



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Michael White (Chairman)
Teji Barnes (Vice-Chairman)
Mohinder Birah
Peter Davis
Patricia Jackson
Kuldeep Lakhmana (Labour Lead)
Judy Kelly, Arts Champion
Brian Stead
Jas Dhot

Date: WEDNESDAY, 27 APRIL
2016

Time: 5.30 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 5 -
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH
STREET, UXBRIDGE
UB8 1UW

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

Published: Tuesday, 19 April 2016

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This Agenda is available online at:

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Putting our residents first

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Terms of Reference

A central role of a Policy Overview Committees is to undertake in-depth policy reviews on specific issues. Reviews provide the opportunity to hear from members of the public and expert witnesses, including people from a wide range of external organisations. Reviews usually make recommendations to the Cabinet on how the Council could improve its work. They therefore perform an important role in opening up the policy-making process to a wider audience, including people who would not normally have the opportunity to participate.

This Committee undertakes the policy overview role in relation to the following matters:

- Highways, traffic, parking & street environment
- Local transport, including rail, cycling & London Underground
- Footpaths and Bridleways
- Road safety and education
- Planning & Building Control
- Libraries
- The Borough's heritage and history
- Sport & Leisure services
- Waste management & recycling
- Green spaces, allotments, woodlands, conservation and sustainable development
- Consumer Protection, Trading Standards & Licensing
- Registrars & Bereavement Services
- Local watercourses, drainage and flooding
- Environmental Health, Air & Noise Quality
- Local impacts of Heathrow expansion
- Local impacts of High Speed Rail

Agenda

Chairman's Announcements

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declaration of Interest in matters coming before this meeting
- 3 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
- 4 To agree the Minutes of the previous meeting 1 - 4
- 5 Allotments update 5 - 28
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Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

23 March 2016



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

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|-----|--|-------------------------|
| | <p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Michael White (Chairman), Teji Barnes, Mohinder Birah, Peter Davis, Patricia Jackson, Kuldeep Lakhmana (Labour Lead), Judy Kelly, Brian Stead, Jas Dhot</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Vicky Boorman (Flood and Water Management Specialist), Peter Oliver (Drainage Officer) and Alex Quayle (Democratic Services Officer)</p> | |
| 54. | <p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p> | |
| 55. | <p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p> | |
| 56. | <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>All items were considered in Part 1.</p> | |
| 57. | <p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The minutes to the meeting held 24 February were agreed.</p> | |
| 58. | <p>LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Vicky Boorman and Peter Oliver attended the meeting to present the report and answer questions from the Committee.</p> <p>Officers informed the Committee that the length of the document was a result of government policy stipulations of the content. Local authorities led on ground and surface water, but main rivers are not within the remit of the Council. The report included modelling work to examine what might happen in certain circumstances, and appropriate risk mitigation or counteraction measures.</p> <p>The report was not aimed at residents, but was only the first step in establishing the strategy, and the responsibilities for the Council, Thames Water and other parties such as the Highways Agency. However, the report did include direction for finding information</p> | <p>Action by</p> |

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| | <p>relevant for residents, and the current information of the website would be adapted as the strategy was implemented. The strategy had been through a consultation with the public, and had been recently approved by the Cabinet.</p> <p>Members enquired about what was expected from the general public, to which officers reported that they hoped residents would use the information to understand whether they lived in an area considered at risk, and what information is available. Members raised the point that though the resources available on the website were highly beneficial, residents may not know that they were there or not be internet users, and requested that consideration be given to pre-emptively providing information in a different format, for example in Hillingdon People or more localised information for at risk areas.</p> <p>A Member of the Committee enquired as to how lessons from recent major flooding were incorporated, to which Officers responded that reports from these areas had been circulated and considered. However, in practice they had only limited relevance because they were in rural areas of steep valleys, whereas Hillingdon is a relatively flat, urban environment. Hillingdon was did not have large areas that were particularly at risk of flooding, but rather small pockets within lots of different communities.</p> <p>In response to a query regarding the impact of building in the borough and in particular increased developments with basements, officers informed the Committee that though this did represent a potential problem, there were already measures taken by the Council in communication with Thames Water and the Environment Agency to anticipate this and mitigate any problems.</p> | <p>Vicky Boorman</p> |
| <p>59.</p> | <p>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 (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>This item was deferred to the next meeting, though Members were invited to contact Alex Quayle with any comments on the draft circulated.</p> | <p>Action by</p> |
| <p>60.</p> | <p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Noted.</p> | <p>Action by</p> |
| <p>61.</p> | <p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>The Committee additionally discussed inviting a report on weed control in public green spaces in the Borough, and how refuse collection is timed to coincide with street litter picking.</p> | <p>Action by</p> |

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| The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.11 pm. |
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These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Alex Quayle on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

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Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee - Allotments Report

Contact Officers: Alex Quayle / Paul Richards
Telephone: 01895 250692 / 01895 250814

REASON FOR ITEM

The Committee had requested an update on the provision of allotments in the Borough.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the current Allotments policy, acknowledge the current Allotment service and are invited to ask for further information if necessary.

INFORMATION

This report is accompanied by *Appendix 1 - Joint Allotment Strategy*, and *Appendix 2 - Map of Allotment Sites in the Borough*.

1. Green Spaces employs a dedicated officer to manage all Borough allotments.
2. Allotment management are classified as Schemes:

Scheme A

A simple scheme was identified to improve the condition of sites. Administrative work and collection of rents would remain with the Council. Any society undertaking the scheme would have a small float to cover postage or other expenses.

Scheme B

This involves the society undertaking the renting of plots, including maintenance costs up to an agreed financial limit with the society retaining all of the rental income.

3. Statistics relating to the LBH Allotments

Complete number of plots borough wide - **1157**

- Number of allotment sites - **35**
- Number of Fully devolved self managed sites - **7**
- Number of L.B.H allotment sites - **27**
- Number of vacant plots - **236** (some plots are not as viable due to hydrology and drainage issues)
- Free plots issued to the over 65's - **314**
- 60 + disabled - **1**
- 60 + concession - **69**

4. Fees and Charges

Fees and Charges are frozen again for 2016/17.

Half price concessions are still being offered to residents on benefits and residents over the age of 60 at a 50% discount rate.

Allotments are free to those over the age of 65. All the fully devolved (fully managed) sites are re-reimbursed for the plots allocated to the over 65s, and the costs go towards onsite maintenance.

5. Investment

Recent examples of Capital (Chrysalis) improvements

2014-2015:

- Hill end Access track cost involved - **£21.000k**
- Western Avenue car park and fence - **£47.100k**
- Moor Lane access track and fence - **£30.100k**

Scheduled for 2016

- Southbourn (Oak Grove) Allotment Concrete access pad - **£26k**

6. Maintenance

The Borough assists with grass cutting of paths and the maintenance of uncultivated plots, and can also assist in the cultivation of new plots. Building and plumbing repairs are undertaken by our main term contractor.

7. Meeting attendance

Paul Richards, Head of Green Spaces, Sport and Culture, and Adrian Batten, Green Spaces Manager, will attend the meeting to introduce the report and answer Members' questions.

London Borough of Hillingdon Joint Allotment Strategy

LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON
JOINT ALLOTMENT STRATEGY
2003 – 2008

March 2003 - cabinet

PART I – MEMBERS & PUBLIC (INCLUDING THE PRESS)

London Borough of Hillingdon Joint Allotment Strategy

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The partnership wishes to acknowledge its debt to Bristol City Council for inspiration from their Allotment Strategy.

Introduction by the Cabinet Lead, Environment

The allotment movement in Hillingdon is a long established one, traditionally based on pleasure and necessity.

Allotments provision has always been incumbent upon the Council, to designate and maintain sites for the growing needs of families. The social gains from local participation and community involvement have been ongoing, although not always acknowledged. In recent years the health benefits of fresh food and gentle exercise have come to the fore.

The Council recognises its obligation to provide well-kept allotment sites in all parts of the borough. We will encourage all residents to avail themselves of this all year round leisure amenity, either actively for exercise and food production, or passively by appreciating that allotments are a valuable green space resource.

I am delighted to commend this Strategy to you.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Allotment gardening provides a wide range of benefits to communities and the environment. Allotments are not just important for good and low cost food production, although this is still important. They provide a valuable recreational opportunity involving healthy activity and social contacts – a way of life for many people, part of the urban culture. Allotments are a distinctive component of the borough's green spaces, significant to wildlife and to the urban landscape.

1.2 The great interest shown by allotment holders and other people during consultation over this Strategy shows that allotment gardening is cherished and can be a distinctive part of Hillingdon's Local Agenda 21.

1.3 Some of Hillingdon's allotment sites are well utilised and flourishing. However, many of the allotments are in a poor state, under-used and in decline.

1.4 Allotments have evolved through a rich and varied history of social and economic change which has been accompanied by a succession of legislative reforms that date back to the Enclosure Act of 1845.

1.5 The resulting legislation, collectively known as the Allotment Acts, is in some ways inadequate for current needs but it will remain pertinent to allotment administration and provision for some time to come, until it is revised.

1.6 London Borough of Hillingdon will continue to provide and promote allotments to its charge payers not only because of the statutory requirement but because:

- Allotment gardening makes a valuable contribution to the Borough's sustainability by providing health, social, economic and environmental benefits;
- Allotments are an important leisure and recreational facility;
- Well-kept allotment sites are of visual benefit to the neighbourhood

These benefits can and should be increased significantly over the period of the Strategy. Fundamental to this is to increase the number of people using allotments. **This Strategy aims to maximise the number of people using allotments and to widen the range of people using them for health, economic and social benefits.**

2 PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

2.1 The Allotment Strategy has been drafted in partnership with Hillingdon Allotment and Horticultural Federation, Healthy Hillingdon and Groundwork Thames Valley for the Borough's allotments managed by the Green Spaces team [i.e. directly managed sites and sites under self-management but not for the small area of privately owned allotments]. The Strategy will:

- Set standards for the provision of allotments in Hillingdon
- Increase the uptake of allotments
- Improve the standard of service provision
- Increase and promote the benefits derived from allotments, with particular emphasis on the educational benefits
- Improve the financial position of the service

2.2 In implementing the Allotment Strategy a service will be developed in which people can expect:

- Good access, good security, well maintained haulage ways and pathways, adequate water provision, sufficient storage facilities and toilets where practical, good facilities, adequate site drainage and freedom from neglected plots
- Opportunities and encouragement to individuals and communities wishing to be involved in the cultivation of allotments
- Efficient and effective allotment administration
- Effective and appropriate allocation of resources
- Fair, open and equitable treatment and safe tenure
- Opportunities for developing gardening skills
- Encouragement and support to sites to develop self-management
- Reasonable charges and rents
- Capitalisation on the educational benefits of allotments-

3 AIM ONE: PROVIDING ENOUGH ALLOTMENTS

3.1 Allotment plots of a variety of sizes can be rented but conventionally are reckoned in proportions of a standard full size plot of 300 square yards [so for example, two people each renting 150 square yard sites will be reckoned as one full size plot equivalent]. For convenience, in the rest of this document “plot” will mean a full size plot equivalent.

3.2 The Borough owns and manages 1075 plots in 26 allotment sites and a further 729 plots in 11 sites are self-managed: a total of 1804 plots in 37 sites.

3.3 In reviewing the amount and distribution of allotment provision, the main considerations are:

- There is no recognised national quantitative standard for allotment provision. Local standards are needed and these will be 7 plots per thousand population and no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from residential locations by foot and these standards will be subject to review after the first year. Obvious gaps appear to be in Hayes Town and Harlington and we will seek to secure appropriate provision in these areas of deficiency.
- The ability to respond to realistic possibilities for future change and growth in the need for allotments should be retained.
- Provision standards cannot be applied mechanically. Even when standards are agreed, in examining the status of any individual site [or possible new site] local considerations and other policy frameworks must play a big part.
- The national average of allotment provision is 6.3 plots per thousand population. Hillingdon has 7.2 plots per thousand population [Bristol has 11.9, Sheffield has 6.7, Liverpool 4.2]. About 45% of Hillingdon’s managed plots are occupied, leaving 591 full size plot equivalents – over 16 hectares – uncultivated. A similar proportion of self-managed plots is vacant. Usage has been declining locally by about 1% per annum, in contrast with a national decline of about 10%.
- The distribution of allotments in Hillingdon is not even and does not reflect demand. Some areas have well-populated sites, notably the northern part of the borough and there are localised areas of shortage. Other wards and localities have sites with very low occupancy; some are partly or completely derelict.

3.4 The partnership proposes that the borough will:-

- 3.4.1 retain a level of allotment provision significantly above the current national average and where possible, no lower than 7 plots per 1000 population, with plots available no further than three-quarters of a mile by foot from any residential location.
- 3.4.2 examine if local deficiencies in allotment provision can be made up from existing open space [clearly the impact on existing and alternative uses and landscapes will have to be taken into account].
- 3.4.3 examine alternative uses for sites or parts of sites where supply seriously exceeds uptake, provided:
- There is consultation with representatives of the allotment movement as well as the existing tenants and the local impact and local public opinion are considered
 - There are no tenants on the site/section of the site, or suitable alternatives can be found within the provision criteria given above.
 - Loss of the whole or part of the site would not lead to under provision against these criteria.
- 3.4.4 In addition, where a better alternative location can be offered and if tenants are in favour of moving, alternative uses for existing sites [even where demand and supply are matched] could be considered.
- 3.4.5 When examining alternative uses to consider in particular:
- The potential for temporary and reversible uses, e.g. grazing, open space etc
 - The potential for generating income for reinvestment in allotment provision or facilities.
 - Local consultation and discussion with the Allotment Federation [where detailed plans for the sale of allotment land to generate income for reinvestment are considered] must be undertaken before schemes are submitted to the Council for approval for disposal. The aim will be to raise a minimum of £1M for the implementation of the Allotments Strategy during the 5-year period.
- 3.5 These proposals are set within the overall framework and operation of the Green Spaces Strategy; the Borough's planning policies, including the U.D.P.; the Capital Investment Strategy and Asset Management Plans; government guidelines and other relevant local strategies [e.g. Healthy Hillingdon, Local Agenda 21, Hillingdon Biodiversity Action Plan].

4. AIM TWO: PROMOTING ALLOTMENT USE

4.1 The use of allotments has been in decline for many years.

4.2 Market research and a local survey of existing plot-holders has identified the main barriers and deterrents to allotment uptake and continued cultivation. These are:

- The poor condition of allotments, particularly
 - overgrown plots, which spread weed over adjacent plots, create a sense of dereliction and demand hard and prolonged work to convert into productive sites
 - poor security [fencing, gates etc]
 - poor condition of paths, car parking provision, water supply and shelter
- the poor quality of service and customer care, due to the continual low budget provision for allotments maintenance
- plots being too large for some tenants

4.3 Conventional promotional work would be almost pointless without improvement to the product. Having recognised this, there are good reasons to promote as well as reinvest in the product:

- the demographics of allotment users suggest a need to reach out to new groups of users whilst continuing to satisfy existing users. This needs to build recognition of the range of benefits and the diversity of possible approaches to allotment cultivation which are possible, i.e. not just vegetable growing but bee-keeping, poultry husbandry, fruit and flower production and lawn areas if desired
- the high early drop-out rate shows that new users need helpful support
- “food links” – developing the organisation infrastructure to supply co-operative purchasing, working and distribution of produce – would enable more flexible involvement in allotment gardening, taking into account that the main reason for non-use is lack of time.

4.4 The partnership proposes that the Borough will:-

4.4.1 retain existing and attract new users by investing a minimum of £1 million in improvements to allotment sites over the next five years, financed by suitable disposals of disused allotment land. This will be used to ensure that sites have effective fencing and gateways, adequate car parking, adequate and easy to use water supply, main access ways in good condition, particular facilities for particular needs [e.g. plots suitable for those with disabilities, including suitable access to sites and buildings for them and toilets, particularly for women].

4.4.2 retain existing and attract new users it will be necessary to increase revenue provision from its present level of £26,500 [£716 per site] to allow for maintenance of new capital items and an increase in the standard of service including:

- control of weeds on vacant plots and headlands of sites
- good customer service [see Aim Three – Good Administration]
- developing the role of site representatives at all sites, with appropriate support and recognition
- supporting developments in co-operative purchasing and working

4.4.3 retain existing and attract new users by continuing the existing annual competition arrangements, with the subsequent presentation evening.

4.4.4 attract new users by:

- keeping some reserve plots ready for occupation
- offering attractive financial terms
- promotions targeted to communities, including schools and adult education use and emphasising benefits [e.g. health, social and low-cost advantages]

A Marketing and Publicity Strategy drawn up by the partnership will involve both the Borough and partners in implementing targeted promotion to potential users. This will help reap the full benefit from capital improvements to sites.

4.5 Although simply halting the decline in plot take-up over recent years will be an achievement [since low occupancy sites are less attractive to newcomers than well-used ones] it is important not to forget the health and community building benefits from the regeneration of sites. Every new plot let will improve the health of the tenant's family and community, as well as just the tenant and will support the community of allotment holders on each site.

4.5.1 It is hard to predict the impact of these measures and set targets for occupation, partly because it is linked to the success of a reinvestment programme which may take some time to bear fruit, partly because there is no useful precedent. The minimum target would be for an additional 100 plots let which is a 15% increase with direct benefits to at least 500 more people. This should move Hillingdon up the league table of London Boroughs, where some [Richmond, Barnet, Redbridge] have over 90% of plots let, several [Bromley, Croydon, Enfield, Kingston, Sutton] have over 80% of plots let and few, including Hillingdon, have 45% of plots let. Figures for neighbouring boroughs are Hounslow 57%, Ealing 73%, Harrow 70% while Slough has 58% occupancy. This would be linked to a constructive rationalisation programme which will further increase the uptake of vacant plots, resulting in more attractive and viable sites.

5. AIM THREE: IMPROVE STANDARD OF SERVICE PROVISION

- 5.1 The need to improve administrative processes is clear and will be subject to annual review, to achieve customer satisfaction. There will also be, annually in October, a joint review of progress with partners against the whole strategy which will be reported to Council and the Federation.
- 5.2 Improvements have been made over the last two years. Customer service has improved since the set up of the Customer Contact Centre [tel: 01895 556000] to make the Council more responsive. A direct call to 01895 250456 is the best way to contact the officer responsible for allotments. A series of practical improvements has been introduced, including:
- A 2-yearly review of allotment rents and conditions of tenancy, to ensure they give value for money; the Federation will be involved in this review
 - Better communication with Site Secretaries, including them being 'copied in' regarding take-up and lapses of tenancies
 - Better discounts, resulting from a review of the charging policy to ascertain the relevancy of charges and concession arrangements.
 - Improved systems for record management
 - The production of an allotments leaflet
 - The appointment of an Allotments Project Officer, funded by Healthy Hillingdon, which has helped to raise the profile of allotments
- 5.3 The Council proposes:
- 5.3.1 To investigate complaints, striving to achieve responsive and communicative outcomes.
- 5.3.2 To finalise and adopt a quality assurance system, possibly securing accreditation under ISO9002.
- 5.3.3 To investigate, with the Federation, the provision of an Allotments Promotion Officer, to be funded from external sources.
- 5.3.4 To take advantage of the availability of a computerised geographic information system in the borough, to digitise allotment records with links to rents receivable/invoicing and financial systems, subject to detailed feasibility work.
- 5.3.5 To ensure that adequate staff provision is made to run the service and ensure the strategy is effectively implemented.

- 5.3.6 To provide options for increased self-management, in particular the opportunity to take full responsibility for administration, rent collection and site works, on peppercorn lease terms. From discussions during the preparation of this strategy it is clear that there would be a need to bring the sites into a good condition first. For those associations not wishing to adopt full self-management, an agreement known as Scheme A could be offered on broadly the same basis as at present but with improvements to detailed arrangements; this is already available and in operation at two sites. The Council must ensure that all allotments, including self-managed sites, are managed with probity, equity and equality and therefore agreements will include appropriate requirements, including making appropriate records available, annually.
- 5.3.7 To support and develop the representative and site management role of site representatives at all sites, including consideration of remuneration for out of pocket costs incurred.
- 5.3.8 To improve its network of contacts in the allotment movement through the Allotment Federation and regular meetings with site representatives and tenants and in particular to consult these during the implementation of the Strategy and to work closely with key partners [Groundwork Thames Valley, Healthy Hillingdon, London Wildlife Trust].
- 5.3.9 To seek out good practice from other progressive and successful local authorities.
- 5.3.10 To ensure that the Green Spaces team works closely with other Council departments, resulting in a cohesive implementation of functions.

6 AIM FOUR: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 6.1 Allotments provide a valuable network of green spaces across the Borough. This is of particular importance in areas of the borough that are densely developed and where houses have small gardens and the parks are of a limited size. However, the security needs of allotments mean that they cannot fully substitute for public open space. However ways to increase the visual amenity of sites should be developed/explored, e.g. ornamental tree-planting, better appearance etc.
- 6.2 The importance of allotments as wildlife habitats and their strategic role as wildlife corridors and buffers to more important wildlife sites is already recognised. However, much of their value has arisen from neglect not decision. As a result, the potential wildlife value is less than could be achieved, the benefits of limited public access are not capitalised on and sites can look derelict with problems created for the remaining users.
- 6.3 There is a very significant opportunity to develop wildlife value in some areas of allotment land with no realistic prospect of coming back into use. These sites are frequently prominent in the local landscape and great visual benefits can be anticipated as well. Conversely, in some places wildlife value has developed to the detriment of allotment provision or other potential uses and careful evaluation of options may be needed.
- 6.4 Overall, there are important net benefits to both wildlife conservation and allotment gardening from positive and conscious choices about unused plots, compared to neglect and abandonment.
- 6.5 Within the cultivated area of allotments, principles of sustainable gardening are relevant. The Council has commitments to reducing pesticide use and use of non-renewable resources. This will be approached by persuasion, not coercion - allotment holders do not want to be burdened with restrictions and regulation. Water-conserving measures and composting will be encouraged, as will a responsible attitude towards the disposal of waste.
- 6.6 **The Council will:**
- 6.6.1 encourage and [where possible] support good environmental practice including organic alternatives to fertilisers and pesticides. This will include technical advice and assistance with composting techniques and organisation [e.g. communal composting]

- 6.6.2 seek to develop face to face support and demonstration projects, drawing where possible on the expertise already in the allotment movement [this already happens informally to a great extent in allotment sites but the potential for outreach and off-site demonstrations has hardly been explored]
- 6.6.3 achieve better management of existing natural features and also the creation of new wildlife habitats where a conscious decision has been taken to manage areas of unused allotment land for wildlife. This will usually involve a change of designation to Open Space, given the difficulty of returning a site to allotment use. Where possible, wildlife management will be in partnership with wildlife groups.

7 AIM FIVE: PROVIDING ENOUGH RESOURCES

CAPITAL

- 7.1 Throughout the preparation of this Strategy, public consultation through the Allotments Initiative has highlighted the need not only to provide enough allotments but to upgrade them.
- 7.2 *Aim One: Providing Enough Allotments* describes how surplus sites can be identified for sale and reinvestment. *Aim Two: Promoting Allotment Use* proposes reinvesting a minimum of £1 million raised by this process in upgrading remaining sites [or in providing new sites]. The programming of reinvestment depends on the rate of progress in identifying and selling surplus land but it is anticipated that the receipts for allotment reinvestment will flow at £0.25 million per annum.

REVENUE: COST

- 7.3 All this would be a poor investment if not sustained. During consultation the allotment movement emphasised that once on an improved physical and administrative footing, the service must be maintained and not allowed to drift back into dereliction. Their suggestion in 5.3.3 is that an officer be appointed from external funding sources but until that is achieved there will be a need for adequate staff provision to run the service and ensure the Strategy is effectively implemented.
- 7.4 Revenue costs will be increased by a higher level of site care, particularly weed control of empty plots. The higher the occupancy rate, the lower the impact of this. Costs would be further contained by the "caretaking" arrangements with site representatives described in *Aim Two: Promoting Allotment Use*.
- 7.5 For a period, the increase in revenue costs would be partly offset by substitution of capital investment [for example, a new robust fence needs less running repairs]. Staff costs will rise by approximately £20k per annum but we will be seeking external funding so there will be no budget implications. It is anticipated that there may be an increase in revenue costs initially but this should progressively reduce as the Strategy becomes more fully implemented.

REVENUE: INCOME

- 7.6 *Aim Two: Promoting Allotment Use* proposes targets for an increase in use of 15% over five years. This would result in an increase in occupancy rates, although with conversion of some allotments to other uses [itself balanced by some new sites in under provided areas] the rate would be even higher. Income at current real rent levels would increase by £1.0k per annum.

7.7 The nearer the overall service can be to breaking even, the less vulnerable it will be to any future cuts. Ideally, allotments could reach revenue break-even, with no net call on subsidy. If so, they could be established as a trading account [perhaps at a later stage transferring the Council's overall interest to a Trust]. This would also provide powerful motivation for staff and partners to sustain effective financial performance.

7.8 It will be reasonable to consider options to move nearer to [or achieve] revenue break-even once the basic thrust of this strategy – to improve the condition of allotments and drive up occupancy – has been achieved. Options can include:

- Putting aside some money from site disposals as an endowment fund
- Reviewing rents and/or concession arrangements [clearly though not at the expense of a drop off in uptake]

7.9 Other opportunities for income generation are emerging [for example, the Lottery's New Opportunities Fund could fund health-related promotions and community allotment initiatives] but the likely value is difficult to assess and should not be regarded as core funding.

8. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

AIM ONE: PROVIDING ENOUGH ALLOTMENTS

| TARGET | TASK/ACTION | BY |
|---|--|------------|
| Retain at least 7 plots per 1000 population in any Area, with sites no further than ¾ mile from residential locations by foot | Undertake study with Federation to see if local deficiencies can be made up from existing open space, where feasible and appropriate and to consider alternatives. | April 2003 |
| Consider alternative uses where there is serious excess of supply | Property review followed by detailed consultations on emerging proposals with the allotment movement | April 2003 |
| | | |

AIM TWO: PROMOTING ALLOTMENT USE

| TARGET | TASK/ACTION | BY |
|---|---|------------|
| <u>Retain existing and attract new users, with target of 15% increase by 2007</u> | Invest up to £1 million in improvements to sites, financed from property disposals, with Federation. | April 2007 |
| | Improve the quality of service, including controlling weeds on vacant plots, developing role of site representative, supporting developments in co-operative purchasing and working | April 2004 |
| | Certain sites to be targeted for promotion and support | April 2003 |
| | Keep reserved plots ready for use | April 2003 |
| | Promotional campaigns N.B. work with Allotment Federation and with site representativeness to achieve the above | April 2003 |
| | | |

AIM THREE: IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF SERVICE PROVISION

| TARGET | TASK/ACTION | BY |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Provide quality assured system | Improve customer service Achieve ISO9002 accreditation | April 2003 April 2004 |
| Provide adequate resource to deliver commitment | Employ additional officer to promote allotments Adopt GIS [subject to detailed feasibility] or dedicated allotment computer system | April 2004 April 2005 |
| Encourage more sites to take on self-management | Complete agreements for newly-devolved sites | April 2004 |
| Develop and support role of site representative as significant part of management process | Continue valuing a forum for Site Representatives and Allotment Officers Improve arrangements for maintenance of empty plots via site reps where possible | April 2003 April 2004 |
| Review Strategy | Measure progress against the Strategy in an annual joint review to be prepared in time for a report to be provided for the Federation A.G.M. in November and the Council | Annually in October |

AIM FOUR: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

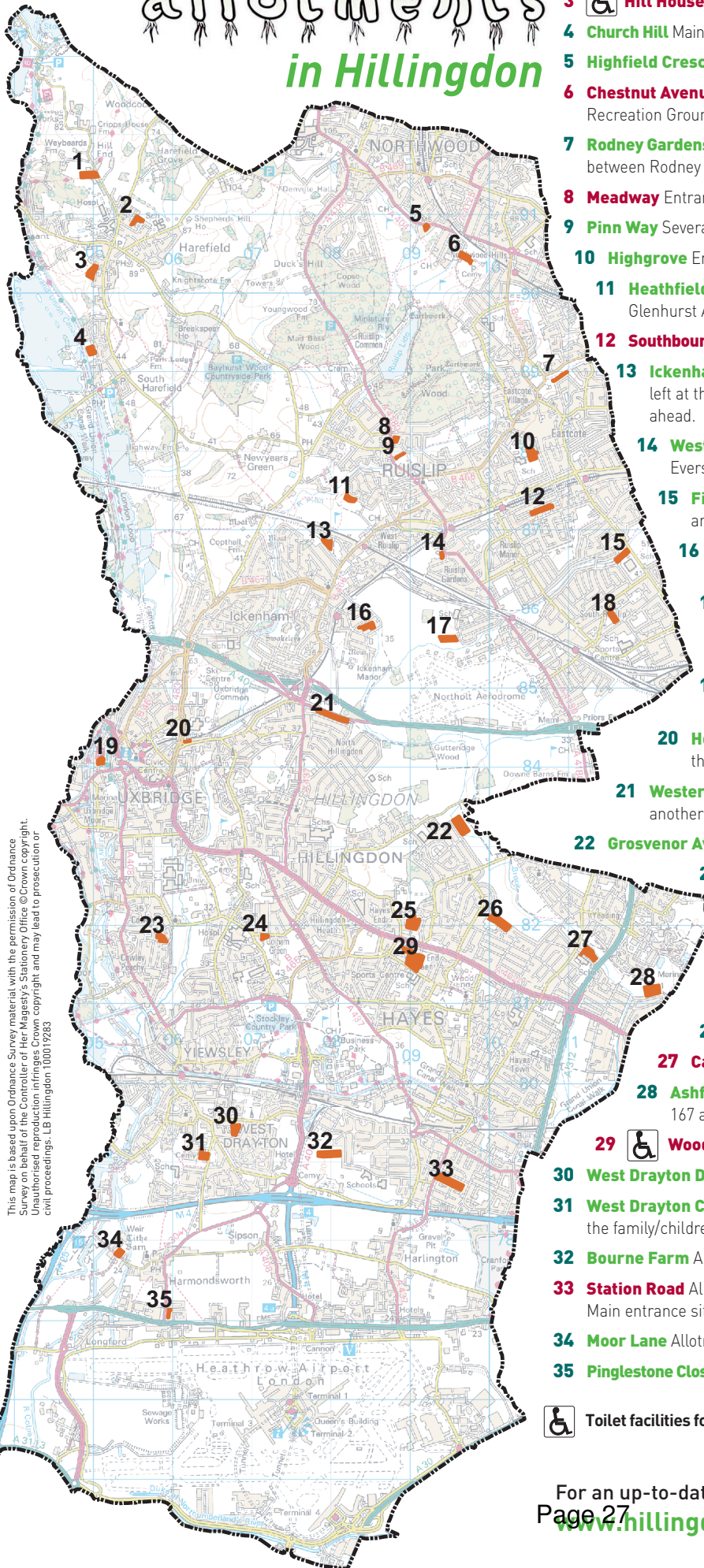
| TARGET | TASK/ACTION | BY |
|---|--|------------|
| Encourage and support sustainable gardening methods | Provide technical information and advice | April 2003 |
| | Investigate feasibility of communal composting projects | April 2005 |
| | Develop a programme of education and training on allotment growing for new and current plot holders in conjunction with Adult Education service [subject to funding] | April 2003 |
| Manage wildlife features better | Identify sections of sites which are to remain under wildlife management: transfer status, prepare and institute management plans | April 2006 |
| | | |

AIM FIVE: PROVIDING ENOUGH RESOURCES




| <u>TARGET</u> | <u>TASK/ACTION</u> | <u>BY</u> |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Invest £1 million over 5 years | Property review to achieve disposals [see Aim One] | April 2007 |
| Long term balance of income and expenditure | Increases in uptake, reductions in vacant land [see Aims One and Two] | April 2007 |
| | Develop self-managed site maintenance arrangements with site representatives and others [see Aim Two] | April 2007 |
| | Adopt GIS subject to feasibility confirmation that this will allow savings in administrative overheads | April 2005 |
| | Continue 2-yearly review of rent levels and concession arrangements | Sept 2004 and Sept 2006 |
| Investigate setting up a trust fund | Explore other funding sources for proposed initiatives e.g. New Opportunities Fund | Ongoing |
| Investigate setting up a trust fund | To ensure that sufficient money is retained in the long term budget to ensure continued provision for allotments | April 2008 |



allotments in Hillingdon



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- 1 Hill End** Main entrance sited between Tanrey Cottages and The Harefield Nursing Centre, Hill End Road.
- 2 Poors Land** Pedestrian gate sited between 91 and 93 Newdigate Road East.
- 3  Hill House** Main entrance sited in Dovedale Close.
- 4 Church Hill** Main entrance sited down a track between 20 and 22 Broadwater Gardens.
- 5 Highfield Crescent** Pedestrian gate sited opposite 6 Highfield Crescent.
- 6 Chestnut Avenue** Multiple entrances off the service road leading into Northwood Recreation Ground, Chestnut Avenue.
- 7 Rodney Gardens** Allotment situated in the grounds of Eastcote House Open Space, between Rodney Gardens and the River Pinn.
- 8 Meadway** Entrance sited next to 5 Meadway.
- 9 Pinn Way** Several pedestrian entrances along Pinn Way.
- 10 Highgrove** Entrance sited opposite 72 Lime Grove.
- 11 Heathfield Rise** Main entrance sited off a footpath/alley next to 22 Glenhurst Avenue.
- 12 Southbourne Gardens** Main entrance sited in a public car park off Oak Grove.
- 13 Ickenham Green** Access to main entrance next to 24 Oak Avenue. Turn left at the end of the public footpath; the gate is on the right a few metres ahead.
- 14 West End Road** Allotment sited next to Ruislip Rugby Club, opposite Eversley Crescent.
- 15 Field End Road** Main entrance sited between Field End schools and Venue 5 pub, Field End Road.
- 16 Glebe Avenue** Access to main entrance via a track off Glebe Avenue. The track is sited opposite the junction of Sussex Gardens.
- 17 Stafford Road** Allotment sited down a track between 27 and 29 Stafford Road.
- 18 The Fairway** Main entrance sited next to 77 The Fairway.
- 19  Barnsfield Place** Main entrance sited in a car park at the end of Rockingham Parade.
- 20 Honeycroft Hill** Pedestrian entrance sited next to U2 bus stop at the Park Road end of Honeycroft Hill.
- 21 Western Avenue** Main entrance next to 34 Freezeland Way. There is another entrance from the end of Windsor Avenue.
- 22 Grosvenor Avenue** Access to the site via a track at the end of Weymouth Drive.
- 23 Peachey Lane** Main gate sited in an access road leading to garages next to 30 St Peters Road.
- 24 Field Heath** Entrance sited opposite a petrol station in Field Heath Road.
- 25 Hayes End** Entrance sited at the end of Welwyn Way, which is off Balmoral Drive.
- 26 Belmore** Main entrance at the end of Burns Close.
- 27 Carlyon Road** Opposite Yeading School in Carlyon Road.
- 28 Ashford Avenue** Main entrance sited at the end of an alley between 167 and 169 Ashford Avenue.
- 29  Wood End Green** Allotment sited on the north side of Wood End Road.
- 30 West Drayton Depot** Entrance sited next to 72 Porters Way.
- 31 West Drayton Cemetery** Entrance sited in Rowlheys Place. Allotment is just past the family/children's centre.
- 32 Bourne Farm** Allotment sited off the service road at the end of Pinkwell Lane.
- 33 Station Road** Allotment sited between Crowland Avenue and Woolcombe Way. Main entrance sited off the slip road on Station Road.
- 34 Moor Lane** Allotment sited at the closed end of Moor Lane; the gate is on the right.
- 35 Pinglestone Close** Access to the site via an alley between 15 and 17 Pinglestone Close.

 Toilet facilities for disabled gardeners

Self-managed sites in red

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Agenda Item 6

Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee - Street Champions scheme: update on review recommendations

Contact Officers: Alex Quayle / Helena Webster
Telephone: 01895 250692 / 01895 277040

REASON FOR ITEM

This item is included as an update on a previous review as scheduled in the Work Programme. The review recommendations were presented to Cabinet in November 2015 and there is now limited feedback on the changes made, with greater detail expected later in the year.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to note the update on implementation of the recommendations of the Street Champions Review.

RECOMMENDATIONS AGREED

1. That the Cabinet Member considers whether Street Champions be contacted to be thanked for their invaluable contribution to the Borough to date and asked to re-register for the Street Champions scheme.
2. That, subject to recommendation 1, the Cabinet Member considers whether the process of re-registering Street Champions also be used to:
 - a. Encourage and offer support for use of the Online Self-Service reporting facility;
 - b. Ascertain whether those registering online would be willing for their contact details to be shared with their local Ward Councillors to encourage greater communication; and
 - c. Promote the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

Both recommendations 1 and 2 have been implemented, as evidenced in Appendix 1 - Thank You & Contact Update letter. This has also enabled

3. In order to provide a greater awareness amongst residents of how to report issues online and to increase the understanding of the Council response, that the Cabinet Member considers the introduction of public information sessions and tours of the Contact Centre available to all current Street Champions.
4. That the Cabinet Member asks officers to provide Ward Councillors with quarterly summaries of the key issues being reported by all residents in their Ward when making any contact with the Council.
5. That, subject to the outcome of the Feel Proud of Your Neighbourhood pilot, the Cabinet Member asks officers to consider offering further celebration and community building events for Street Champions to ensure that they feel valued for the important contribution they make to the environment of the Borough.

6. That, subject to the outcome of the Feel Proud of Your Neighbourhood pilot, the Cabinet Member asks officers to consider the diversification of the digital technologies used:
 - a. To make Street Champions aware of the digital tools available for them to better engage with their neighbours in the reporting of local concerns; and
 - b. How the Council could better communicate with volunteers to disseminate information relevant to their local areas.

INFORMATION

1. Both **recommendations 1 and 2** have been implemented, as evidenced in *Appendix 1 - Thank You & Contact Update letter*. This has also enabled the Community Engagement Team to provide quarterly summaries to all Ward Councillors, as per **recommendation 4**. The most recent update for Q4 2015/16 was sent out on 12 April 2016.
2. **Recommendation 5** has also been implemented and two events have been held. One on 14 September 2015 for Street Champions in the south of the Borough (Hayes and West Drayton police areas) attended by some 106 Street Champions, Ward Councillors and guests. The other on 7 March 2016 focussing on the North and Uxbridge police areas attended by some 125 Street Champions, Ward Councillors and guests. These attendances have been much higher than in previous years following the re-registration and the renewed interest which this generated. See *Appendix 2 - Street Champion Event September 2015* and *Appendix 3 - Street Champion Event March 2016*.
3. In terms of **recommendations 3 and 6**, all on-line information has been refreshed with direct links to on-line reporting. The Community Engagement Team continue to look at ways in which we can make better use of digital technologies.
4. A more detailed update will be available later in the year from Helena Webster, Community Engagement & Town Improvements, should the Committee request it.



HILLINGDON

LONDON

Name
Address1
Address2
Postcode

March 2015

Dear ,

Street Champions Feel PROUD and Thank You

We are writing to thank you for your help in identifying and reporting issues ranging from fly tipping through to street lights not working or highway repairs. It is thanks to Street Champions actively alerting the Hillingdon Contact Centre that we are able to act on the information provided.

Building on your valued contribution, we would be interested in other ways in which we may be able to work closely with Street Champions to create neighbourhoods which not only look and feel better but which are safer too. This is exactly why we are writing to all Street Champions to see if you would be interested in future meetings with Ward Councillors, the Police and Council Officers to improve how local issues are communicated and addressed. This could also include improving local facilities through initiatives such as the Ward Budget scheme which is being extended and the £1m a year Chrysalis fund. More information is at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/proud

Included with this letter is a very short feedback form to check your availability and interest in being part of this work. This is also an opportunity to update your contact details and confirm your continued participation as a Street Champion. The feedback form can also be quickly completed online at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/streetchampions or if you need any additional assistance you can telephone directly on 01895 558136. We would ask you to respond by **30 April 2015**.

We look forward to working closely with you and for your continued support, so that your neighbourhood is one you Feel PROUD of.

Yours sincerely,

Kat Reynolds

Community Engagement Team
Residents Services

T.01895 558136

streetchampions@hillington.gov.uk www.hillingdon.gov.uk

London Borough of Hillingdon,

4W/05, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW

Street Champions - Feedback

Please complete by 30 April 2015 and return in the prepaid envelope or complete on-line at:
www.hillingdon.gov.uk/streetchampions

Registered Contact Details

Name
Address1
Address2
Postcode

Tel:
Email:

Updated Contact details (if needed)

Are you happy to continue to be registered as a Street Champion? Yes / No

If not, please let us know your reasons here:-

Are you happy for your contact details to be shared with Ward Councillors? Yes / No

Are you happy for your contact details to be shared with local Neighbourhood Watch? Yes / No

Please note that by confirming, you are giving us permission to share your details within the council including ward Councillors and strategic partners such as the Metropolitan Police.

I would be interested in attending a local meeting with Ward Councillors, Police and Council officers.

It would suit me to attend on: *(tick as many boxes as relevant)*

A weekday afternoon A weekday evening

I would like to bring a guest to the meeting

My top two issues which I would want to discuss with my Ward Councillors are:-

1. _____
2. _____

My top two issues which I would want to discuss with the Police are:-

1. _____
2. _____

My top two issues which I would want to discuss with Council Officers are:-

1. _____
2. _____

If you have other ideas as to how the Street Champions scheme can be improved please let us know here:

Signed:

Page 32
Date:



Street Champion Meeting



Jointly hosted by

Cllr Douglas Mills, Cabinet Member
and
**Chief Superintendent Nick Downing,
Hillingdon Police Borough Commander**

Monday 14 September 2015

Main event from 7pm to 9pm

And an opportunity to meet with ward
councillors and council officers from 6pm



Find out what Hillingdon Council is doing to create a neighbourhood you can Feel PROUD of by:

- working with you to reduce crime
- making your local parks, green spaces and leisure facilities even better
- ensuring regular street cleaning and maintaining your weekly refuse and recycling collections
- giving you the opportunity to let us know about other local facilities you would want us to improve.

at the newly opened
St Martins CofE Primary School, Rowan Road, West Drayton, UB7 7UF



Your invitation for you and a guest
Please RSVP by
1 September 2015



HILLINGDON
LONDON

www.hillingdon.gov.uk/proud



Location

St Martins CofE Primary School, Rowan Road, West Drayton, UB7 7UF

By car

Limited parking will be available at the school staff car park accessed by Laurel Lane, with some on street parking in Laurel Lane and surrounding roads.

By bus

U3 stops on Laurel Lane

Refreshments

A buffet and refreshments will be available from 6pm.

Book your place by 1 September 2015

@ streetchampions@hillingdon.gov.uk

☎ 01895 558136

Published by the London Borough of Hillingdon

August 2015
12328



Street Champion Event

Focus North Areas and Uxbridge

At the John Locke Academy, Bader Way, Uxbridge, UB10 0FW



Jointly hosted by

Cllr Douglas Mills, Cabinet Member

and

**Chief Superintendent Nick Downing,
Hillingdon Police Borough Commander**

Monday 7 March 2016

Main event from 7pm to 9pm

And an opportunity to meet with ward
councillors and council officers from 6pm,
with a light buffet and refreshments.

**Find out what Hillingdon Council is doing to create
a neighbourhood you can Feel PROUD of by:**

- working with you to reduce crime
- making your local parks, green spaces and leisure facilities even better
- ensuring regular street cleaning and maintaining your weekly refuse and recycling collections
- giving you the opportunity to let us know about other local facilities you would want us to improve.

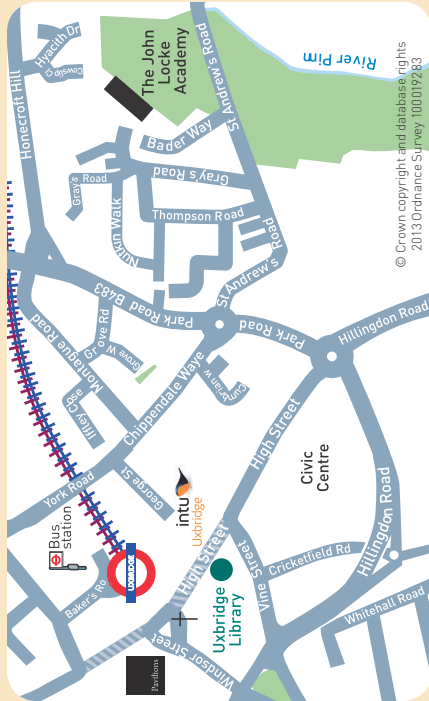
Your invitation for you and a guest
Please RSVP by 22 February 2016



HILLINGDON
LONDON

**Feel
PROUD**
AND GET INVOLVED

www.hillingdon.gov.uk/proud



Location

The John Locke Academy, Bader Way, Uxbridge,
UB10 0FW

By car

Parking will be available at the school car park accessed by Bader Way.

By public transport

Served by London Bus routes 427, 607, U1, U3, U4 and U7 with a 10 to 15 minute walk along St Andrews Road. The nearest London Underground station is Uxbridge with an estimated 15 to 20 minute walk.

Book your place by 22 February 2016

@streetchampions@hillingdon.gov.uk

01895 558136

Published by the London Borough of Hillingdon

Example of community led improvements to parks and playgrounds.

Long Drive playground improvements



Long Drive playground was renovated at the request of a local mum and regular visitor to the playground who noticed that the existing play equipment was looking tired and worn. Feedback on the final design was gathered from pupils and parents of nearby Deanesfield School and included a zip wire which is very popular.



The new playground was formally opened by the Mayor of Hillingdon on 27 May 2015, following £80,000 investment from the council's Chrysalis Programme.

January 2015
12441

Agenda Item 7

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

Contact Officers: Alex Quayle
Telephone: 01895 250692

REASON FOR ITEM

The Committee is asked to consider the review report produced as a result of the review into Mechanisms for Reviewing Major Developments in the Borough and Identifying Lessons to be learned for the Planning Process.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to give consideration to the review report, provide any feedback or agree recommending the report to Cabinet.

INFORMATION

1. The Committee have held two witness session meetings on the review. In the first session James Rodger, the Head of Planning and Building Control provided Members with a presentation on the aims of the review topic. At the second meeting of the review the Committee heard evidence from Satish Vekaria, Design Manager, Major Constructions Projects and from Dale Venn and Jane Venn (Dale Venn Architects Ltd).
2. The following review represents the conclusions of the witness sessions, discussion within the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee, and discussions of recommendations with officers.
3. If approved, it is proposed that the report will be presented at the next meeting of Cabinet on 19 May 2016 for consideration of the recommendations.

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Report of the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee 2015/16

Mechanisms for Reviewing Major Developments in the Borough and Identifying Lessons to be Learned for the Planning Process



Members of the Committee

Cllr Michael White (Chairman)
Cllr Teji Barnes (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Mohinder Birah
Cllr Peter Davis
Cllr Patricia Jackson
Cllr Judy Kelly
Cllr Kuldeep Lakhmana (Labour Lead)
Cllr Brian Stead
Cllr Jas Dhot

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The function of Policy Overview Committees is not just to review the policy of the Council, but to help make specific improvements to the Borough. Hillingdon is a prosperous, successful and growing Borough, which brings with it new development and changes to the built environment. It is incumbent on the Council to ensure that what we approve for construction is the best that it can be for residents.

Planning applications are decided in a rigorous, methodical manner, supported by varied evidence and national and local policy. However, this review illustrates the Council desire to improve and identify ways to enhance policy and its results. This review considers major developments for the simple reason that they have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people. Through better understanding of the consequences of decisions made by committees, and also how Members can influence a decision, we can continue to improve planning outcomes.

In this report we recommend Member development measures to give them greater knowledge of planning matters and the tools to make a positive change to an application, to better discharge their duty to represent the interests of residents. Not only that, but the recommendations show an awareness of the need to be constantly learning and improving to deliver the best possible Borough.

I would like to thank the witnesses and Members of the Committee for their contribution to the review and passion for making the Borough a better place.

Councillor Michael White

Chairman of the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following its review, the **Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee** has made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1 That the Council undertakes post development review of planning decisions.

2 That Members of the Major Planning Committee should attend yearly site visits to high profile developments they have approved to understand and learn lessons from decisions made.

3 That there should be a properly established evaluation process that occurs during the site visits.

4 That the costs of a Member site visit should be considered as part of the member development budget.

5 That structured site visits held for Members should include reference to informatives or conditions imposed, and how these have manifested post approval.

6 That the architect/scheme designers from each development which were subject of the site visit be encouraged to contribute to the post development review process.

7 That Ward Councillors should be invited to submit suggested sites to visit or given a list of sites the Committee will visit and asked if they have any feedback to give on particular developments in their Wards, in particular what end users and neighbours have told the Ward Councillors they think of the development in question.

8

That any suggested changes brought about by post development review be fed into the planning process as part of the ongoing updating of planning policies.

BACKGROUND TO THIS REVIEW

The Members of Hillingdon's Central & South, North and Major Applications Planning Committees are responsible for numerous decisions of varying scope across the Borough. Major applications by their nature have a significant impact on the built environment and residents' enjoyment of the Borough. This is primarily through the change in environment that occurs through new development; ranging from impacts on everything from security, drainage, visual appearance, outlook, light, noise, traffic congestion and parking, through to the wider multi-faceted impacts on neighbourhoods and town centres from very large scale redevelopments.

It is certainly the case that considerable effort is given to determining planning applications by planning officers and the Councillors on Hillingdon's Planning Committees. However, less attention is devoted to assessing whether the approved development is successful once built, or actually creates a high quality environment for occupiers, users or neighbours. There is no formal mechanism by which Members of the Planning Committees can assess the results of their decisions, or use existing developments to help inform future decisions.

The review aimed to understand how lessons are currently learned post approval, and whether there were any simple post development processes that could be recommended to Cabinet to analyse the successes and failures of major developments. It also sought to find methods for decision makers to learn lessons for any post development review processes undertaken. The result would be that Members could better understand how plans would translate to reality, and ways to make a substantive difference to an application.

A greater understanding of the consequences of decisions made has obvious benefits to the ongoing planning process, and the potential to make a long-term contribution to a better Borough built environment for residents. Significant officer and Member resource is invested in determining planning applications, and increasing capture of lessons is a logical improvement to services offered by the Borough.

The scope of the review did not include enforcement activities.

Structure

The information, evidence and findings of this review are set out under the following headings:

1. Current Situation
2. Matters learned from witness sessions
 - Assessing the current systems
 - Site tours
 - External review of major developments
3. Conclusions

CURRENT SITUATION

Decisions relating to Major applications are made by the Major Planning Applications Committee. Applications considered 'major' are those that involve:

- the creation of 10 or more residential units
- residential development on a site of 0.5 hectares or more
- non-residential development on a site of at least 1 hectare
- non-residential development that creates more than 1000 square metres of new gross floorspace
- the creation of a change of use of 1000 square metres or more of gross floor space (not including housing)
- Council owned development sites / applications where the Council is the applicant
- The Head of Planning, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member, may refer applications which by virtue of the level of public interest or by virtue of the economic / regeneration benefits of the proposals are felt to warrant consideration at the Major Applications Committee

Decisions are informed by officer reports and presentations, petitioners or applicants addressing the committee, discussion in committee and, on occasion, site visits. There are also numerous mechanisms by which Members of the Committee can influence an approved development, through informatives or conditions imposed. There is however, no feedback loop to inform Members how the information they received and conditions imposed contributed to making the best decision for the Borough.

The review mechanisms currently used by Hillingdon Council are limited, and there is no framework in place which permits Members to undertake a critical evaluation of a development. Certain Council activities do elicit valuable information, but only partially address planning matters or are too infrequent to make a consistent contribution.

The Local Plan to an extent provides a mechanism whereby officer and public feedback regarding development is given, however, much of the feedback on planning issues of importance stems from views on development already undertaken. The Local Plan is also developed over many years preventing it from being used as a tool for assessment, and it does not represent a targeted qualitative review of whether the Borough's planning decisions are resulting in high quality development.

The Planning Department undertakes occasional customer feedback exercises targeted at applicants and agents. However, this tends to result in customers focussing on whether they liked the service given by a particular officer or the merits or otherwise of phone calls going through a customer contact centre. The feedback given does not tend to provide meaningful responses on the quality of developments arising from the planning process, nor the impact of Councillor input.

Lastly, there is individual site specific feedback from residents or Resident Associations on developments which are being built. This is almost entirely focussed on potential breaches of planning control, rather than constructive feedback on schemes once built.

The Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee therefore identified a learning and policy gap between decision-making, and the consequence of these decisions which this review will address.

Matters Learned From Witness Sessions

ASSESSING THE CURRENT SYSTEMS

The first witness session confirmed that there is currently no post development review process in place which enables lessons to be learnt from planning decisions either by officers or Councillors.

The current system of decision making means that all high profile or major development decisions are effectively made by Councillors who sit on the 3 planning committees. Officers make recommendations, but it is ultimately the decision of Members of the Committee to decide if a proposal is suitable within national and Council policy. As a result, any post development review process agreed by Cabinet must heavily involve members of the Planning Committees as well as officers.

1

That the Council undertakes post development review of planning decisions.

In order to maximise the benefit of post development review, it was concluded that Members and officers must work in tandem. With Members reliant on information provided by officers, it is important that any review allows lessons to be shared to both parties.

The Committee noted the distinction between post development review as a tool for learning and improving decision, and enforcement actions for breaches of planning control.

A common policy other Councils have put in place is to organise site visits for Councillors accompanied by officers to understand what constituted a successful development, and how they could contribute to bringing this about, similar to a defunct exercise in the Borough.

SITE TOURS

Previously, Councillors attended tours of the Borough to visit different sites and developments approved by the Committee. However, there was limited rigour applied to the process, which was essentially Councillors visiting a list of sites and sharing their views with officers. There was then, very limited attention given to the process of the decision, any information shared or the impact of any conditions imposed on a development.

However, the Committee was convinced of the merits of site visits, and that properly structured they retain the potential to inform future decision making.

2

That Members of the Major Planning Committee should attend yearly site visits to high profile developments they have approved to understand and learn lessons from decisions made.

The Committee felt that any site visits should include an invitation to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation and Recycling, and, where appropriate, the Chairman of the Licensing Committee should be invited to attend to visit those premises which required licensing (i.e hotels, restaurants, bars, casinos etc).

The problem identified with previous site visits undertaken by Members and officers was a lack of structure, and limited reference back to the application and decision. Without a systematic approach that ensures certain prerequisite information is garnered from a site visit, there is limited scope for learning, and therefore limited use to future decision making. In parallel to this, without consideration of the decision itself, and the content of discussion during the meeting, the value of a site visit is diminished.

As a result, the Committee recommended:

3

That there should be a properly established evaluation process that occurs during the site visits.

The structured content of site visits can be determined by officers on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Members. However, suggested topics include:

- Reference to the officer report and Member discussion and factors considered in the decision, as captured in minutes
- Changes that occurred to the development post committee
- Examples of the impact of conditions imposed or informatives, especially those applied following discussions in Committee, and whether the planning conditions were fit for purpose
- Reference to associated issues that an application may have had an impact on, for example pressure placed by new development on existing on-street parking. This may also include concerns of residents considered unfounded by officers
- Evaluation of the building by end users

The benefit of such a process is the clear link between decision and result, and feedback to Members about how they were informed, considered and made their decision. Though the use of design awards was discussed as a potential mechanism of post development review, the link between the awards and encouraging understanding of flaws in decision making was doubtful. It was the view of the Head of Planning that such measures only include the very best schemes, not contributing to improvements for poor developments, and are expensive and not cost effective.

In contrast, the measure to introduce a structured site tour, with close attention to evaluation of the decision, makes use of existing resources and expertise. The additional

cost incurred through organised and delivering a site tour is comparatively small, and could fall within the budget for member development, if agreed by cabinet.

4

That the costs of a Member site visit should be considered as part of the member development budget.

The Committee also discussed how the Council has undertaken post development surveys of new development. Unfortunately, these provide limited valuable data as local residents focus on a topical issue related to the Council (e.g. How often refuse is collected) rather than answer questions in the way a survey intends. Given the shortcomings of this method, the Committee determined that site visits represented potentially the most effective method, both in learning and cost.

This review has identified simple mechanisms by which learning about development can be undertaken. Though more complex methodologies were identified, these are potentially much more costly than re-establishing a programme of site visits and ensuring that the visit is accompanied by a structured evaluation of the application and decision. There is therefore insufficient justification for design awards which have questionable learning potential. Instead, site visits can be accommodated within the member development budget, and have the potential to fulfill the stated aims of the review.

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

As part of the review, the Committee consulted Dale Venn and Jane Venn of Dale Venn Architects Ltd, and Satish Vekaria, Design Manager in Major Construction Projects at the London Borough of Hillingdon.

Witnesses noted the key role that conditions and informatives played in the realisation of a development. Planning conditions are an important and much debated part of the planning process; hence it is important to consider whether the right planning conditions were imposed. Specifically, the Committee considered the extent to which planning conditions were flexible, and achieved their stated aims. Given their significant influence, Members should be clear on the link between conditions and informatives and the ultimate outcome of the development.

5

That structured site visits held for Members should include reference to informatives or conditions imposed, and how these have manifested post approval.

This recommendation sits neatly within the suggestion of a structured site visit, allowing members to consider a completed development with reference to conditions imposed.

The evidence presented to the Committee also considered measures for external contribution for post development review, in order to ensure that different stakeholders

had the opportunity to contribute to ongoing improvement to the planning process. Furthermore, it is rarely the case that what is approved is precisely what is built, as building projects evolve to reflect client requirements and the need to meet Building Control, budgetary and other important requirements. There is therefore a need for a wider consultation of how a building project has developed, and the Committee recommended:

6 That the architect/scheme designers from each development which were subject of the site visit be encouraged to contribute to the post development review process.

In short, the views of the end user are important to gauging the success or otherwise of a building, and good planning is not just about whether the scheme complied with Council planning policies. The above recommendation takes into account changes during construction, and also the extent to which a development achieved the intended function successfully. It is however, important to note that the recommendation does not seek to encourage or alter current enforcement practices, and that post development review is a learning tool for officers and Members.

There will inevitably be some amendments to plans as developments evolve, and how these are handled affects the final development. Witnesses emphasised the benefits of clear and positive communication channels between the developer and the Council throughout the planning process, and the contribution that this makes to a better quality development.

In parallel, contribution from the end user is key to establishing if a development can be considered a success. Debate within the Policy Overview Committee with external speakers made it clear that Ward Councillors have considerable knowledge in this regard, or an understanding of groups in their ward that are most affected. As a result, the committee recommended:

7 That Ward Councillors should be invited to submit suggested sites to visit or given a list of sites the Committee will visit and asked if they have any feedback to give on particular developments in their Wards, in particular what end users and neighbours have told the Ward Councillors they think of the development in question.

The benefits of Ward Councillor input to the post development review process are obvious in that they have great understanding and knowledge of the local area. However, this also extends to a privileged position within local networks of end users and residents. It is thought that this recommendation would help to provide an additional layer of insight and quality control to the suggested process of site visits.

To this end, Ward Councillors should be notified in advance of the itinerary being set for planned site visits in order to make suggestions for sites which merit a visit and scrutiny from the Committee. This links closely to the second part of the recommendation to create a close link to the end user, as the witness sessions suggested that Ward Councillors ordinarily have significant knowledge to the better and worse development within their ward.

The original programme of site visits appears to have been curtailed as it did not make a positive benefit to the decision process. However, the results of this review suggest that the direction of information was too heavily from Members to Officers, and insufficiently considered the decision-making process.

However, this does reinforce the need to for a cyclical process, whereby the results of site visits contribute directly to how decisions are taken, and these decisions are subsequently reviewed. It is for this reason that the committee recommended:

8

That any suggested changes brought about by post development review be fed into the planning process as part of the ongoing updating of planning policies.

This recommendation ensures that learning during the site visits reaches the point where it is most valuable - before a development is approved. Ensuring that the process is updated on an ongoing basis allows Members and officers to respond to and modify the above recommendations depending on how successful they are, potentially assisting this review to make a more long term contribution to better planning in Hillingdon.

CONCLUSIONS

As a consequence of this review, there is a greater knowledge of how lessons are currently learned in the Borough following approval of an application. The work of the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Committee and invited witnesses has elicited several simple and flexible post development processes to evaluate major developments for consideration by Cabinet. The result of these recommendations is likely to be a better understanding from Members of how the information supplied to them in order to make a decision manifests once built, and how they can more effectively use their influence.

The recommendations set out in this report contribute to addressing a learning gap within planning policy for the Council. The manner in which this achieved is multifaceted, and represents the diverse experience of the witnesses who addressed the committee. The recommendations have the potential to achieve the goals of the review as set out in the background to this review, in an economical and efficient manner with a clear contribution. An additional benefit of the key recommendations proposed is that they remain simple to modify and adapt as priorities and learning needs of Members and officers change.

The background to this review noted the intricate way in which consequences of planning decisions contribute to life in the Borough. The recommendations outlined in this review acknowledge the requirement to be flexible both in what learning can be taken from a particular development, and considering a plurality of views of a development. Ensuring that both Members and officers can learn the resulting lessons equally and in tandem is a key strength of these recommendations.

Though no significant issues were identified in the process of determining major planning applications, the recommendations of this review are presented to Cabinet as proportionate, cost effective and potentially highly beneficial to Members, officers and residents.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

As agreed by the Committee:

1. To understand how lessons are currently learned post approval from processing planning applications;
2. To look at suggested models of best practice (such as the Building for Life Standard) that stem from Governmental or professional bodies and to seek advice from local experts in the fields of planning or architecture.
3. To consider, and recommend to Cabinet any improvements to, the Council's present approach.

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WITNESSES

Witness sessions for the review were held on 12 November 2015 and 16 January 2016 in which the Committee heard from the following expert witnesses:

Session 1

- James Rodger – Head of Planning and Enforcement, London Borough of Hillingdon

Session 2

- Dale Venn – Dale Venn Architects Ltd
- Jane Venn – Dale Venn Architects Ltd
- Satish Vekaria – Design Manager, Major Construction Projects, London Borough of Hillingdon

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Forward Plan

Contact officer: Alex Quayle
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REASON FOR ITEM

The Committee is required by its terms of reference to consider the Forward Plan and comment as appropriate to the decision maker on key decisions that relate to services within its remit (before they are taken by Cabinet or Cabinet Member).

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

- To comment on items going to the Cabinet or Cabinet Members for decision.
- Or to note the items and decide not to comment.

INFORMATION

1. The Forward Plan for the following months has been published. Those items that are within this Committee's remit are shown on the attached version of the Forward Plan. The Committee may wish to consider and comment on these items.
2. Committee Members are requested to send in any questions they have regarding the attached Forward Plan or on any reports going to the next meeting of Cabinet, and to notify any officers that they would like to attend to give advice.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

- To consider whether there are comments or suggestions that the Committee wishes to make that will aid Cabinet's decision making.

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| Ref | Upcoming Decisions | Further details | Ward(s) | Final decision by Full Council | Cabinet Member(s) Responsible | Officer Contact for further information | Consultation on the decision | NEW ITEM | Public / Private Decision & reasons |
|--|--|--|----------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care AD = Administration FD= Finance SI = Standard Item each month | | | | | | | | | |
| Cabinet Member Decisions - March 2016 | | | | | | | | | |
| 94 | CCTV maintenance tender | Cabinet Members will consider a tender for provision of maintenance to public space CCTV. | Various | | Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE / Cllr Douglas Mills | RS - Nigel Dicker | | | Private (3) |
| 91 | Tender: Hay Cutting and Hedge Trimming | Cabinet approval will be sought to award a contract to carry out Hay Cutting and Baling including Hedge Trimming within Borough. | Various | | Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE / Cllr Jonathan Bianco | RS - Adrian Batten | | | Private (3) |
| Cabinet - 21 April 2016 | | | | | | | | | |
| 114 | Grant of a long lease for garden, Cowley | This matter seeks Cabinet approval to grant a long lease of the garden forming part of a freehold premises in Cowley, following consideration by Strategic Property Governance Group | Brunel | | Cllr Jonathan Bianco | RS - Susan Williams-Joseph | | NEW | Private (1,2,3) |
| 109 109 109 | Barnhill Estate, Hayes - Roof refurbishment | Cabinet will consider appointing a contractor to address the maintenance issues for roofing, guttering and roof insulation on the Estate. This will reduce the ongoing responsive repair expenditure, improve the thermal performance reducing heating costs and ensure the properties are maintained in a suitable condition. | Barnhill | | Cllr Jonathan Bianco | RS - Chris Woods | Residents / Tenants | NEW | Private (3) |
| Cabinet Member Decisions - April 2016 | | | | | | | | | |
| 110 | Contractors for Supported Housing Developments | Delegated approval by Cabinet has been granted to Members to appoint Design and Build Contractors for the new Parkview and Grassy Meadow Extra Care Housing developments. | Townfield / Yiewsley | | Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE & Cllr Jonathan Bianco | RS - Jenny Evans | Public consultation | NEW | Private (3) |
| Cabinet - 19 May 2016 | | | | | | | | | |
| 95 | Environmental Enforcement Service | Cabinet will consider a tender for the provision of an Environmental Enforcement Service. | All | | Cllr Jonathan Bianco | RS - Bill Hickson Partners | | | Private (3) |
| SI | Reports from Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees | Major Policy Review recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet as and when completed. | TBC | | TBC | AD - Democratic Services | | | Public |

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Agenda Item 9

Work Programme and Review Topics for the Next Municipal Year

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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 each agenda.

MEETINGS

| | |
|--|--|
| 16 Jun 2016 Venue: CR3a | Major Review 1 – agree potential review topic for first major review |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |
| | Update on implementation of recommendations from past reviews |
| 27 Jul 2016 Venue: CR3a | Major Review 1 – consideration of scoping report |
| | Consideration of Budget Planning Report for Residents Services 2015/16 |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |
| 21 Sep 2016 Venue: CR5 | Major Review 1 – First witness session |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |
| 18 Oct 2016 Venue: CR4 | Major Review 1 – Second witness session |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |
| 22 Nov 2016 Venue: CR6 | Major Review 1 – Third witness session |
| | Review 2 – agree potential review topic for single meeting review |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |
| 10 Jan 2017 Venue: CR4 | Review 1 - consideration of draft final report |
| | Review 2 - consideration of scoping report |
| | Annual Safety at Sports Grounds Report |
| | Budget Report for consideration |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |
| 22 Feb 2017 Venue: CR4 | Review 2 - witness session |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |

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|--------------------|--|
| 22 Mar 2017 | Review 2 - consideration of draft final report |
| Venue: CR4 | Update on the Council's and other bodies' responses to flooding in the Borough |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |

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|--------------------|---|
| 26 Apr 2017 | Consideration of topics for major reviews for the next Municipal Year |
| Venue: CR4 | Update on implementation of recommendations from past reviews |
| | Work Programme – review the annual work programme |
| | Cabinet Forward Plan – review forthcoming decisions |

FUTURE REVIEW TOPICS

At the last meeting the committee suggested weed control in public spaces, refuse collection and allotments. Members are welcome to suggest any further topics they have either for a review or an information update, in order that exploratory work can be undertaken before the first meeting of the new municipal year, when the work programme will be confirmed.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

1. To note dates for meetings
2. To make suggestions for future working practices, reviews, and updates.