

## Minutes

### RESIDENTS, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

17 March 2021



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

	<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b> Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman), John Morgan (Vice-Chairman), Allan Kauffman, Devi Radia, Stuart Mathers, Paula Rodrigues, Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead), Colleen Sullivan, Alan Chapman and Tony Little.</p> <p><b>Also Present:</b> Cristi Gonzalez (Ealing Adult Learning Manager) Eamon Scanlon (Head of Adult Learning and Skills Service, LB Hammersmith and Fulham)</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Neil Fraser (Democratic Services Officer), Dan Kennedy (Director, Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services), Rani Dady (School Improvement / Governance / Moderation Manager), Stuart Hunt (Green Spaces Service Manager), Sarah Phillips (School Place Planning Project Manager), Debbie Scarborough (Adult &amp; Community Learning - Service Manager), Naveed Mohammed (Head of Business Performance &amp; Insight) and Abi Preston (Head of Education Improvement &amp; Partnerships)</p>
50.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
51.	<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
52.	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be considered in public.</p>
53.	<p><b>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The clerk provided updates on the additional information requested at the previous meeting:</p> <p>On Rivers and Towpaths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regarding the 150m threshold for developments near canals and rivers, this had</li></ul>

been confirmed to be a national direction and not locally set.

- It was the Canal and Rivers Trust's responsibility to maintain and clean (litter pick) towpaths, using their own cleaning contractor, Fountains, as well as local community groups or businesses.

On the Cabinet Forward Plan:

- It was confirmed that Policy Overview Committees were not consultees on every Cabinet report, and instead were only listed on the Forward Plan for those items where they would be part of a consultation. On the climate change action plan, the Climate Emergency declaration approved by full Council stated that the Corporate Services POC would lead on monitoring the Cabinet's action plan following its approval at Cabinet. Other POC's could determine whether they wished to be part of any consultation on this item, though the Corporate Services POC would lead on this.

It was requested that the clerk review and confirm to Members why the Corporate Services POC had been chosen as the lead Committee.

It was highlighted that Mr Little's attendance at the previous meeting had been omitted from the minutes document included with the meeting papers.

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2021 be approved as a correct record, subject to Mr Little's attendance being included.**

54. **SECOND WITNESS SESSION FOR REVIEW INTO HILLINGDON'S ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning), Cristi Gonzalez (Ealing Adult Learning Manager), and Eamon Scanlon (Head of Adult Learning and Skills Service, LB Hammersmith and Fulham) were present to provide information as part of the second witness session for the review into the Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning Service.

The report included with the meeting papers detailed a summary of the service's planning for the next academic year. In addition, a forthcoming bid to the GLA for an additional £200k over 2 years was to be submitted in the coming days. This funding was confirmed to be in addition to the current levels of GLA funding which had been set many years ago, and which provided some authorities with significantly higher or lower funding. The Committee was advised that this historic GLA funding could potentially be reviewed, but that lobbying of the GLA would likely be required.

Neither Ealing nor Hammersmith and Fulham received direct funding from their councils, with all funding received via grants from the GLA or ESFA. Fees were charged where appropriate, with lower fees or concessions provided for learners receiving benefits or from certain socio-economic backgrounds.

On learning venues, Hillingdon was confirmed to use schools, children's centres, libraries and other venues, including Brookfield, a dedicated venue.

Regarding mental health of learners, Hillingdon provided support free of charge to all

learners. Fees received were used to support those learners who did not pay for courses. Attendees advised that interdepartmental working had increased, for example via referrals to the social care teams. External organisations such as MIND were also being engaged. Officers were proactive, with targeted outreach involving GP's, neighbourhood care teams, public health etc. It was recognised that further work could be done to promote the services available. Ealing and Hammersmith and Fulham highlighted additional engagement with partners such as MENCAP, housing associations, Holey, and the educational training foundation, among others.

Changes to the services as a result of the pandemic included continued provision of 'blended learning' with a number of courses remaining online, alongside an increased focus on courses linked to health and wellbeing. The importance of providing face to face learning to allow for social interaction and engagement between learners had been recognised, as well as for those learners who were unable to use remote learning technology. Internal working practices between departments had also been strengthened.

Partnership working between Hillingdon and other authorities included a regular online meeting to discuss how to overcome challenges or share best practice. Joint training sessions and the sharing of resource materials was also carried out, while authorities often submitted joint bids for funding, where appropriate. Each authority in an attendance also drafted an annual self-assessment of their service, which was then peer reviewed by the other councils.

Regarding the rebuilding of Harlington school, it was confirmed that classes would continue to be run in the school while the rebuild was underway. However, once complete, the new site would have lower available space for in-person classes, and officers were working to identify long terms solutions to address this.

The Committee thanked the witnesses for their time and noted the information provided.

55. **UPDATE ON TREE PLANTING IN THE BOROUGH** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Stuart Hunt (Green Spaces Service Manager) introduced a report detailing Tree Planting within the Borough. It was highlighted that Hillingdon had planted 6,250 trees over the preceding 12 months, and had removed 215.

Members asked a number of questions, including:

**Did Hillingdon have a target for annual tree planting?**

There was no set target, though the service attempted to plant on a 1:1 basis at a minimum. Potentially, a new strategic plan, linked to the urban forest plan, S106 funding etc, could provide a target.

**Was data on Tree Protections Orders (TPOs) by ward available?**

Data was available, though some TPO locations were area based, and therefore not as specific. All data was available via the website.

**Was there any way to increase tree planting on public highways?**

Highways were recognised as hostile environments for trees to grow, and the service was therefore looking at alternate sites for planting. However, highways would continue

to be looked at as potential locations, particularly if deemed suitable for trees to act as traffic calming measures.

**Was there a strategic plan for ancient woodlands? Many areas had dead branches that could cause injury to the public.**

Strategic plans had been agreed with National England and were in place. Walking routes were inspected annually to safeguard the public, though it was recognised that fallen branches or leaves were good for the ecosystem and demonstrated that the area was healthy.

**Were schools and pupils involved in addressing pollution?**

The service engaged with the school staff, and provided them with materials in a child friendly format for dissemination to their pupils.

**The Borough's award of Tree Cities of the World status was recognised as a considerable achievement. Was this award applied for?**

The award was applied for as part of a lengthy process wherein a borough must demonstrate that it met certain criteria. This was the first year Hillingdon had applied for the award.

**Was there data available for green hedges around schools, and for tree planting in areas of high pollution?**

The officer would review the available data for sharing with the Committee following the meeting. It was recognised that addressing air pollution was part of the Borough's Air Quality Action Plan.

Instant hedges were recognised as being expensive to produce and difficult to maintain. In general, trees and hedges survived better when planting small.

**What legislation was available to protect trees and saplings?**

The TPOs in place protected trees and saplings from felling. Further messaging on the importance of trees was also being shared with residents by Hillingdon and Central Government.

**What could the Council do to address the impact of large projects, such as HS2 or a potential 3<sup>rd</sup> runway at Heathrow, on trees?**

For large projects, the planning process would set out the developer's obligations to protect or replace trees, with a view to ensuring at least 1:1 replacement if existing trees were to be removed.

**Was the Council working with local business to sponsor tree planting?**

The service was reviewing this, with a view to engaging local businesses to sponsor tree planting on sites such as roundabouts, etc.

**Breakspear Crematorium was not referenced within the report. Why?**

Space at the crematorium was limited, and so tree planting on site was limited to 1:1 replacement of existing trees, where required.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

56. **QUARTERLY SCHOOL PLACES UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Sarah Phillips (School Place Planning Project Manager) introduced the quarterly school places planning report. It was highlighted that more complete data would be provided within the next report, which would include data from the January census and the primary offer day.

In general, schools were continuing to function well during the pandemic, with most remaining full in terms of pupil numbers. Where required, officers were working with schools to address issues resulting from the pandemic.

Primary school numbers remained stable, with up to 12 primary schools being reviewed for potential reductions in the PANs. Further detail would be provided as part of the next report.

Demand for secondary school places continued to be high, with the Borough identifying 140 vacant places at secondary schools, which was lower than the 5% margin recommended by the DfE. It was expected that the majority of these places would be filled through the year and so places would be tight.

For 2022 enrolment, it was recognised that the current year 5 group had over 100 more pupils than the year 6 who were the basis of the Year 7 numbers, and pupils would be accommodated by more temporary places, or an increase in pupils going out of borough, until the new school and expansion due to open in 2024 would accommodate the increased pupil numbers.

A review of provision at special schools was underway to ensure the changing needs of pupils continued to be met. New special schools were in development, to open between 2022 and 2024, and planning was underway for enrolment at these schools, which would reduce the use of expensive out of borough places.

Members asked a number of questions, including:

**Some parents had refused offers of places at secondary schools. Was this linked to certain areas of the Borough, or Ofsted reports?**

A number of parents chose to decline offers if not offered their top preferences. It was expected that many of these would subsequently accept offers at a later date. It was recognised that some schools had received fewer requests for places than others, which seemed due to locations, travel and lower Ofsted grades.

**Some special schools, such as Willow, appeared to take double the number of pupils than others. Why was this?**

Willow roll had been stable at around 60 pupils and remained the smallest special school, however, the proportion of the roll that were Hillingdon residents had risen from below half. The full January rolls of all the special schools and the number of Hillingdon residents on roll would be reported after the meeting.

**The report appeared to omit the 6 secondary schools that were deemed to 'require improvement'. Could a full audit of all schools be provided?**

There were 6 secondary schools with Year 7 intake and one UTC and one studio school with Year 10 intakes, that were deemed to 'require improvement.'

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

57. **STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION 2019-20** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Abi Preston (Head of Education Improvement & Partnerships) introduced the annual Standards and Quality in Education report. It was highlighted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, no statutory assessment data for 2019/20 or 2020/21 was available. Instead, the data was based on 2018/19.

Data available showed that attainment and progress within the primary phases were either in line with or above national level for all key measures. For the secondary phase KS4 outcomes and progress had decreased slightly but still remained above national averages, and at post-16 level progress had been made but did continue to underperform. This would continue to be a key priority moving forward.

Due to the pandemic, the full Ofsted framework was suspended and instead limited to monitoring visits for the majority of the year. During 2019-20 87% of all schools were judged as good or better compared to 88% in 2018/19, and this was broadly the same during the pandemic. There were 15 schools inspected prior to the Ofsted framework being paused due to COVID-19, one demonstrated an improvement to the final inspection judgments and moved from 'requires improvement' to 'good', whilst 11 of the 15 retained their previous inspection judgments. Three of the 15 schools during this period received a downgraded judgment and of those, two were academy schools which we are working closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner to support their improvement.

For the Council's schools at risk register, there were 19 schools that were at risk of underperformance in Hillingdon, which had increased by one from the previous year. Of this, 9 of the schools were maintained by the Council and are already in receipt of intensive monitoring, challenge and support by officers. To continue to support schools, a new four-tier categorisation and support model for schools has been introduced, which included a new category called the 'Watch' category which is a form of light touch support for schools with just one area of need rather than a number of areas of need for support. Templates had been updated, and included a new support plan for schools in the Targeted and Intensive categories, so that objectives and impacts were clear and understood.

The team had been focusing on supporting schools through lockdown and the challenges the pandemic has brought. Schools had done really well to respond to the regularly updated guidance throughout, and officers had supported schools with a key focus on supporting remote learning policies, ensuring that disadvantaged children had devices and could access remote learning tools. Officers had since been supporting children returning back to school and were focusing on catch-up funding and how to support schools to close any gaps for the children resulting from the pandemic.

Members asked a number of questions, including:

**Was there any data on the ethnicity and gender of pupils, and if so, did that data highlight any concerns?**

Such data could be provided to the Committee following the meeting.

**How quickly did the Regional Schools Commission (RSC) respond? Did they offer support to schools?**

Officers were in regular contact with the RSC, including weekly calls, and the RSC was very responsive. However, it was recognised that the RSC operated differently to the Council, with less of a focus on individual schools.

**Was the Council appropriately resourced to improve performance?**

Hillingdon was a 'high delegating' Borough, which meant that a high level of funding went directly to the schools. There were opportunities for schools to pool their resources and increase their working relationships. It was recognised that some schools required additional support, and a review was underway on how best to provide this. School leaders are positive about the proposed review which is due to take place in the next few months .

**Did the delay in processing Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) impact on the Council's ability to place pupils and provide support?**

Work had been carried out to address the backlog of EHCP applications. Over the last 12 months, a record number of applications had been processed on time. Further dialogue around how to provide in-year support in the face of changing pupil need was underway.

**Were small cohorts, such as pupils being home schooled, care leavers, etc, provided targeted support?**

Dedicated support was provided where required. Support would continue to be reviewed to ensure flexibility in light of changing circumstances (e.g. the pandemic).

It was suggested that when compiling data around those not in employment, education or training (NEET) the figures include those 'not known', to provide a more accurate number.

Members thanked officers for the detailed report but referenced previous requests to have such reports broken down to promote ease of understanding. It was suggested that officers produce 2 smaller reports, with one setting out results, and the other linked to improvements. In addition, the Committee had previously requested that reports include detail of performance versus other London boroughs and statistical neighbours, instead of national figures., as well as how Hillingdon was supporting the 14 planning areas. The need to identify best practice from neighbours, particularly those with schools in areas with higher levels of deprivation, was highlighted.

Officers agreed that future reports would be reviewed to provide data in a different format as requested.

It was suggested that the comments of the Committee recognise the continued support by officers for learning and well-being, through what had been a challenging time. However, there continued to be concerns around school performance which put Hillingdon below the London average in some stages, and suggested that Hillingdon looked at best practice delivered by other councils, so that Hillingdon's position compared to other London boroughs and statistical neighbours could be improved. It

was agreed that the final wording of the Committee's comments be delegated to the clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition lead.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. That the final wording of the Committee's comments be delegated to the clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Opposition lead.**

58. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 9*)

Consideration was given to the Cabinet Forward Plan.

It was suggested that an item on climate change be added to the Committee's work programme, if the report was approved by Cabinet.

**RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.**

59. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 10*)

Consideration was given the Committee's Work Programme.

Further to comments on agenda item 9, it was suggested that an item on climate change be added to the Committee's work programme, if the report was approved by Cabinet.

On the matter of the Youth Services item scheduled for the April meeting, Dan Kennedy (Director - Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services) informed the Committee that a review of the service was currently being undertaken, and it was therefore requested that the item be deferred until the review was completed.

This was agreed, though some Members expressed disappointment in the deferral of the item. It was requested that the clerk liaise with officers to agree a new meeting date for the item as soon as possible.

It was suggested that new items on abandoned vehicles, and illegal felling of trees, be considered for inclusion on the Programme.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the Work Programme be noted;**
- 2. That the item on Youth Services be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee;**
- 3. That new items relating to climate change, abandoned vehicles, and illegal felling of trees be considered for inclusion on the Programme.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.34 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Neil Fraser on 01895 250682. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.



