

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

20 November 2014

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Michael White (Chairman), David Yarrow (Vice-Chairman), Teji Barnes, Mohinder Birah, Patricia Jackson and Kuldeep Lakhmana (Labour Lead)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Steven Maiden (Democratic Services Officer), Victoria Boorman (Flood & Water Management Specialist), Charlotte Stamper (Communications Manager) and Helena Webster (Community Engagement & Town Centres Team Leader)</p>
24.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillors Allen, Davis and Melvin with Councillors Eginton and Edwards substituting.</p>
25.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Barnes declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item 6, 'Update on the Council's and Other Bodies' Responses to Flooding in the Borough' as her husband was a flood risk management engineer who had worked for Thames Water in the past. She remained in the room for discussions.</p>
26.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2014 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
27.	<p>DIVERSIFYING THE STREET CHAMPIONS INITIATIVE - THIRD WITNESS SESSION (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>As in previous meetings, the witness session was divided into two sections; the first dedicated to gathering evidence from an active Street Champion and the second set aside for officers from the Corporate Communications and Community Engagement teams to provide brief updates on their work areas since the last session at which they had also presented evidence. The following is a summary of evidence heard.</p> <p><u>Street Champions</u></p> <p>The Street Champion providing evidence was from Cavendish ward and noted that he had been attracted to the role because he was interested in the Borough's environment. This had started with reporting graffiti issues but had latterly focussed on litter. He had worked for the Royal Mail for 23 years and reported issues via the</p>

Contact Centre on issues throughout Hillingdon as well as in other London boroughs. He commended the Council as, in his experience, it was far better at dealing with reported issues than its neighbouring boroughs. Issues in Hillingdon were generally dealt with in a matter of days. The Street Champion noted that the quick resolution of an issue was considered to be a better form of feedback than a written update.

The possibility of linking the Street Champions initiative with Neighbourhood Watch was discussed and it was suggested that the Council's reporting system could be used to report low-level crimes that would otherwise not be reported to the Police. Members noted this idea but stressed that the Police would be unlikely to support such a development.

The Street Champion informed the Committee that he had attended celebration events in the past and that these had been a valuable opportunity to meet other volunteers and feel valued by the Council. However, he suggested that some of the events were too large which led to it being difficult to share opinions given the number of views to be heard. It was noted that these meetings had been most beneficial when there had been a Police presence providing information and advice.

The Street Champion already had good links with his Ward Councillors and supported the suggestion that they be copied in when reports were submitted online.

It was suggested that the Council could undertake more publicity to promote the Street Champions initiative including case studies in the Hillingdon People setting out what volunteers had achieved.

Other witnesses

The Community Engagement and Town Centres Team Leader noted that there had been issues with the sharing of Street Champion data with Ward Councillors. This was because the registration process had not asked whether volunteers were willing for their data to be shared in this way. However, the proposed plan to ask Street Champions to re-register with the Council would be a good opportunity to ask this question.

Members asked that officers provide the Committee with the number of Street Champions who had registered within the last 12 months. Officers stressed that the number of active volunteers was significantly less than the 4,000+ residents registered for the scheme and that new registrations were relatively low. Data on the total number of active volunteers could be drawn together and reflected in the Committee's final report.

Information was provided on the four Feel Proud of Your Neighbourhood pilots for which individual leaflets and Facebook pages had been produced. The pilots would be progressed after Christmas and, based on their findings and success, a decision would be made as to whether the programme should be rolled out throughout the Borough.

The Communications Manager advised that some research had been undertaken on the external website, fixmystreet.com. The Council's Contact Centre had advised that some residents already used the site and that reports were submitted to them as with any other issue. Officers from the Contact Centre had noted that dealing with reports from the site could be difficult because residents were not always required to input the level of detail needed for issues to be located and / or resolved. As such, officers stressed that they would not want to promote the use of this site.

The Committee was informed that it would be possible to have a smart phone app to report issues but the aim was to have a website that was good enough that residents did not need a standalone app.

The Committee agreed that recommendations would be developed in the following keys areas:

- § Training sessions for Street Champions on how to use the online reporting system. It was suggested that this could be supplemented by a tour of the Contact Centre.
- § Additional functionality on the online reporting system that copied Street Champions' reports into Ward Councillors unless otherwise specified.
- § The possibility of offering celebration events for volunteers to make them feel valued for the work they do.
- § That research be undertaken to ascertain exactly how Street Champions wanted to report and wanted to be communicated with.
- § All currently registered Street Champions be contacted and asked to re-register. This would also be an opportunity to ask whether they were willing for their data to be shared with their local Ward Councillors.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. Officers provide the Committee with the number of people who had registered as Street Champions in the past 12 months; and**
- 2. Officers produce a draft final report reflecting the suggested recommendation areas set out above.**

28. **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S AND OTHER BODIES' RESPONSES TO FLOODING IN THE BOROUGH** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Officers provided a brief presentation on the Flood Investigation Report - December 2013 to June 2014 in which it was noted that such a report fulfilled the Council's responsibility as the Lead Flood Authority to investigate significant flooding. Information for the report had been gathered directly from residents as well as from the Contact Centre. It was noted that the report only dealt with the most recent flooding events and had not explored historic floods as this would have been too resource intensive. The report had also not dealt with some of the ongoing ground water flooding issues that were present throughout the Borough. It was often very difficult and expensive to ascertain where these were coming from and the priority had been the major areas of flooding.

In response to Members' questions, officers confirmed that Community Flood Plans were support plans for residents of a local area that could involve neighbours assisting one another with sandbags or taking care of properties whilst owners were away.

Officers advised that the Council worked well in some areas with the Environment Agency and had recently been awarded £175k for flood works in the Borough. However, there were some areas in which the relationship was less effective. This was also the case with Thames Water which was noted to be a difficult organisation to communicate with and that it was often not possible to get complete answers concerning the works that they would or would not undertake.

Members reminded officers that this Committee could be used to apply pressure on to partner agencies such as the Environment Agency and Thames Water should this be necessary.

	<p>Members stressed that the Council should not just focus on the clearing of ditches but also trash screens. Officers agreed that this was an important area and noted that a map and plan setting out ownership and responsibility was being drafted. This would be used to prioritise cleaning work.</p> <p>In response to Members' questions, officers explained that schools in flood risk areas were being worked with in order that they all knew their responsibilities and the risks.</p> <p>It was agreed that a regular report would be added to the Committee's Work Programme so that it could be kept updated on the Council's flood response.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A regular report on the Council's response to flooding in the Borough be added to the Committee's Work Programme; 2. The report be noted.
29.	<p>CONSIDERATION OF TOPICS FOR SECOND REVIEW OF THE YEAR (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>The Committee discussed possible topics for a single meeting review to take place in 2015. The following were agreed as areas to be considered by officers and the Chairman as to which would be a viable area for investigation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number and condition of street signs in the Borough with consideration being given to their state of repair and whether or not they were easily visible in their current state. 2. The capacity of the Borough's Theatres and whether they were being used effectively. This would include investigating whether or not there was anything that the Council could do to provide additional support to boost usage. 3. The policing of memorials in the Borough and whether there was anything more that the Council could do to ensure that they were kept in a good state of repair. 4. Promoting the use of buses and public transport throughout the Borough. This had been successfully done in other London boroughs. 5. The state of the Council's footpaths and bridleways and whether more could be done to make them usable to as many residents, for as much of the year, as possible. <p>RESOLVED: That officers, in conjunction with the Chairman, agree to develop one of the above areas into a full length scoping report for consideration at the following meeting.</p>
30.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
31.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.07 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the

resolutions please contact Steven Maiden on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.