

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

19 January 2016

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, Jas Dhot, Patricia Jackson, Judy Kelly, Kuldeep Lakhmana (Labour Lead), Brian Stead</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Dale Venn (Dale Venn Architects Ltd), Jane Venn (Dale Venn Architects Ltd), Satish Vekaria (Design Manager, Major Construction Projects)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Nigel Dicker (Deputy Director Residents Services), James Gleave (Local Development Framework Principal Policy Officer), Chris Mansfield (Deputy Director Planning, Transport & Community Projects), Gregory Pike (Finance Manager), Ceri Lamoureux, (Lead Finance Business Partner), Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager) and Alex Quayle (Democratic Services Officer)</p>	
40.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>	
41.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>	
42.	<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 confirmed that all items on the agenda would be considered in public.</p>	
43.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2015 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2015 were agreed.</p>	<p>Action by</p>
44.	<p>DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS REPORT FOR RESIDENTS SERVICES 2016/17 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Committee was presented with an update on the 2016/17 Residents' Services draft Budget Proposals, and raised the following points:</p>	<p>Action by</p>

- The overall view set out in the report showed the funding position for the next 4 years improving from previous forecasts, however the 16/17 position was worse as a result of savings being front-loaded.
- The Council continued to operate within the constraints of Government's deficit reduction programme, which had seen a reduction of 56% (£67m) in Central Government funding since 2010/11 and all indications were that funding would continue to decline.
- Members were asked to note that the draft budget report did not include the impact of the recent Spending Review or LG Provisional Settlement, which would be addressed in the budget report to February Cabinet.
- To ensure that there would be no Council Tax rise in the next financial year, savings of £12.144 million had been identified. The total savings included in the draft budget for Residents Services totalled £4.472 million.
- Despite savings, the budget still contained significant capital programmes including the renovation of the Battle of Britain Bunker, a new Council vehicle fleet, school playgrounds and road safety signage for schools.

The Committee expressed admiration for the continued savings found within the budget without compromising front line services.

The Committee commented that charges for non-resident users of services had remained static for several years, and this was a potential area to review for future savings. It was noted that charges have been benchmarked against those of neighbouring authorities and shown to remain competitive.

RESOLVED -

- 1. That the Budget Proposals for Residents Services 2016/17 be noted.**

45.

RESIDENTS' & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE - MAJOR REVIEW 2015/16 - MECHANISMS FOR REVIEWING MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BOROUGH AND IDENTIFYING LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FOR THE PLANNING PROCESS *(Agenda Item 6)*

As part of the second witness session of the Major review, the Committee was addressed by Dale and Jane Venn, Hillingdon-based architectural consultants, and Mr Satish Vekaria, Design Manager in the Council's in-house Major Construction Projects team.

Dale Venn and Jane Venn raised the following points:

- In their contribution they would try to be the voice of the applicant/customer in the planning process.
- Named contacts for Planning Officers and direct contact information would be a preferable system to negotiate planning applications.
- Planning conditions were often seen as excessive or onerous,

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and too rigid rather than guidance.

- Though the overall process was good, it was seen as slow.
- The applicant perception was that Central Government wanted to encourage development, and local government wished to slow or prevent it.
- As a care of duty, inspections were made post-development.

In response to a Member question, Dale and Jane Venn reported that they did not perceive there was variation in how applications were treated within the Borough depending on their location.

The Council's Design Manager informed the Committee that he managed a small design team within the Council which undertook projects with a budget between £1,000 and £3 million. The team managed projects from design to conclusion, and also conduct follow-up with users.

During the discussion, designs and images for a community resource centre (located in Queen's Walk) were circulated and the following points were raised:

- After a building was completed, a client survey was undertaken regarding building and design quality, service, the delivery timescale and whether or not the building was meeting the needs of users.
- When designing and building Queen's Walk Community Centre, ongoing communication and close work with the Planning and Highways departments was critical.
- Upon completion, users of the building did not initially find all of the spaces suitable, in this case due to limited input from carers and families during development. To address this, the design team try to involve as many stakeholders and users of a building from an early stage, and at different points in the process.
- The design team make an effort to stay in contact with users of completed projects. Especially in the first 12 months they try to catch any defects in the building, however some users periodically return to the design team for advice on how changing usage could be accommodated.
- Reference was made to the very close working which took place with planning officers and in particular the discussions which took place on materials. This close liaison was vital to ensure details were correct. A Member referred to the excellence of the site but that some users had expressed concerns at the lack of gardens. The Council's Design Manager said he would have another look at this.

The Committee thanked the witnesses for attending.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the information provided be noted and be taken into consideration as part of the review.**
- 2. That officers be asked to provide a summary of the evidence of the review, together with suggested recommendations for Members to discuss.**

