025/26													
Residents' Services Select Committee	January 14	February 19	March 13	April 22	May No meeting	June 12	July 15	September 9	November 6	January	February		
Review: Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey													
Topic selection / scoping stage													
Witness / evidence / consultation stage													
Findings, conclusions and recommendations	Findings					Final report							
Final review report agreement						Cabinet							
Target Cabinet reporting													
Regular service & performance monitoring													
Budget and Spending Report (Dan, Karrie, Ceri and Geetha)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			
Infrastructure Funding Statement Update (previously CIL Expenditure Monitoring - Annual Report & S106) each November - Julia Johnson											X		
Mid-year budget / budget planning report - Andy Goodwin / Richard Ennis							X				X		
Strategic Climate Action Plan Update each Nov - Ian T (to Cabinet in September)											X		
Cabinet's Budget Proposals For Next Financial Year	X												
Cabinet Forward Plan Monthly Monitoring	X	X	X	X									
Parking Annual Report - Richard Webb							X	X	X	X	X		
Annual Performance Report (Ian Kavanagh) - DK and KW to attend to answer qus.											X		
Annual Complaints Submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service (Rod Smith/Debbie W) - Sam Strong or Gary Penticost to present the report					X								
One-off information items													
ASB Service Update (with updated FPN figures)					X								
Graffiti Removal													
Sports - facilities, engagement & inclusivity													
Animal Welfare						X							
Consultation on Uxbridge Master Plan						X							
Housing Allocation Policy Consultation Draft						X							
Heathrow Investment													
Heathrow Expansion						X							
Abandoned Vehicles													
Regeneration of Town Centres (Chambers of Commerce, Hayes T Partnership, Uxb BID)						X							
Success of Chrysalis Project			X										
Trading Standards - Tackling Underage Drinking / Vaping					Tr								
Licensing of Fun Fairs and enforcement measures for flyposting (Steph / Nicola Herbert)	X												
Community Payback Scheme - structure of the Scheme (Jo Howells / Richard Webb)			X										
Noise Team Structure, success of enforcement measures and update on site visit						X							
Review of Statement of Gambling Policy - policy framework consultation													
Sport for Young People - how the Council encourages participation in deprived areas											X		
APCOA Parking Enforcement - income / contract cost (Freddie Mohammed)	X												
The condition of allotments in the Borough						X							
Statement of Licensing Policy (Policy Framework) - Dan Ferrer											X		
Heathrow Employment and Skills Academy						X							
Crime & Disorder - Statutory Scrutiny (themed)													
Safer Hillingdon Partnership Development													
Safer Hillingdon Partnership Performance											X		
Past review delivery													
Update on Alley Gating Review													
Review of Empty Homes Council Tax Premium											X		
Internal use only													
Report deadline													
Agenda publication date													

Committee Site Visits
CCTV Control Room, Civic Centre (25 July 2022 and 4 November 2024)
Botwell Leisure Centre (27 February 2024)
Harlington Road Depot (28 September 2022)
Weed Killing Contractor (6 June 2023)
Heathrow Airport (Imported Food Office) (4 October 2022)
Out of Hours Noise Team (1 November 2024)
Hillingdon Fire Station (7 December 2022)
Graffiti Removal
Breakspear Crematorium (25 January 2023)
Harefield and Yiewsley Civic Amenity Sites
Traffic wardens / Abandoned Vehicles—24 and 25 February 2025 at 5pm
Canal Visit—1 November 2023
The Battle of Britain Bunker (26 July 2023 at 6pm)
Building Control
Planning Enforcement
HS2 Site Visit
Dogs Trust
Edmonton Recycling Centre (Tuesday 4 September 2024—09:45—10:45)
Custody Suite - Polar Park, Heathrow
Employment and Skills Academy, Heathrow
Uxbridge / Ruislip Lido
Mortuary

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