

Minutes

Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities
Policy Overview Committee
Tuesday, 13 October 2020
Meeting held at VIRTUAL - Live on the Council's
YouTube channel: Hillingdon London



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Members Present:

Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman)
Lindsay Bliss
Nicola Brightman
Alan Deville
Jazz Dhillon (Opposition Lead)
Scott Farley
Martin Goddard
Wayne Bridges

Apologies:

Vanessa Hurhangee

Officers Present:

Kevin Byrne, Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships
Ian Anderson, Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries
Luke Taylor, Democratic Services Officer

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hurhangee.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020 were received as a correct record.

15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

16. ANNUAL COMPLAINT & SERVICE MONITORING REPORT

The Business Manager for Complaints and Enquiries introduced the report, which detailed information and analysis of complaints and Members' Enquiries (MEs) received between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020.

Members heard that the number of informal complaints received during this period had reduced from 2,756 to 2,339, a drop of 15%, with a 3% increase of Stage 1 complaints (from 837 to 861), a small increase at Stage 2 (from 73 to 80), and no Stage 3 complaints were received for this period. There had also been a significant drop in Ombudsman investigations from 86 to 59, while compliments increased substantially from 234 to 301. The Business Manger expected the volume of complains to double for 2020/21 as a significant number of compliments had been received in relation to wildflowers planted across the Borough. MEs had seen a small drop from 11,675 to 11,423 but remained consistent. The Business Manager for Complaints and Enquiries confirmed that next year a five year analysis will be provided to the Committee. Waste Services also received the most MEs, with 5,949 enquiries, more than many other areas combined.

Councillors were informed that an analysis of complaints showed that delays or poor communication accounted for the majority of justified complaints, and it was vital that response times for complaints in some areas improved.

Responding to the Committee's questioning, the Business Manager for Complaints and Enquiries noted that Stage 1 complaints could take from four to five hours on average to investigate and respond. Enquiries from the Ombudsman took considerably longer to process, and on average this would take up five to seven hours of officer time to provide the information requested. Members also heard that complaints regarding Children's Services were even more time consuming as they were split into three tiers, with Stages 2 and 3 of this statutory process requiring independent investigators to be appointed and the need for all officers to be interviewed. There is also a financial cost to the Council for Stages 2 and 3. Although the Council did not receive many of these complaints, they do take up a considerable amount of time of staff at officer, manager and Head of Service levels.

The Business Manager for Complaints and Enquiries stated that, with regards to anti-social behaviour complaints, GDPR requires that we do not disclose to a complainant any personal details relating to their neighbour. This means that when a complaint is received, officers will not be able to tell a complainant what specific action was taken against their neighbour, if any, but a response in general terms will usually be issued. The Committee heard that there have been more anti-social behaviour complaints during the Covid-19 pandemic, including on noise and parking.

Members noted that the Council is focused in using feedback received to drive up service improvement in many areas, and thanked officers for their good work and the comprehensive report.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Complaint and Service Monitoring Report for 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 be noted.

17. REVIEW D: SCOPING REPORT

Members considered a draft scoping report that put forward an initial plan for the Committee's next review.

The Head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships introduced the scoping report, and stated that it provided a brief overview of the voluntary sector's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Hillingdon, which would be expanded on in the future witness sessions.

Members were informed that a review into the topic would not only look at the response to residents' needs, but also consider the impact the pandemic had on the voluntary sector. The Committee noted that a lot happened over a very quick period of time in response to the pandemic, but overall the Council and voluntary sector worked well together and received good feedback from residents.

The head of Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships confirmed that the response to the pandemic may continue to be a challenge over the coming months, but there were a number of different witnesses who could be asked to attend the meeting and give evidence for the Committee.

The Committee stated that the scoping report encompassed the Council and voluntary sector's response to the pandemic well, and asked whether domestic violence charities would also be contacted as witnesses given the increase in domestic violence through lockdown. Officers confirmed that this could be considered to an extent, and it was agreed that the Committee would consider this concern and the response to it, but may not require witnesses given the scope of the review.

The Chairman noted that the Council's own response to the pandemic was also still ongoing, but the performance of its response would be considered further down the line. Members agreed that the response was so wide ranging it would fall outside the Committee's specific remit and the Council would likely be conducting a much larger review into this in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agreed the scoping report and initiated a review into "The Voluntary Sector's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Hillingdon".

18. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED: That the forward plan be noted.

19. WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2022

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted, subject to:

- 1. The information items regarding the "Alleygating Scheme" and "Anti-Social Behaviour during lockdown" be moved to the meeting on 12 January 2021;**

- 2. The past review delivery item regarding “Local Policing & Community Safety in Hillingdon” be moved to the meeting on 12 January 2021; and,**
- 3. The information items regarding “Hillingdon First Limited” and the “Safety of Council-Owned Properties & Buildings” be moved to the meeting on 3 February 2021.**