

Minutes

ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND REGENERATION SELECT COMMITTEE

22 July 2021

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Alan Chapman (Vice-Chairman) Nicola Brightman Allan Kauffman Scott Farley (Opposition Lead) Janet Gardner Darran Davies (In place of Alan Deville)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Neil Fraser, Democratic Services Officer Andy Goodwin, Interim Financial Planning Manager Julia Johnson, Planning Policy and Infrastructure Manager Roz Johnson, Planning Services Manager</p>
14.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllr Deville, with Cllr Davies present as substitute.</p>
15.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
16.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be considered in public.</p>
17.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record.</p>
18.	<p>2022/23 BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND REGENERATION SELECT COMMITTEE (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Andy Goodwin - Interim Financial Planning Manager, introduced a report detailing the budget setting for services within the remit of the Committee.</p>

Key points from the report were highlighted, including details of the financial pressures generated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the additional funding received from government, together with earmarked Council reserves, in order to manage such pressures.

The impact of such pressures on Social Care was recognised as a national issue faced by most councils, while investment in school budgets still faced significant challenges where demand was outstripping government funding. The Council was working on a recovery plan with the Department for Education to bring that position back into balance in the medium to long term.

The financial standing of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was confirmed to be sound, with the 30 Year Business Plan demonstrating sustainability in the longer term.

Next steps were confirmed to be the formal presentation of the budget to Cabinet in December 2021, requesting approval of the budget proposals, followed by a return to this Committee in January 2022 to discuss the proposals further.

Members queried a number of points as a result of the report.

In response, the Committee was advised that, regarding the report's reference to a 'favourable outlook' on demand-led budgets, risk contingencies on such matters were reported separately. However, a review of relevant external factors had resulted in a favourable position in relation to the budget, driven by additional government funding. Regarding the impact of inflation on the budget, this was regularly reviewed, to ensure value for money regarding utilities, as well as employee salaries and service costs.

The HRA was confirmed to include both property acquisition and construction, as part of a proven portfolio.

It was requested that the officer provide further detail on how Hillingdon's management of the dedicated School Grant deficit compared to its statistical neighbours and nearby boroughs, as well as details of timescales for the construction of new Council properties, following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

19. **NEW PLANNING POLICIES - PROPOSED PLANNING REFORMS IN ENGLAND**
(*Agenda Item 6*)

Julia Johnson - Planning Policy and Infrastructure Manager, introduced a report detailing proposed planning reforms in England, and the concerns expressed regarding those proposals, following the government's white paper published in August 2020.

The proposals were summarised, which centred around the 'three pillars of change' and which aimed to overhaul the outdated planning system, streamline the process to deliver homes faster, protect valued green spaces, and build beautiful homes.

The consultation on the proposals had opened on 06 August 2020, and Hillingdon Council had submitted a response, approved by Cabinet in October 2020, detailing concerns relating to the potential negative impact of the changes on residents, businesses, and other service users. A government response to the consultation was not expected until Autumn 2021.

Members sought further clarity on a number of points, and in response, were advised that the Council had previously successfully lobbied to have its target for new homes as part of the London Plan reduced, though targets were likely to increase moving forward.

In addition, details on the use of digital technologies as part of new planning processes were still to be confirmed, though would likely form part of a national framework including data capture and sharing.

Regarding whether, under the new processes, local authorities would be able to control developments to ensure a good quality of construction and aesthetics in keeping with the existing street scene, the Committee was advised that there would be rules and guidance in place to ensure new developments were appropriate for their location area. Further guidance on construction within the Green Belt was awaited, together with definitions of area categories (e.g. growth areas).

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

20. **DRAFT REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - CONSULTATION** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Julia Johnson - Planning Policy and Infrastructure Manager, introduced a report detailing revisions to the Statement of Community Involvement.

It was confirmed that, as the Local Planning Authority, Hillingdon was required to review its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) every 5 years. As the Council was due to review its Local Plan, it was desirable to also produce an up-to-date SCI alongside any revisions to the Local Plan. It was highlighted that further guidance was awaited before aligning the reviewed SCI under the terms of the new planning reforms discussed in agenda item 6.

The Committee was requested to comment on the proposed SCI as set out in the appendix to the report.

Regarding a query on how neighbourhood forums were engaged with under the terms of the SCI, the Committee was advised that there were rules for the formation of neighbourhood forums, including the minimum number of members required, together with ratification by the Council that the Forum was representative of its community. Once approved, such Forums could then be engaged as part of any relevant consultations. Regarding the format of how residents were consulted with on the matter of developments within their local area, legislation required that the Planning Authority produce a site notice or that they advise neighbours, and while there was no set radius for whom should be notified, officers did have a level of discretion.

Members advised that some residents had complained that they had not been consulted on developments within their immediate areas.

Members expressed their view that further transparency on the use of CIL monies was required. In response, the Committee was advised that work was underway with the Council's ICT department to update its systems and create a new database, which would allow a greater level of detail to be reported as part of the annual CIL statement.

It was agreed that officers would provide further detail regarding any plans for the introduction of a refund to address damage to the public realm during constructions

(e.g. damage to pavements).

RESOLVED: That the report be noted, and that the relevant comments made by the Committee be included in the forthcoming report to Cabinet.

21. **SCOPING REPORT FOR REVIEW** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Consideration was given to the Scoping Report for the Committee's review, provisionally titled: "Our engagement with tenants and leaseholders - improving participation and feedback to improve service and satisfaction".

Members approved the report for implementation, though suggested that the any site visits be sufficiently prepped to ensure that they would add value to the review. It was agreed that the clerk would review suitable site visits in consultation with the Chairman and Labour Lead.

Regarding witness sessions, it was reiterated that witness sessions should include a wide variety of participants in order to obtain a broad spectrum of resident views.

On the matter of the suggested engagement with residents of the Hayes Town Centre and Avondale Drive estates, Members were informed that this was due to the existing engagement with those residents as part of recent regeneration of those areas. However, Members were reminded that, following the meeting, they could suggest residents for the clerk to contact to request their participation with the review.

While Members had due consideration to the suggested Terms of Reference to the review, it was suggested that as the review progressed, the Council's Engagement Strategy could be updated to include a standards checklist to ensure that

- a. housing was of sufficient quality for tenants when moving in;
- b. guidance on how tenants could contact the Council to resolve issues was provided; and
- c. a set of standards that the Council expected tenants to abide by was provided.

It was suggested that the engagement should focus on canvassing what residents actually wanted the Council/landlords to provide.

It was confirmed that, following a query from the Chairman, the Better Neighbourhood Fund was not available for the regeneration of playgrounds on estates, and it was agreed that the clerk would further explore and feed back to the Committee on this matter.

RESOLVED: That the scoping report for the review be approved for implementation.

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

Consideration was given to Cabinet's Forward Plan, as updated following publication of the meeting papers.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

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

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme for 2021 and beyond.

Members suggested additional topics for information reports, as follows:

- Recycling
- Pest Control
- Alleygating
- The Hillingdon First card
- Street Champions
- Climate Change

It was agreed that the clerk would review the above topics for suitability before bringing an updated work programme to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Forward Plan be noted, and;**
- 2. That the clerk review the above topics for suitability before bringing an updated work programme to the next meeting of the Committee.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.15 pm.

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