

Minutes

RESIDENTS, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

15 October 2019

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman), Michael Markham (Vice-Chairman), Heena Makwana, Devi Radia, Stuart Mathers, Paula Rodrigues, Jan Sweeting, Steve Tuckwell and Brian Stead (In place of Allan Kauffman)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Neil Fraser (Democratic Services Officer), Ian Anderson (Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries), Sarah Phillips (School Place Planning Project Manager) and Dan Kennedy (Director, Housing, Environment, Education, Performance, Health & Wellbeing)</p>
32.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Allan Kauffman and Mr Tony Little. Councillor Brian Stead was present as Councillor Kauffman's substitute.</p>
33.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
34.	<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 were marked as Part I and would therefore be considered in public.</p>
35.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was agreed that Cllr Sweeting would forward a list of the actions remaining from previous meetings to the clerk, for review with officers.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2019 be approved as a correct record.</p>
36.	<p>REVIEW INTO LITTERING AND FLY TIPPING WITHIN HILLINGDON - SECOND WITNESS SESSION (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The witness session was attended by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Brough – Chairman of the Hayes Town Partnership• A S Puar – Chairman of the Hayes Town Business Forum

- Colleen Sullivan – Oak Farm Residents Association
- Jane Turnbull - Oak Farm Residents Association
- Claire King – Resident of Barnhill Ward
- Kiran Soor – Resident of Barnhill Ward

The Committee heard evidence from Mr Brough and Mr Puar first, who detailed the work the Hayes Town Partnership and Hayes Town Business Forums had undertaken to address littering and fly tipping within Hayes.

The Hayes Town Partnership had been set up by Hillingdon Council to promote the economic regeneration of Hayes. Members of the partnership included the Council, the Police, the Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce, Hayes Town Business Forum, Global Academy, Uxbridge College, Brunel University, major developers and large employers.

Hayes Town Business Forum had been set up to be a voice for businesses in Hayes. A branch of Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce, the Forum had over 50 members, mainly small independent traders.

Littering and rubbish-dumping in Hayes Town included:

- Dropping of litter
- Casual depositing of bags of rubbish
- Dumping of furniture, fridges and other appliances
- Organised dumping
- Depositing of food for pigeons

Regarding bags of rubbish being left next to litter bins, determining who was responsible was difficult. It was likely that the bags were deposited by both residents and landlords, as well as local shopkeepers. It was noted that the Council was a victim of its own efficiency, as by removing rubbish so quickly (when reported), people were becoming reliant on this as 'the system' for disposal of their rubbish.

Residents of flats in Hayes Town often left bags of rubbish on the street regardless of whether it was a being/rubbish collection day. Ward Councillors were active in reporting such issues to the Council. CCTV and bag searching were carried out to try to identify the owner of the rubbish, but this was not always successful.

Rubbish dumped in rear alleyways in Hayes Town was difficult to have cleared, as the locations were privately owned, but often in multiple ownerships. The Partnership and the Forum had organised community litter picks to deal with accumulated rubbish in the rear alleyway between Botwell Lane and East Avenue. Attendees had included shopkeepers and residents of the flats over the shops, but not in large numbers. On each occasion, support from officers in Residents Services was useful when arranging for the rubbish to be removed for disposal (at no charge.)

It was noted that, in general, engagement with shopkeepers was hit and miss. Only a small proportion of shopkeepers used email, social media or the Council website, and so personal engagement and one-to-one meetings were required. However, as the average age of business owners was reducing, the use of email was becoming more common.

The Partnership and Forum had undertaken a number of initiatives to address these matters, including:

- Production of a poster highlighting that the dumping of waste was unacceptable, and the fine applicable if caught. The poster had been designed to be visually striking and clearly understood through the use of images rather than words. The poster had been seen to have made a large impact, especially for those people whose first language was not English.
- Lobbying of the Council to produce its own posters in a similar style, and to help in getting them displayed in shop windows. It was suggested that weatherproof posters could be fixed to litter bins.
- Production of a joint letter from the Council and the Business Forum to all shops and flats over shops, set out in clear language alongside a copy of the poster. As copies were currently in the process of being sent out, it was too early to comment on their impact.
- Showing support for the Council's duty of care inspections to ensure proper contracts were in place for rubbish disposal and the prosecution of those not complying.
- Giving publicity of successful prosecutions in the weekly Hayes Town News email bulletins produced by the Partnership, which went out to more than 500 local groups.

Engagement with Botwell House, Dr Triplets and Minet Junior School had been ongoing since 2012, and activities and achievements included:

- Great commitment and enthusiasm from the children
- Presentations made in the Council Chamber
- 'Cleaner & Greener Hayes' poster competition held
- Community litter picks organised
- Reporting of problem areas and remedies including more bins
- Performance of a Keep Hayes Clean song on Hayes FM
- Anti-litter demo in Hayes Town with great placards
- Production of a leaflet for delivery house to house

It was the opinion of Mr Brough and Mr Puar that draconian fines should be avoided in the first instance of an offence, as it was felt that engagement and education was better for fostering positive engagement and change within the community.

It was noted that there was no provision for the collection of recycled materials or garden waste in Hayes Town but it was not known whether this was a factor that led to more dumping.

The Hayes Town Partnership was a member of the Hillingdon Canals Partnership, the Friends of Lake Farm Country Park and the Friends of Minet Country Park and had participated in community litter picks organised by those groups. The canal towpath in Hayes Town was a particular hot spot for litter, largely caused by drinkers. Litter picks had been organised, and had been successful in engaging volunteers from the community, including Hayes Muslim Centre and the Hillingdon Gurkha Nepalese Community. The Canal and River Trust (CRT) had a Volunteer Team Leader for London West who remained active in recruiting and deploying volunteers.

CRT also had an adoption scheme under which a group of volunteers committed to carrying out regular litter-picking for a defined stretch of towpath. CRT provided gloves and litter-pickers, as well as advice on working safely. A small scheme had been established in Hayes Town by residents at High Point Village.

The Friends of Lake Farm Country Park organised periodic litter picks by a small group

of dedicated volunteers supported by the Conservation and Countryside Officer in Green Spaces. The most recent event included volunteers for the first time from the Quba Muslim Centre in Golden Crescent, Hayes.

The Hayes Town Partnership had been working with the Hillingdon Canals Partnership and the Canal and River Trust to develop Community Payback schemes with the London Community Rehabilitation Company, who were engaged by the Probation Service. Priority areas were the canal towpaths through Hayes and Yiewsley Town Centres. In Hayes, the Partnership had secured free use of the YMCA youth centre on Sundays and had agreement from the Council to provide a trade refuse bin free of charge. Progress on the Yiewsley scheme depended on the provision of a portable building and approval by Tesco for location in its car park.

A joint team of academics at Brunel and Sussex Universities had always contacted the Partnership to highlight a research project they had undertaken in a number of London Boroughs including Hillingdon. This entailed working with and interviewing street cleaners, who confirmed that often they were treated negatively by the public. Researchers were currently doing more work in Southwark on how to change public attitudes, and had confirmed that they would be willing to share their findings with the Committee and work with the Council to explore how they could help achieve public attitude change in Hillingdon.

Hillingdon's new Local Plan Part II was discussed, within which it specified that certain areas of Hillingdon would be re-designated as urban areas, which would result in a greater proportion of new high-density housing projects. However, it was Mr Brough's opinion that in general, new housing developments had better waste management plans than many older developments, so this was not a concern.

The Committee next heard testimony from Claire King and Kiran Soor, residents of the Barnhill Ward. The residents agreed with Mr Brough and Mr Puar that dumping of rubbish bags and larger items continued to be an issue. Bins were often full to overflowing, which contributed to the stacking of waste around the bin. It was unknown if there was an issue related to the size of the bins, or the regularity of their emptying.

Dumping of rubbish and builders waste was reported regularly, which the Council then cleared in a timely fashion. However, in many ways this incentivised people to dump more. The Fix My Street app was used to report issues when they occurred, which worked well.

It was felt that a key issue was the high turnover of tenants in rented accommodation. With the requirement that the flat be cleared before new tenants moved in, landlords and tenants were choosing to dump their rubbish onto the street instead of disposing of it properly. People eating fast food on the street were also a significant cause of litter. Many people were simply unaware that a free waste disposal service was available.

Regarding ways to address these issues, it was felt that efforts should be made to limit the creation of litter before it was dumped, i.e. reducing usage of single-use plastic, non-biodegradable containers, and the like. It was noted that bins were not present on buses, which led to littering on the bus, though it was accepted that their absence may be related to security concerns.

The build-up of street refuse had also been seen to attract wildlife such as rats and urban foxes. New lidded bins had not been sufficient to prevent the animals from gaining access, as they simply chewed through the containers.

The education and engagement of young people was identified as key to addressing the issues, as it was felt that the young people could act as advocates to older generations.

Fines of up to £400 were felt to be too low for persistent of serious offenders.

Finally, the Committee heard evidence from members of the Oak Farm Residents Association, Colleen Sullivan and Jane Turnbull.

The Association comprised about 25 members, and focussed on an area between Freezeland Way and Clifton Gardens. The Association worked closely with partners such as Ward Councillors and the Police, and held many meetings and community events.

The issues noted by the Association related to littering in public parks and spaces, as well as fly tipping. Fly tipping in particular was predominantly by builders who took advantage of the gated back alleys and access roads to dump their waste. Due to the gates, the Council were unable to address the dumping due to lack of access.

The Association was attempting to raise awareness through leaflets and flyers, as well as social media such as Facebook. Litter picking activities were also being held.

As a result of the witness session, a number of actions were identified for consideration as potential recommendations to Cabinet:

- Signage could be bigger, clearer, and more prominently displayed.
- The size of bins could be increased.
- The Council could organise a planned program of contacting shopkeepers to set out their responsibilities. This could include the scheduling of workshops, with officer attendance, to educate and explain to shopkeepers why it was in their interest to properly dispose of waste.
- The creation of a 'do's and don'ts' document for new shopkeepers, given to shopkeepers when arranging business rates and the like.
- Engage with the chairman of the Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce to seek advice on how to encourage the creation of town partnerships and forums in other areas of Hillingdon, as well as how best to offer ongoing support and advice to those forums.
- Creation of waste champions, similar to street champions.
- Offering incentives to business owners or residents for good practice or behaviour.
- Offering offenders the option of an awareness/training course, or clean-up exercises, instead of fines.
- Mandate 'duty of care' activities for fast food proprietors and the like, to ensure that they cleared up the rubbish from their patrons at the start of each working day.
- Greater engagement with schools and teachers to educate and encourage children and young people to become active in addressing waste issues. Assign an officer to liaise with schools.
- Make free skips more widely available, or provide a 'waste amnesty' where people are encouraged to deliver large amounts of waste to designated sites for disposal, free of charge.
- More options for landlords to freely dispose of waste when changing tenants.
- Encourage landlords to accept their responsibility to provide a means for tenants to store domestic refuse between weekly collections.

- Greater publicity for the Council's free waste disposal service.
- Further use of volunteers as a positive way of getting the community to take pride in their local area.
- Formally recognise when individuals or groups make a positive difference.
- Further involvement of volunteers from minority ethnic communities, to help increase their feeling of belonging and aid community cohesion. Publicise good news stories.
- Make greater use of CCTV when mattresses and other large household items are dumped, and publicise the prosecution of offenders.
- Review the collection of recycled materials for Hayes Town and also garden waste for places like Brotherhood Court in Coldharbour Lane.
- Review the arguments in support of the provision of a rubbish dump in the south of the Borough.
- A collection service for garden waste/recycling in Hayes.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the information presented by the witnesses be noted; and**
- 2. That the suggested actions be considered as potential recommendations to Cabinet upon the conclusion of the review.**

37. ANNUAL COMPLAINT & SERVICE MONITORING REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2018 TO 31 MARCH 2019 - INCLUDING EDUCATION COMPLAINTS (Agenda Item 6)

Ian Anderson, Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries, introduced a report detailing corporate complaints for 2018-19.

The Committee was advised that the number of complaints had not changed dramatically since the previous year, and remained low when set into context of overall Council services. When comparing to neighbouring authorities, Hillingdon was receiving fewer complaints. Member Enquires remained high in number, with the topic of waste accounting for over half of all Enquiries.

The number of compliments recorded had increased, due to better staff reporting and data capture. It was anticipated that compliments would continue to rise across the next year as further data was captured.

Responding to Education and Children's Services complaints required further improvement the 10 working day target was being missed in a number of complaints. However, complaints Education complaints relating to schools missed the target mainly because it required an input from schools, in the event that a school was closed (due to holidays, etc.), obtaining that data was difficult, which in turn delayed the response. Meetings were being held with Heads of Service to identify further ways to improve.

Overall, the number of complaints upheld by the ombudsman was low. The report referenced a Public Report issued by the Ombudsman which was upheld and related to a Housing Benefit claimant was elaborated on. The Council had subsequently accepted all of the ombudsman's recommendations, and had learned several lessons relating to the handling of the complaint, the communication with the complainant, and points of contact.

Members requested that a breakdown of the subject of Member Enquiries be set out in future reports. In addition, it was requested that a separate email address be created to allow Members to submit emails on subjects that did not require an answer, thereby

reducing the demands on officer time.

Mr Anderson advised that a breakdown could be hard to provide, due to the way in which Enquiries were recorded, though this could be looked into for next year's report. Similarly, the suggestion for a new email address for Elected Members to use to report items for example to be collected, rubbish to be cleared, etc would be looked into and this would mean that the existing e-mail address would be for enquiries.

Members asked how the issue of bias was dealt with. For example, how could a complaint service, run by the Council, investigate complaints against Council-led decisions (such as Planning Committee decisions) impartially?

The officer advised that this was a common question. In response, the Committee was advised that officers would respond to complaints based on the data available. If mistakes were identified, then the Council would acknowledge these and put measures in place to ensure they were not repeated. In addition, the Corporate Complaints process had previously been updated to allow all complaints dealt with at Stage 1 (i.e. the majority) to escalate direct to the Ombudsman, if complainants were not satisfied. Whilst the Council process many planning complaints, in many such cases the complaint procedure is not the correct channel to seek a resolution as planning decisions for example need to be considered through the planning inspectorate, appeal hearings and tribunals.

Members sought clarity on how individual achievement was recognised. Mr Anderson advised that when a compliment is received, the Head of Service or Director would write to the member of staff and thank them for their work. The Council also has an Employee Recognition Scheme where staff can be nominated and receive recognition for what they did. In addition, extracts from compliments are used at the Staff Roadshow. Mr Anderson explained that before a compliment is recorded, he will first check that someone has gone that extra mile rather than being complimented for doing their job.

The Committee asked whether all staff were trained to recognise and deal with complaints received by telephone. Members were advised that not all staff were trained to resolve a complaint, though all should be able to recognise a complaint and escalate accordingly. There were a number of complaint handling events throughout the year that staff could attend and this provides them with information on how to deal with complaints and our processes for dealing with complaints. The vast majority of complaints were dealt with informally, and were more often requests for certain actions or information than official 'complaints'.

Members sought clarity on why the number of complaints dealt with by the Ombudsman for adult social care had increased. The Committee was advised that the number of complaints was skewed somewhat, because of the length of time taken by the Ombudsman to deal with such complaints (approximately 9 months), and because of this many complaints received in the previous year but show in the figures for the following year. A year on year comparison could be provided to Members following the meeting.

It was requested that Mr Anderson provide a list of Member Enquiries per ward, in alphabetical order, so that Members could potentially identify common or ongoing problems. Mr Anderson advised that this would be subject to Manager approval.

The Committee requested further detail on complaint reference 6810892, which the report stated had not been investigated by the ombudsman. The officer advised that

this was a quirk of wording, and the matter had been investigated. To provide further clarity, it was agreed that the officer would provide further detail on the matter outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. That a breakdown of the subject of Member Enquiries be set out in future reports, if possible;**
- 3. That the potential for a separate email address for Members to submit emails on subjects that did not require an answer be looked into;**
- 4. That the potential for individual achievement to be recognised on the Council's website be reviewed;**
- 5. That a year-on-year comparison of complaints received by Adult Social Care be provided to Members following the meeting;**
- 6. That a list of Member Enquiries per ward be provided to Members, if possible; and**
- 7. That further detail on complaint reference 6810892 be provided to the Committee.**

38. QUARTERLY SCHOOL PLACES PLANNING UPDATE *(Agenda Item 7)*

Dan Kennedy, Director, Housing, Environment, Education, Performance, Health & Wellbeing, and Sarah Philips, School Place Planning Project Manager, introduced the latest quarterly update on school places.

Key points of the report were highlighted, with particular reference made to the demand for secondary school places. Pupil numbers in primary schools were high but steady, which in turn would affect demand for secondary places for the next 7 years. Options to address this, (alongside how to deal with the few primary schools who had remaining places), had been submitted to lead Members for consideration, and this information would be brought to the Committee once available.

Any decision on the proposals would be made through the Cabinet process. The issues were complex, and required careful consideration of how resources were allocated. Options to address the issues included school expansions, as well as the creation of the DfE approved new free school. Challenges included making sufficient places available to meet demand with options for parents to exercise their preferences without destabilising schools that were not filled by preferences and so reliant on receiving pupils for whom they were a lower or no preference.

The Committee sought clarity on how officers factored in intake from other boroughs. Members were advised that the forecast modelling factored in migration between neighbouring boroughs, based on previous trends and general averages. However, high numbers of first preferences for the more popular schools required that each school's admissions criteria be applied in all cases, and this could result in deviation from the 'average projection' due to factors varying from year to year such as numbers of siblings.

Some Members expressed concerns regarding the available secondary school places in light of the primary population and DfE guidelines for the retention of spare capacity, future demand for these places over forthcoming years, and how parents would continue to be offered meaningful choice over their children's schools. It was requested that future reports contain more specific information, including the proposed measures to address these concerns, information on pupil movement and trends, which schools

would have bulge classes, and the location of the new schools. It was agreed that Councillor Sweeting would forward detail of the requested information to the clerk, for forwarding to report authors.

Officers highlighted that all school children had been offered a school place for entry in year 7 in September 2019, despite a significant increase in demand. The Council was continuing to meet demand through significant investment and expansion measures, and 5% spare capacity was being factored into all forecasts, in line with DfE guidelines. Discussions were ongoing with schools on how to meet future demand, and schools were eager to be part of any solution.

In response to a question on families being required to travel by public transport, officers advised that the Council provided support to families who were required to travel by way of clear information, including travel plans and public transport schedules.

It was requested that officers provide detail on those schools that required additional accommodation, and the relevant capital spending required for this accommodation.

Members also requested that, following the closing date of 31 October for next year's admissions, a brief update on the Council's position regarding places for September 2020 be brought to the January 2020 Committee meeting, ahead of the more detailed quarterly update to be considered in February.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. That Cllr Sweeting provide the clerk with information requested for inclusion in the next quarterly update report;**
- 3. That officers provide Members with detail on proposals to meet the future need for school places, when available; and**
- 4. That a brief update on the Council's position regarding places for September 2020 be brought to the January Committee meeting.**

39. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Consideration was given to the Cabinet Forward Plan.

It was noted that the adoption of the Local Plan was now scheduled to be considered at the Cabinet meeting in December. It was requested that the reason for this rescheduling be looked into, before being fed back to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. That further detail on the rescheduling of the adoption of the Local Plan be provided.**

40. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 9*)

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan.

Members were advised that as part of the review into Littering and Fly Tipping, suitable site visits and activities were being reviewed. At the previous meeting, reference had been made to litter picking activities in South Ruislip. These activities were held on the 3rd Saturday of each month, and it was suggested that Members could take part at a

future litter pick. In addition, it was suggested that Members may wish to shadow the street enforcement team as they undertook their role.

It was agreed that the clerk, following consultation with the Chairman, forward a suitable date for these activities.

Members also requested detail on when Cabinet would be considering the provision of Youth Services item, and whether this would impact on the scheduled information report on the topic that was due to be brought to the Committee meeting in January 2020.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. That suitable dates for litter picking activities and site visits be forwarded to the Committee; and**
- 3. That the clerk liaise with officers regarding the item on youth services before feeding back to the Committee.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.32 pm.

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