

## Minutes

### RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

13 February 2013



Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b> Councillors Susan O'Brien (Chairman) Mary O'Connor (Vice-Chairman) Lynne Allen Kuldeep Lakhmana Carol Melvin David Payne Josephine Barrett David Yarrow</p> <p><b>Witnesses Present:</b> Colin Edards, Pest Control Contractor Chris Troy, Environmental Protection Unit Manager</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Nigel Dicker, Deputy Director, Residents Services Shabeg Nagra - Public Protection Services Manager Colin Russell - Waste Division Manager Nadia Williams, Democratic Services</p>	
61.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Cllr Michael White who was substituted by Councillor Josephine Barrett.</p>	
62.	<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interests notified.</p>	
63.	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items on the agenda marked as Part 1 would be considered in public.</p>	
64.	<p><b>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2013</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2012 were agreed as an accurate record and there were the following matters arising:</p>	

**Minute 58 (Agenda item 6) – Residents Services 2013/14 Budget Proposals**

- 1) The final comments submitted to Corporate Services POC were noted as follows:

*“The Chairman of RESPOC is satisfied with the report and proposed figures. The Committee welcome the further investment for roads, the continued refurbishment of Hillingdon libraries, the re-modernisation of Ruislip Lido and the provision of grounds maintenance vehicles at West Drayton Boys Club.*

*The Committee looks forward to seeing the yet to be decided figures in connection with cemetery charges to bring them more into line with other authorities.”*

- 2) With regard to proposed fees and charges relating to Exclusive Rights of Burial (Lawn Section Graves), the Committee noted that Cabinet had approved an increase of 20% to non-residents at the meeting held on 24 January 2013. Members indicate that whilst this minimal charge was welcomed, the Committee looked forward to a further increase in the near future.

65.

**REVIEW 2: A REVIEW OF LOCAL PEST CONTROL SERVICES AND THE IMPACT OF WASTE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES ON THESE - WITNESS SESSION 2 (Agenda Item 5)**

**Action by**

The Chairman of the Committee welcomed Chris Troy, Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) Manager and Colin Edards, Pest Control Contractor to the Committee’s second Review of Local Pest Control Services and the Impact of Waste Management Processes on these.

Chris Troy advised that the Public Protection Service interacted with other teams within the Council and was mainly concerned with dealing with food and commercial premises. He explained that charges were levied to non-Council tenants for dealing with issues relating to pest control, namely rats and mice.

It was explained that there was a great deal of interaction with Hillingdon Housing Services regarding this issue and when dealing with charges, the department would usually take account of people receiving benefits.

The Committee was informed that officers in Public Protection Services enforced Food Hygiene & Safety in food premises and had powers to take enforcement action where there were pest infestations. A key reason for voluntary/formal closure of food premises was the presence of cockroaches, mice & rats. There were also requirements for food operators to have management systems in place, to prevent insect or vermin, and this included the management of refuse (there was a duty to have regular waste collections & outside bins must have lids). These activities would have a knock on effect to residents living in the vicinity and poorly

managed food businesses would attract vermin and increase their levels in an area.

The unit liaised with the Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Team (ASBIT) on an on-going basis.

Members were informed that Public Protection Services provided a chargeable service for treating rats and mice in private residences. Private contractors were sometimes employed to carry out treatment.

It was explained that if there were alternative food sources, rodents would often eat this rather than feed regularly on the poison bait. Where this happened treatment would be less effective. Waste food from domestic or commercial premises attracted rats, mice, birds, squirrels, foxes and other vermin. Members were advised that often, it was people's behaviour which was the underlying cause of the problem, particularly when people put food out for wildlife or when residents leave out food in bags for long periods. The Committee was informed that this did not however, mean that Hillingdon was experiencing the problem of 'super rats', as had been highlighted in Hampshire. Hampshire had applied to the Health & Safety Executive for permission to use potent pesticides outdoors. Such so called 'acute' pesticides were more hazardous to the non-target species and the environment.

With regards to the issue of enforcement of poor waste management in neighbourhoods, it was noted that most of this task was carried out by ASBIT, and were found to be generally related to residents not controlling waste properly. Approximately a hundred notices had served annually and enforcement action was taken where rubbish was harbouring pest infestations.

The Committee was advised that the Pest Control Association had suggested that the key to addressing this issue was by using the educational approach, as the problems usually emanated from human behaviour and therefore, treatment was not necessarily the answer to resolve the problem.

Members were advised that the Council website included a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section which gave residents advice and ideas on how to prevent pest infestation (<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/12789/Rats-and-mice>). The website also contained an on-line booking form for Residents to book treatment and included a list of charges.

Members of the Committee raised the following points:

- Throwing bird seeds attracted rats - there should also be an alternative means of raising awareness, other than the Council website, as many elderly people in particular, did not have access to computers.
- Suggested that identifying the source of pest infestation was an issue that that needed to be pursued. Officers advised that this

was an area that was difficult to address, as there could be behavioural issues with a number of people living on the streets. This was why ASBIT were usually involved to carry out investigations and record incidents.

- Requested officers to provide some statistical data relating to the number of calls that had been received in regard to pest infestation for Members to establish the scale of the problem within the Borough. Officers advised that in 2011, 865 treatments had been provided in respect of rats and mice, but ASBIT would need to supply figures relating to the receipt of complaints. The figures prior to 2011 were noted as being higher, as no charges were levied for treatment prior to that period.
- There had been no injuries as a result of fox attack and investigations relating to the issue of foxes were usually triggered off as a result of complaints received.

The Committee was informed that officers were pro-active with regard to carrying out food inspections, which were carried out on a six month basis for high risk premises. High risk premises were defined as being high risk due to the nature of the food they were producing or if they had a poor record of compliance.

Chris Troy advised that enforcement notices that had been served and dealt with were not monitored in terms of area, and these were usually dealt with by ASBIT.

With regard to the issue of 'scores on doors' (now called the Governments 'Food Hygiene Rating System') of food premises, officers advised that there were 2,500 food premises in the Borough and the Food Standards Agency was currently pursuing legislation requiring premises to display their score ratings (which they currently were not forced to display).

In response to concerns about infestations resulting from building works, officers explained that in the past, some intelligence would have been undertaken, and EPU would have been aware of any issues arising in an area from these works; as building works resulted in elevating the problem due to the disturbance of the pests in the manholes.

Colin Edwards informed the meeting that his role as a pest control contactor was to cover when Council officers were on leave and as required by the Pest Control Section. He explained that he previously worked for Harrow Council and during that time, when dealing with pest infestation problems, time was also spent in investigating the source of the problem. However, this was no longer the case due to limited resources. There had been 8 members of staff and he was the only staff member remaining by the time he left. In Hillingdon there were just two full time pest control officers.

Members were advised that with time and adequate resources, the

source of pest infestations could be investigated. It was noted that one of the causes of infestation was the increasing number of building development resulting in the disturbance of drainage, which aggravated the rats in the sewers and thus, resulted in an increase in the rat problem. Mr Edards suggested that sewers were the main source of the issue.

With regard to the issue of controlling pigeons, Members were advised that these could only be controlled by trapping them and, as long as members of the public kept feeding them, it would be very difficult to address the problem. In addition, this problem could be resolved by setting traps where the pigeons were roosting and checking the traps on a daily basis.

With regarding to lead time from the time complaint was received to resolving the problem, it was explained that work for the day would be collected from the Council's Security Desk and calls would be made according to the number of bookings listed on the schedule.

Chris Troy reported that a new system had since been introduced, where all calls were taken via the Contact Centre. From receipt of calls, three appointments would be booked within a week for the caller.

Shabeg Nagra added that up to 10 appointments would be booked per day and these would depend on the number of work that had already been scheduled for that day. Currently, 2 officers performed Pest Control task and one of the officers spent half a day on dog control duty.

Concerns were raised about the prospects of a caller having to wait up to a week before their issue was dealt with.

Officers advised that the priority with regard to responding to pest control queries was for Hillingdon Housing Services. Owner occupiers were required to pay a fee and had the option of dealing with the issue via private contactors.

Concerns were expressed about the problem getting worse where the free treatment was only provided to Council tenants and lease holders having to pay to resolve problems. The lack of investigative work not being undertaken to find the source of the problems due to cost were also noted as a cause for concern. It was suggested that the situation would only get worst, as the issue was not being dealt with holistically.

Officers advised that where investigative work was undertaken, the whole area would be required to be treated.

Members noted that no weekend service was provided but that the duty officer would conduct a risk assessment in respect of the emergencies and respond accordingly; otherwise, calls during the weekends relating to rats would be looked at on the Monday after the weekend.

It was noted that emergencies relating to the accidental failure of

	<p>sewer pipes were usually dealt with under building regulations, which would require the issue to be resolved within the minimum time of 24/48 hours.</p> <p>In discussing the issue of sewer baiting, it was noted that 27% of local authorities did not carry out this function, as water authorities were now responsible for this (stopped in 1991).</p> <p>Officers explained that the reason sewer bating was not being undertaken by local authorities was that it would not be effective in many areas, due to the availability of other food sources.</p> <p>Colin Edards added that it could take up to about 5 years to see the effect of sewer bating.</p> <p>The Committee was extremely concerned that the Pest Control Service could be outsourced and the service implications this would have. The Committee noted that the Council now had only 1.5 Pest Control Officers for a Borough of this size and indicated that Members would be recommending for more officers to be appointed.</p> <p>Nigel Dicker advised that in the move to contracting the work out, there had been the requirement that the level of contract would be dictated by the level of demand. The contract would be defined, by stipulating for example, that callers should wait no more than two weeks to have their issue resolved. The onus would be on the contractor to meet the demand for the service.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the witnesses for providing the Committee with valuable evidence in respect of their review.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p><b>That officers provide statistical data on the level of calls received and cases dealt with relating to pest infestation, particularly on rats and mice and cockroaches.</b></p>	<p>Chris Troy Shabeg Negra</p>
66.	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13</b> (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p><b>The Committee agreed the work programme and discussed possible witnesses for the forthcoming witness sessions.</b></p>	<p><b>Action by</b></p> <p>Nadia Williams</p>
67.	<p><b>FORWARD PLAN</b> (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>The Committee requested the report relating to 'Beds in Sheds', due to be reported to the Cabinet meeting on 21 March 2013.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p><b>The Committee agreed the Forward Plan.</b></p>	<p><b>Action by</b></p> <p>Nadia Williams</p>

The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.00 pm.
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These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Nadia Williams on 01895 277 655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.