

Minutes

CORPORATE RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE SELECT COMMITTEE

17 June 2025



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	Committee Members Present: Councillors John Riley (Chair), Adam Bennett (Vice-Chair), Kaushik Banerjee, Farhad Choubedar, Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead), Narinder Garg and Raju Sansarpuri LBH Officers Present: Anisha Teji – Democratic Services Karrie Whelan – Corporate Director of Place Fiona Sweet – Museums & Heritage Manager
76.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>) Apologies were received from Councillor Elizabeth Garelick with Councillor Raju Sansarpuri substituting.
77.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>) None.
78.	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>) RESOLVED: That the minutes from the meetings on 10 April 2025 and 8 May 2025 were approved.
79.	TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>) It was confirmed that all items would be heard in Part I.
80.	MAXIMISING COUNCIL SPACES: A REVIEW OF BUSINESS AND PRIVATE HIRE OPPORTUNITIES - WITNESS SESSION 1 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>) The Chair began the witness session by outlining the Committee's review into optimising the Council's estate. This involved identifying and categorising small buildings, halls and rooms that could be hired out, with the aim of creating an asset register to assess their usability. Many of these properties were underused, and the Committee discussed appointing officers to audit and manage them, with a view to promoting and commercialising viable spaces for domestic or small business use. The Corporate Director of Place and the Museums & Heritage Manager presented the Council's approach to asset management, advocating for a corporate landlord model. The initial focus was on developing a comprehensive asset management database to

capture usage and operational status of all built assets. For non-operational buildings, alternative uses such as long-term lettings or short-term hires were being explored. The Civic Centre was cited as a key example of a site with potential for better space utilisation. Pilot projects in the libraries service were underway to maximise community use of available spaces, with a long-term goal of implementing a corporate strategy and online booking system.

Responsibility for the space hire pilots had recently shifted from the Place Directorate to the Homes and Communities Directorate, with the Museums & Heritage Manager continuing to lead the initiative, particularly in libraries, with plans to expand to other service areas. The libraries team had experience hiring out spaces to banks, community groups and for events like weddings. Over the past year, they trialled a system called Bookings Plus, which offered virtual tours, detailed space information and flexible pricing. While mostly self-managed, bookings required approval for out-of-hours use. The system automated invoicing and accepted card payments, though it was not yet integrated with the Council's financial system, leading to additional commission fees. Integration was under consideration to improve efficiency.

Members discussed the wide range of council assets, including garages and car parks, and stressed the importance of exploring all available spaces to maximise utilisation. A major barrier had been the lack of a digitised asset management system. Over the past eight – nine months, efforts had focused on data collection to support the development of a system which was hoped to come into effect in October. This would enable better tracking, scheduling, and decision-making. Funded through transformation budgets, the system was seen as a corporate priority, with early pilots already showing increased commercial hires. A cost-benefit approach was being applied to assets like garages to determine whether to repair, redevelop or dispose of them.

The Council had set income targets of £867,000 from leases and rent reviews, and £230,000 from sponsorships. Sponsorships, such as those supporting community events like Picnic in the Park, were being used to fund local activities. Officers clarified that lettings were being proactively managed, with a clear distinction between lease income and space hire. While commercial returns were important, Members raised concerns about protecting community-run spaces and ensuring affordability. Officers confirmed that rents were based on ability to pay, with lease clauses safeguarding community use.

Operational challenges included maintenance, insurance and tenancy management. The Council had expanded its repairs team and introduced measures like advance payments and key safes to reduce admin issues. Differentiated pricing supported community groups while generating income. However, the lack of a formal project plan and outdated GIS data remained obstacles. The GIS system showed land ownership but lacked integration with estate management data, requiring manual verification.

The Committee agreed on the need for a baseline asset register before progressing further. The Place Directorate would lead this work, supported by a strengthened property team, initially focusing on garages and leases to generate new income. Community involvement was seen as essential, though it needed to be balanced with financial goals. Legal frameworks now allowed residents to identify and protect community assets. The meeting concluded with a discussion on council tax banding and the need to clarify how property changes were monitored, suggesting further investigation into national versus local responsibilities.

	Members thanked officers for their attendance. RESOLVED: That the Committee met with officers and asked questions pertaining to the review.
81.	CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>) RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.
82.	WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>) The Committee requested an information item on council tax and property development. A member raised the issue of how properties that underwent significant development—such as being extended from one-bedroom to four-bedroom homes—were reassessed for council tax banding. The concern was whether such changes were being tracked and whether the Council was potentially missing out on revenue due to outdated banding. Concerns were noted about the garage disposals listed in the Cabinet Forward Plan, questioning whether these had undergone proper economic viability assessments. Members agreed to look into dates for site visits as listed on the work programme. The Committee raised concerns about the lack of financial updates over the past nine weeks, noting this hindered effective scrutiny and accountability, especially in light of recent comments from senior Council leadership on financial delays. Members were keen to receive financial updates at the next meeting and update about the monitoring module of the Oracle Cloud. RESOVLED: That: 1. Democratic Services arrange for an information item on Council Tax be considered. 2. Democratic Services liaise with Members to agree suitable dates for a site visit. 3. The work programme be noted.
	The meeting, which commenced at 7pm, closed at 8.41pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Anisha Teji, Senior Democratic Services Officer on ateji@hillingdon.gov.uk or 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.