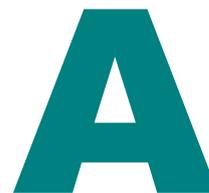




HILLINGDON
LONDON



Virtual Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Philip Corthorne, (Chairman Designate)
Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman)
Judith Cooper
Alan Deville
Tony Eginton (Opposition Lead)
Janet Gardner
Becky Haggar
Paula Rodrigues
Steve Tuckwell

Date: TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY
2021

Time: 7.00 PM

Venue: VIRTUAL - LIVE ON THE
COUNCIL'S YOUTUBE
CHANNEL: HILLINGDON
LONDON

**Meeting
Details:** Virtual Meeting

This agenda is available online at:
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Published: 11 January 2021

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Putting our residents first

Lloyd White
Head of Democratic Services
London Borough of Hillingdon,
Phase II, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW

Terms of Reference

The Following Terms of Reference are common to all Policy Overview Committees (referred to as “The overview role”):

1. To conduct reviews of policy, services or aspects of service which have either been referred by Cabinet, relate to the Cabinet Forward Plan, or have been chosen by the Committee according to the agreed criteria for selecting such reviews;
2. To monitor the performance of the Council services within their remit (including the management of finances and risk);
3. To comment on the proposed annual service and budget plans for the Council services within their remit before final approval by Cabinet and Council;
4. To consider the Forward Plan and comment as appropriate to the decision-maker on Key Decisions which relate to services within their remit (before they are taken by the Cabinet);
5. To review or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken by the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member, a Council Committee or an officer.
6. To make reports and recommendations to the Council, the Leader, the Cabinet, a Policy Overview Committee or any other Council Committee arising from the exercise of the preceding terms of reference.
7. In accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consider ‘Councillor Calls For Action’ (CCfA) submissions.

To perform the overview role outlined above in relation to the following matters:

1. Social care services for children, young persons and children with special needs
2. Oversee the Council’s Corporate Parenting responsibilities
3. Adoption and Fostering
4. Family Services
5. Adult Social Care
6. Older People’s Services
7. Care and support for people with physical disabilities, mental health problems and learning difficulties
8. Asylum Seekers
9. Local Authority Public Health services
10. Encouraging a fit and healthy lifestyle
11. Health Control Unit, Heathrow
12. Encouraging home ownership
13. Social and supported housing provision for local residents
14. Homelessness and housing needs
15. Home energy conservation
16. National Welfare and Benefits changes

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for Absence and to report the presence of any substitute Members
- 2 Declarations of Interest in matters coming before this meeting
- 3 To receive the minutes of the previous meeting 1 - 10
- 4 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
- 5 Committee Review: Making the Council more autism friendly: Findings and Survey results 11 - 42
- 6 2021/2022 Budget Proposals For Services within the Remit of the Social Care, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee 43 - 54
- 7 Voids Management Update 55 - 78
- 8 Forward Plan 79 - 90
- 9 Work Programme 91 - 94

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Minutes

SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

26 November 2020



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

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Ian Edwards (Chairman) Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman) Tony Eginton (Opposition Lead) Janet Gardner Becky Haggart Paula Rodrigues Steve Tuckwell</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Stephanie and Toni Mullally – representing HACS</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Tiffany Boreham, Benefits Team Manager Gavin Fernandez, Head of Service - Adult Social Care Sunita Ghudial, Benefit & Governance Manage Kate Kelly-Talbot, Assistant Director - Adult Social Work Muir Laurie, Deputy Director of Exchequer Services & Business Assurance Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer Rod Smith, Residents Services - Tenancy Services</p>
24.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Judith Cooper and Alan Deville.</p>
25.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
26.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING DATED 21 OCTOBER 2020 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 21 October 2020 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
27.	<p>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 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items were in Part I and would be considered in public. It was</p>

agreed that items 6 and 8 would be considered in tandem as they were on a similar theme; item 7 would therefore be considered prior to item 6.

28. **COMMITTEE REVIEW: MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY: WITNESS SESSION 3** (*Agenda Item 5*)

HACS

Two witnesses were in attendance – Toni and Stephanie Mullally – representing Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support (HACS). Members were informed that HACS had been founded in 1997 by parents in of children in Hillingdon affected by autism. It was confirmed that HACS supported over 300 families at present and had a large professional database consisting of teachers, SENCOs, health visitors and mental health professionals.

Councillors heard that services offered included advice and guidance, family support, educational workshops, an employability project started in 2015 and an adult support group. The age range of those supported by HACS ranged from 2 years 8 months to 59 years. Members were advised that HACS was one of the only autism specific short breaks providers in the Borough providing weekend respite services for those aged 5 – 25 years. It was confirmed that autism was not classified as a learning disability or a mental health disorder. The term ‘high-functioning’ often used when referring to those with autism who did not have a learning disability was particularly unhelpful as it suggested that these individuals had less support needs; this was not necessarily the case therefore HACS avoided using this terminology.

The Committee requested further clarification regarding the effectiveness of the Government’s National Strategy on tackling autism. It was confirmed that there was now a clearer focus in terms of central Government legislation and attempts had been made to improve employment opportunities. However, although awareness was increasing, outcomes did not appear to be changing very much. On a localised level there was a more co-ordinated approach with agencies working together. It was noted that the National Strategy focused on adults. However, in Hillingdon, a decision had been taken to focus on children and families too. In response to their enquiries, Members were informed that it was difficult to access data in relation to autism therefore the tracking of outcomes locally was challenging. On a service level there had been a vast improvement since 2010 in terms of what was available for families to access; however, there was still a long way to go.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that greater clarity was needed regarding the services provided by the local authority and how to access said services. It was reported that the information was currently not in a central location and was therefore not easy to locate. HACS received calls from GPs on a weekly basis asking how patients could get an autism diagnosis in Hillingdon. For those who were not eligible for specialist or statutory support, it was confirmed that availability of services was often an issue. It appeared that many Council officers lacked understanding of ASD. It was suggested that one option would be to train up a number of autism ambassadors across the Council (one ambassador per department) who could provide expertise in this area. Should the ambassador be unable to assist, a member of HACS could step in and offer support and expertise. The Committee was informed that Council departments did not appear to offer a joined up approach at present – families were often obliged to repeat themselves again and again when approaching different local authority departments which was exhausting and distressing. Members enquired whether a one front door approach would assist in

addressing this issue. HACS felt this would be very welcome; ideally people with autism would be allocated a key worker to help them navigate services. A one front door approach would help to reduce the frustration and distress experienced by those with autism when trying to access support services.

The Committee was informed that very few adult referrals were received by HACS; possibly because their adult services were still being developed and had only been live for approximately one year. There was scope for working much more closely with local authority adult services; particularly to raise awareness of HACS. It was confirmed that the response to a HACS autism awareness day held in 2019 had been excellent with some 500 people in attendance. There had been a number of inspirational speakers—some on the autism spectrum themselves – who had been very well received. An April 2020 version of the event had been planned to engage with adults and shape the development of adult services. Unfortunately, this had been postponed due to the pandemic but would take place in 2021.

Members enquired whether transport facilities, libraries, parks etc within Hillingdon were easily accessible to those with autism. It was confirmed that HACS had been working closely with libraries and young people from the HACS employability project had been offered work there to gain work experience. One young person had been offered a permanent position. Members were advised that, having been trained by HACS, library staff were now very autism aware. In terms of other facilities, it was reported that autism-friendly cinemas in the Borough had been successful and outdoor gyms in local parks were also popular – particularly with younger people with autism. The Rural Activities Garden Centre was another great resource and offered a safe, sensory environment. HACS managed the tea rooms there.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that autism friendly letters would be greatly welcomed as people with autism often struggled to understand letters or were unwilling to open them. An easy read format would be extremely helpful.

In terms of physically navigating the Borough, the Committee was advised that this was extremely challenging for people with autism. It was suggested that autistic adults would welcome the opportunity to be consulted on matters which affected them directly. An example was given of a shopping centre which had introduced autism quiet shopping hours once every three months from 10-11 on Sunday. This was impractical as it was too infrequent and coincided with universal worship time.

In response to further questioning from the Committee, it was confirmed that the nationally recognised incidence rate of autism was approximately one in one hundred. Members were informed that more could be done to support children in care in terms of support networks for foster carers etc. Members were informed that HACS had a strong relationship with the paediatricians on the Looked After Children Board and regularly made recommendations to foster parents and adoption panels. At present HACS were working with the kinship team to ascertain what type of assessments should be considered to assist a young person who was struggling to get an autism diagnosis.

Councillors sought further clarification regarding HACS and their work within schools. It was confirmed that HACS carried out training sessions in schools and supported parents of children with autism at annual reviews, in exclusion cases etc. Members were informed that HACS had a strong partnership with head teachers and SENCOs and worked closely with both mainstream and special schools.

The Chairman thanked HACS for their contribution to the review and congratulated them on their excellent work.

Autism Training within the Council

Kate Kelly-Talbot, Assistant Director – Adult Social Work, updated the Committee on autism training within the Council. Members were informed that, within the Council, two levels of training were available to staff – a General Autism Awareness module and a 2-day specialist training course offered to those carrying out assessments; the latter had been undertaken by approximately 120 Adult Social Care staff members to date. It was confirmed that all staff in the Learning Disabilities and Autism Service had completed the 2-day training course. The Committee heard that a number of frontline staff could benefit from the autism awareness training; e-learning Autism Awareness training had been developed and had been launched in Feb 2020. This training was available to all staff, but further work was planned to promote uptake. A more targeted approach may be required, but this work has been slightly delayed due to the pandemic.

New legislation was being brought in which would be closely monitored to ensure the Council's autism offer was updated and refreshed as necessary.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the e-learning training was ready to be rolled out. There was a need to consider which departments to target first and whether to include it as part of officer induction. Members were keen for this e-learning to be rolled out as quickly as possible to raise awareness among staff and assist in addressing the issues raised by HACS.

Democratic Services informed Committee Members that, as agreed, an autism survey had been circulated to 25 service managers across Council frontline departments. A report would be compiled to appraise the Committee of the results of the survey in due course.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

- 1) Gave consideration to the information provided in the verbal update; and**
- 2) Sought the views of the HACS witnesses and asked any necessary questions in support of the Committee's Review.**

29. UPDATE ON ONLINE HOUSING BENEFIT APPLICATIONS *(Agenda Item 6)*

Sunita Ghudial, Head of Benefits – Exchequer Services presented the report which had been prepared in February 2020 prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. An addendum had been included in the pack which captured the impact of the pandemic from 1 March 2020 onwards.

Members were informed that, prior to the pandemic, the benefits online facilities had been introduced for new claims on 12 June 2017 and fully rolled out on 21 May 2018. The service enabled customers to apply and report changes for Benefits and Council Tax Reduction online 24/7 at their convenience – this was a faster and more efficient system. It had also been brought in as part of the national shift towards claiming benefits online, which included the roll out of Universal Credit (UC). The Committee heard that UC had been fully rolled out in Hillingdon on 24 October 2018 – it was a single monthly payment which had to be applied for online. It was confirmed that the

majority of new claims for help with housing costs were now made through UC. Help with paying Council Tax was not included in the UC claim and was processed by the Local Authority's Benefits team.

The Committee was informed that the Benefits service continued to provide support for people who did not have access to online facilities or needed assistance to make a claim. There were 11 computers available in the Benefits reception area in the Civic Centre, 4 at the One Stop Shop in Hayes and others in libraries across the Borough. Benefits staff were available within the Civic Centre and at the One Stop Shop to assist. It was confirmed that, between 1 April 2019 and 30 September 2019, an average of 130 people per week had visited the Civic Centre to make an application, report a change or submit supporting documentation.

It was noted that the data in the addendum covered the period from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020. During the pandemic, staff had been advised to work from home and the Benefits reception had closed temporarily. Customers had been advised to go online or call the contact centre. Those who were unable to complete an online form had been advised to request a paper application. Members heard that demand was being managed successfully and on only one occasion had a face-to-face meeting been necessary.

Councillors were informed that, between 1 March 2020 and 31 August 2020, the Benefits Service had received 10,274 emails and 22,297 telephone calls. Of the new claims received during this period, over 82% had been submitted online successfully. 453 paper applications had been received which constituted 13% of the total. During this period the Benefits Service had seen an increase in applications of 63% compared to the period from 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019. It was confirmed that, despite the increase in the number of applications, the Benefits service had seen an improvement in processing times and home working had been a major contributing factor in this.

Members thanked officers for the report and noted the significant impact of Covid-19 on online benefits services. Members were very impressed with the reported outcomes and thanked staff for their professionalism and innovation in rising to the challenge presented by the pandemic. It was suggested that some of the learning in terms of efficiencies would be beneficial in the future.

Members requested further clarification as to how the considerable improvements in processing times had been achieved. Tiffany Boreham, Benefits Team Manager, advised the Committee that, although it had been an extremely challenging time, the majority of staff had been successfully working from home. Members heard that the team had focussed on priority work, extra training had been provided, some staff members had been promoted as part of a re-structure and it had been possible to automate some processes to save time and work more efficiently. It was reported that there had been a huge increase in workload but fortunately no team members had been affected by Covid or taken ill. All staff were challenged, kept informed of progress and praised for the work they were doing. Members thanked Tiffany and her team for their hard work and impressive achievements to date.

In addition to the above, the Committee heard that teams across the Council had risen to the challenge presented by the pandemic and had worked collaboratively to ensure a joined-up response. At the onset of the pandemic, staff from the Counter Fraud team had been asked to work at office-based desktops and had handed over their laptops to benefits staff to enable them to work from home. It was confirmed that many members

of the benefits team had been working extra unpaid hours to get the job done and support vulnerable people. This had contributed to the massive increase in performance levels. Members welcomed this collaborative approach across the Council and expressed gratitude to all those involved.

Members reiterated their gratitude to all those involved in this endeavour and commended them for their valiant efforts in working proactively to get the job done and support residents during such a difficult time.

RESOLVED: That the Social Care, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee noted the contents of the report and sought clarification from officers as required.

30. **CARERS STRATEGY - UPDATE ON WORK TO SUPPORT CARERS IN THE BOROUGH** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Gavin Fernandez, Head of Service – Adult Social Care presented the report. Members were informed that, in May 2020, Cabinet had been updated on the delivery of the Carers Strategy in 2019/20 and had agreed a proposed approach to support the Strategy going forward. The approach included priorities for 2020/2021. The report shared with the Committee provided Members with an update on the delivery of those priorities. Key points highlighted included:

- A guide for people who suddenly became carers was on track – an initial draft had been developed and was due for completion by Q4;
- A response to carers' feedback from the CCG's October 2019 AGM had been implemented and a Farsi speaking interpreter in the south of the Borough had been recruited;
- Information for children with learning disabilities and/or autism was being prepared including Easy to Read guidance on accessing the health service appropriately; and
- The Hillingdon Parents' Forum was working with officers to improve the information available on the Council's for parents of children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) conditions.

In terms of achievements from April – September 2020, Members were informed that some strong partnership working had been taking place during the pandemic. In the first 3 months of the pandemic, the Hillingdon Carer's Partnership had supported:

- 134 families to receive deliveries of meals;
- the delivery of 378 food parcels; and
- the collection of 296 prescriptions.

In Q2 £36.4k Covid grants had been secured to provide the following:

- Hardship grants to 40 families with Young Carers;
- Hardship grants to 23 Adult Carers; and
- 22 young adult carers with laptops to support their home study.

Other support had included providing regular care calls to over 1,034 carers and the completion of 324 Emergency Replacement Care Plans with Carers to ensure that alternative care arrangements were in place if the Carer was incapacitated for any

reason.

The Committee heard that the period from April to August 2020 had seen 525 Carers' Assessments completed which would suggest an outturn for 2020/21 of 1,260 assessments against a target of 986. There had also been positive increases to the Carers' Register – as at 30/9/20 there were 7,982 Adult Carers registered on the Hillingdon Carers' Partnership Carers' Register, which was an increase of 264 on the position in April and represented 30.7% of Adult Carers against a target of 28%. The Council's Carers' Champion, Councillor Haggart, had identified Carers with Multiple Caring Responsibilities as a focus area - the implications of these additional responsibilities on the wellbeing of Carers were being taken into consideration as part of the annual review process. Members were informed that all 43 of the GP practices that were members of the GP Confederation had now identified a Carers Lead to raise awareness among practice staff. Moreover, the Hillingdon Carers' Partnership had helped to improve the income of 140 Carers by securing an additional £607,397 in Carer-related benefits. 1,213 breaks had been provided via the Carers' Partnership during the review period – many in a virtual format due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Members congratulated officers on the report and were pleased to note the vast improvement in partnership working. In terms of challenges, Members sought further clarification regarding the difficulties faced during the pandemic and projections for the future. It was confirmed that the focus had been on linking all the partners together so as to not lose sight of Carers. A large amount of learning had taken place and the department was now better prepared to face the future.

In response to further queries from the Committee, it was confirmed that sources of information were available to assist Carers in securing their allowances. A sum of money had been secured by Hillingdon Carers through the DWP – the exact figure would be confirmed by Democratic Services at a later stage. Members requested further clarification regarding the likely challenges in supporting Carers in 2021/22. It was confirmed that many people had become Carers during lockdown and a whole system approach was required to ensure they were not lost in the system or left behind in the future.

Members enquired how businesses had been able to support Carers. It was agreed that officers would explore this further and clarify at a later stage. It was noted that, during the pandemic, respite services had been provided virtually. Feedback had generally been positive to date. Further details would be provided to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Committee noted progress against the Carers Strategy delivery plan activity for 2020/21;**
- 2) the Committee confirmed that reporting on the delivery of the Strategy should be annual and precede the annual progress report to Cabinet;**
- 3) Democratic Services contact officers to establish the exact sum of money secured by Hillingdon Carers through the DWP;**
- 4) Officers clarify how businesses were supporting Carers and;**
- 5) Further information be provided to the Committee in relation to the virtual respite services provided during the pandemic and feedback received in relation to them.**

8)

This report was presented in tandem with the Online Housing Benefit Applications update (agenda item 6). Rod Smith, Service Manager – Tenancy Services, presented this update on Universal Credit further to the 2019 extensive review. It was noted that the Committee had been mindful of the challenges facing vulnerable residents and had asked the Council's Universal Credit Project Group to explore several areas for possible improvement including –

- Strengthening collaborative work between key partners;
- Exploring opportunities for residents who lacked access to ICT or the skills to apply for and manage a claim;
- Developing clear processes and procedures for signposting residents;
- An increase in awareness of debt management;
- Appropriate training to staff across the Council.

A summary regarding the impact of Covid-19 and feedback from partners had been included in the report.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that, although the focus had been on Universal Credit, the needs of vulnerable people and those with debts pre-Covid had also been taken into consideration. The approach had been to tailor services to individuals which included assisting people with financial issues and teaching them how to manage their housing costs, utility bills etc at a very challenging time when many people had found themselves without work. The focus had been on working collaboratively with partners to support those in need of help.

Members were glad to see that Universal Credit had been successfully rolled out and noted that staff at the One Stop Shop in Hayes had been extremely helpful in supporting residents seeking assistance pre-Covid. Members were delighted to note how much had continued to be achieved throughout the pandemic to support vulnerable residents.

The Committee noted that the trial managed migration in Harrogate had been suspended. It had also been reported in the press that, in the first 6 months of that managed migration in Harrogate, less than 20 cases had been successfully migrated to Universal Credit out of a total of 10,000. In light of this, Members enquired how Hillingdon was faring. It was confirmed that stress testing during the pandemic had strengthened the service; different ways of working had been introduced and changes made to meet demand. It was confirmed that existing claims in Hillingdon had been due to migrate over to Universal Credit in November 2020 but this had been delayed temporarily due to the pandemic.

In response to Members' requests for clarification it was confirmed that, although it was impossible to guarantee that no one had been missed, those who did not come forward were often evidenced by arrears of rent accruing. This would provide an indicator that there was a need to engage and support these people. It was reported that all Universal Credit claims had to be verified on behalf of the DWP and 100% of claims had been turned around within the required timeframe of 5 days. Staff had worked from home 7 days a week to meet these demands and had proactively contacted claimants to offer support.

Members extended their gratitude to all those involved in this endeavour and commended them for their valiant efforts in working proactively to get the job done and

	<p>support residents during such a difficult time.</p> <p>RESOLVED That the Committee:</p> <p>Noted the continuing efforts of the Council and its partners to support residents in accessing and managing their Universal Credit claims and in particular the efforts of the Council and its partners to support vulnerable households in Hillingdon during the unprecedented financial challenges facing households as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>
32.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Social Care, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee noted items going to Cabinet.</p>
33.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Social Care, Housing & Public Health Committee considered the Work Programme and noted its contents.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.37 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny on 01895 250185. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

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'MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY' REVIEW INCLUDING RESULTS OF MANAGERS' AUTISM QUESTIONNAIRE

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Steve Clarke, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A1/A2 – 'Making the Council more Autism Friendly' Questionnaire Results Appendix B – Review Scoping Report 'Making the Council more Autism Friendly' Appendix C – Autism Review: Minutes from previous meetings
Wards	All

HEADLINES

This is an opportunity for the Committee to receive feedback from the managers of the Council's various public facing service areas on the steps taken to facilitate an autism-friendly environment.

In addition, for the Committee's information and to aid in the formulation of future recommendations arising from the review, attached as appendices are the review's original scoping report (Appendix B) and a timeline with the relevant minutes from the Committee's meetings (Appendix C). Members are asked to explore any early findings or ideas for possible future recommendations to form the basis of the Committee's report into making the Council more autism friendly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Autism Questionnaire

The Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee are undertaking a review into how the Council can facilitate more autism friendly public facing services. The review, when completed, will come forward with recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

Part of the Committee's review is to establish the level to which the Council's public facing service environments, e.g. receptions, facilities, venues etc., are made accessible for residents with autism. A questionnaire was distributed to the managers responsible for the Council's

Classification: Public

Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee – 19 January 2021

service areas with a public facing environment (Appendix A1). Managers were asked to respond in a manner that reflected the delivery of their service area before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic i.e. before March 2020, unless they deemed the response specifically relevant. 13 responses were received (see appendix A2) and have been summarised below:

Summary of responses

Respondents managed a variety of the Council's public facing service environments and engaged with residents on a regular basis.

Pre coronavirus pandemic, face to face interaction with residents took place in a variety of settings; including publicly accessible areas such as reception areas and leisure centres as well as private settings such as schools, young people's centres and interview rooms. Telephone and email contact with residents were also a primary means of communication. It was noted that there was no uniform guidance or checklist from the Council ensuring that public facing environments were autism-friendly; however, there were instances of public spaces being reviewed by a Speech and Language Therapist.

Respondents were asked about the considerations taken to ensure their public facing service environments were accessible for residents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), specifically in relation to potential levels of sensory stimulation i.e. noise levels, harsh lighting, strong smells and colour schemes. Although responses varied, it was noted that where there was an element of control over the aesthetics of the space, surroundings were tailored to facilitate muted colours and natural light where possible; this was found to foster a calming environment. There were several environments where responsibility for aesthetics lay with other departments, namely Facilities Management.

There was promising engagement with regard to considering the extent to which public information boards, notices, signage etc. were supported by the use of easily understood symbols, pictures, photos or objects. There were examples of managers and specialists reviewing correspondence templates, literature and signage with a wide range of service user needs in mind, including autism; however, this was an area where some managers requested further support and advice. Furthermore, there were few instances where a formal procedure was in place should a person with autism need to leave an environment unexpectedly.

There was a willingness to engage staff with the Council's latest Autism Awareness Training, some service areas had already taken the training and even expressed an interest in refresher training in future. Some respondents noted that simply by taking the survey, their attention had been drawn to areas where they could improve an autistic person's experience with their service. It was also noted that where reception areas were open to all residents, consideration should be given to ensure the safety of officers and offer a professional and welcoming area for visitors.

Multiple respondents expressed a readiness to receive ideas and recommendations for improving public facing service areas in an effort to become more autism friendly, particularly as many avenues of physical interaction were closed off currently due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Timeline of the review and minutes

For the Committee's information and to aid in the formulation of recommendations arising from the review, attached as appendices are the review's original scoping report (Appendix B) and the relevant minutes from the Committee's meetings (Appendix C).

Implications on related Council policies

The role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

None at this stage, pending any findings approved by Cabinet.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

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Making the Council more Autism friendly - questionnaire

Councillors on the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee are undertaking a review into how we can make the Council more autism friendly. The review, when completed, will come forward with recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

Part of the Committee's review is to establish what we currently do (or don't do) in the Council's public facing service environments, e.g. receptions, facilities, venues etc... to support and make them more accessible for residents with autism. An important part of being autism-friendly for any organisation is to consider the environment of the public space and a useful short read to find out more about this can be found here: <https://happiful.com/making-entertainment-and-public-spaces-more-autistic-friendly/> (<https://happiful.com/making-entertainment-and-public-spaces-more-autistic-friendly/>).

As a manager responsible for a service area with a public facing environment, the Committee would greatly appreciate your input into its review by completing this short questionnaire.

If you cannot respond to each question, that's fine; however, it is recommended you provide any response based on pre-COVID times, unless you have some recent examples during the pandemic that can also be used. Your feedback will be presented in a combined report to the Committee in the coming month.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me in Democratic Services. Kind regards, Liz Penny - Clerk to the Committee (Tel. #0185 or email epenny@hillington.gov.uk (<mailto:epenny@hillington.gov.uk>))

* Required

1. Please enter your name and the service area you are responsible for.

2. What specific public facing service area(s) do you manage? (e.g. reception areas, contact points, public facilities or venues) *

3. Do you use a checklist or guide in your service area to ensure that public facing environments are autism-friendly? If so, please provide details.

4. If you are responsible for a public facing environment (e.g. reception, library etc...) have you considered whether the colours and patterns are low arousal such as cream and pastel shades rather than vibrant colours and patterns which could be visually offensive?

5. Have you considered the general noise level in a public-facing environment?

6. Have you considered if the environment has fluorescent or harsh lighting?

7. If applicable, do 'offensive' smells drift around the building from room to room and have you considered how you might isolate them?

8. Do you make your environments free of unnecessary obstructions and clutter?

9. Have you considered to what extent public information boards, notices, signage etc... are supported by the use of symbols, pictures, photos or objects?

10. Is there a system in place should a person with autism need to escape/leave an environment?

11. Have staff in your service area taken up the Council's latest Autism Awareness training?

12. Please provide any other comments, examples or ideas you would like to feedback about how you make your service area more accessible to people with autism.

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Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
 Making the Council more Autism friendly - questionnaire - responses

Appendix A2

Q2

	What specific public facing service area(s) do you manage? (e.g. reception areas, contact points, public facilities or venues)
	Reception areas and interview rooms within Link1a (civic centre)
	We deliver music lessons in schools, at Compass Theatre, Manor Farm House and Southlands Arts Centre. We also run a Music School on Saturdays at John Locke Academy. We also operate a instrument store for hires from the Civic Centre.
	Register Office
	Council Tax reception (within the Housing Benefits Reception area) (Closed to the public since March 2020
	Venues
	Young People's Centres
	Leisure Centres - they are managed on behalf of the Council by a company called Better (Corporate name is GLL)
	Queens Walk Resource Centre
	Corporate Reception and Housing Needs Reception
	reception area
	None
	Main Reception and Housing Needs receptions, telephone and email contact through the Contact Centre
	Occasional photo calls, media relations, interviews with residents for publications - however we do not have a public facing space per se
	Do you use a checklist or guide in your service area to ensure that public facing environments are autism-friendly? If so, please provide details.
	Whilst we do not have a check list our Speech and Language Therapist reviewed all public spaces and informed the layout, colours, wall displays etc
	No
	No
	No
	We don't have a specific guide for general visitors but it is something we are keen to develop. Our education team do however engage with schools that visit and following a questionnaire requesting the needs of the school, we will adapt our educational offering to cater for autism and any other additional needs.
	No
	The checklist or guide would be based on DDA guidelines
	No/ however we do try to not over saturate with information
	As these areas are managed by the Contact Centre, we employ Customer Service Advisors who are skilled in managing all types of visitors to the Civic Centre.
	no
	N/A
	No
	No

Page 19

Q4

If you are responsible for a public facing environment (e.g. reception, library etc...) have you considered whether the colours and patterns are low arousal such as cream and pastel shades rather ...

The colours within Link1 a are neutral and we removed any colour posters or wall coverings.

No

No

No....the colour etc has been chosen by Facilities

We have looked at this and have developed activities taking into consideration colours.

yes, as we work with young people with Autism.

The areas tend to be white or pastel colours

We do have a big reception area and it is pastel /cream

We are not responsible for this aspect of the public reception areas.

yes, the site is painted in colours suitable for people with dementia - muted tones and natural light. This works as low arousal for people with autism.

N/A

No the decoration falls under Corporate Management

NA

Have you considered the general noise level in a public-facing environment?

This was considered as the "low humming" from the air conditioning unit was a distraction. This was reviewed with facilities and fans turned down where possible.

No

We try to ensure it is a calming environment as we register deaths

We try to maintain a calm environment but a peak times that is difficult

We have considered this and it is a quiet environment generally

yes

Yes but difficult to control at times

WE sometimes play calming music and show underwater scenes/waterfalls and snow falling .

No, however both these reception areas can get busy and noisy.

yes. no music playing, the number of people accessing the space is managed to reduce crowding

N/A

No but we are mindful of the noise level due to conversations and information under GDPR regulations.

NA

Page 20

Q6

Have you considered if the environment has fluorescent or harsh lighting?

The lighting is extremely harsh but given the set up in was very difficult to change

No

The lighting is soft due to the work we do

Not until now

We try to soften the lighting across the sites whilst still being light enough to be safe.

yes, we are aware, but have not control of what types of lighting is installed

The areas need to be well lit for health and safety reasons

its all very subtle lighting

We are not responsible for this aspect of the public reception areas.

yes. the lighting gives the effect of natural light and curtains are open to allow light through windows

n/A

This is a corporate facility.

NA

Q7
Page 21

If applicable, do 'offensive' smells drift around the building from room to room and have you considered how you might isolate them?

N/A

Not an issue

no offensive smells in the register office

n/a

N/A

No

n/a its very airy

Yes, both these areas can have 'offensive' smells.

NA

N/A

No but is we do become aware then these are reported to facilities.

NA

Q8

Do you make your environments free of unnecessary obstructions and clutter?

Yes.

Where possible

yes

yes

Yes

yes

Yes they are as clutter free as possible

yes

The areas are free of unnecessary obstructions and clutter.

yes,

N/A

Yes

Office - yes

Q8
Page 22

Have you considered to what extent public information boards, notices, signage etc... are supported by the use of symbols, pictures, photos or objects?

The Speech and Language Therapist has helped to review all literature and signs within the building and all correspondence templates with service users.

Not enough

sometimes

yes

We could do more with this and would appreciate support and advice

Yes, we create picture boards or story boards for our young people with Autism when attending the youth club session

Noticeboards are not generally used

our service users information is all easy ready timetables and posters

No.

notice boards are kept free of unnecessary signage and picture formats are offered where possible

N/A

No this would sit under Corporate Communications team.

Yes - we try to be as visual as possible, where appropriate, from an accessibility point of view... both on our website and in printed publications, marketing materials we issue. This is also to assist with overcoming language barriers in some circumstances.

Q10 Is there a system in place should a person with autism need to escape/leave an environment?

The Officer seeing the child and family would be aware of the underlying health needs and would discuss with the child with the child how they could leave/take a break should they wish.

Not formally

no

No

All tours in the museum are stewarded so that if anyone needs to leave they are able to

Staff would provide assistance to the person/carer if required

WE have an open building and a garden and we have areas at the moment we can chill out in such as the sensory room

No - although our officers would be aware if our visitors became unsettled.

not a specific system but there is free access to exit points should the person need to leave

N/A

No not to my knowledge

NA

Have staff in your service area taken up the Council's latest Autism Awareness training?

Some have however all have undertaken training within the service lead by specialist staff

No

no

No not aware there was any

No but we would be keen to

yes via L& D

Not applicable - Better would provide training

Ongoing updates of training at the moment for the staff team

No.

yes

Yes but not sure if it is the most current, a refresher would be useful

No we have not

We have done some training with an external provider about neurodiversity - everyone in the service took part

Q12

Please provide any other comments, examples or ideas you would like to feedback about how you make your service area more accessible to people with autism.

We are due to relocate to the newly designed Mezz in early 2021. Its has been agreed that the Speech and Language Therapist will help to inform the layout, colours etc to make it user friendly.

This is not an area we have considered but this form has given me ideas to put in place.

At the moment the reception area is closed to visitors. We will take on board any recommendations when re-opening

We are currently reaching out to SEND coordinators in schools in order to develop our educational offering. We have activities such as object handling, larger print for worksheets when we're open and virtual sessions that are aimed at schools during periods where they can't visit but would also be useful for schools that aren't local to us. We adapt lessons to be shorter where needed too and are open to ideas on how to improve.

To create one sensory space in each young peoples center where they have a space children and young people can take time to reflect, calm down a quiet space

Making sure that people are not bombarded by information. We communicate changes to Su's in advance maybe with a social story.

As both these reception areas are accessible by all our residents consideration should be given to ensure safety of officers and a balanced professional/friendly area for visitors.

Residents can contact using a variety of methods. So access is available to all services through a route of their choosing and makes the user comfortable . I.e telephone, email etc.

Those with neurodiverse conditions in our team are given chance to suggest reasonable adjustments - for example, allowing team members with autism to wear more comfortable clothing, work flexible hours, receive instructions in a preferred format (e.g. verbally, followed up with a summary email), noise cancelled headphones, extra time to do work, supportive software on computer systems



Social Care, Housing and Public Health
Policy Overview Committee
Review Scoping Report (DRAFT)

**Working Title: 'Making the Council
more autism friendly'**

1. REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Background to the review

The aim of this review is to consider how the Council can improve its customer service to support its local residents with autism. Subject to any findings, the review could make practical, feasible and supportive recommendations to promote inclusion when accessing our universal services.

Autism is being increasingly recognised within our society, with many organisations now being obliged to have proper awareness and support in place. Many changes have been introduced but work is still underway to help transform people's attitudes, understanding and perceptions of autism. This review is concerned with understanding how the Council can make reasonable adjustments to assist autistic people to access our universal services fairly.

The review will hear from expert witnesses explaining the current work in progress and how further initiatives could enhance the way the Council works to become autism friendly. This review could also afford the Committee an opportunity to meet with autistic people and parents of autistic children to hear their perspective. It will

also review the impact of various initiatives in the private and public sector. It will also consider whether the Council has a supportive culture for when autistic residents approach Council services.

At the Committee meeting on 23 October 2019, it was unanimously agreed to review autism. At this meeting, the Committee agreed to progress a review for its next topic, and it is considered this would be a sufficiently targeted review, that could take place over the span of a number of committee meetings.

Subsequently, at the Committee's meeting on 27 November, where it considered the draft scoping report, Members provided further helpful steers on the review, including agreeing the possibility of additional witnesses sessions and a broadening of the scope to include autism friendly access to children's and adults services (all-age), along with all other universal council service provision. This has been reflected in the indicative timetable at the end of the scoping report.

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference are suggested for the review, subject to any changes agreed by the Committee:

1. To understand the different types of autism and how residents' lives can be impacted by autism, including the direct views of local residents with experience of autism;
2. To understand national legislation and guidance about autism and consider how the Council is currently complying with this;
3. To assess the work already taken across front-line services and other all-age council services areas, to be aware of and support autistic people when they access our services;
4. To review autism friendly actions and initiatives across the voluntary, private and public sector to improve customer experience when accessing services;
5. To consider feasible, practical ways the Council could, going forward, make its front-line services more autism friendly;
6. To influence or propose any emerging Council plans, guidance or policies with respect to autism;
7. Subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

2. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Context

Around 700,000 autistic people in the UK are on the autism spectrum, according to the National Autistic Society. Autism is different for everyone. It is not an illness, it's a developmental disability which impacts the way you act, the way you interact with

others and how you perceive things. Autism is not something that can be “cured” but methods and strategies can be used to try and manage autism.

Key information

Autism is a spectrum condition meaning that people can have different types of autism or vary in terms of the level of autism. All autistic people share certain difficulties, but being autistic will affect them in different ways. Some autistic people also have learning disabilities, mental health issues or other conditions, meaning people need different levels of support. The features of autism can include having difficulties in social interactions, resistance to change and having distinctive behaviours. All people on the autism spectrum learn and develop. With the right sort of support, autistic people can be helped to live a more fulfilling life of their own choosing.

For some autistic people many things can be overwhelming and taking part in everyday activities can be difficult. People with autism can be perceived to be acting a certain way which may cause misunderstandings.

The Autism Act

In fear of people being lost through the system and not being effectively diagnosed with autism, campaigners campaigned for some form of legislative protection to support people with autism. In light of this, a number of autism charities worked together to campaign for the Autism Act so that legal duties were set on adult services to encourage them to provide support and assistance to those that required it.

The Act was implemented in November 2009 and indicated:

“The Act says that there has to be a Government strategy for improving services for autistic adults, underpinned by legally binding guidance to councils. It also has a built-in review – every five years or so – when the strategy and the statutory guidance are updated.”

Since the introduction of the Act, and as a result of proactive campaigning, the Government's Autism Strategy will now also cover childrens' care.

The introduction of the Act evidences the progress that has been made, with autism now simply even being recognised. However, notwithstanding all of the positive progress already made, autistic people still face judgement and misunderstanding. Attitudes and perceptions of autism needs to be improved through further education, awareness and training.

Autism Friendly Award and Initiative

Although 1 in 100 people in the UK are autistic, when families and carers are taken into account, approximately 2.8 million lives are directly affected by autism. It was with this in mind that the National Autistic Society's Autism Friendly Award was introduced to recognise the contributions businesses and organisations made to support people with autism. It was also hoped to encourage other businesses and organisations to invest in making services more autism friendly. It was emphasised that changes did not need to be costly, but small steps could make significant differences.

According to research conducted by the National Autistic Society:

79% of autistic people and 70% of families said they felt socially isolated;
50% of autistic people and families sometimes don't go out because of concern about people's reaction to their autism.

A number of initiatives have already taken place in the Borough to support autism including the recent introduction of a quiet hour shopping in the Uxbridge INTU on the first Saturday a month. Other support offered by current services in the Borough includes:

- *Attention Hillingdon* - a project running over 80 nurseries, playgroups and children's centres offering intervention support services to develop listening and attention skills.
- *Centre for ADHD and Autism Support (CAAS)* - supports, educates and empowers individuals with ADHD and/or on the autism spectrum, their families and the community. Through raising awareness they change perceptions and break down barriers. They offer a wide range of support services to families across North West London.

Other initiatives across the country have been introduced to make services autism friendly. However one that has been particularly well received is Wigan Council's introduction of an Autism Friendly Wigan Passport. The passport is a small document that autistic people can use to access services around the Borough. This includes access to surgeries, council services, leisure facilities and supermarkets and shopping centres. This helps to tailor communications and provide the best support for people with autism.

Making the London Borough of Hillingdon more autism friendly

It is proposed that the Committee reviews the existing customer service environment across front-line and key services in respect of people with autism, e.g. housing,

libraries, receptions, benefits etc... This would also involve access to children's and adults social care services, so that the Committee's review would be all-age.

This review of service access can help establish current practices, along with a gap analysis to identify areas for improvement. It is intended that the review will hear from expert witnesses in the autism area to consider ways in which services can be made more autism friendly. Examples, though not necessarily being recommended at this time, could include introducing more autism friendly signage such as pictures and calming colours in service areas, reducing bright lights, having autism friendly hours and creating open spaces in libraries to allow more space to read and relax and stocking autism friendly books.

Remit and related Cabinet responsibilities

This review would fall fully under this Policy Overview Committee's approved remit set out in the Constitution and also cut across the Cabinet Member portfolios of:

- Social Services, Housing, Health and Wellbeing;
- Education and Children's Services

Discussions on draft or emerging recommendations may be undertaken with Cabinet Members as per the Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet Relations approved by full Council on 12 September 2019.

Further information

NHS website, "What is autism" (online) accessed on 4 November 2019:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/what-is-autism/>

Dimensions website, "Free autism friendly training for libraries" (online) accessed on 30 October 2019:

<https://www.dimensions-uk.org/get-involved/campaigns/dimensions-autism-friendly-environments/autism-friendly-libraries/free-autism-friendly-training-libraries/>

Kent County Council website, "Autism Spectrum Disorder Select Committee Report" (online) accessed on 31 October 2019:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s14884/ASD%20Report%20FINAL.doc.pdf>

National Autistic Society website "Autism Friendly Award guidelines" (online) accessed on 30 October 2019:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/autism-friendly-award/guidelines.aspx>

National Autistic Society website "What is the Autism Act?" (online) accessed on 30 October 2019:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/not-enough/what-is-the-autism-act.aspx>

Intu Uxbridge website, “ National Autistic Society- Quiet Hour” (online) accessed on 30 October 2019:

<https://intu.co.uk/uxbridge/events/national-autistic-society-quiet-hour>

Living Autism website, “How to create an autism-friendly environment” (online) accessed on 4 November 2019:

<https://livingautism.com/create-autism-friendly-environment/>

Coventry City Council, “Autism friendly libraries” (online) accessed on 30 October 2019:

https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/126/libraries/3218/libraries_-_core_services

Southampton City Council, “Autism Friendly Chill Out Sessions” (online) accessed on 30 October 2019 :

<https://www.southampton.gov.uk/libraries/library-activities/autism-friendly-chill-out-sessions.aspx>

3. EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Lines of Enquiry and Witness testimony

Lines of enquiry will be worked up prior to witness sessions.

A possible gap analysis exercise could be undertaken where services are asked to complete surveys identifying areas that are being met. This information would then be analysed and areas of improvement identified.

Potential witnesses could include:

- Testimony from LBH Officers;
- Testimony from Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support (HACS);
- Testimony from autistic people and parents of autistic children to gain the user perspective;
- Testimony from the Cabinet Member;
- National autism experts.

Emerging conclusions or themes for development

These will emerge and become apparent as the review progresses.

4. REVIEW PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

As Policy Overview Committees now operate under a multi-year work programme, the Committee has scope to undertake a more detailed review.

It is advised that witnesses attend in 'themed' sessions to better focus questions and discussion. A draft time-frame & milestones are set out below and can be extended or reduced as the Committee sees fit:

Meeting Date	Objectives	Possible witnesses / activity
27 November 2019	Consider and agree Scoping Report	Committee recommended an updated scoping report - to be circulated to Members.
15 January 2020	Hold Witness Session 1 - Adult Autism	Review of the current statutory framework for adults and how this is being delivered in Hillingdon.
Outside Committee	Possible Member Briefing on Adult Autism (based around current Adult Autism training offer)	
Outside Committee	Member site visit to two libraries in the Borough - Uxbridge and Eastcote Library to take place on 25 February 2020	
Committee deliberations were suspended temporarily during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. A virtual committee briefing was held on 18 June in advance of an expected formal meeting in September.		
23 September 2020	Committee to receive an update on the review so far and review minutes from Member site visits.	
21 October 2020	Hold Witness Session 2 - Children's Services/ Transitions/preparation for adulthood	Council Officers - Children's Services
Outside Committee / Informal	Gap analysis survey undertaken (survey by Democratic Services with front-line services)	
26 November 2020	Hold Witness Session 3 - Wider Council services	HACS / voluntary sector Representative from the National Autistic Society Local authority exemplars

Outside Committee / Informal	Informal meeting with people with autism / parents to understand views (with officers and in appropriate setting)	
19 January 2021	Consider initial recommendations to evaluate further	Cabinet Member may wish to be invited at this stage. Feedback from survey.
9 February 2021	Findings and recommendations	Clarification from officers, if required
25 March 2021	Consider Draft Final Committee Report	Delegate authority to finalise text to Chairman and Labour lead.
Cabinet - TBC	Report presented to Cabinet (target date)	Cabinet considers and decides whether to agree recommendations to be actioned / become council policy.
TBC	Monitoring of implementation of any recommendations	

** Specific meetings can be shortened or extended to suit the review topic and needs of the Committee*

Financial Assessment

This review is not expected to require a financial assessment at the scoping stage.

However, as the review progresses, Committees should seek to ensure any recommendations are feasible, cost-effective or indeed can save the Council money. Any early findings or recommendations by the Committee which may result in a call on Council budgets should be discussed at the earliest opportunity by the Chairman, with the relevant Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services and Leader of the Council to assess viability.

This is in accordance with the approved Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet Relations approved by full Council on 12 September 2019.

Resource requirements (for review)

None identified - officer support from Democratic Services.

Equalities impact

This review will seek to strengthen the Council's efforts ensuring equal access by residents to council services.

SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
Making the Council more Autism Friendly – Minutes from previous meetings

15/01/20	<p>MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY</p> <p>The Assistant Director – Adult Social Work and Head of Service – Learning Disability and Mental Health were in attendance to present the first witness session on Adult Autism: statutory background and local arrangements.</p> <p>It was reported that the Autism Act 2019 committed the Government to having a strategy for meeting the needs of adults in England with autistic spectrum conditions. Following on from the Autism Act, the government published the first national autism strategy for England, 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' (2010), which was then updated with 'Think Autism' (2014).</p> <p>It was noted that the strategy for adults with autism in England set out a vision that: "All adults with autism will be able to live their lives within a society that understands and accepts them, they can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents."</p> <p>In December 2018, the Government announced plans to introduce an updated national autism strategy which covered people of all ages in England for the first time. Publication of the updated autism strategy was anticipated shortly in January 2020.</p> <p>It was noted that there were 15 challenges identified in the Think Autism 2014 strategy and this was communicated to local authorities and statutory bodies. The Committee was provided with a local action plan 19/20 demonstrating the different initiatives that had been undertaken by the Council.</p> <p>The Autism Partnership Board had been established to improve outcomes for people with autism and their families. It was confirmed that the Board met quarterly and in order to ensure meaningful engagement there would be a wider range of people attending the Board. The minutes would be reported to the different organisations involved.</p> <p>Members found the report useful and noted the positive work undertaken by the Council particularly in respect of housing. The scoping report established a great framework and formed a good basis for the review.</p> <p>It was emphasised that communication was key and it was important to let residents know about the different services available for both adults with autism and children with autism. Members commented that it would be useful to view the local housing strategy and its reference to autism.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the information received from officers.</p>
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06/02/20	<p>AUTISM REVIEW - 'MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY'</p> <p>It was noted that a Member site visit would take place on 25 February 2020 to two libraries in the Borough to review the types of services available for people with autism.</p> <p>The scoping report was also updated to read the following:</p> <p><i>The aim of this review is to consider how the Council can improve its customer service and key services to support its local residents with autism.</i></p> <p>The purpose for removing “and key services” was to enable the Committee to focus its review on autism, specifically on the interaction between services and the user.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the scoping report be updated.</p>
23/09/20	<p>AUTISM REVIEW - 'MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY'</p> <p>Members were informed that the Scoping Report had been updated and the timings revised due to Covid-19. It was confirmed that all Members had been invited to complete an online Basic Autism Awareness training module.</p> <p>In terms of next steps, it was confirmed that the October meeting would focus on Children’s Services, Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood while the meeting in November would cover Wider Council Services. It was hoped that a representative from the Parent Carer Group would attend the October meeting while a member of the Hillingdon Autistic Care Service (HACS) would be in attendance at the November meeting. A survey of Council frontline services would also be conducted to ascertain how autism-friendly they were.</p> <p>Members requested the attendance of a representative from the Benefits Agency at witness session 3 as it was unclear how the system worked in terms of the allocation of benefits to those with autism. This would enable the Committee to understand how autism-friendly the access to benefits was at present.</p> <p>The Committee enquired whether it would be possible to invite a representative of a charity for adults with autism to attend a witness session. It was also noted that it was important to establish the autism-friendliness of establishments (including shops) within Hillingdon both for adults and children. Members were informed that the Centre for ADHD and Autism Support offered help to both adults and children but focused mainly on the London Borough of Harrow.</p> <p>It was suggested that an additional witness session could be required and, if necessary, the work programme would be adjusted accordingly.</p> <p>For the October meeting, the Head of Safeguarding – Children’s and Young People’s Services was informed that it would be useful to understand from parents whether they felt the Council was receptive to the issues regarding which they were seeking help. For older children, it would be beneficial to understand how the Council ensured it listened to them and how it dealt with potential conflict between what the children might want and what their parents might prefer.</p> <p>RESOLVED That the Committee:</p>

- 1) Gave consideration to the updated scoping report and made comments and suggestions on the detail contained therein; and
- 2) Considered the information received from officers.

21/10/20

COMMITTEE REVIEW: MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY: WITNESS SESSION 2

Poppy Reddy, Head of Service – Court and Children with Disabilities, presented the report. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Vikram Hansrani, Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion, was not in attendance. It was agreed that any questions from the Committee which Poppy was not in a position to answer would be forwarded to Vikram for his response after the meeting.

The report highlighted the services available to residents and local authority support available to adults and children with autism. Members were informed that the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Service and Inclusion Service in Hillingdon consisted of three strands – SEND, SEND Advisory Service and the Educational Psychology (EP) Service. The Committee was advised that the latter was a very popular service. There were two primary referral pathways into the EP Service – statutory and traded.

In terms of Statutory Services, the first point of contact for families was the Early Help Team within the Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH). All staff were appropriately trained to have an understanding of autism and how to help families. Where a child had a disability which met the eligibility criteria for specialist or statutory intervention, the cases were referred to the Children with Disabilities Team (CWD) which consisted of 8 qualified social workers and two family support workers. Following a holistic assessment and identification of need, families were supported via a bespoke Child in Need Plan that was reviewed 6-monthly. A package of support was considered within the Plan which could include:

55. Social Worker support, advice, advocacy and guidance – different communication methods were employed to include play, visual aids, sensory items and electronic devices. During the lockdown period, tablets had been provided to children and families for their use;
56. Direct payments and agency packages to enable families to purchase services directly. A personal budgets policy would soon be launched – this would give families more choice and independence in choosing services;
57. Short breaks to give carers a break and to enable the young person to develop different relationships and learn new skills;
58. From October 2020, Harrow Mencap had been granted the contract to deliver short breaks in Hillingdon – this included holiday and weekend programmes. During lockdown, Harrow Mencap had assisted the local authority by providing virtual activities, art activities, singing etc – these had been popular initially but did not give families the break they really needed;
59. Hillingdon had one excellent in-house respite resource - Merriefield House Resource Centre which offered overnight stays to give families a much-needed break;
60. Referrals to targeted services.

A number of other community resources were tapped into to offer support to families, short breaks or activities including HACS, and CASS. A Home from Home option was being explored whereby foster carers would provide respite care in their own homes.

The CWD team worked with young people until the age of 18 at which time they

would transition into adult services if they met the criteria. A transition panel met on a monthly basis and young people were introduced to the panel from the age of 14 to ensure a smooth transition. Those young people who did not meet the criteria would be signposted to other activities and services. LAC children would have local authority involvement until the age of 25.

Members enquired whether Children's Social Care statutory services were assessed and benchmarked against those of other local authorities. It was confirmed that the service provided by Hillingdon was deemed to be very good - a lot of positive feedback had been received. In terms of costs, it was very difficult to provide accurate figures since the provision was based on individual need and varied hugely – there was no cap on expenditure. There was no waiting list at present – all the young people had an allocated social worker. However, it was noted that not all young people with disabilities fell under the remit of the CWD Team.

The Committee welcomed the report but commented that more data would have been helpful. Clarification regarding the chart on page 12 of the agenda pack was requested as this was somewhat unclear and appeared incomplete. It was agreed that this request would be passed to Vikram Hansrani for further clarification after the meeting. Vikram would also be asked to provide clarification regarding referrals into the Educational Psychology Service – were these being actioned speedily, how many young people were still waiting and how did Hillingdon compare with other local authorities?

Members were pleased to note that approximately 80% of the young people with ASD who had graduated from the supported internships were now in full time employment. It was agreed that, following the meeting, Vikram would be asked to provide further information as to the number / percentage of young people who took up the supported internships initially.

Councillors requested a pie chart or graph to demonstrate the range / different types of autism. It was agreed that this would be explored further by Democratic Services.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that, prior to the pandemic, a representative of the benefits service had been co-located in the Civic Centre to provide benefits advice to the leaving care cohort and to assist social workers in supporting families with members with ASD; particularly in relation to accessing benefits which was a complex area.

Members enquired how EHCPs were monitored and tracked. It was confirmed that EHCPs were reviewed annually to ensure they continued to meet the need; they would be updated as required.

In response to further enquiries from the Committee, it was agreed that Vikram would be asked to clarify what additional resource provision within secondary settings to meet the needs of CYP with ASD was currently being explored and who was being consulted on this (as mentioned on page 12 of the agenda pack). Members were informed that Vikram Hansrani chaired a special schools' meeting once a month – one of the issues discussed was how the local authority could support these schools. Vikram would be asked to provide further clarity on this.

The external witnesses (representatives of the Hillingdon Parent Carer Forum - HPCF) were invited to provide further information regarding their own personal

experiences.

Georgie Bhad addressed the Committee confirming that the HPCF was a small steering group in Hillingdon which aimed to be the voice of parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Parents were surveyed and asked about their experiences and the information was fed back to the local authority. It was noted that parents were often quiet when things were going well and more vocal when they were having difficulties. Members were informed that parents felt the criteria to access the type of help set out by Poppy in her report were high in Hillingdon – Georgie’s own son attended a special school and had moderate learning difficulties but did not qualify for such support. Short breaks could be accessed but were payable. An EHCP had been in place for her son for many years but it was noted that available services in the Borough were restricted and demand outstripped supply. Waiting lists to be diagnosed with autism were very long and it was often difficult to meet the criteria for an EHCP.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that local criteria were based on central Government advice. It was agreed that Democratic Services would attempt to source further information regarding the local criteria to access additional support services and a comparison with those of neighbouring boroughs.

Leanne Williams of HPCF addressed the Committee confirming that an ‘ELSA’ was an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant. Leanne commented that, in Hillingdon, the EP service, Schools’ Advisory Service and support in special schools for children with ASD were very good. It would be useful to have more information regarding the number of ASD students in Hillingdon, the number that access Poppy’s service and the level of students that needed EHCPs. It was felt that many schools did an excellent job in terms of monitoring and reviewing EHCPs; however, this was not the case in all schools. Where problems arose, the systems and processes were in place to escalate these, though they were not always dealt with speedily.

Aisha Richardson-Long addressed the Committee informing Members that she was the mother of two children with special needs and had recently managed to secure an EHCP for her son. It was confirmed that her children attended special schools but did not meet the criteria to access the services outlined by Poppy. Ms Richardson-Long praised the level of support available within the special schools attended by her two children. However, the Committee was advised that, when their children first received a diagnosis of ASD, many parents struggled to cope and needed more guidance and help which was difficult to access. It was felt that more support should be made available to those children who did not meet the criteria for Poppy’s service so they did not miss out. In response to questions from the Committee, Ms Richardson-Long confirmed that she had not initially received the guidance she needed from the local authority. She had found SENDIASS to be excellent and very supportive; however, it had taken her a long time to access the level of support she needed which had been extremely stressful.

Members enquired how the HPCF service linked in with the Council. It was confirmed that HPCF was a statutory service - all local authorities had to offer an information and advice service for local residents.

Members acknowledged that, in terms of special schools, the provision in Hillingdon was excellent. Clarification was sought as to how mainstream schools were managing in terms of those children who did not meet the criteria to attend

special schools, did not qualify for an EHCP and were falling beneath the radar. It was confirmed that mainstream schools were in receipt of SEN support funding to support these young people. It was acknowledged that it was difficult for schools as autism was a very wide spectrum which presented itself in a variety of ways and children with ASD had differing needs. However, if mainstream schools could handle this more effectively, there would be less need for EHCPs. Parents often felt an EHCP would provide some leverage to get the level of support and help their child needed.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that, in her time of need, there had been no support available from the local authority for Aisha as the mother of children with special needs.

The external witnesses from HPCF were thanked for attending the meeting and for their useful contributions to the discussion.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

1. Gave consideration to the information provided in the report; and
2. Sought the views of witnesses and asked any necessary questions in support of the Committee's review.

26/11/20

COMMITTEE REVIEW: MAKING THE COUNCIL MORE AUTISM FRIENDLY: WITNESS SESSION 3

HACS

Two witnesses were in attendance – Toni and Stephanie Mullally – representing Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support (HACS). Members were informed that HACS had been founded in 1997 by parents in of children in Hillingdon affected by autism. It was confirmed that HACS supported over 300 families at present and had a large professional database consisting of teachers, SENCOs, health visitors and mental health professionals.

Councillors heard that services offered included advice and guidance, family support, educational workshops, an employability project started in 2015 and an adult support group. The age range of those supported by HACS ranged from 2 years 8 months to 59 years. Members were advised that HACS was one of the only autism specific short breaks providers in the Borough providing weekend respite services for those aged 5 – 25 years. It was confirmed that autism was not classified as a learning disability or a mental health disorder. The term 'high-functioning' often used when referring to those with autism who did not have a learning disability was particularly unhelpful as it suggested that these individuals had less support needs; this was not necessarily the case therefore HACS avoided using this terminology.

The Committee requested further clarification regarding the effectiveness of the Government's National Strategy on tackling autism. It was confirmed that there was now a clearer focus in terms of central Government legislation and attempts had been made to improve employment opportunities. However, although awareness was increasing, outcomes did not appear to be changing very much. On a localised level there was a more co-ordinated approach with agencies working together. It was noted that the National Strategy focused on adults. However, in Hillingdon, a decision had been taken to focus on children and families too. In response to their enquiries, Members were informed that it was

difficult to access data in relation to autism therefore the tracking of outcomes locally was challenging. On a service level there had been a vast improvement since 2010 in terms of what was available for families to access; however, there was still a long way to go.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that greater clarity was needed regarding the services provided by the local authority and how to access said services. It was reported that the information was currently not in a central location and was therefore not easy to locate. HACS received calls from GPs on a weekly basis asking how patients could get an autism diagnosis in Hillingdon. For those who were not eligible for specialist or statutory support, it was confirmed that availability of services was often an issue. It appeared that many Council officers lacked understanding of ASD. It was suggested that one option would be to train up a number of autism ambassadors across the Council (one ambassador per department) who could provide expertise in this area. Should the ambassador be unable to assist, a member of HACS could step in and offer support and expertise. The Committee was informed that Council departments did not appear to offer a joined up approach at present – families were often obliged to repeat themselves again and again when approaching different local authority departments which was exhausting and distressing. Members enquired whether a one front door approach would assist in addressing this issue. HACS felt this would be very welcome; ideally people with autism would be allocated a key worker to help them navigate services. A one front door approach would help to reduce the frustration and distress experienced by those with autism when trying to access support services.

The Committee was informed that very few adult referrals were received by HACS; possibly because their adult services were still being developed and had only been live for approximately one year. There was scope for working much more closely with local authority adult services; particularly to raise awareness of HACS. It was confirmed that the response to a HACS autism awareness day held in 2019 had been excellent with some 500 people in attendance. There had been a number of inspirational speakers– some on the autism spectrum themselves – who had been very well received. An April 2020 version of the event had been planned to engage with adults and shape the development of adult services. Unfortunately, this had been postponed due to the pandemic but would take place in 2021.

Members enquired whether transport facilities, libraries, parks etc within Hillingdon were easily accessible to those with autism. It was confirmed that HACS had been working closely with libraries and young people from the HACS employability project had been offered work there to gain work experience. One young person had been offered a permanent position. Members were advised that, having been trained by HACS, library staff were now very autism aware. In terms of other facilities, it was reported that autism-friendly cinemas in the Borough had been successful and outdoor gyms in local parks were also popular – particularly with younger people with autism. The Rural Activities Garden Centre was another great resource and offered a safe, sensory environment. HACS managed the tea rooms there.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that autism friendly letters would be greatly welcomed as people with autism often struggled to understand letters or were unwilling to open them. An easy read format would be extremely helpful.

In terms of physically navigating the Borough, the Committee was advised that this was extremely challenging for people with autism. It was suggested that autistic adults would welcome the opportunity to be consulted on matters which affected them directly. An example was given of a shopping centre which had introduced autism quiet shopping hours once every three months from 10-11 on Sunday. This was impractical as it was too infrequent and coincided with universal worship time.

In response to further questioning from the Committee, it was confirmed that the nationally recognised incidence rate of autism was approximately one in one hundred. Members were informed that more could be done to support children in care in terms of support networks for foster carers etc. Members were informed that HACS had a strong relationship with the paediatricians on the Looked After Children Board and regularly made recommendations to foster parents and adoption panels. At present HACS were working with the kinship team to ascertain what type of assessments should be considered to assist a young person who was struggling to get an autism diagnosis.

Councillors sought further clarification regarding HACS and their work within schools. It was confirmed that HACS carried out training sessions in schools and supported parents of children with autism at annual reviews, in exclusion cases etc. Members were informed that HACS had a strong partnership with head teachers and SENCOs and worked closely with both mainstream and special schools.

The Chairman thanked HACS for their contribution to the review and congratulated them on their excellent work.

Autism Training within the Council

Kate Kelly-Talbot, Assistant Director – Adult Social Work, updated the Committee on autism training within the Council. Members were informed that, within the Council, two levels of training were available to staff – a General Autism Awareness module and a 2-day specialist training course offered to those carrying out assessments; the latter had been undertaken by approximately 120 Adult Social Care staff members to date. It was confirmed that all staff in the Learning Disabilities and Autism Service had completed the 2-day training course. The Committee heard that a number of frontline staff could benefit from the autism awareness training; e-learning Autism Awareness training had been developed and had been launched in Feb 2020. This training was available to all staff, but further work was planned to promote uptake. A more targeted approach may be required, but this work has been slightly delayed due to the pandemic.

New legislation was being brought in which would be closely monitored to ensure the Council's autism offer was updated and refreshed as necessary.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the e-learning training was ready to be rolled out. There was a need to consider which departments to target first and whether to include it as part of officer induction. Members were keen for this e-learning to be rolled out as quickly as possible to raise awareness among staff and assist in addressing the issues raised by HACS.

Democratic Services informed Committee Members that, as agreed, an autism survey had been circulated to 25 service managers across Council frontline departments. A report would be compiled to appraise the Committee of the results

of the survey in due course.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

1. **Gave consideration to the information provided in the verbal update; and**
2. **Sought the views of the HACS witnesses and asked any necessary questions in support of the Committee's Review.**

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2020/21 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING & PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

**Contact Officer: Gemma McNamara
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REASON FOR ITEM

1. To comply with the Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules as part of the agreed consultation process for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, alongside the Council's Capital Programme, this report sets out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within the remit of the Social Care, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee. Following consideration by Cabinet on 10 December 2020, these proposals are now under consultation, and the proposals for each Group are being discussed at the January cycle of Policy Overview Committees.
2. Cabinet will next consider the budget proposals on 18 February 2021, and the report will include comments received from Policy Overview Committees. At the meeting on 18 February 2021 Cabinet will make recommendations to full Council regarding the budget and Council Tax levels for 2021/22, who will meet to agree the budgets and Council Tax for 2021/22 on 25 February 2021.
3. The Committee needs to consider the budget proposals as they relate to the the relevant service areas within the Social Care and Environment, Education & Community Services / Building Services Groups, but within the corporate context and the constraints applying as a result of the aggregate financial position of the authority.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

4. It is recommended that the Committee notes the budget projections contained in the report and comments as appropriate on the combined budget proposals put forward within the Social Care and Environment, Education & Community Services Groups, within the context of the corporate budgetary position.

BACKGROUND

5. The Council continues to operate within a reduced funding envelope following marked reductions in central government funding over the period since 2010/11, and although funding levels have stabilised since 2019/20 there remains an element of the legacy grant cuts being financed through releases from General Balances. Alongside the funding challenge, continuing demographic and demand pressures and a return to an inflationary environment over the medium term will necessitate delivery of further substantial savings. This report to Cabinet on the budget for 2021/22 quantifies the financial challenge faced by the Council over the medium term and outlines an approach to meeting this challenge whilst continuing to 'Put Residents First'.
6. This report to Cabinet on the budget for 2021/22, building upon the position outlined in the 2020/21 budget report to Council in February 2020, the outturn position for the 2019/20 financial year and experience to date during 2020/21 alongside latest projections and an assessment of the financial impact of the proposed savings

Classification: Public

Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee – 19 January 2021

programme. This background to development of the 2021/22 budget is outlined below, with the following sections of this report setting out the resulting budget proposals for the new financial year.

2020/21 Budget

7. At the time of Council Tax setting for the current year in February 2020, it was anticipated that this combination of inflationary pressures, growing demand for services and increased capital financing costs would generate an underlying savings requirement of £34,954k over the period 2021/22 to 2023/24. In addition, it was planned to step down use of General Balances from £6,334k in 2020/21 to zero over two years which would increase the total savings requirement to £41,288k.
8. The budget strategy presented to Cabinet and Council assumed that use of the Social Care Precept and inflationary growth in Council Tax (pegged at 90% of the maximum permissible level) would generate £14,959k, with £1,113k full year effects from approved savings proposals reducing the residual budget gap to £25,216k for 2021/22 to 2023/24 as set out below.

Table 1: February 2020 Budget Strategy

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Current MTF
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Underlying Savings Requirement	9,792	12,765	11,529	10,660	34,954
Unwind Prior Use of Balances	7,776	6,334	3,000	0	6,334
Total Savings Requirement	17,568	19,099	14,529	10,660	41,288
Proposed Council Tax Increase	(4,421)	(4,695)	(4,983)	(5,281)	(14,959)
In-year Call on General Balances	(6,334)	(3,000)	0	0	0
Current Savings Proposals	(6,813)	(760)	(203)	(150)	(1,113)
Savings to be identified	0	10,644	9,343	5,229	25,216
Closing General Balances	(27,905)	(24,905)	(24,905)	(24,905)	N/A

9. This approach was expected to reduce unallocated General Balances to £24,905k, providing a level of headroom against the £15,000k minimum level of balances required to manage risks in an authority such as Hillingdon. To avoid further depletion of balances, this strategy necessitated the delivery of approximately £10,000k savings over the two budget setting cycles in 2021/22 and 2022/23. Beyond this timeframe, projections were for an annual savings requirement of circa £5,000k per annum – driven by growing demand for services and cost inflation being partially offset by a growing tax base and inflationary uplifts on income.

2019/20 Outturn

10. At the time of budget setting in February 2020, General Balances had been projected to total £34,239k at 31 March 2020. An improvement of £1,019k was reported in the final months of the year as unallocated growth and contingency sums were released alongside minor improvements across a range of services, which together with the decision to capitalise £2,274k of Highways expenditure previously planned to be funded from Earmarked Reserves increased this underspend to £3,293k.
11. This improvement of £3,293k was set aside in Earmarked Reserves to provide funding for COVID-19 pressures not covered by grant monies, and supplemented by redirecting other previously earmarked sums to create a £9,126k reserve for COVID-19 costs, while General Balances remained at the budgeted level of £34,239k.

2020/21 Budget Monitoring Position

12. The consultation budget was finalised in the context of the Month 7 monitoring position, with pressures totalling £29,428k being projected in relation to the various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on General Fund operations during 2020/21. Significant additional funding has been awarded to manage these pressures, with four separate tranches of grants totalling £25,133k having been awarded to Hillingdon and a further £7,700k expected through the Government's commitment to finance 75% of Fees & Charges losses above a 5% threshold. While funding due from government therefore currently exceeds identified pressures, it is likely that the ongoing management of the pandemic and its local impacts will result in further costs emerging over the remainder of this year and into 2021/22. In the event that in-year costs exceed available grants, the COVID-19 reserve is available to isolate any impacts from General Balances.
13. With COVID-19 related pressures being managed in this way, an underspend of £3,279k is reported across the Council's normal General Fund operations. Within this position it is expected that a number of one-off or temporary underspends will be sufficient to contain a pressure of circa £1,000k arising from a higher than budgeted pay award being agreed nationally (2.75% rather than 2.00%). The reported underspend includes a £764k underspend on corporate budgets primarily relating to savings on short term borrowing and reduced spend on debt financing budgets due to the timing of capital expenditure impacted by COVID-19, alongside £2,299k underspends from across service budgets. This Month 7 monitoring position would deliver General Balances of £31,184k at outturn, with no material movements in this position in the recently completed Month 8 monitoring report.

2021/22 Budget Development

14. Services have been developing savings proposals with a view to bridging the future budget gap and the growing cost of providing valued services to residents. In addition to this work across directorates, a comprehensive review of the corporate elements of the budget has been undertaken since February, capturing funding, inflation and capital financing. During the autumn, a series of challenge sessions were held to affirm the budget position. Each session followed a similar format reviewing:
 - The current position in 2020/21 - both monitoring and savings delivery.

- Existing and emerging pressures that need to be addressed in the 2021/22 budget and forecasts for future years.
- Progress on the development of savings proposals for 2021/22 and beyond.
- Identification of any potential growth or invest-to-save bids.
- Capital programme requirements.

15. The consultation budget represents the combined outputs from these sessions, with a savings programme and planned use of General Balances being delivered to produce a balanced budget, after securing additional revenue from a 4.8% proposed Council Tax increase for 2021/22, enabling delivery of a budget without recourse to reductions in frontline services.

BUDGET PROPOSALS

16. The Council's budget was presented to Cabinet in the context of a challenging medium term outlook with a budget gap of £33,263k to be managed through a combination of savings and Council Tax uplifts over the three years to 2023/24. This position takes into account the favourable outcome of Spending Review 2020, which broadly secures a £1m uplift in funding alongside an additional benefit of £2m driven by a lower pay award than previously forecast, but there remains a level of uncertainty due to Brexit and the upcoming Fair Funding Review, which has been delayed by a further year.

17. The funding strategy is presented in the context of a proposed increase in Council Tax at 4.8% in 2021/22, and indicative inflationary uplifts of 3.8% on Council Tax from 2022/23 onwards securing £16,141k additional income. In addition to this, identified savings deliver a further £2,797k over the three year period, alongside the planned use of general balances leaves £12,605k of savings to be identified over the remaining two budget cycles.

Table 2: Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Current MTF
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Underlying Savings Requirement	9,792	10,003	10,223	13,037	33,263
Unwind Prior Use of Balances	7,776	6,334	2,421	1,000	6,334
Total Savings Requirement	17,568	16,337	12,644	14,037	39,597
Proposed Council Tax Increase	(4,421)	(5,862)	(4,989)	(5,290)	(16,141)
In-year Call on General Balances	(6,334)	(2,421)	(1,000)	0	N/A
Current Savings Proposals	(6,813)	(8,054)	(2,797)	0	(10,851)
Savings to be identified	0	0	3,858	8,747	12,605
Closing General Balances	(31,184)	(28,763)	(27,763)	(27,763)	N/A

18. The above strategy continues to include the planned release of General Balances while maintaining unallocated reserves within the recommended range for Hillingdon of £15,000k to £32,000k. While a review of the range of risks facing the Council does not indicate a change to this range will be necessary at the moment.

The Budget and Policy Framework Rules

19. The public consultation on the budget proposals commenced on 11 December 2020 following decisions taken by Cabinet on 10 December 2020.
20. There will be a further consideration by Cabinet of the budget proposals on 18 February 2021, including comments from Policy Overview Committees and the public consultation. These will be collated and reported back to Cabinet by the Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities Policy Overview Committee. Council will be requested to approve the Cabinet's proposals on 25 February 2021, and if approved without further amendment they will be effective immediately.

Corporate Summary

21. While the focus of the discussion for the Policy Overview Committee should be the specific services within its remit, it is important that this discussion is conducted in the context of the overall corporate financial position. The Council's financial performance during 2020/21 is being significantly impacted by the pandemic, with pressures of £29,428k being reported against the General Fund with significant additional funding having been awarded to manage these pressures.
22. With COVID-19 related pressures being managed in this way, an underspend of £3,279k is reported across the Council's normal General Fund operations. Within this position it is expected that a number of one-off or temporary underspends will be sufficient to contain a pressure of circa £1,000k arising from a higher than budgeted pay award being agreed nationally (2.75% rather than 2.00%). Within this position, £3,577k of the £6,386k savings planned for 2020/21 are banked or on track for delivery in full by 31 March 2021, with £2,809k being tracked as being at an earlier stage of implementation or at risk as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
23. The budget proposals included in this report represents the Cabinet's budget strategy for 2021/22. Revenue budget proposals have been developed to continue to support the over 65s meet their Council Tax liability by continuing the cash discounts awarded through the older people discount for those currently in receipt of the benefit, but closing the scheme to new entrants. The final funding settlement for 2020/21 and confirmation of a number of levies payable to other public authorities will not be confirmed until early 2021, although budgeted sums are broadly in line with national spending figures outlined in the Spending Review 2020.
24. Recurrent funding available to support the budget requirement is projected to total £232,837k in 2021/22, inclusive of £5,862k additional income linked to the proposed

Classification: Public

Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee – 19 January 2021

4.8% increase in Council Tax to protect frontline services for residents. This recurrent funding is supplemented by £3,500k of one-off funding including £834k from local COVID-19 reserves and a £2,421k release from General Balances to support the £244,391k projected cost of delivering services in 2020/21.

25. The Council's draft budget strategy is to align the profile of budget proposals to deliver a budget for 2021/22, while maintaining unallocated reserves between £15,000k and £32,000k. The development of £8,054k savings proposals are sufficient to reduce the budget gap to £2,421k, which it is proposed to cover through the drawdown from General Reserves, as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 3: Budget Requirement

	Movement from 2020/21 £'000	2021/22 Budget Requirement £'000
Recurrent Funding	(349)	(226,975)
Council Tax Increase (3.8%)		(5,862)
One-Off Funding	2,451	(1,079)
Planned Use of General Balances		(2,421)
Total Resources	2,102	(236,337)
Roll Forward Budget		234,284
Inflation	4,700	
Corporate Items	1,901	
Contingency (Service Pressures)	3,456	
Priority Growth	50	10,107
Budget Requirement		244,391
Gross Savings Requirement		8,054
Savings	(8,054)	(8,054)
Net Budget Gap		0

26. This draft budget includes £50k new funding for Domestic Abuse Initiatives to further support this service area in light of increases in need. In addition, the Council has £1,038k of Priority Growth Earmarked Reserves that can fund any new and emerging issues going into 2021/22, with further Earmarked Reserves being available for specific areas of spend, including Environment and Recreational initiatives (£450k) and the All-Age Sport and Activity Fund (£308k).
27. An update of the Council's capital programme is also presented in this report, with £344,775k of planned investment in local infrastructure over the period 2020/21 to 2025/26. This includes a new Leisure centre in Yiewsley, a major programme of investment in the borough's highways, a programme of sports club rebuild/refurbishments, a libraries refurbishment programme and provision for investment in Youth infrastructure. The programme is supported by £97,230k of external funding, £60,466k of capital receipts from the disposal of surplus assets and Community Infrastructure levy alongside £167,079k of Prudential Borrowing. Financing costs

associated with implementation of this programme are the principal driver behind the £1,901k Corporate Items and are forecast to grow to £7,729k by 2025/26.

2020/21 GROUP BUDGET PROPOSALS

28. Budget proposals relating to services within the remit of Social Care, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee are presented below, with headline operating budgets for the relevant services outlined in Table 3. In addition to these base budgets to support services, more volatile or demand-led areas of activity are managed through Development and Risk Contingency - with latest projections for 2021/22 expanded upon in the following sections of this report.

Table 4: Group Budgets within Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities Policy Overview Committee Remit

	Social Care £'000	Environment, Education & Community Services £'000	Total £'000
Operating Budget 2020/21	117,350	4,227	121,578
Inflation	2,558	36	2,594
Corporate Items	159	0	159
Contingency	2,061	0	2,061
Priority Growth	50	0	50
Savings	(1,750)	(750)	(2,500)
Operating Budget 2021/22	120,429	3,513	123,942

Development & Risk Contingency

29. The Development and Risk Contingency is used to manage budgets relating to volatile or demand-led budgets, where there will remain uncertainty as to the level of resources required until actual demand for services is known at outturn. Rather than inflating Directorate Operating Budgets to cover all potential risk items, these are collated and budgeted for in the round.

30. The following paragraphs provide an overview of items specifically identified within Development and Risk Contingency, identifying key risks and emerging issues where appropriate alongside commentary on proposed management action.

Service Pressures – Demographic Growth Items

31. Support for Looked after Children (£3,211k provision, £656k growth from 2020/21) – Growth in numbers of Looked after Children continues to outstrip broader population trends with projected numbers of placements forecast to increase during 2021/22. Given the high unit cost and complexity of reasons for entering care, this is expected to remain a volatile area going forward.

32. Support for Children with Disabilities (£895k provision, £117k growth from 2020/21) – Alongside Looked after Children, Children with Disabilities continues to see growth in

Classification: Public

Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee – 19 January 2021

placement numbers necessitating a £117k uplift in the contingency requirement for 2021/22.

33. Adult Social Care Placements (£2,793k provision, £1,288k growth from 2020/21) – Forecast growth in this area is anticipated to be in line with population growth of approximately 2% following the 2020/21 additional investment in the Mental Health service, with this budget presenting a return to the usual population based growth. In addition, £200k has been allocated to fund additional demand for legal services related to increases in demand within Social Care.

Service Pressures – Risk Items

34. Homelessness Prevention (£822k provision, no change from 2020/21) – This is an area that has seen significant impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside additional funding from Central Government during the crisis largely targeted at Rough Sleeping. This position presents a return to the pre-pandemic levels of homelessness, with the expectation being that the Council can manage demand within the average budgeted level of 130 clients and that grant funding opportunities from Government continue to be available.
35. Asylum Funding Shortfall (£1,063k provision, no change from 2020/21) – Home Office funding available to the Council to support Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children remains insufficient to meet the full cost of this demand.

Priority Growth

36. This consultation budget includes one specific Priority Growth item of £50k to support Domestic Abuse Initiatives in the borough. In addition, the Council has £1,038k of Priority Growth Earmarked Reserves that can fund any new and emerging issues going into the new financial year and beyond, with further Earmarked Reserves being available for specific areas of spend, including Environment and Recreational initiatives (£450k) and the All-Age Sport and Activity Fund (£308k).

Savings

37. The following paragraphs provide an overview of savings proposals included in this draft budget. These include efficiency savings and other measures reducing the cost of service delivery without impacting upon service. Savings measures fall into six broad themes, with the first five representing efficiency savings and charging proposals that do not directly impact upon the service offer to residents:
- i. Service Transformation represents the majority of proposed savings, with items presented in this category ranging from the full year effect of previously implemented proposals, the implementation of recently agreed BID Reviews and the expected benefits arising from potential new BID Reviews.
 - ii. Effective Procurement savings reflect efficiencies gained through the commissioning of services from third parties, including the insourcing of functions

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Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee – 19 January 2021

where this represents better value for money than previously externalised services.

- iii. Managing Demand items relate to measures intended to maintain or improve services to residents – particularly in relation to social care and other direct support for clients – through investment in early intervention, identification of alternative support models and other initiatives.
- iv. Income Generation & Commercialisation proposals include the regular annual review of Fees and Charges against those of neighbouring authorities, alongside savings arising from reviews of services with scope to operate with a reduced level of subsidy from the Council Taxpayer.
- v. Savings proposals from Zero Based Reviews represent budgets, which have been identified as being surplus to requirements through the line-by-line review of the 2019/20 outturn position and similar exercises being undertaken by Finance.
- vi. Policy Decisions represents a step change in the Council's service offer rather than efficiency gains, with a single proposal relating to the cessation of the local First Time Buyer's Scheme falling in this category.

Pump Priming Savings and Flexible Use of Capital Receipts

38. The Council is currently permitted to finance the costs associated with service transformation from Capital Receipts, with both one-off implementation costs and the support for service transformation, including the BID team, being funded from this resource. This draft budget has been prepared on the basis that such implementation costs for the 2020/21 savings programme, estimated at £3,750k, will be financed from a combination of Capital Receipts and Earmarked Reserves as appropriate.

Social Care

39. A zero based review is planned for Social Care across both Adults and Children's services, including a review of the future demand for the service and unit cost assumptions. In view of a reduced headcount within Adult Social Care and implementing early intervention services within Children's Services, this review is expected to deliver a reduction in spend of £1,000k for 2021/22.
40. Reviews of Children's services including both structures and processes, ensuring a clear pathway for each child and a zero based review of the Asylum Service are anticipated to deliver £400k of savings for 2021/22. Alongside this, a further £100k of income is expected to be generated by leasing out part of the Civic Centre to one of the Council's care partners.

Environment, Education & Community Services

41. A further £750k is proposed against the Housing Service for 2021/22, increasing to £1,000k by 2022/23, with approximately half of this value to come from improved management of temporary accommodation, maximising the impact of Central

Government grant income, with the other half to come from the closing of the First Time Buyers Scheme in light of the other support in this area offered by Central Government including Help to Buy Equity Loan, Shared Ownership and First Homes schemes.

Cross-Cutting Initiatives

42. The Council continues to review recruitment and retention requirements of Council run services, with a review of vacant posts expected to deliver a £100k saving for 2021/22.

FEES & CHARGES

43. The Council is empowered to seek income from Fees and Charges to service users across a wide range of activities. Some of these Fees and Charges are set by the Government or other stakeholders, but many others are set at the discretion of the Council, based on Cabinet's recommendations. The Council continues to operate a system of differential charges through the Hillingdon First card, which enables preferential rates to be offered to local residents.
44. The Council continues to benchmark Fees and Charges against those of neighbouring authorities and other service providers, with charges being set at a maximum of 90% of the relevant benchmark for residents, and at benchmark for non-residents where applicable. This realignment of charges does not directly impact upon budgets within this Policy and Overview Committee's remit, although proposals include Proposals include uplifts to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence fees, the introduction of Housing Act Notice fees, a Penalty Charge Notice fee for non-compliance with a Remedial Notice and professional advice fees to landlords to raise standards in HMOs.

Capital Programme

45. The Council's current capital programme, as approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2020, continues to be focused on the provision of sufficient school places to meet rising demand across the borough. This programme has been reviewed and amending to reflect the ongoing priorities of the Council. The following key amendment items within the Capital Programme fall within the remit of Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee.
 - a. A £200k uplift in the £250k budget established in February 2016 for autism respite accommodation on the 1&2 Merrimans site is included to facilitate six larger bedrooms and a dedicated sensory room.
 - b. It is proposed to reduce the annual £100k budget for PSRG/LPRG to £50k per annum, reflecting both current and historic activity levels.
46. A review of financing assumptions has been undertaken, with £2,824k unallocated capital funding included in the Better Care Fund being allocated to fund the purchase of Social Care equipment previously financed from borrowing.

Classification: Public

Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee – 19 January 2021

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

47. The budget proposals for 2021/22 are based on the tenth full year of self-financing for the Housing Revenue Account. Under self-financing, the regulations maintain a ring-fence around the Council's provision of housing, the cost of which is fully supported by rental income.
48. This position includes rent increases of CPI+1% per annum from 2021/22 to 2025/26 to reflect Government policy, whilst providing for substantial investment in new General Needs. There is also no change to the HRA rent policy.
49. Included within the proposals is a contribution to support in-year capital investment of £19,021k, whilst maintaining HRA General Balance at their current level. This planned use of balances reflects increased investment in new housing stock, and the underlying financial position of the HRA remains robust.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FOECAST 2021/22 - 2025/26, presented to 10 December 2020 Cabinet Meeting

Voids Management Update

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Rod Smith – Residents Services
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Void to let case study examples
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an understanding of the empty property [known as ‘void property’] management process, the contributions made by various service teams, the interfaces in the ‘end to end process’ and performance associated with this core landlord function.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1. Notes the content of this report including the work which has been undertaken and the work which is ongoing to make best use of the Council’s available housing stock and to mitigate the extent of rent loss.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Void Property Management as a landlord function

Empty property management is a core landlord function sitting alongside other key landlord functions such as undertaking repairs and collecting the rent due. The end to end void management process is not vested in one single service team but spans across several teams involving ‘hand-offs’ at key stages of the process. An effective end to end process with robust management oversight is fundamental in ensuring that the Council reduces the total number of void properties at any one time and the total period individual properties are void. A void property represents a loss of income to the Council, measured by weekly rent loss. At the same time a household is denied access to a unit of social housing. This household could be in severely overcrowded and or sub-standard accommodation or could be a homeless household occupying a high cost unit of temporary accommodation.

Overview and definition of a void

A void property exists only where the tenancy and rent account has been formally closed. A property could exist where there is no lawful tenant in occupation but there is a live account in place regarding ‘use and occupation charges’ due from the occupier. A tenant may have passed away or abandoned a property but until such time as the tenancy is lawfully ended [normally via issue of a Notice to Quit] the rent account cannot be closed. The property, although unoccupied, will only be void once due process has been followed and the tenancy and rent account closed. There are several service teams involved in the end to end void property management process. Some of the teams have a dominant role to play such as the Void Repairs Team whilst others have a more minor but nonetheless important part to play such as the Housing Revenues &

Charges Team. A summary of the teams and their involvement in the process is set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Service Teams involved in the Void Management process

Service area	Summary Responsibilities
Lettings Team	Is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending the previous tenancy. • Advertising the property and shortlisting potential tenants. • Arranging viewings. • Signing-up new tenants and ensuring they have received all the required statutory paperwork.
Void Repairs Team	Ensures the following is undertaken before any void property is re-let: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It shall be in a clean and safe condition • It will comply with government standards • It will be presented in a good condition. • All statutory safety checks are confirmed and recorded on council systems
Counter Fraud Team	Is responsible for gathering information and carrying out visits as part of the verification check. They provide a level of quality assurance prior to the prospective tenant securing a social housing property.
Tenancy Management Team	Is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally ending all tenancies where there is no tenant in occupation and passing vacant possession to the Lettings Team. • Following up all cases where a forthcoming void notification [either following a death or planned move] does not result in the keys coming forward. • Providing a viewings service to prospective tenants.
Contact Centre	The first point of contact for tenants, relatives / next of kin regarding any empty property or a property which is due to become empty.
Resettlement Team	Is responsible for all properties used as temporary accommodation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending the previous tenancy • Signing-up new tenants and ensuring they have received all the required statutory paperwork.
Housing Revenues & Charges Team	Are responsible for setting up a new rent account [for a new letting] or terminating an existing rent account [after the ending of a tenancy] following formal notification that the Lettings Team have created or terminated a tenancy.

Business Performance Team	Provide routine and bespoke activity and performance information to Landlord Board, managers and the Voids Management Group to support effective performance management of key stages of the end to end voids process.
Voids Management Group	A cross service group of managers who meet on a fortnightly basis to review performance information and address barriers to service delivery and performance. The group's terms of reference are to: <i>'Take collective ownership for the end to end void property process, to drive improvements in performance, embed good practice and make the best use of the Council's limited supply of social housing'</i>

Summary of key processes and interfaces

Tenancy termination

The Council are notified in a variety of different ways that a property may become empty or is empty. It is the role of the notified officer to ensure this information is shared with all relevant teams so forward planning can be carried out prior to the property being returned by the current tenant or next of kin. This includes planning a pre-vacation inspection and advertising the property to create a shortlist of potential tenants.

When the property has become vacant and the keys have been returned the Lettings Team ensure systems are updated to bring the tenancy and the rent account to an end and trigger the Void Repairs Team to start required works so that the property meets the Council's 'minimum lettable standard'.

Void property inspection and repairs

The overriding objective is that the property should be safe in terms of the health and safety of the future occupants. All repairs relating to health and safety are carried out prior to occupation. In accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating Systems (HHSRS) contained within the Housing Act 2004, the property should be free from:

"Any deficiency that might give rise to a hazard which interferes with or puts at risk the health or safety or even the lives of the occupants."

Void property inspections should specifically address the following hazards (as categorised within HHSRS) before the property is let:

- Physiological (damp and mould growth, excess cold/heat)
- Pollutants (asbestos, carbon monoxide)
- Psychological (security, lighting)
- Hygiene (pests, food safety, sanitation, water supply, drainage)
- Protection against accidents (falls, electrical hazards, fire)

The Void Property Clerk of Works will complete a Health and Safety Checklist for each void as well as taking and recording photographic evidence of the void during the void inspection and ensure that all Class 1 Hazards are addressed before occupation.

Electrical, gas and water/waste services are tested, and gas safety certificates and NICEIC electrical inspection certificates will be provided.

- All systems for heating and hot water will receive standard checks for safety and effectiveness and
- Essential repairs to services are completed prior to letting
- All flues are checked
- All landlords' gas appliances will receive an annual gas safety inspection (once connection arranged by the tenant).

All void properties will also have an asbestos survey carried out in line with the Asbestos Management Plan (AMP). Where either Amosite or Crocidolite is identified or any damaged asbestos of any kind, removal will be arranged as required by the AMP.

Completion of the void property inspection will lead to the following actions being undertaken:

- The Void Property Inspection Sheet will be updated and passed to the Voids Coordinator for loading onto Oneserve.
- The Health and Safety Check will be undertaken
- All repairs required prior to occupation will be raised (and marked as rechargeable to the former tenant where appropriate)
- All remedial work carried out should be documented (including before and after photos) and retained for future reference.
- All post-let work should be recorded on the habitable certificate and orders raised (on assess). Voids Coordinator/Repairs Planners will make appointments with the tenant on sign up.

All void work will be completed in line with the approved Schedule of Rates.

At the void property inspection major works voids (classified in line with the Homes and Communities Agency definition) will be identified and marked on Oneserve. Where the Void Clerk of Works suspects structural repairs are required a Structural Engineer will be consulted.

Strategic Voids (e.g. isolated properties, properties with potential for extension or those where significant investment is required) will be identified in line with the Asset Management Strategy and passed to the Investment Team for further appraisal. The void property path on Northgate will be updated accordingly.

The Voids Team are currently being impacted by the proportion of new voids coming through which fall outside of the definition of a 'standard' or routine void due to the extent of work required before reletting. Approximately 50% of the Council's managed stock requires either a new kitchen, bathroom or other type of capital work. During 2019/20 the Void Repairs Team completed 265 standard voids compared with 288 major works voids. In the period April 2020 to mid-December 2020 the team has completed 343 voids. Of these 197 were standard void refurbishments compared with 146 major refurbishment voids. The quality of void properties coming forward and into the voids process directly impacts on the length of time a void property remains with the Void Repairs Team before it can be passed back to the Lettings Team for re-let. The average standard refurbishment cost for a void is £2,126.27 whereas the average Non decent voids refurbishment cost £5,257.28 per property.

Advertising and short-listing

The Council participates in a choice-based lettings scheme called Locata. Properties are

advertised on Locata for a week to allow all suitable applicants to express an interest or “bid” for a property. Once the bidding has closed a shortlist will be created prioritising applicants first by banding and then length of time in that band.

Once the shortlist is created Lettings Officers will request verification checks for the applicants at the top of the shortlist. The verification process is undertaken by the Counter Fraud team in line with the Social Housing Allocation Policy and represents a final check to ensure that, if successful, the applicant is still eligible for the property in question.

Within the Social Housing Allocations Policy there is scope for properties to be let outside of choice-based lettings in certain prescribed circumstances. This includes existing social housing tenants that are fleeing domestic abuse or homeless households who have been in temporary accommodation for longer than the average period. By directly allocating a property to a household we can provide a fast response to a specific housing need. By directly allocating to tenants fleeing domestic abuse we can move vulnerable households into safe and secure accommodation and minimise risk. By directly allocating to homeless households we can fulfil our housing duty to the applicant by making one offer of suitable accommodation and can discharge the ongoing duty if the household does not accept the accommodation.

In order to determine which properties are to be matched with direct allocations the Lettings Team ringfence properties where specific actions are undertaken to make them available for re-let. This includes property recovered due to fraud activity and those that are released due to under occupiers downsizing.

As part of the Council’s response to Covid-19, and in line with Government issued guidance, the Lettings Team stopped advertising and letting properties through choice-based lettings between March 2020 and August 2020. Direct allocations were used to ensure only essential moves continued throughout this period and to ensure void properties continued to be let.

Verification and lettings

The verification checks are in place to ensure all the information taken at the start of the application remains the same and the applicant meets the criteria for an offer of social housing. These checks are carried out by the Counter Fraud Team who review documents, carry out rent, Council Tax and ASB checks. A proportion also involve visiting properties to confirm residency and living arrangements. Once these checks are completed and outcomes notified an assessment is carried out to determine if the client still meets the requirements for the specific property. This includes property which is purpose built or adapted for people with disabilities.

Viewings

Accompanied viewings are held with prospective tenants once the property is returned to the Lettings team. Viewings are held with up to three prospective tenants and are accompanied by a Viewings Officer who can answer any questions the prospective tenant may have and record their decision, including any refusal reasons or feedback.

Multiple viewings are undertaken to reduce the turnaround time for properties. Some residents who are invited to viewings do not attend and some will refuse the property despite bidding for it. By inviting multiple applicants to view properties within allotted timeslots the Council can minimise void turnaround times and make more efficient use of Viewing Officer time.

The viewing outcomes are passed back to the Lettings team. This will work with the applicant at

the top of the short-list who accepted the property and progress the case to tenancy sign-up. If no applicant accepts the property it will be necessary to bring forward further applicants from the short-list or re-advertise if the short-list has been exhausted. This process can be repeated on several occasions until the property is let. Transparency is provided through Locata in that unsuccessful bidders can see specific details regarding the successful applicant. This includes their banding and priority award date.

The reasons for refusals are recorded on Locata and any appropriate sanctions are applied. This could include discharge of duty for unreasonable refusals for homeless applicants who have been issued a final offer letter or suspension on Locata for those that have refused three reasonable offers within a six-month timeframe.

The Voids Management Group

The Voids Management Group was established in April 2019 with the specific aim of bringing together key managers involved in the end to end voids process, improving the quality and range of management information to support scrutiny of the process and to increase overall performance. At the time the Group was established there were 220 void properties in management and teams were generally progressing the voids process via several sequential steps as reflected in Appendix 3 rather than undertaking key stages of the process in parallel.

One of the early objectives of the Group was to move towards 'parallel working' and bring forward a weekly data set which improved 'ownership' and 'accountability' for all void properties. The weekly data set places all void properties into one of three distinct groups:

- **Voids with Lettings** – these are properties which are 'ready to let' but a tenancy agreement has yet to be signed
- **Voids with Void Repairs** – these are properties which are not yet ready to let in that they require the completion of works to bring them up to the Council's 'minimum lettable standard'
- **Voids which are unavailable to let** – these include a range of properties which fall outside the definition of routine voids re-servicing and include major works voids e.g. due to fire damage or underpinning where the property is not habitable in its current condition and properties which the Council has elected not to progress with the re-let process. This could include; properties which are undergoing feasibility surveys in relation to possible conversion, change of use or extension, properties which are being considered for disposal or redevelopment and properties undergoing invasive investigation in relation to fire safety. The common theme across this group is the long- term nature of the void and that, in the interim, it is not possible or appropriate for the property to be let.

In addition to this basic division of voids the weekly data set includes:

- The full void pathway for every void let which includes the date each stage of the void is reached
- Details of all Extra Care voids which are allocated by Adult Social Care once the property is 'ready to let'
- Details of all 'forthcoming voids' i.e. properties where the Council has been given notice that the property will be coming available at a future date
- A breakdown of voids with the Lettings Team by property type
- Weekly rent loss for each group of voids
- Details of properties which are 'not available to let' and have no current expected return

date

This basic approach to grouping voids along with other aspects of the data set enabled managers to;

- Identify 'clusters' of properties which may require alternative approaches to secure re-letting
- Establish which part of the process was adding time to the overall end to end process and why
- Focus on the interfaces and interrelationships between voids moving from one group to another and where delays were occurring
- Develop target timeframes for individual stages of the void process as well as the overall targets
- Develop a performance dashboard and
- Determine 'at a glance' where resources may need to be allocated

Changes delivered since 2019

Quality assurance frameworks have been developed and put in place to pick up any anomalies at the earliest point in the process and to break the cycle of any repeat performance issues.

A tracking system has been developed and implemented between the Void Repairs Team and the Lettings Team. This system, for every void which is with Repairs, notifies the Lettings Team of the expected return date and any changes to the expected return date. Through close monitoring the Lettings Team use the date to forward plan key parts of their process including the verification of applicants and setting up viewings. It also enables Lettings Officers to chase any outstanding information or verifications to ensure all checks are completed by the time the works are completed and the property is ready to let.

A new service level agreement has been developed and agreed between Counter Fraud and Housing Services to create flexibility with verification turnaround times. In summary terms the performance expectation moved away from a blanket target time to a more targeted approach depending on what stage of the process the void is at. There is no gain in receiving verifications for applicants on a property which will not be ready to let for two weeks but real gains can be made on receiving verifications back when a property will be ready to let and a viewing has been set up with two days' notice.

Using feedback from the Viewings Officers and the dedicated Downsizing Officer within the Lettings Team, an enhanced void standard was developed and used to address high refusal rates on properties which were identified as 'harder to let'. These were principally age restricted bungalows for older people. This targeted approach produced positive outcomes and the increased void property spend was offset by reduced rent loss.

A pilot initiative has been undertaken using one of the two void repair contractors in relation to viewings whilst void repair works are in progress. This pilot has demonstrated a real improvement in void turnaround times once the property is ready to let and work is ongoing in terms of identifying properties which are suitable to view using this approach.

The Void Repairs Service undertook a retendering process in relation to its void repairs contract in the lead up to the expiry of the existing term contractor on 2nd April 2020. The tender took into consideration all aspects of a modern Void Repair Service and was geared toward a one stop shop for works of a varied nature and value, reducing the need to employ multiple contractors to

complete a single void. The tender recommended the use of two contractors to undertake void property repairs divided into North and South areas. This ensured that void properties are returned as quickly and effectively as possible and ensures that cover could be provided by one contractor if the other one failed or was unable to cope with the volume of new voids coming through. Evidence to date has demonstrated the real value of having two contractors working in parallel but able to provide mutual support.

Current service improvement objectives

Based upon progress to date it is planned to accelerate and roll out the approach to viewings whilst works are in progress to help reduce overall void to let times. The pilot approach has been restricted to family sized accommodation.

The verifications process is under review to establish if the time between verification visits can be increased whilst still maintaining the same level of assurance. This would ensure a larger pool of applicants who were verified at any one time. In addition, a targeted approach to verifications is actively being considered by way of a rolling program of visits to applicants in priority bands. This would mean that applicants would always have up to date visits and that only desktop checks would need to be completed at offer stage. This would support reduced void turnaround times and would positively impact where there is a need to progress to a second viewing.

Work is ongoing with colleagues in Adult Social Care to streamline processes associated with the reletting of Extra Care Voids and to align working practices to those followed across Housing Services. This includes reviewing what additional support can be put in place to assist residents looking to move into Extra Care.

New joint operational practice notes are being drafted to share with teams working across the void management process to ensure consistency and clarity of approach as well as embedding good practice more widely. This practice note will embed timescales and KPI's for each part of the process on a formal basis.

It is recognised that gains can be made from accelerating the number of 'pre-vacation inspections' undertaken and undertaking works prior to the property being void. Progressing this workstream has presented challenges since the onset of the pandemic but nonetheless remains a service development objective.

In line with government proposals to introduce a new 'Decent Homes Standard' it is also appropriate for the Council to review its approach to planned works programmes to maximise the potential to bring properties up to standard and in turn reduce the number of major works voids. Evidence also suggests that effective engagement with tenants during the lifetime of the tenancy to address property neglect, misuse and hoarding can have the potential to reduce the extent of works of repair and clearance at the end of a tenancy which in turn can positively impact upon relet times. A pilot approach is currently underway using a schedule of 130 properties where there has been no tenancy change for at least 10 years and a limited repair history.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

None at this stage, pending any findings by the Committee and any recommendations forwarded to Cabinet.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Appendix 1 – Void to let case study examples

The Coppice - Property was affected by fire damaged and remained empty since 27th January 2020. A decision was made that the project should be carried out by Void Repairs. The property was inspected 5th June 2020 and works commenced on 17th June 2020. The project was completed on 22nd October 2020 and returned to lettings within 20 weeks from receiving the keys. Comparative projects have usually taken a minimum of 6 months to complete, this process saved both time and reduced overall rent loss to the Council.

Before





After





Bungalow – Hayes – An incident occurred on 6th November 2020 where the property was struck by a vehicle during the night breaking through the brickwork of the bedroom of the property. As the elderly resident was not able to stay at the property the property was issued to Void Repairs. The property was inspected on 9th November 2020 and works commenced on 17th November 2020. Void Repairs assisted the elderly resident with moving their belongings to temporary accommodation by utilising term contractors. Refurbishment works internally have been completed with replacement doors and windows to the front of the property scheduled to be installed in early January 2021.

Before

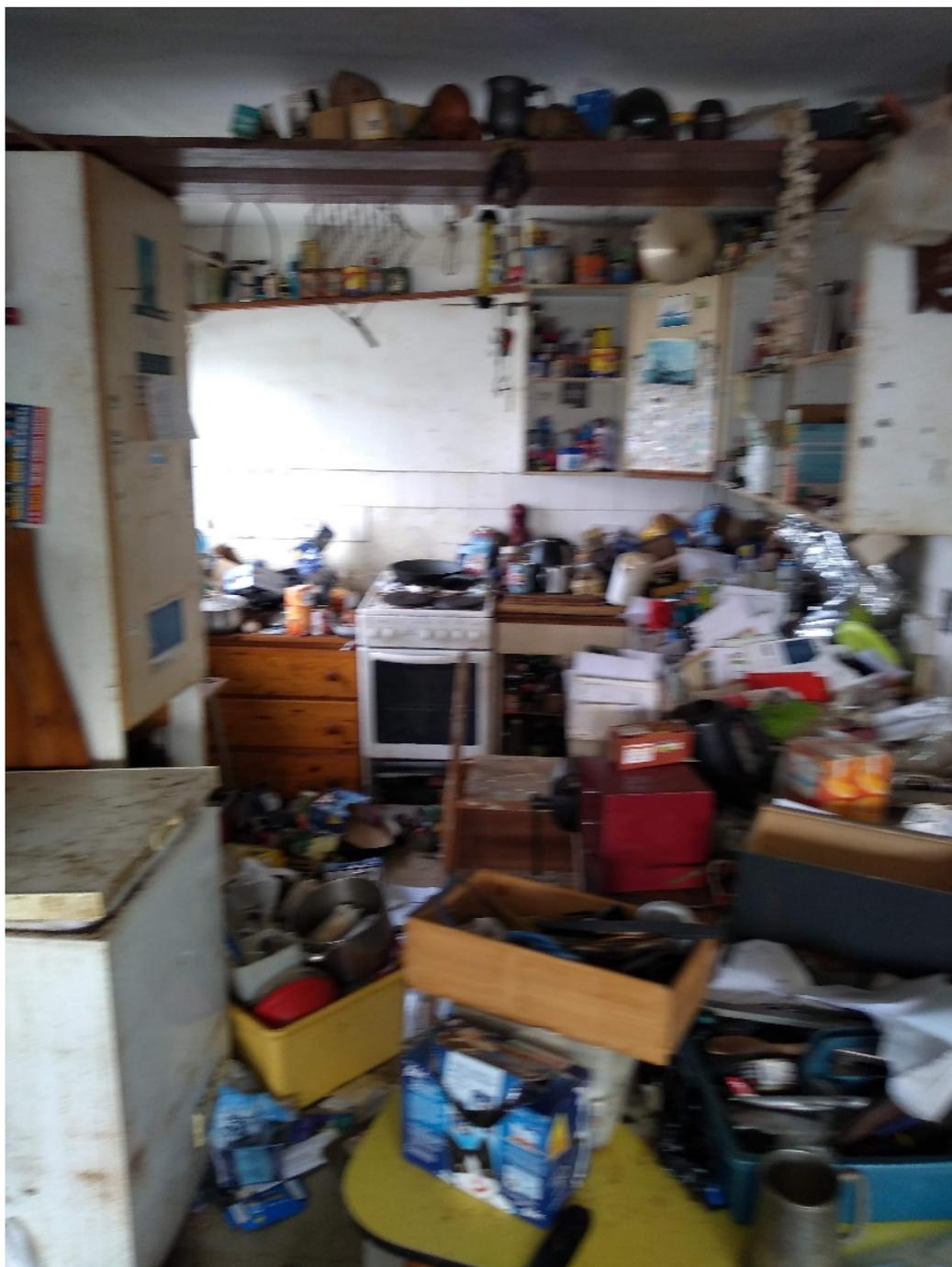


After



Fairlie House - Property was passed to Void Repairs on 19th August 2020, the inspector identified that the deceased resident was hoarding various items and the flat required extensive refurbishment including a new kitchen and bathroom to bring it to a lettable standard. Works commenced on 8th September 2020 following a large clearance of items. Works were completed on 5th October 2020.

Before



After

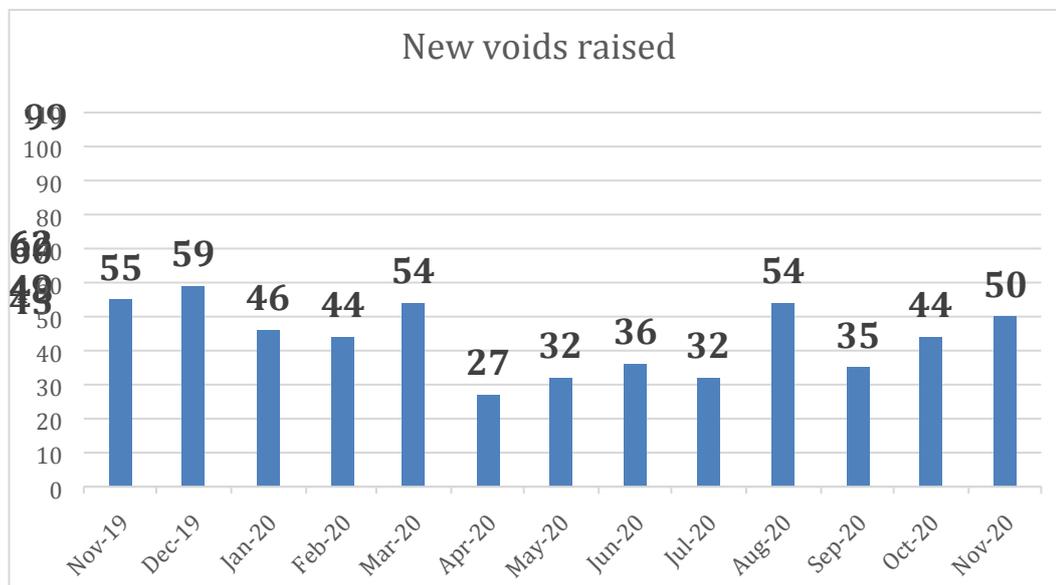


Ash Grove – This property was returned to the Council on 23rd November 2020 whilst it was still within the notice period which did not end until 30th November 2020. Works were able to be undertaken prior to the end of the tenancy and this had an impact on the overall turnaround time of the property with the works being completed on 9 December 2020 and the tenant signing that week for the property. In all this property was vacant for only 14 days.

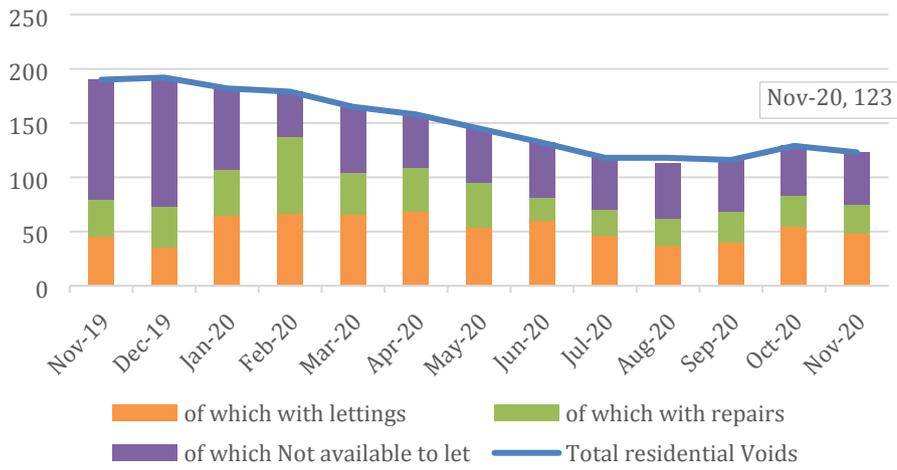
Campbell Close – This property was part of our pilot for viewings whilst works are in progress. The property became vacant on 26th October 2020. The prospective tenant viewed and accepted the property on 4 November 2020 and all verification checks were completed prior to the works being completed on 9 November 2020. This allowed for the resident to sign the tenancy agreement the day after the works were completed. This property was vacant for just 21 days.

Churchfield Close – This property was a bungalow that was identified as a possible candidate for the minimum lettable standard plus. The incoming tenant was an existing social housing tenant who was over the age of 55 and was suffering with medical conditions that meant he was struggling to maintain a larger property and garden along with the caring responsibilities for his wife. By providing additional works such as decoration in the property the couple were able to downsize from their two-bedroom property into a one bedroom.

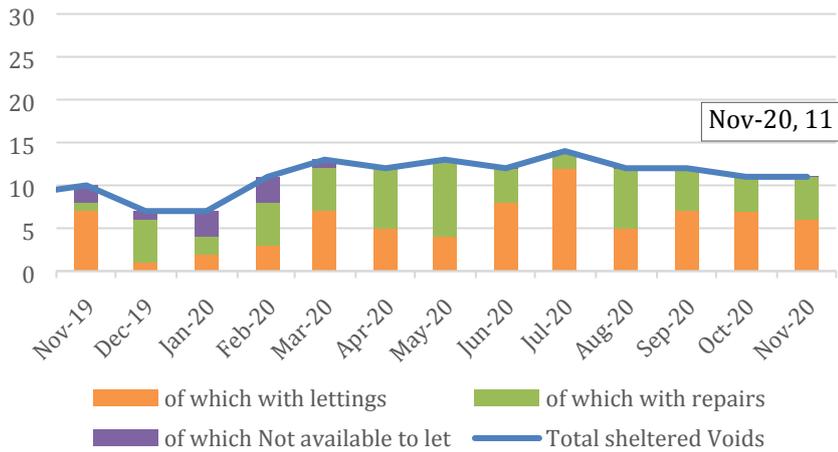
Appendix 2 – Voids Performance information – November 2019 to November 2020



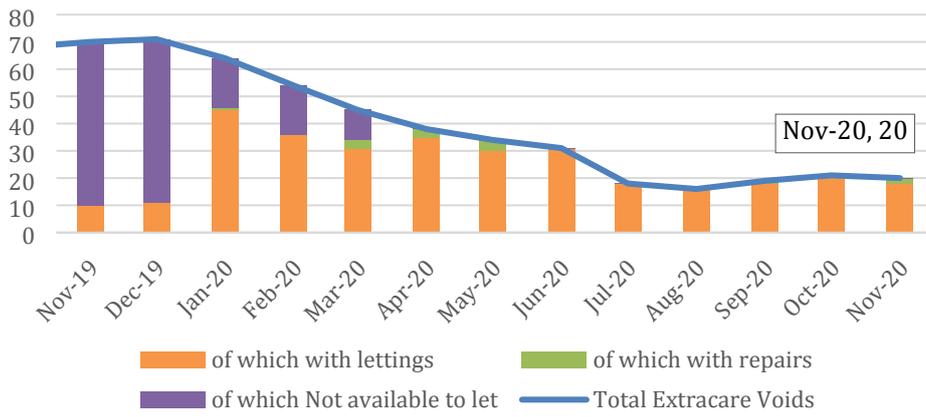
All Residential Voids



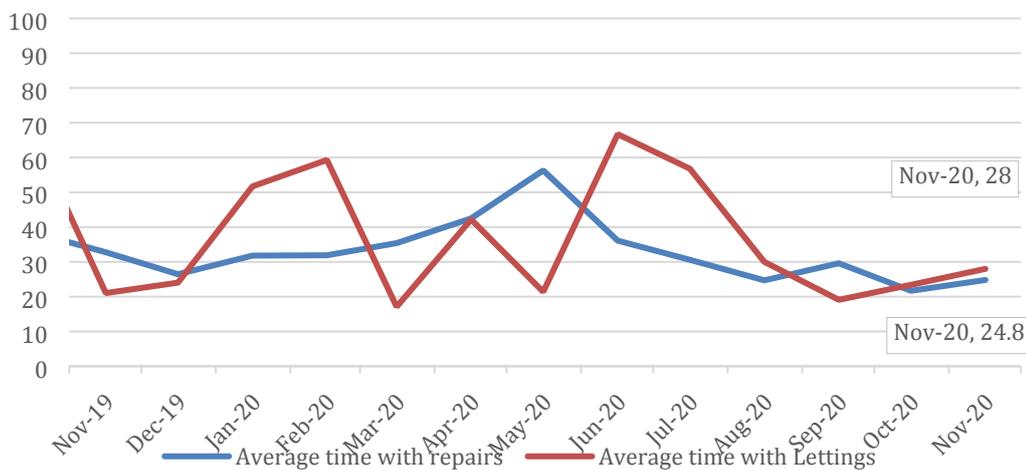
Sheltered Voids



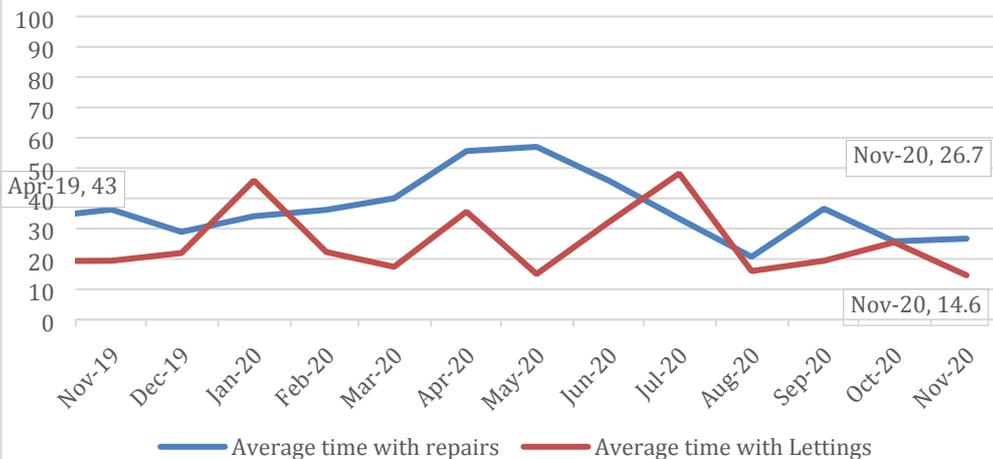
Extracare Voids

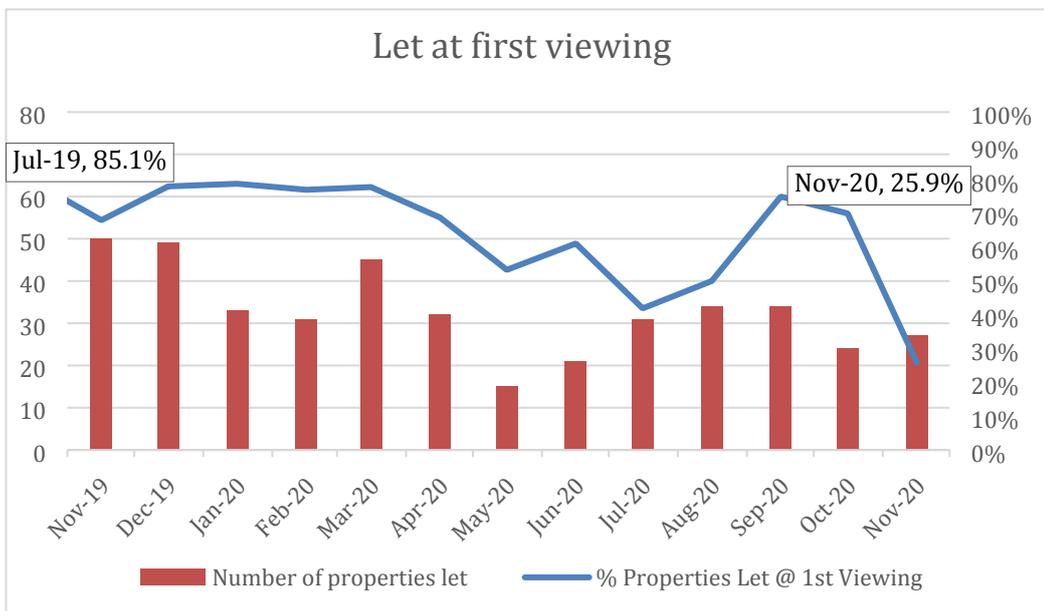
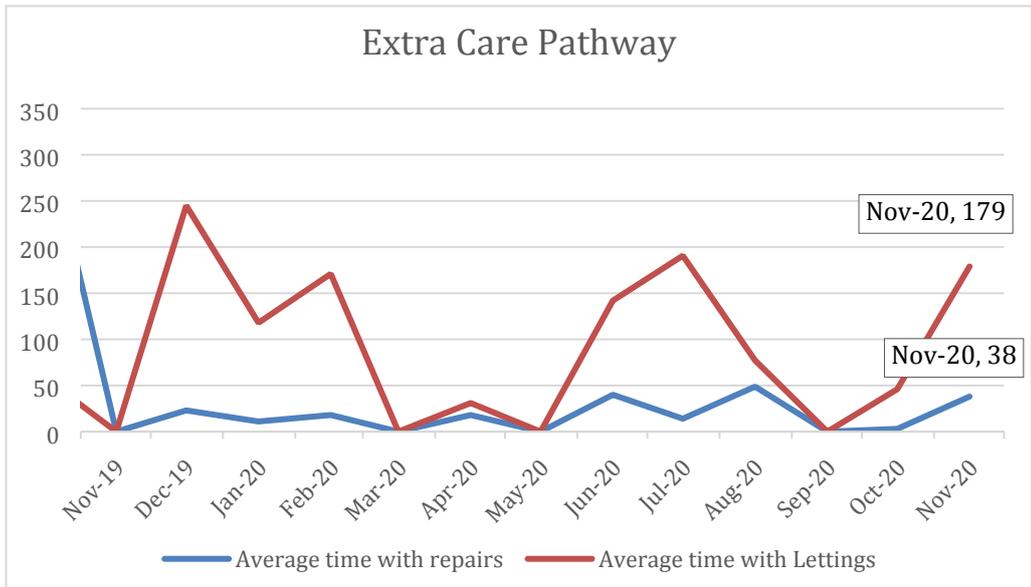


Void to Let Pathway All Properties

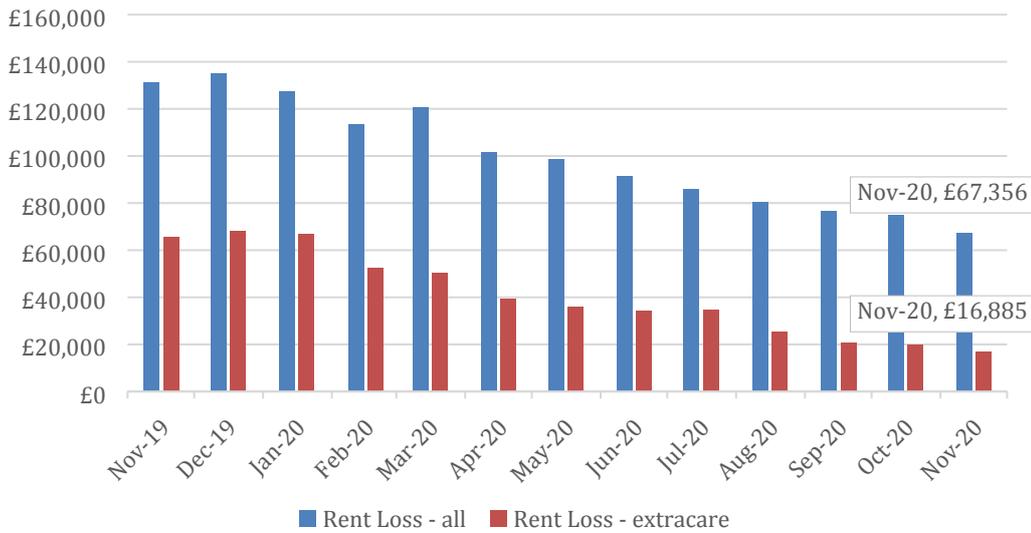


General Needs Pathway

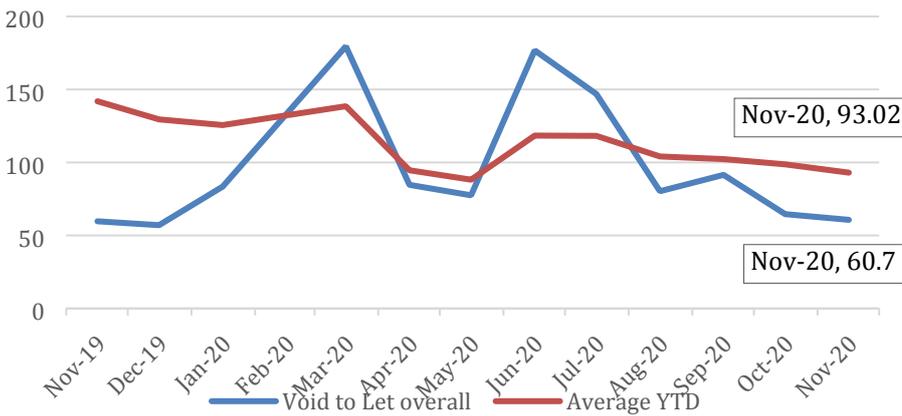




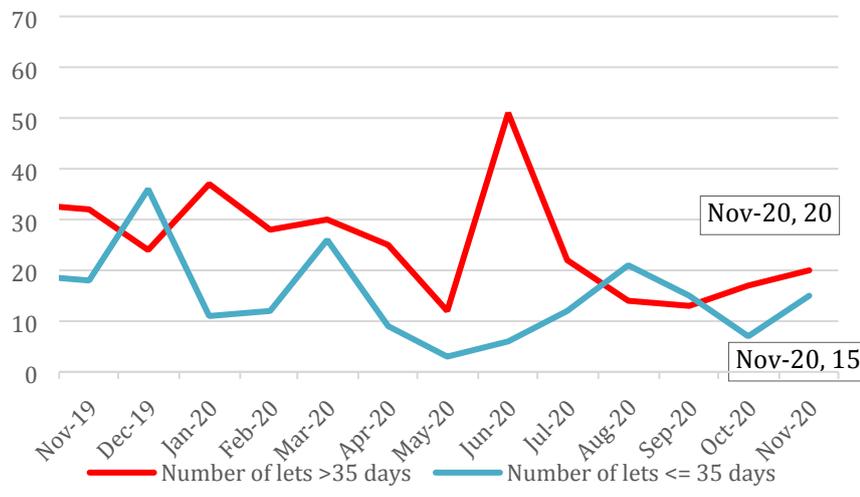
Void rent loss - Monthly - in year



Overall Void to Let timeline



Lets against 35 day target



	Tenant	Repairs	Lettings															
Appendix 3 – Sequential and parallel voids processing																		
Time Frame Void to Let																		
Void Path	Wk -4	Wk -3	Wk -2	Wk -1	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Wk 9	Wk 10	Wk 11	Wk 12	Wk 13	Wk 14+
Notice																		
Repairs - Void Inspection				1.50%	98.50%													
Repairs - Work Ordered					65%	22%	8%	2%	1%	2%								
Repairs - Work Completed					3%	23%	38%	15%	10%	4%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	
Allocations - Nomination																		
Allocations - Viewing					3%	2%	11%	16%	10%	9%	11%	5%	5%	5%	2%	2%	2%	17%
Allocations - Verification					5%	7%	9%	12%	12%	9%	6%	6%	5%	4%	2%	2%	2%	19%
Allocations - Signup					3%	6%	10%	12%	12%	10%	6%	7%	4%	4%	3%	2%	1%	21%
Allocations - Tenancy Start					13%	3%	2%	2%	6%	7%	11%	8%	7%	6%	4%	3%	4%	25%
2018_19 Performance = Week 14																		

Page 77

Time Frame Void to Let									
Void Path	Wk -4	Wk -3	Wk -2	Wk -1	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5
Notice									
Repairs - Void Inspection									
Repairs - Work Ordered									
Repairs - Work Completed									
Allocations - Nomination									
Allocations - Viewing									
Allocations - Verification									
Allocations - Signup									
Allocations - Tenancy Start									

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SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE - FORWARD PLAN

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny / Steve Clarke - Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Forward Plan
Ward	All

HEADLINES

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 which relate to services within its remit (before they are taken by the Cabinet or by the Cabinet Member).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee notes and comments on items going to Cabinet.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The latest published Forward Plan is attached, with items relevant to the Committee's brief.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Policy Overview Committees directly engage residents and external partners in the work they do.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

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Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ref

Ward(s)

Final decision by Full Council

Cabinet Member(s) Responsible

Officer Contact for further information

Consultation on the decision

NEW ITEM

Public or Private (with reason)

SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

Cabinet meeting - Thursday 21 January 2021

003	Public Health Integrated Services	Cabinet will receive a report regarding the continuation of the existing public health contracts and co-termining the end date of all such contracts to July 2022 which are currently let to the provider CNWL, as part of a transformation project. The time period will allow for the rationalisation of assets and management, and enable a move towards an integrated model.	All		Cllr Jane Palmer	RS / FD - Sally Offin / Dan Kennedy / Sharon Daye / Tony Zaman		NEW	Public
004	2020/21 Better Care Fund Section 75 Agreement	A report to Cabinet regarding the agreement under section 75 of the National Health Service Act, 2006, that will give legal effect to the 2020/21 Better Care Fund plan, including financial arrangements.	All		Cllr Jane Palmer	SC - Gary Collier			Public
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Paul Whaymand			Public
SI	Reports from Policy Overview, Scrutiny & Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		TBC	CR&S - TBC	TBC		Public

Cabinet Member Decisions expected - January 2021

007	Occupational Therapy Services for Adults and Children	Cabinet Members will consider procurement matters in relation to this service which undertakes a number of assessments for residents' social care requirements.	All		Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE / Cllr Jane Palmer / Cllr Susan O'Brien	SC / FD - Darren Thorpe / Sally Offin			Private (3)
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Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ref

Ward(s)

Final decision by Full Council

Cabinet Member(s) Responsible

Officer Contact for further information

Consultation on the decision

NEW ITEM

Public or Private (with reason)

SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	CR&S - Democratic Services	Various		Public
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Cabinet meeting - Thursday 18 February 2021

010	Community Equipment contract extension for two years 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023	Cabinet will consider the Community Equipment contract extension for two years 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023. The current supplier is Medequip Assistive Technology. Hillingdon are part of a London consortium group and the call off contract arrangement is administered by Westminster City Council.	N/A		Cllr Jane Palmer	FD / SC - Sally Offin / Darren Thorpe		NEW	Private (3)
011	Contract extension award for Carer Support Services	Cabinet will consider a contract extension for Carer Support Services for adults, children and young people for a two year period from 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2023. The current provider is the Carers Trust Hillingdon.	N/A		Cllr Jane Palmer	FD / SC - Gavin Fernandez / Sally Offin		NEW	Private (3)
014	Contract extension - Revenues and Benefits Service	Cabinet will consider an extension to the current contract for the Revenue and Benefits service, which undertakes the collection and recovery of Council Tax, business rates, the processing of benefits claims and related queries.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Muir Laurie			Private (3)

Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ref

Ward(s)

Final decision by Full Council

Cabinet Member(s) Responsible

Officer Contact for further information

Consultation on the decision

NEW ITEM

Public or Private (with reason)

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015	The Council's Budget - Medium Term Financial Forecast 2021/22 - 2025/26 (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)	Following consultation, this report will set out the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2021/22 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration.	All	TO FULL COUNCIL 25/2/21	Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE & Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Paul Whaymand	Public consultation through the Policy Overview Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers		Public
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Paul Whaymand			Public
SI Dec 03	Reports from Policy Overview, Scrutiny & Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		TBC	CR&S - TBC	TBC		Public

Cabinet Member Decisions expected - February 2021

SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	CR&S - Democratic Services	Various		Public
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Cabinet meeting - Thursday 18 March 2021

SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Paul Whaymand			Public
SI	Reports from Policy Overview, Scrutiny & Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		TBC	CR&S - TBC	TBC		Public

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 or Private (with reason)
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SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

Cabinet Member Decisions expected - March 2021

Ref	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	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 or Private (with reason)
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	CR&S - Democratic Services	Various		Public

Cabinet meeting - Thursday 22 April 2021

SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Paul Whaymand			Public
SI	Reports from Policy Overview, Scrutiny & Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		TBC	CR&S - TBC	TBC		Public

Cabinet Member Decisions expected - April 2021

SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	CR&S - Democratic Services	Various		Public
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Cabinet Member Decisions: Standard Items (SI) that may be considered each month

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 or Private (with reason)

SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

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 or Private (with reason)
SI	Urgent Cabinet-level decisions & interim decision-making (including emergency decisions)	The Leader of the Council has the necessary constitutional authority to make decisions that would otherwise be reserved to the Cabinet, in the absence of a Cabinet meeting or in urgent circumstances. Any such decisions will be published in the usual way and reported to a subsequent Cabinet meeting for ratification. A fuller notice period for any key decisions to be taken will be given, where practicably possible. The Leader may also take emergency decisions without notice, in particular in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be ratified at a later Cabinet meeting.	Various		Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE	CR&S - Democratic Services	TBC		Public / Private
SI	Expenditure Approval: ICT Equipment, Furniture and General Equipment	To approve or not, the release of funds for certain types of discretionary expenditure, following new expenditure approval controls agreed by Cabinet on 21 January 2016 to enable greater scrutiny of expenditure in these areas, further enhancing the Council's strong financial management.	N/A		Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE and Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Corporate Procurement	None		Public
SI	Ward Budget Initiative	To approve the spending of Ward Budgets following applications from Ward Councillors - this will be done on a monthly or regular cycle.	All		Cllr Douglas Mills / Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE	RS - Helena Webster	Local consultation within the Ward undertaken by Ward Councillors		Public
SI	Business, shops and commercial rents, leases, surrenders and renewals	To approve various rents, leases, surrenders and lease renewals for a variety of businesses, organisations, properties or via commercial transactions, as per thresholds for decision-making set out in the Procurement and Contract Standing Orders.	Various		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	RS - Mike Paterson			Private (3)

Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ref

Ward(s)

Final decision by Full Council

Cabinet Member(s) Responsible

Officer Contact for further information

Consultation on the decision

NEW ITEM

Public or Private (with reason)

SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

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 or Private (with reason)
SI	To consider rent reviews	To consider rent reviews of commercial and other premises.	tbc		Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE / Cllr Jonathan Bianco	RS - Mike Patterson			Private (1,2,3)
SI	School Governing Bodies and Governors / Authorising Academy Appointments	To approve appointments, nominate appointments and make reappointments of local authority governors and to approve any changes to school governing body constitutions. To also authorise any Member to be a Governor or Director of an Academy.	N/A		Cllr Susan O'Brien	CR&S - Democratic Services			Public
SI Page 86	Appointment of Consultants & agency staff	To consider the appointment of consultants where the cost is between £5,000 and £50,000. To appoint individual temporary and agency workers between this value for senior management posts. To also accept the appointment of any consultants delegated by Cabinet.	N/A		Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE	various			Private (1,2,3)
SI	Release of Capital Funds	The release of all capital monies requires formal Member approval, unless otherwise determined either by the Cabinet or the Leader. Batches of monthly reports (as well as occasional individual reports) to determine the release of capital for any schemes already agreed in the capital budget and previously approved by Cabinet or Cabinet Members	TBC		Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE / Cllr Jonathan Bianco	various	Corporate Finance		Public but some Private (1,2,3)
SI	The purchase of ex Council properties or new private properties for the Council's housing supply	The Leader of the Council may determine, as and when required, the purchase of new properties using HRA capital funds to increase the affordable housing stock within the Borough. Such acquisitions will be reported back to Cabinet.	TBC		Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE / Cllr Jonathan Bianco	Jean Palmer OBE			Private (1,2,3)

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 or Private (with reason)

SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

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 or Private (with reason)
SI	Petitions about matters under the control of the Cabinet	Cabinet Members will consider a number of petitions received by local residents and organisations and decide on future action. These will be arranged as Petition Hearings.	TBC		All	CR&S - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Local Safety Schemes and Parking Revenue Account funded schemes	To consider petitions received and decide on future action	TBC		Cllr Keith Burrows	RS - David Knowles	Traffic Liaison Group		Public
SI	Pedestrian Crossings	To approve schemes to provide crossing facilities	TBC		Cllr Keith Burrows	RS - David Knowles			Public
SI	To approve debt / write offs	To approve individual case of debt / write offs that are in excess of £5000 but under £50,000.	n/a		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	various			Private (1,2,3)
SI	To approve compensation payments	To approve compensation payments in relation to any complaint to the Council in excess of £1000.	n/a		All	various			Private (1,2,3)
SI	Transport - Local Implementation Programme	Local Implementation Programme including schemes for the public realm, parking, road safety, school travel, walking, cycling, air quality improvement and Traffic Regulation Orders.	TBC		Cllr Keith Burrows and Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE	RS - David Knowles			Public
SI	Acceptance of Tenders	To accept quotations, tenders, contract extensions and contract variations valued between £50k and £500k in their Portfolio Area where funding is previously included in Council budgets.	n/a		All	various			Private (3)

Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ward(s)

Ref

Final decision by Full Council

Cabinet Member(s) Responsible

Officer Contact for further information

Consultation on the decision

NEW ITEM

Public or Private (with reason)

SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

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 or Private (with reason)
SI	All Delegated Decisions by Cabinet to Cabinet Members, including tender and property decisions	Where previously delegated by Cabinet, to make any necessary decisions, accept tenders, bids and authorise property decisions / transactions in accordance with the Procurement and Contract Standing Orders.	TBC		All	various			Public / Private (1,2,3)
SI	School Redundancy Payments	To consider requests for School Redundancy Payments and decide whether to approve them on behalf of the Local Authority	TBC		Cllr Susan O'Brien	RS - Daniel Kennedy			Private (1,2,3)
SI	Sale, and conversion, of loft space to leaseholders and also extension of Leasehold Interests of flats under the 1993 Act	To consider any issues in relation to loft space and also consider an extension of the leasehold interests for several flats where the Council as freeholder has received an application under the Leasehold Reform Housing and Urban Development Act 1993. The report will recommend grant of the extensions in each case where the Notice is valid and in accordance with legislation.	TBC		Cllr Philip Corthorne / Cllr Jonathan Bianco	RS - Mike Paterson			Private (1,2,3)
SI	Chrysalis Programme of Environmental Improvements	The Cabinet Member will be asked to consider the approval of projects.	Various		Cllr Douglas Mills	RS - Helena Webster / Perry Scott			Public
SI	External funding bids	To authorise the making of bids for external funding where there is no requirement for a financial commitment from the Council.	n/a		All	various			Public
SI	Appeals in relation to business rates (NNDR)	To determine appeals in relation to business rates following a decision by the Council.	TBC		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	Maureen Pemberton			Private (1,2,3)

Upcoming Decisions

Further details

Ward(s)

Ref	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Officer Contact for further information	Consultation on the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI		All	various			Public

SI = Standard Item each month

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services SC = Social Care CR&S = Corporate Resources & Services FD= Finance

The Cabinet's Forward Plan is an official document by the London Borough of Hillingdon, UK

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SOCIAL CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny / Steve Clarke, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Work Programme
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To enable the Committee to track the progress of its work in 2020/21 and forward plan its work for the current municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee considers the report and agrees any amendments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. The Committee's meetings tend to start at 7pm and the witnesses attending each of the meetings are generally representatives from external organisations, some of whom travel from outside of the Borough. At present, meetings are being held virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting dates for this municipal year are as follows:

Meetings	Room
19 January 2021, 7pm	Virtual
9 February 2021, 7pm	Virtual
25 March 2021, 7pm	TBC
13 April 2021, 7pm	TBC

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Policy Overview Committees directly engage residents and external partners in the work they do.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

Multi year work programme

May 2018 - May 2022

2021

Social Care, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee

September 23	October 21	November 26	December CABINET	January 19	February 9	March 25	April 13	May CABINET	June TBC
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REVIEW : Making the Council more autism friendly

Topic selection / scoping stage	Review update								
Witness / evidence / consultation stage		Witness 2	Witness 3						
Findings, conclusions and recommendations					Findings	Agree recommendations	Present draft report		
Final review report agreement								CABINET?	
Target Cabinet reporting									

Regular service & performance monitoring

Mid year Budget Update	X								
Annual complaints & service update report	X								
Children's Safeguarding Partnership (formerly the LSCB)	X								
Annual SAB (Adults Safeguarding Board report)	X								
Quality and Capacity of the Community Mental Health Services in Hillingdon		X							
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services update		X							
Looked After Children Performance Data									
Report / minutes from the Corporate Parenting Panel		X	X				X		X
Cabinet's budget proposals for next financial year					X				
Cabinet Forward Plan Monthly Monitoring	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

One-off service monitoring

Hillingdon Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy							X		
Better Care Fund Plan									
Update on Telecare Line							X		
Semi - independent living for young people								X	
Update on the Carers Strategy Update				X					
Online Housing Benefit Applications				X					
Housing Briefing (update on housing stock and zero carbon commitment)						X			
Management of voids					X				
Covid-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan		X							

Multi year work programme										
May 2018 - May 2022					2021					
Social Care, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
	23	21	26	CABINET	19	9	25	13	CABINET	TBC
Past review delivery										
Universal Credit 1 year on (as per recommendation approved with claimant stats and experience)			X							
Becoming an Autism Friendly Council										
Internal use only										
Report deadline	11 Sept 2020	9 Oct 2020	13 Nov 20		6 Jan 21	27 Jan 20	12 March 21	1 April 21		
Agenda published	15 Sept 2020	13 Oct 2020	18 Nov 20		11 Jan 21	1 Feb 21	17 March 21	5 April 21		