

Minutes

SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

19 January 2021

Meeting held at VIRTUAL - Live on the Council's
YouTube channel: Hillingdon London



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Philip Corthorne (Chairman) Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman) Judith Cooper Alan Deville Tony Eginton (Opposition Lead) Janet Gardner Becky Haggar Paula Rodrigues Steve Tuckwell</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Kate Kelly-Talbot, Assistant Director - Adult Social Work Gemma McNamara, Finance Manager - Transformation, Finance and Chief Executive's Office Melissa Murphy, Housing Register, Allocations and Lettings Manager Poppy Reddy, Head of Service - Court and Children with Disabilities Rod Smith, Service Manager - Tenancy Services Carole Lewis, SEND Advisory Service Manager Dominika Michalik, SEND Service Manager Tony Zaman, Corporate Director of Social Care Dan Kennedy, Director, Housing, Environment, Education, Performance, Health & Wellbeing</p>
35.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>No apologies had been received.</p>
36.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
37.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 26 November 2020 be approved as an accurate record.</p>

38. **TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE** (*Agenda Item 4*)

It was confirmed that all items were in Part I and would be considered in public.

39. **COMMITTEE REVIEW: MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY: FINDINGS AND SURVEY RESULTS** (*Agenda Item 5*)

The Chairman introduced the item and summarised the progress made thus far with the review. It was noted that the scheduling of the review had been heavily impacted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, leading to an extended review schedule; there had also been changes to the Committee's membership which presented further challenges. The Chairman drew attention to the witness sessions which had taken place over the course of the review and the minutes from previous meetings; further to this, it was noted that the following discussion of ideas was to form the basis for the Committee's recommendations arising from the review. Key officers were present to advise Members if required.

An initial idea for one of the primary recommendations arising from the review was the need for the Council's public facing service environments to adopt a practical corporate standard, or checklist, to ensure a consistent approach in making those areas more autism friendly. Having autism friendly signage in publicly accessible areas was highlighted as an important measure to take. Members were in agreement that this would give uniformity to the places in which residents with autism access day to day Council services.

The Committee expressed particular interest in the rollout of autism training for front line staff and were minded to explore the possibility of making it a mandatory part of the training offer for staff who regularly interact with residents. Members welcomed the training that had already taken place for front line staff but noted that this would ideally be expanded to more staff, Councillors were inclined to have officers examine the prospect of different forms of training, when circumstances allowed.

There was interest in the support offered to parents and carers of children who may fall short of having an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). It was noted that the SEND Advisory Service offers training and workshops to parents and carers through their 'Early Bird' and 'Signet' programmes; the Signet programme was not only accessible to families with children with a diagnosis of autism but also children who presented social communication needs without a formal autism diagnosis. The delivery of these programmes was scheduled to increase over the coming months. It was noted that the scope of the review's recommendations were targeted primarily towards the way in which residents with autism access the Council's services and not necessarily the statutory care services and packages offered to residents with autism.

Members were minded to explore the feasibility of providing access to, and information about, the Council's services at one centrally located point to improve accessibility for residents with autism. This could minimise the need for residents with autism to repeatedly access different locations, be it physically or online, to contact the Council's services.

The Committee sought information on the feasibility and the merits of seeking Autism Accreditation for the Council as a whole, or particular Council services, through the National Autistic Society. Further to this, the idea was raised of possibly having an

autism ambassador within each department, this was linked to the discussion around mandatory training for front line staff.

Members highlighted the need for robust procedures in relation to any formal environments whereby a resident with autism may become overwhelmed and need to leave the setting urgently; it was noted that, by leaving the setting spontaneously, it should not be taken as an unwillingness to access the particular Council service or a withdrawal from the process in question. There should be processes in place to continue formalities in an appropriate manner.

It was noted that the results of the autism questionnaire posed an opportunity for the Committee to receive feedback from the managers of the Council's various public facing service environments on the measures that had already been taken, and potential measures that could be adopted, to facilitate an autism friendly environment. Members highlighted the prospect of using the autism questionnaire as a tool to track and monitor the progress of the review's recommendations going forward, as a before and after snapshot.

The Committee highlighted the importance of welcoming the culture of continuing improvement such as the appointment of an Advanced Social Work Practitioners with a focus on autism, the development of e-learning training and a clear Council wide policy on reasonable adjustments under the Disabilities Discrimination Act.

The Chairman noted that officers would use the ideas produced by the Committee for the review's recommendations to explore the feasibility and compatibility of the suggestions with Council services and a draft report would be scheduled to come before the Committee in March 2021.

RESOLVED That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee:

- 1) **Noted and commented on the results of the autism questionnaire directed at managers of the Council's public facing service environments; and**
- 2) **Noted the Committee's review into making the Council more autism friendly and explored findings and ideas for recommendations arising from the review.**

40. **2021/2022 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF THE SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING & PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**
(Agenda Item 6)

Gemma McNamara, Finance Manager - Transformation, presented the report which laid out the draft revenue budget and capital programme for the services within the remit of the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee for the financial year 2021/22.

Members queried the development of risk contingency in paragraphs 31 – 35 of the report which was based on the 2020/21 data. The Committee were informed that the figures were based on the current financial year with growth added on to that. Members noted that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was still being calculated and due to the volatility and uncertainty of the current situation, the impact would need to be factored into longer-term financial planning.

Members highlighted paragraph 45 of the report, specifically the £200k uplift in the

£250k budget established in February 2016 for autism respite accommodation on the 1 & 2 Merrimans site and queried the extended period of time that the project had taken so far. It was highlighted that a range of technical issues with the suitability of the build and ensuring the right design for the intended clients had been the main factors in the length of time associated with the project.

The Committee emphasised the Better Care Fund and the utilisation of the funding to better support health and social care integration as a positive move for residents, although it was noted that there could be a challenge in terms of seeking agreement between health partners, especially in what has been a difficult year for all services. Officers stated that the work done in light of moving towards an integrated care pathway, known as Hillingdon Health and Care Partners, would start to materialise in the coming year; it was also noted that within this change there would be a shift in funding towards the preventative care provision.

The Committee congratulated officers on the well-balanced budget proposals, especially given the constantly shifting environment. The following comments were proposed by the Chairman to be submitted to Cabinet on behalf of the Committee:

“The Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy and Overview Committee commends officers on the budget proposals, maintaining services for residents, with appropriate contingency provision for service pressures. Proposals for priority growth within Domestic Abuse are welcomed, as are proposals within the capital programme for autism respite accommodation and the investment in general needs housing within the HRA. The committee also welcomes the approach to innovation, delivering service transformation.”

The Committee gave general agreement to the proposed comments and were encouraged by reference to the proposed priority growth within Domestic Abuse services. A question in relation to budget setting and the number residents in receipt of Adult Social Care services was raised, with reference to the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Officers noted that the headcount of residents in receipt of services was usually fairly stable and it was the cost of care delivery which tended to increase; this year however there had been more of a fluctuation in headcount due to the impact of the pandemic, specifically with regard to residential and nursing care. Officers advised that the base budgets and contingency was set using the same approach as previous years and any impact that Covid-19 may have on the base budgets for 2021/22 was to be managed using the Council’s Covid-19 contingency budget.

Although general approval was given for the proposed comments, Members were minded to receive further clarification officers before giving formal agreement to the comments. The Chairman agreed to consult with the Opposition lead on the final approved comments.

RESOLVED: That the Committee gave general agreement to the proposed comments and that, upon receiving clarification from the Corporate Director of Social Care, the Chairman agree the final comments to be submitted to Cabinet in consultation with the Opposition lead.

Rod Smith, Service Manager – Tenancy Management and Melissa Murphy, Housing Register and Allocations Manager, were present for this item. The report was presented summarising the key processes and interfaces within the management of Voids and some key points were highlighted. It was noted that, in 2020, over half of empty homes required major works and improvements to be brought up to a habitable standard, this was a significant driver of costs.

A number of changes to the void property management process had been delivered since 2019, notably the development of a tracking system to notify the Lettings team of the expected return date and any changes to said date, this aided the Lettings team to forward plan key parts of their process. Further notable changes included a pilot initiative in relation to viewings whilst void repair works were in progress and the retendering of the Voids Repairs Service's void repairs contract which moved towards a one stop shop for works of a varied nature and value, reducing the need to employ multiple contactors to complete a single void.

The Committee highlighted the need to make the most of the Council's housing stock and the importance of this work area. Members also noted how the management of void properties was a challenging work area and commended officers on their efforts.

Members were minded to explore the challenges with regards to letting sheltered housing; officers informed the Committee that the vast majority of sheltered housing voids were one bedroom properties which limited the amount of work that needed to be done and as such generally indicated a shorter empty property time. However, there were challenges involved with letting sheltered schemes, some schemes were considered very popular whereas some were less so and would take multiple viewings leading to a longer empty property time.

Regarding the condition of voids properties, the general underlying issue was investment in the general stock with the major impact on the voids turnaround time being the number of properties requiring major works such as rewiring, new kitchens and new bathrooms.

Members queried the number of photographs used when advertising void properties, the Committee had noted that only a small number of photographs, two to three, were used. Officers informed Members that the service generally advertised properties when they were notified that the previous tenant would be leaving, however the tenant would usually still be occupying the property. The limited number of photos used was to not identify the exact whereabouts of the property as there had been instances of people arriving unannounced to attempt viewing the property.

Regarding the level of decorating required to meet the minimum lettable requirements, the Committee were informed that under the conditions of tenancy, the decorative standard was the responsibility of the tenant, although there were exceptions to this. With regard to floor coverings, basic flooring was provided generally for bathrooms and kitchens where properties required it, however, new carpets for circulation areas were not typically provided. Members queried what support may be given to residents in terms of furnishing and decorating; officers highlighted that every person using the service has an initial support assessment and there is the availability of vouchers for second-hand furniture through Trinity.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the content of the report and the ongoing work to make best use of the Council's available housing stock and the mitigate the extent of rent loss.

42.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman highlighted that, under the Council’s new leadership, the Forward Plan was likely to undergo some changes to ensure it contained further detail on items to be heard by Cabinet and that it looked further ahead than the current four months.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee noted items going to Cabinet.</p>
43.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman highlighted that the Public Health Integrated Services report that was to be heard by Cabinet on 21 January 2021 would be of particular interest to the Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considered the Work Programme and noted its contents; and, 2. Added an item to receive an update from officers on the progress of the integration of Public Health Services later in the year.
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.43 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steve Clarke on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.