

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

29 July 2015

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Michael White (Chairman), Teji Barnes (Vice-Chairman), Mohinder Birah, Peter Davis, Patricia Jackson, Kuldeep Lakhmana (Labour Lead), Judy Kelly, Brian Stead and Jas Dhot</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Nigel Dicker, Residents Services, Ed Shaylor, Residents Services, Linda Wharton, Residents Services, Alex Chrusciak, Residents Services, Andy Evans, Finance, Ainsley Gilbert, Democratic Services</p>
12.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
13.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
14.	<p>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 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was agreed that all items would be considered in part 1.</p>
15.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be accurate.</p>
16.	<p>SCOPING REPORTS FOR BOTH REVIEWS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Clerk introduced the Scoping Report regarding 'The Council's Approach to the problem of hoarding'. He explained that the proposal for a review into hoarding had come from members, and that the review would aim to ensure that the Borough was taking the right approach to dealing with hoarders.</p> <p>Ed Shaylor, Residents Services, explained that a multi-agency panel, chaired by the Fire Brigade, had been set up in 2014. This had considered 36 cases. The Council was empowered to take enforcement action, but it was noted that such action had to be justified and that there were many people who could be classed as eccentric, but whose accumulations were not causing significant harm. Many powers existed under public health legislation, but again they had fairly strict criteria for use. Hoarding was a</p>

recognised mental health issue and so in some cases this meant that the Council had to take a more cautious approach than neighbouring residents might like. Identifying budgets was recognised as an issue, as there was understandably no dedicated budget for dealing with hoarding, although officers had tried to ensure that a one Council approach was taken to ensure that work was done. Costs could often be recovered from residents.

Linda Wharton, Residents Services, explained that the Council also had powers under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act, which whilst intended to aid redevelopment, were also applicable to hoarding which affected the amenity of the area. This power was slow to use as action had to be agreed by the relevant area planning committee, which in turn required a report to be written, causing delay. The power had been used once and had been successful in getting the resident to take action before a prosecution was brought.

In response to questions from members, officers explained that:

- Most reports regarding hoarding were from neighbours, although some came through other agencies who had visited residents.
- The number of hoarders in the Borough was unknown, and that this would depend on how hoarding was defined.
- If officers were aware of someone who had properties in a different borough, they would seek to take co-ordinated action with other authorities.
- Residents would be signposted to mental health services, however, they would have to take the initiative and use these.
- Some use had been made of Community Payback Teams and Blue Sky Regeneration in clearing properties.
- Time limits were set for residents to clear rubbish on a case by case basis.
- Vulnerable people were identified by the Police and Fire Brigade, and that annual gas checks by landlords were another good opportunity to identify hoarding.

The Clerk introduced the second scoping report into 'Mechanisms for reviewing major developments in the Borough and identifying lessons to be learned for the planning process'. He explained that the review had been suggested by James Rodger, Head of Planning, and that its aim was to identify whether improved review mechanisms would be likely to raise the quality of developments through learning lessons from previous schemes and to consider what form any such mechanisms might take.

Alex Chrusciak, Residents Services, explained that it was hard to get feedback on the quality of developments. There were a number of standards against which developments could be judged, however, these were not widely adopted. There was an opportunity to use modern technology to gather feedback from residents.

In response to questions from members, officers explained that:

- The review of developments would have to take place over a long period of time, as there was often a significant gap between planning approval, and residents moving in and feedback from applicants and agents was unlikely to be focused on the liveability of the properties.
- There was a possibility of the Government introducing more standardised planning guidance, which would make it harder for Local Authorities to improve the quality of development in their areas.

Members also raised issues such as parking and storage which they felt were important to the quality of a development.

	<p>Resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That the scoping reports into 'The Council's Approach to the problem of hoarding' and 'Mechanisms for reviewing major developments in the Borough and identifying lessons to be learned for the planning process' be agreed.
17.	<p>BUDGET PLANNING FOR RESIDENTS SERVICES (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Andy Evans, Finance, introduced the report. He explained that the saving requirement for 2016/17 was expected to be £20.3 million. The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review may change this figure but the outcome is not expected until the last week of November. The delay in the implementation of the Care Act had eased funding pressures slightly, although it was not clear yet whether transitional funding would now be withdrawn. The Council had a good record on budget management building up general balances of £40 million, and this good past performance meant that £5 million could be drawn from balances in 2016/17 to smooth the impact of funding reductions . The Residents Services Directorate had made good progress towards its savings targets, although there were of course also some funding pressures. Fees and Charges would continue to be reviewed, and other forms of income, such as grants, would continue to be sought where the criteria aligned with the Council's priorities.</p> <p>In response to questions from members, officers explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The full implementation of the Care Act had the potential to be very costly but low uptake of those parts of the Act already implemented had limited the amount spent so far. The delayed full implementation and any increase in uptake would mostly impact the Adult Social Care Services Directorate. - Officers from Finance and Residents Services worked closely together to find savings, that would generate efficiency savings without impacting on service delivery. This process was however more difficult each year. <p>The report was noted.</p>
18.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
19.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.30 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Ainsley Gilbert on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.