



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Richard Lewis (Chairman)
Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman)
Robin Sansarpuri (Labour Lead)
Wayne Bridges
Tony Burles
Nick Denys
Narinder Garg
Raymond Graham
Carol Melvin

Date: THURSDAY, 5 FEBRUARY
2015

Time: 7.30 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 6 -
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH
STREET, UXBRIDGE UB8
1UW

**Meeting
Details:** Members of the Public and
Press are welcome to attend
this meeting

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Published: 28 January 2015

Contact: Khalid Ahmed
Tel: 01895 250833
Fax: 01895 277373
Email: kahmed@hillington.gov.uk

This Agenda is available online at:

<http://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=243&MId=2119&Ver=4>

Putting our residents first

Lloyd White
Head of Democratic Services
London Borough of Hillingdon,
3E/05, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW
www.hillingdon.gov.uk

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About this Committee

This Policy Overview Committee (POC) will undertake reviews in the areas covered by the Administration and Finance Directorates and can establish a working party (with another POC if desired) to undertake reviews if, for example, a topic is cross-cutting.

This Policy Overview Committee will consider and comment on budget and service plan proposals for the Administration and Finance Directorates.

The Cabinet Forward Plan is a standing item on the Committee's agenda.

The Committee will not consider call-ins of Executive decisions or investigate individual complaints about the Council's services.

To perform the policy overview role outlined above in relation to the following matters:

1. Democratic Services
2. Localism
3. Central Services, incl. Human Resources, ICT, Communications & Legal Services
4. Capital programme, property, construction & facilities management
5. Financial Planning & Financial Services
6. Enforcement and anti-fraud activities
7. Procurement
8. Performance Improvement
9. Economic development & town centres and regeneration
10. Local commerce, employment, skills and job creation
11. Local Strategic Partnership and Sustainable Community Strategy;
12. Community engagement, partnerships and the voluntary sector
13. Equalities and Community Cohesion
14. Community Safety
15. Public Safety & Civil Protection
16. Energy use and carbon reduction
17. Health & Safety
18. Any functions not included within the remit of the other Policy Overview Committees
19. Cross-cutting reviews that cover the remit of other Committees

Agenda

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of Interests
- 3 Minutes of Meeting held on 8 January 2015 **(Pages 1-6)**
- 4 Exclusion of Press and Public
To confirm the items of business marked Part I will be considered in public and that items marked Part II will be considered in private.
- 5 Budget Proposals 2015/16 - Comments From Policy Overview Committees
(attached)
- 6 Second Major Review - Social Housing Fraud **(Pages 7-16)**
- 7 Forward Plan **(Pages 17-22)**
- 8 Work Programme **(Pages 23-26)**

Minutes

Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy

Overview Committee

Thursday 8 January 2015

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



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Members Present: Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman), Wayne Bridges, Tony Burles, Nick Denys, Narinder Garg, Raymond Graham, Carol Melvin, and Robin Sansarpuri.</p> <p>Officers: Garry Coote (Corporate Fraud Investigation Manager), Bharat Jashapara (Principal Accountant - Finance and Administration), Iain Watters (Corporate Finance - Financial Planning Manager) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p>	
32.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2014</p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>	
33.	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business would be considered in public.</p>	
34.	<p>BUDGET PROPOSALS REPORT FOR ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE SERVICES 2015/16</p> <p>The report set out the draft revenue budget and capital programme of the Administration and Finance Groups for 2015/16, along with indicative projections for the following four years.</p> <p>The Committee was informed that the Council continued to operate within the constraints of the Government's deficit reduction programme which had seen a reduction of £58m in central government funding since 2010/11. Combined with the range of demographic and other service pressures which were impacting on the Council's finance, this required the Council to continue to identify savings and efficiencies to protect services to residents.</p> <p>Members were informed that the budget proposals presented to Cabinet in December included a reduction of £8,529k in funding and savings proposals which amounted to £10,113k. These savings included £6,879k of new proposals.</p> <p>In relation to Administration and Finance Group Budget proposals, there were proposed savings which totalled £1,521k for 2015/16. Members were informed that the proposed</p>	<p>Action By:</p>

	<p>savings were a combination of service efficiencies, additional income generated and the retendering of contracts.</p> <p>Particular mention was made to the increased income from Legal Services (£140k), which was being delivered through higher rates charged for S106 agreements. In addition there was increased anticipated income of £40k anticipated from Registration from the extension of operating hours and the marketing of wedding packages.</p> <p>A Member asked why was the renewal of Marriage Vows only charged as a flat fee and not cost banded as per the Marriages/Civil Partnerships. In response, subsequent to the meeting, Members were informed that there was less demand for renewal of Marriage Vows than for Marriages/Civil Partnerships, therefore the 'renewal' ceremony was offered only on certain days and on a flat fee basis.</p> <p>In relation to the Fees and Charges, Members were informed that the proposed increases were effective from 1 January 2015 and had been agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 18 December 2014.</p> <p>In relation to the Council's draft Capital Programme, it was noted that despite the current financial difficulties in local government finance, there would be a proposed significant capital investment of around £336,290k which would be of great benefit for residents on the Borough.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <p>1. That the budget projections contained in the report be noted together with the acknowledgment that the delivery of front line services to residents of the Borough had not been impacted by the savings which the Council was making.</p>	Action By:
35.	<p>SECOND MAJOR REVIEW - CORPORATE FRAUD - SOCIAL HOUSING</p> <p>The Council's Corporate Fraud Investigation Manager attended the meeting and provided Members with the background to the review topic.</p> <p>Members were informed that Social Housing Fraud related to the abuse of the allocation and occupancy of a Council owned property. Offenders could be either sub-letting their property, living elsewhere or claiming to be homeless when they were not. Therefore, the tenure or homelessness application would be fraudulent and the registered tenant or applicant would not have a genuine housing need.</p>	

<p>The Committee was informed that in October 2013 the Government passed legislation to criminalise sub-letting fraud. On conviction, tenancy fraudsters faced up to two years in prison or a fine.</p> <p>Members were informed that Hillingdon would use these powers to prosecute suitable cases. Reference was made to the Council's publicity on this which included "blow the whistle on Housing Cheats" posters which appeared in every issue of Hillingdon People. This had helped to generate calls to the Council's fraud hotline, and all such referrals were fully investigated by the Council.</p> <p>In addition, examples of case studies which involved social housing fraud were publicised in Hillingdon People and these articles often described the improved quality of life for Hillingdon residents who had been allocated the tenancy of a recovered property. Members were informed that this generated positive feedback from residents and encouraged the reporting of suspected social housing fraud.</p> <p>The Committee was informed that the Social Housing Fraud Project had commenced in October 2010 and had been initially targeted at registered Council tenants who were either sub-letting the property or were not resident, and therefore, the properties were empty.</p> <p>Members were greatly encouraged that since the commencement of the project 177 properties had been recovered and re-let to people with genuine housing need.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Audit Commission estimated that nationally it costs Councils on average £18,000 a year for each family placed in temporary accommodation. Working on that basis the savings to date for the 177 recovered properties was £3,186,000.</p> <p>The Team</p> <p>Members were informed that the team currently comprised of two full time Housing Investigation Officer Posts, one part-time Visiting Officer, administrative support and the Corporate Fraud Investigator Manager. The Committee would receive evidence from members of the Team during the review.</p> <p>The Project Team met every week to review cases and to agree the appropriate course of action and a Legal Officer attended these meetings.</p> <p>Members were provided with a brief summary of some of the</p>	<p>Action By:</p>
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37.	CABINET FORWARD PLAN Noted.	
38.	WORK PROGRAMME Noted.	
	Meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 8.45pm Next meeting: 5 February 2015 at 7.30pm	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. These minutes are circulated to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

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BUDGET PROPOSALS 2015/16 – COMMENTS FROM POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEES

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

To consider the full set of Policy Overview Committee comments on Cabinet's budget proposals, their overall implications and to submit those comments to Cabinet.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

That the Committee:

- 1. Consider the comments from the other Policy Overview Committees;**
- 2. Seek clarification where necessary and;**
- 3. Submit an agreed set of comments to forward to the Cabinet for it to consider alongside this Policy Overview Committee's budget proposals.**

INFORMATION

As part of the Constitution (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure), Policy Overview Committees have a role to review the Cabinet's draft budget proposals, which were set out at Cabinet on 18 December 2014.

At each Policy Overview Committee in January, consideration was given to reports which provided details of budget proposals relating to the remit of each Policy Overview Committee.

For Members information the full extract of the minute relating to the budget proposals for each Policy Overview Committee is attached as Appendix A.

The Policy Overview Committee comments are set out as below:-

Residents' & Environmental Services POC – 20 January 2015 (Residents Services)

"The Committee commended officers on the proposed budget, particularly in relation to fees and charges where, for the most part, the Council proposes a freeze, with modest increases proposed for a small number of charges in 2015/16. Where increases are recommended, charges have been benchmarked against those of neighbouring authorities and shown to remain competitive.

It was appreciated that the cemetery charges had not increased in a while and that action needed to be taken to bring them closer in line with other local authorities. Some Members suggested that consideration be given to reducing the percentage increase for residents and also be mindful of the proposed increase for non residents, especially when some elderly residents have had no option but to move closer to their families (other areas) due to health reasons but have requested to be buried where they were born, or indeed lived for the majority of their lives. Officers should be allowed to exercise their discretion in terms of the rates in such cases to ensure that we are putting our residents first. However most of the Committee understood the reasoning behind the changes in cost."

Children, Young People and Learning POC –14 January 2015 (Children, Young People and Learning Services)

"The Committee noted the budget proposals submitted and acknowledges the work that has been undertaken in providing a working budget, noting constraints placed via external funding streams. Concerns were expressed by some Members about the levels of savings that needed to be achieved."

Social Services, Housing and Public Health POC – 21 January 2015 (Adult Social Care, Housing & Public Health)

The Committee noted the budget proposals and welcomed the work of the Council in this challenging area. In particular, the Committee welcomed the ongoing work in relation to the preventative agenda so that informed decisions were taken to mitigate future risks. The Committee acknowledged the introduction of the Care Act 2014 introduced a significant number of changes to Adult Social Care funding arrangements and the introduction of the Better Care Fund had significant ramifications to the way in which the Council funded health and social care.

The Committee was concerned about the costs associated with Bed and Breakfast accommodation and the relationship between homelessness and the number of void properties. However, it also welcomed the steps being taken across Council Departments and in conjunction with partners to monitor the numbers of empty properties.

The Committee welcomed the ongoing work to develop the supported living programme to promote independence and avoid costly residential placements but also recognised the need to monitor the slippage of several start dates closely. In relation to the Right to Buy Scheme, the Committee were assured that a stringent process was in place to restrict churn in the market place.

The costs associated with transitional children were noted and in particular the estimate this could be managed down by 6% and not affect the quality of care by taking into account the experience in recent cohorts of children.

The Committee also noted the importance of early intervention and prevention and the redesign of services so that savings could be achieved without impacting on front line services."

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC –8 January 2014 (Finance and Administration)

The Committee reviewed the relevant budgets in detail and whilst it did not make any specific comment, Members acknowledged that the delivery of front line services to residents of the Borough had not been impacted by the savings which the Council was making.

The Committee noted that despite the current financial difficulties in local government finance, this Council's draft capital programme for 2015/16 consisted of a proposed significant capital investment of around £336,290k.

This capital investment included:- the continuation of the Primary Schools capital programme, the development of a new Secondary Schools capital programme, the provision of a new landmark theatre and museum, investment in roads and pavements, as well as investment in new Youth Centres and improvement work associated with the Borough's highways, environmental and recreational facilities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Relevant minute extracts from the POCs

APPENDIX A

Residents' & Environmental Services POC – 20 January 2015 (Residents Services)

"Consideration was given to the budget proposals for the Council's Residents Services. Members were advised that £10m of savings were proposed for Hillingdon in 2015/2016, approximately £3½m of which related to the services covered within this Committee's remit. It was anticipated that £110k of savings would be achieved through reviews of the Fleet Management operation and further ICT rationalisation.

It was noted that proposals in relation to the outcome of zero-based reviews across the group were expected to contribute £375k towards delivery of the savings target, while the budgetary impact of West London Waste Authority's closure of the Victoria Road Civic Amenity site was expected to release £406k. Members were advised that there had been no additional costs for the provision of the service in Harefield as a result of this closure and that there had been an increase in the income received from trade waste. However, there had been a slight increase in the cost of disposal from this site and more vehicles had travelled through Harefield as a result.

In addition to preferential rates for residents, the Council had frozen almost all Fees and Charges for residents during 2013/14 and 2014/15, with modest increases proposed for a small number of charges in 2015/16. Where increases were recommended, the cost recovery principle had been considered and charges had been benchmarked against those of neighbouring authorities and shown to remain competitive.

- Growth of £711k for the Residents Services Group had been included in the draft budget for consultation, based on Cabinet's known expenditure commitments.
- Of this £711k: £440k had been provided to support a continuation of the Ward Budget Scheme, providing a sum of £22,000 for investment in each ward;
- an additional £62k growth to fund the Police Tasking Team was included in the budget, representing the full year effect of monies included in the 2014/15 budget and bringing this funding to £134k per annum;
- £130k Priority Growth was included in the budget to provide increased investment in tackling Rogue Landlords and Beds in Sheds across the Borough; and
- in order to ensure that the benefits of recent investment in the Ruislip Lido site were maximised, £24k was being earmarked to fund additional staffing in the peak season.

This draft capital programme for 2015/2016 included a number of proposed new schemes totaling £15,951k:

- Battle of Britain Bunker, a Heritage Civic Pride project - A restoration project on the former RAF Uxbridge Site. Plans included the replacement of a building near the Bunker known as the ASU building with potential for it to act as a visitor centre, the overall project was estimated to cost in the region of £4,850k with a target completion date of September 2015;
- Highways Structural Works & Pavements Priority Growth - £3,000k additional investment was included in this draft budget to continue the Council's programme of activity in these areas;
- Cedars & Grainges Car Park Improvements - An extended scope had been outlined for the previously planned investment in Uxbridge Town Centre car parks, which would support economic development in the area. An increase of £2,155k, partially funded from £200k of Developer Contributions, was therefore included in this draft budget;
- Borough-wide Car Park Improvements & Rural Activities Garden Centre Car Park - An additional £500k of investment in off street car parks across the Boroughs, including an enhancement of parking facilities at the Council's Rural Activities Garden Centre;
- Ruislip Lido Boathouse - Refurbishment of the Boathouse at Ruislip Lido for service use at an estimated cost of £210k;
- Investment in Bowls Clubs - £900k provision for the refurbishment of two existing bowls clubs and construction of a third was included in this programme and intended to support the Council's broader Public Health responsibilities by encouraging activity in the Borough's older population; and
- Haste Hill Golf Club Investment - A set of two projects to refurbish the club house for use as a function room at a cost of £80k and a replacement of the irrigation system for £450k. An invest-to-save business case was in development around the updated clubhouse and improved parking provision, with financing costs associated with the project to be met from future revenue streams.

Members congratulated the officers on the format of the report and on the content therein.

With regard to cemetery charges, concern was expressed that there had been a blanket 15% increase in charges for residents whereas non-residents had only received an increase of approximately 7% across the board. Members were advised that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken against neighbouring boroughs which highlighted that the charges were significantly less in Hillingdon. As the cemetery charges had not been increased for a couple of years, they were re-evaluated to bring them in line with other London councils. It was suggested that

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

5 February 2015

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

consideration be given to reducing the percentage increase for residents and increasing the percentage increase for non-residents."

Children, Young People and Learning POC –14 January 2015 (Children, Young People and Learning Services)

Officers provided a presentation on the Council's budget in which it was noted that:

- § Indicative sums published by DCLG indicated that there would be a further 13.8% funding reduction in 2015/16. This followed a total reduction of 37% (£58m) in central government funding since 2010/11.
- § The proposed level of Education Services Grant for 2015/16 (£802m) represented a 20% cut compared to 2014/15 (£1.02b).
- § An initial 2015/16 budget gap of approximately £20 million had been identified. This had been managed through a drawdown of £5 million from balances, and the full year effect of savings identified in 2014/15 as part of the BID transformation programme, reducing the gap to around £10 million.
- § The majority of the proposed savings related to changes proposed within the Adoption and Fostering Service, which was aiming to speed up the process of permanency.
- § Since February 2014, groups had been developing savings proposals sufficient to manage the overall funding reduction and to manage any increased cost pressure within their services. A comprehensive review of the corporate elements of the budget had been undertaken, including funding inflation and capital financing. A series of budget challenge sessions had been held in the summer and autumn.
- § The Children's and Families Act 2014 came into force in September 2014. This introduced significant changes and required a substantial amount of work to ensure delivery.
- § The Service was in the final stages of implementing the Children's Pathway BID Review, which should be completed in 2015. This would enable the Service to have a greater focus on early intervention, which should enable the Council to deliver savings in 2015/16.
- § Asylum Seekers were continuing to have an impact on the budget. This was because the proportion of children over 18 was continuing to increase at a higher rate than the number under 18, which attracted less Home Office Grant funding.
- § The primary pupil population continued to grow. It had increased by 2.8% between October 2013 and October 2014. This continued increase in the pupil population had required the council to build three new primary schools. The number of children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs had grown at double the rate of the general school population. The secondary school population had previously been stable and was now starting to grow.
- § Capital investment was proposed of approximately £150m in primary schools and £80m for secondary schools.

Discussion

Members questioned the basis for some of the figures provided, the inflation rate used and whether the figures would prove to be feasible. Concerns were raised about how difficult it was to recruit social workers. Officers were asked to provide a figure in relation to the number of agency social workers working at the Council.

In response, Officers advised in relation to the inflation rate used and confirmed that work was in progress to reduce the number of children placed in private foster care and increase permanency. It was anticipated that these measures would help to ensure that the budgetary targets were realised. Around one third of workers in services that employed social workers were agency staff. Officers confirmed that recruitment of social workers was currently challenging due to a shortage of persons working in this field. The shortage was having an inflationary effect on wages which made recruitment a challenge. Agency workers were now staying an average of 36 weeks.

Members questioned the cost to the Council of agency staff and felt that Hillingdon spent more than average. It was suggested that a dedicated team should investigate costs at neighbouring councils and that the allocation of additional funding in the short term could save resources in the long run. Officers responded that work was in progress and that authorities within London and beyond were looking at the capping of pay rates. However, this was difficult as the provision of social workers was a statutory requirement. Investment in the service had supported stability and service transformation had taken place between during 2014.

In response to a question from the Committee, Officers advised that the proposed Adoption and Fostering Review would result in expected savings of £2.84 million over the next four years. This was equivalent to approximately one third of the service's £8 million budget.

Members questioned why the Capital Programme did not include the expansion of specialist schools or provision at existing schools. Officers were also asked if there was capacity to go into the market to identify potential privately owned sites for future schools provision, in addition to those owned by the Council.

Officers stated that two thirds of the 3 new primary schools had Specialist Resource Provision built in and that a new special free school situated in the Borough, would offer 140 places. The proposed Additional Needs Strategy had gone to Cabinet. This would set out measures to meet the needs of children and young people in Hillingdon that had additional needs. Prospective sites for new schools were investigated by a dedicated team and by the Performance and Improvement Team. The Schools Places Programme was reviewed weekly and reported back to the Corporate Director of Residents' Services.

The Committee noted that Fostering and Adoption had been identified as the main area in which savings could be made and there was concern that this could risk its positive Ofsted rating. Officers advised that the proposed changes would not affect service delivery and it was anticipated that productivity and the quality of outcomes would be enhanced.

The Chairman noted that the Hillingdon Music Education Hub had received an extra £90,000 of funding and thanked Officers for work in this area.

Social Services, Housing and Public Health POC – 21 January 2015 (Adult Social Care, Housing & Public Health)

"The report set out the draft revenue budget and capital programme of Adult Social Care Group, Public Health, Housing General fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2015/16, along with indicative projections for the next five years. The Committee noted that the Council was looking to make significant savings of around £10,113k across the Council for 2015/16, of which the total savings in the draft budget for Adult Social Care were £3,190k and £200k for Housing.

With regards to future challenges for the Adult Social Group, it was noted that these stemmed from the following areas:

- Demographic pressures arising from an ageing population
- Transitional children moving through to Adult Services
- The Winterbourne View report and the transfer of financial responsibility for a number of clients from the National Health Service to the Council.
- The potential shortfall in Social Care and Health New Burdens Funding.
- The impact of Housing Benefits changes on Temporary Accommodation."

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC –8 January 2014 (Finance and Administration)

"The report set out the draft revenue budget and capital programme of the Administration and Finance Groups for 2015/16, along with indicative projections for the following four years.

The Committee was informed that the Council continued to operate within the constraints of the Government's deficit reduction programme which had seen a reduction of £58m in central government funding since 2010/11. Combined with the range of demographic and other service pressures which were impacting on the Council's finance, this required the Council to continue to identify savings and efficiencies to protect services to residents.

Members were informed that the budget proposals presented to Cabinet in December included a reduction of £8,529k in funding and savings proposals which amounted to £10,113k. These savings included £6,879k of new proposals.

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee
5 February 2015

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

In relation to Administration and Finance Group Budget proposals, there were proposed savings which totaled £1,521k for 2015/16. Members were informed that the proposed savings were a combination of service efficiencies, additional income generated and the retendering of contracts.

Particular mention was made to the increased income from Legal Services (£140k), which was being delivered through higher rates charged for S106 agreements. In addition there was increased anticipated income of £40k anticipated from Registration from the extension of operating hours and the marketing of wedding packages.

A Member asked why was the renewal of Marriage Vows only charged as a flat fee and not cost banded as per the Marriages/Civil Partnerships. In response, subsequent to the meeting, Members were informed that there was less demand for renewal of Marriage Vows than for Marriages/Civil Partnerships, therefore the 'renewal' ceremony was offered only on certain days and on a flat fee basis.

In relation to the Fees and Charges, Members were informed that the proposed increases were effective from 1 January 2015 and had been agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 18 December 2014.

In relation to the Council's draft Capital Programme, it was noted that despite the current financial difficulties in local government finance, there would be a proposed significant capital investment of around £336,290k which would be of great benefit for residents on the Borough."

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Agenda Item 6

SECOND MAJOR REVIEW - SOCIAL HOUSING FRAUD

Contact Officers: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

To make comment and agree the draft scoping report for the review into Social Housing Fraud and to hear evidence from two Investigators from the Corporate Fraud Investigation Team.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

- 1. The Committee is asked to receive a presentation from two Investigators from the Corporate Fraud Investigation Team and make comment and approve the draft scoping report which is being presented.**

BACKGROUND

1. At the last meeting of the Committee held on 8 January 2015, the Committee was given a presentation by the Corporate Fraud Investigation Manager on the Committee's second review topic, Social Housing Fraud. The information presented is detailed in the Minutes which are included in the papers for this meeting
2. For Members information attached as Appendix A is a draft scoping report which Members are asked to make comment on and approve if appropriate.
3. For this meeting, two Investigators from the Corporate Fraud Investigation Team will provide the Committee with details of some of the work and investigations which are underway.
4. Examples of combating social housing fraud are publicised in Hillingdon People. These articles often describe the improved quality of life for Hillingdon residents who have been allocated the tenancy of a recovered property. This generates positive feedback from residents and encourages reporting of suspected social housing fraud. Attached to this report is one such article which also includes a short case study which perfectly highlights the positive impact of the work carried out by the Corporate Fraud Team.

PAPERS ATTACHED

Appendix A - Scoping report
Appendix B - Hillingdon People article.

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**Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy
Overview Committee
Review Scoping Report 2014/15**

Social Housing Fraud

1. REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Aim and background to review

To examine the work which this Council carries out in relation to the detection of social housing fraud and to investigate other measures which could be used to save this Council money and to recover social housing which was being fraudulently used.

Terms of Reference

1. To review the current extent of social housing fraud within the Borough.
2. To assess the legislative framework which has been set up to tackle the problem of social housing fraud.
3. To examine the initiatives which the Corporate Fraud Investigation Team is involved in to tackle social housing fraud.

DRAFT

4. To assess the cost benefits to the Council of the detection of social housing fraud.
5. To examine the joint working which takes place between the relevant agencies and Council services to ensure early detection of social housing fraud.
6. To examine best practice either in the private or public sector which could be used by this Council.
7. To report to Cabinet on any recommendations which arise out of the review.

2. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Strategic context

The Government estimates that at least 100,000 social housing properties are the subject of housing fraud. In response to this, the Government has introduced the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act and made almost £10m available to tackle the issue.

This legislation had seen tenancy fraud become a criminal matter and local authorities have the power to prosecute those who unlawfully sublet their social housing.

The Act applies to social housing tenants and introduces two new criminal offences. Firstly, where the tenant sublets or parts with possession of a property or ceases to occupy knowing that it is a breach of tenancy. The second, more serious offence, is where a tenant dishonestly, in breach of tenancy, sublets without consent and ceases to occupy the property as their only or principal home.

The first offence only requires knowledge that the tenant sublet their home in breach of their tenancy agreement, the second requires proof this was done dishonestly.

The maximum penalty for the first offence is a fine of up to £5,000. The second, more serious, offence is punishable by a jail sentence of up to 2 years and/or a fine of up to £50,000. The Court also has the power to make "unlawful profit orders" that require the tenant to pay back any profits "the court considers appropriate".

In addition, local authorities have been given more powers to investigate social tenancy fraud by enabling better access to data from banks, building societies, telecoms companies and utility companies.

DRAFT

Key Information

With upwards of almost 1.7 million households on the waiting list for social housing and around 250,000 social households officially classed as overcrowded, social housing fraud needs to be stopped.

Many social landlords, including this Council, are increasing their efforts to stop fraud in their housing stock, and as a result more social homes have been recovered for their proper use. Whilst this progress is encouraging, the Government wants local authorities to do more to prevent and stop social housing fraud.

Preventing people from engaging in social housing fraud would reduce the number of unlawfully occupied social homes and free up more social housing for those in genuine need. This would be achieved by deterring people from engaging in social housing fraud, incentivising those already committing fraud to stop and making it easier for social landlords to detect and evict those who continue to commit fraud.

What's happening in Hillingdon?

The Council's Social Housing Fraud Project commenced in October 2010 and was initially targeted at registered Council tenants who were either sub-letting the property or were not resident and properties were empty. Since the commencement of the project 177 properties have been recovered and re-let to people with genuine housing need.

The Audit Commission, in their report 'Protecting the Public Purse 2014' estimated that nationally it costs councils on average £18,000 a year for each family placed in temporary accommodation.

From April to November 2014 applying the Audit Commission 'Protecting the Public Purse' guidelines equates to a saving of £684,000 in Hillingdon through the detection.

The review will find out about projects which are taking place to improve detection rates and provide more savings to the Council.

Responsibilities

The Council's Corporate Fraud Investigation Team is responsible for investigating social housing fraud and work closely with the Council's Housing Service and Revenues and Benefits.

Current intelligence, best practice and research

Case studies will be provided during the review to highlight the work which is being carried out within Hillingdon

DRAFT

In January 2012, the Government published a consultation paper on proposals to reduce the incidence of fraud relating to social housing in England.

The summary of responses to the consultation and next steps can be found here

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8408/2179472.pdf

3. WITNESS EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Witness testimony

Garry Coote - LBH Corporate Fraud Investigation Manager
Team investigators from Corporate Fraud Investigation Team
Officer from Council's Legal Services team
Representatives from other social landlords
Investigators from other local authorities
A relevant officer from the Department for Communities and Local Government

Key information required

Statistics and data on the extent of the potential fraud in this area
Cost effectiveness of investigations
Potential savings for the Council
Best practice from other organisations.

Lines of enquiry

1. What advice is given to social housing tenants on the rules of their tenancy and how often is it given?
2. What is the likely impact of social housing fraud on the availability of social housing?
3. What is Hillingdon doing to ensure that social housing provided in the Borough is lawfully occupied?
4. What practices and processes are used to gauge the extent of social housing fraud and is it cost effective?
5. What examples are there of joint working between Council services and other agencies to mitigate against social housing fraud?

DRAFT

6. How successful has the Council been in terms of prosecutions?

6. What publicity is given for residents of the Borough to "whistle-blow" and identify fraudsters in their neighbourhoods?

4. REVIEW PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose / Outcome
8 January 2015	Presentation from Corporate Fraud Investigation Manager	Information and analysis
5 February 2015	Draft Scoping Report Witness Session 1 Investigators from Corporate Fraud Team	Evidence & enquiry
12 March (date to be changed) 2015	Witness Session 2	Evidence & enquiry
28 April 2015	Draft Final Report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report

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How you can blow the whistle on housing cheats

Hillingdon Council continues to successfully fight social housing fraud to ensure residents in genuine housing need have permanent accommodation.

Since April 2011 Hillingdon has reclaimed 168 council owned properties which were either empty, illegally sublet or obtained through providing false information. These properties were then re-let to residents and families who were living in temporary accommodation and on the housing waiting list. In total, 38 properties have been recovered since April 2014.

A one bedroom first floor flat in Hayes was reclaimed after a neighbour notified the council that the tenant had a dog in the property. The council could not make contact with the tenant and a home visit revealed two subtenants who had rented the property after seeing an advert on the classified adverts website Gumtree. The subtenants were unaware it was a council property. The tenant had sublet the property and was receiving a rental income he wasn't entitled to. He was jailed for fraudulently claiming more than £25,000 of benefits he wasn't entitled to.

Last year there were also several cases of housing fraud where the tenant emigrated and sublet their council property. A two bedroom ground floor flat in Hillingdon was investigated after the tenant failed to pay their rent. Home visits revealed the property was illegally sublet and the tenant was living in America. An eviction warrant was obtained and the subtenants abandoned the property, allowing the council to recover and re-let it to someone in genuine housing need.

Cllr Philip Corthorne, Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing, said: "People who are committing social housing fraud are using up valuable housing space and depriving families and vulnerable people on the waiting list which isn't fair. The council will use all its powers to reclaim money or

property that has been fraudulently claimed. If you have suspicions or information that someone you know is committing fraud please contact the council."

If you are aware of anyone illegally subletting a council property please contact us on our 24-hour, confidential and anonymous hotline 0800 389 8313 or email fraud@hillingdon.gov.uk.



Donna Reeve and her three children outside their new home

Our new perfect home

Donna Reeve and her family moved into a three bedroom adapted property in Hayes after it was reclaimed by the council. The previous tenant had left the property and moved other family members in who had also been provided with social housing. The council was paying rent on two properties and the tenants hadn't informed the council of the change in circumstance.

Donna and her three children are now very pleased to be living there. Previously they were in a two-bedroom maisonette on a split-level, which was too small. "My three children were sharing the same bedroom with very little room to play. We had a shared

garden and no dining room. One of my sons has a disability and special needs and the property wasn't adapted for his needs and the car park was a walk away. There were two flights of stairs which was really difficult."

Donna said: "We are all a lot happier and very settled. It feels like we are at home now rather than being stuck somewhere."

"It's perfect for us. We have a dining room with a table and now enjoy sitting down to dinner together. We have two bathrooms and a wet room. We can also park our car outside the house. It's made such a difference to all of us and the children definitely love having more space."

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Agenda Item 7

Cabinet Forward Plan

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

The Committee is required to consider the Forward Plan and provide Cabinet with any comments it wishes to make before the decision is taken.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Decide to comment on any items coming before Cabinet
2. Decide not to comment on any items coming before Cabinet

INFORMATION

1. The Forward Plan is updated on the 15th of each month. An edited version to include only items relevant to the Committee's remit is attached below. The full version can be found on the front page of the 'Members' Desk' under 'Useful Links'.
2. The Forward Plan attached has not been updated since the last meeting of the Committee held on 26 June. However, an updated version of the Forward Plan published on 15 July will be distributed on the evening of the POC meeting.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

1. Members decide whether to examine any of the reports listed on the Forward Plan at a future meeting.

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Cabinet meeting - 12 February 2015

5	<p>Better Care Fund Pooled Budget</p>	<p>The report will seek Cabinet approval to enter into a pooled budget with Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 for Hillingdon's Better Care Fund Plan. The plan seeks to achieve better outcomes for Hillingdon's older residents through greater integration between health and social care.</p>	All		<p>Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE & Cllr Philip Corthorne</p>	<p>ASC - Gary Collier</p>	<p>Hillingdon CCG, NHSE</p>	<p>NEW</p>
10	<p>The Council's Budget - Medium Term Financial Forecast 2015/16 - 2019/20 BUDGET & POLICY FRAMEWORK</p>	<p>Following consultation, this report will set out the Cabinet's proposals for the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2015/16 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following five years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration. Subject to Cabinet's decision, the budget will then be referred to full Council for approval.</p>	All	26-Feb-15	<p>Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE & Cllr Jonathan Bianco</p>	<p>FD - Paul Whaymand</p>	<p>Public consultation through the Policy Overview Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers</p>	

Cabinet meeting - 19 March 2015

20	Procurement of Energy Supplies 2016-2020	Cabinet will be asked to approve the recommended strategy for the procurement of energy supplies 2016-2020.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Allison Mayo		NEW	Private (3)
12	Provision of the Supply and Installation of CCTV Equipment	Cabinet will be asked to consider creating a Framework Agreement for the Provision of the Supply and Installation of CCTV Equipment to The London Borough of Hillingdon, for the term of 3 years with the option of a 1 year extension, subject to performance.	All		Cllr Douglas Mills	FD - Victoria Coady	Service areas / Corporate Procurement		Private (3)
13	Oracle HR & Payroll 'Phase 2' Planning	In April 2014, Cabinet approved the 'phase 1' implementation of Oracle HR and Payroll, which enabled integration with the Oracle Financials system. In this original report it was noted that a second paper would be presented to outlying the proposed 'phase 2' implementation of a Performance and Learning Management system. This paper will outline recommendations following the project scoping for the 'phase 2' of the HR & Payroll system project.	N/A		Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE & Cllr Scott Seaman-Digby	AD - Mike Talbot	Corporate consultants		Private (3)
9	Town Centre Improvement Schemes and Crossrail update	Cabinet will receive an update on the Borough's popular and successful Town Centre Improvement Schemes along with associated improvements from the Crossrail project, nearing completion across the Hayes/West Drayton corridor.	Various		Cllr Douglas Mills	RS - Jales Tippell / Helena Webster	Various stakeholders		
21	Update on the Borough's environmental, commercial, cultural and leisure initiatives	Cabinet will receive an information report, detailing the benefits to residents, businesses and communities during 2014/15 from Hillingdon's popular external funding initiatives, e.g. Chrysalis, Shop Front Grants, Ward Budgets, Sports Fund.	All		Cllr Douglas Mills	RS/AD - Jales Tippell / James Rodger / Mark Braddock			

22	Single software solution to automate the Accounts Payable process in Oracle E-Business Suite	Cabinet approval will be sought to appoint a provider for the Single software solution to automate the Accounts Payable process in Oracle E-Business Suite.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Victoria Coady	Corporate Procurement	Private (3)
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Agenda Item 8

WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

This report is to enable the Committee to review meeting dates and forward plans. This is a standard item at the end of the agenda.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. To confirm dates for meetings
2. To make suggestions for future working practices and/or reviews.

INFORMATION

All meetings to start at 7.30pm

Meetings	Room
26 June 2014	CR 6
16 July 2014	CR 5
16 September 2014	CR 4
29 October 2014	CR 4
11 December 2014	CR 4
8 January 2015	CR 5
5 February 2015	CR 6
12 March 2015	CR 6
28 April 2015	CR 5

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

2014/15 DRAFT Work Programme

Meeting Date	Item
26 June 2014	Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee Possible Review Topics 2014/15
	Work programme for 2014/15
	Cabinet Forward Plan
16 July 2014	Budget Planning Report for Administration and Finance Directorates
	Scoping Report for next Major Review and presentation
	Work Programme
	Cabinet Forward Plan
16 September 2014	Major Review - Witness Session
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme
29 October 2014	Major Review - Witness Session and consideration of draft recommendations
	Single Meeting Review - Members Enquiries
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme
11 December 2014	Major Review -Consideration of recommendation
	Second Review Topic - To agree
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme
8 January 2015	Budget Proposals Report for 2015/16
	Second Review - Scoping Report and Witness Session

	Major Review -Consideration of recommendations
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

5 February 2015	Witness Session for Second Review
	Budget comments from other Policy Overview Committees
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

12 March 2015	Witness Session for Second Review
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

29 April 2014	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

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