

## Minutes

Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy  
Overview Committee  
Tuesday, 28 April 2015  
Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p><b>Members Present:</b> Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman), Wayne Bridges, Nick Denys, Narinder Garg, Raymond Graham, Carol Melvin, John Oswell and Robin Sansarpuri.</p> <p><b>Apologies:</b> Councillor Tony Burles (Councillor John Oswell substituting).</p> <p><b>Officers:</b> Garry Coote (Corporate Fraud Investigations Manager) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p>	
50.	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2015</b></p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>	
51.	<p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business would be considered in public.</p>	
52.	<p><b>SECOND MAJOR REVIEW - SOCIAL HOUSING FRAUD</b></p> <p>The Committee was provided with a report which summarised the evidence which had been received during the review into Social Housing Fraud.</p> <p>Members were informed that since the Social Housing Fraud Project had started, 190 properties had now been recovered and would be let to people with a genuine housing need. Based on the Audit Commissions estimate this was a saving to the Council of £3.4m.</p> <p>Discussion took place on suggested recommendations for the review and the following were agreed for inclusion in the review's final report:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Congratulations be given to the Corporate Fraud Investigations Team for the work they have carried out in relation to the detection of Social Housing Fraud and the resultant housing resources which have been brought back to the Council.</li><li>• Reference was made to other Registered Social</li></ul>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p>

	<p>Landlords (Housing Associations) within the Borough which the Team could undertake work for and it was suggested that approaches be made to enable other properties within Hillingdon to be recovered, if fraudulently used. The more properties recovered would help reduce the associated costs of temporary accommodation and reduce the numbers on the housing waiting list.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers to investigate using the subtle branding of social housing to enable unsuspecting sub-letters to know that the property they had privately rented was social housing. Reference was made to the possibility of the use of stickers which could be used during annual inspections.</li> <li>• The Committee referred to those unsuspected sub-letters who had lost money as a result of Social Housing Fraud. It was suggested that a recommendation should be the Council should apply for Compensation Orders for sub-letters during court prosecutions.</li> <li>• The Committee praised the innovative use of social media which was used for investigations, together with the excellent joint working which took place across Council services.</li> <li>• Reference was made to the requirement to clearly communicate the terms and conditions of tenancy agreements and it was asked that consideration be given to tenancy agreements being countersigned to ensure that social housing tenants were aware of their tenancy legal obligations.</li> <li>• A suggested recommendation was that a reminder should be included in tenant's annual rent statements, reinforcing the terms and conditions of social housing tenancy agreements.</li> <li>• Reference was made to the need for people who were looking to rent property in the Borough being made aware of the status of properties. Officers to investigate if there could be a process whereby the Council could be contacted by residents to check if a property was Council owned, and therefore could not be sub-let.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of a policy on Social Housing Fraud to provide a framework for the Council to prevent, identify and address social housing fraud with the Council's social housing stock.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee thanked the Corporate Fraud Investigations Manager for the support he had given the review.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Committee noted the suggested recommendations and officers be asked to prepare a draft final report in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p> <p><b>Khalid Ahmed</b></p>
53.	<p><b>UPDATE ON THE COMMITTEE'S REVIEW ON THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE</b></p> <p>Members were provided with an update with the progress of the Committee's review into the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.</p> <p>The Committee was provided with a paper which provided a breakdown of those complaints which had a policy related element which could be considered for a decision to exit the complaints process after stage 1 on the basis that they were unlikely to lead to a different outcome if considered at stages 2 and / or stage 3 of the process.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Council's Corporate Management Team had considered the findings of the Committee's review and suggested that officers at this stage would prefer to retain the current three stage complaints procedure. However, an updated Complaints Procedure would be reported to this Committee and to Cabinet in the autumn, after consideration of this Committee's suggestions to streamline the current three stage process by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Committee noted the information now reported and the suggested way forward for this Committee's review into the Corporate Complaints Procedure.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Khalid Ahmed</b></p>
54.	<p><b>REVIEW TOPICS FOR THE NEXT MUNICIPAL YEAR</b></p> <p>Discussion took place on possible review topics for the Committee to consider. Suggestions were:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Business Rates</b> - Members were informed that in the Budget, the Chancellor had said that the government would look at reforming the business rates system. As a trial four UK regions had been told they could collect and keep 100 per cent of business rates paid by local shops and restaurants. Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Greater Manchester and Cheshire East would start receiving all the rates paid in their areas from April in a trial that could possibly be rolled out across the country.</li> <li>• <b>Financial Implications of Hillingdon Hospital Trust being in deficit</b> - The Committee was informed that Hillingdon Hospital would be in deficit for this coming year and consideration could be given to the implications of this for the Council.</li> <li>• <b>Town Centre Regeneration</b>-To look at how successful the regeneration of the Borough's Town Centres has been.</li> <li>• <b>Blue Badges</b> and the abuse of the system - Members were informed that in 2015/16 the Corporate Fraud Investigation Team would be recruiting an additional Officer whose work would include targeted Blue Badge operations. These exercises would be conducted in partnership with the police in different areas of the Borough. It was noted that this would be a good area for the Committee to review in 2016/17.</li> <li>• <b>Single Person Discount (SPD) for Council Tax</b> - The Committee was informed that currently 30,500 people were registered for SPD in Hillingdon which equated to 28% of Hillingdon residents. Since January 2015 the Corporate Fraud Investigation Team had developed 3 work streams to match internal data sources against SPD claims. The Committee asked that consideration be given to this area being the subject of a single meeting review later in the year.</li> </ul> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>That officers be asked to give consideration to the areas discussed with a view to approving a review topic for the next meeting, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p>          <p><b>Khalid Ahmed/Garry Coote</b></p>
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55.	<b>CABINET FORWARD PLAN</b>  Noted.	
56.	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>  Noted.	
	<b>Meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 8.30pm</b> <b>Next meeting: 25 June 2015 at 7.30pm</b>	

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.