

Minutes

PETITION HEARING - CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES

19 January 2023

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillor Eddie Lavery</p> <p>Officers Present: Debbie Roscoe, Housing Manager Steve Clarke, Democratic Services Officer Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Ward Councillors Present: Councillor Sital Punja (present for item 4) Councillor Peter Curling (present for item 5)</p>
9.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING <i>(Agenda Item 1)</i></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
10.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE IN PUBLIC <i>(Agenda Item 2)</i></p> <p>It was confirmed that all items were marked as Part I and would be heard in public.</p>
11.	<p>TO CONSIDER THE REPORT OF THE OFFICERS ON THE FOLLOWING PETITION RECEIVED: <i>(Agenda Item 3)</i></p>
12.	<p>YIEWSLEY COURT, HORTON ROAD, YIEWSLEY - PETITION FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH TENANTS <i>(Agenda Item 4)</i></p> <p>The Cabinet Member considered a petition in objection to the change of use of Yiewsley Court sheltered housing scheme.</p> <p>In objecting to the proposal to change the use of Yiewsley Court sheltered housing scheme, the lead petitioner put forward to the Cabinet Member some reasons against the change of use, and elderly residents being moved out of their homes. Key points raised by the petitioner included:</p> <p>Following the consultative meeting the petitioner attended on Tuesday 20 September 2022 on a review of housing dedicated for use by older people that was provided by Hillingdon Council, the petitioner identified that residents needed help to remain in their homes.</p> <p>The petitioner noted he contacted the Yiewsley Ward Councillor, Sital Punja, for further assistance from which they held their own residents meeting.</p>

The petitioner acted as representative of 17 out of the 25 residents who expressed a desire to remain in Yiewsley Court.

It was noted that out of the 17 residents, one of the residents was reportedly occupying Yiewsley Court on a temporary basis and was not a permanent tenant.

Following submission of the petition, a family member of one of the signatories had contacted the Council on their behalf to request that their signature to the petition be removed on the grounds that they had not understood what they were signing, and in addition, accused the petitioner of doorstepping.

The lead petitioner made known that these claims were false and that the resident in question had expressed with certainty to him last week Saturday that he willingly signed the petition and would like to stay living in the property.

The petitioner respected the wishes of the 3 residents who had expressed a desire to move out of their homes. This left 5 residents remaining, who did not wish to become at all involved for reasons that possibly included the Home Loss Payment or awaiting the outcome of this petition.

The petition had acquired over 300 signatures within the local area, which included residents, their family members, the local church, the local doctor's surgery, and the Robert's Close Sheltered Housing Scheme.

The petitioner described the housing situation of a resident who was partially sighted, had lived in sheltered accommodation for 15 years and was being looked after by her trusted neighbour whom she relied on. The petitioner posed the rhetorical question of what the resident would do without the help of her neighbour.

The petitioner described the housing situation of another resident who had severe reading and writing disabilities and had lived in sheltered accommodation for 6 years. The petitioner expressed that this particular resident enjoyed coffee mornings at the local church and felt safe knowing that he had helpful neighbours assisting him with tasks such as form-filling.

The petitioner cited another resident's experience of living in sheltered accommodation who had been living in the property for 12 years, where there were many local shops as well as doctor and dental surgeries within walking distance. This resident was living in a perfect location and did not wish to move homes.

The petitioner also highlighted that his mother-in-law was an elderly Council tenant who had been living in sheltered accommodation for almost 16 years. She had given up living in a 3-bedroom house to reside in Yiewsley Court after her husband had passed away. The petitioner emphasised that his mother-in-law was happy living in Yiewsley Court and enjoyed her hobbies as well as regular visits from relatives. The petitioner expressed on behalf of his mother-in-law that 'she just wanted to be left alone to stay here to the end of her days'.

The petitioner cited another resident's experience of sheltered housing who had been very happy living in Yiewsley Court for 15 years and was described as being horrified and distraught at the thought of having to start over again by moving homes.

The petitioner noted that there were many other residents who also objected to being

moved out of their homes as a result of the proposed changed use of Yiewsley Court sheltered housing scheme, but for reasons of time, he could not name them all.

The petitioner was disappointed with the proposal and asked the question of whether Hillingdon Council could do better than what had been put forward for their proud senior citizens, some of whom were vulnerable or born in the UK or were immigrants, who had worked all their lives, and raised families.

The petitioner expressed that he did not think the decision to change the use of Yiewsley Court sheltered housing scheme was a morally or ethically good decision.

Councillor Sital Punja attended as Ward Councillor for Yiewsley and addressed the Cabinet Member. The key points raised objecting the proposal to change the use of sheltered housing scheme for Yiewsley Court were:

There were residents who had made Yiewsley Court their home, community, and support network.

There were also residents who had lived in the area most of their lives and enjoyed the ideally located Yiewsley Court, which was located close by to the local doctor surgery, dentists, pharmacy, High Street, Faith Groups, and bus routes.

Moreover, there were residents who benefited from an open space who felt safe and comfortable living in Yiewsley Court.

In addition, there were residents who had made adjustments to their homes to meet their personal needs and medical necessities.

There were residents who had family nearby to visit and help them, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ward Councillor emphasised that the above reasons were expressed to her of why residents were heartbroken that they could be asked to leave Yiewsley Court. This served to demonstrate how Yiewsley Court was a great success in providing a good home for residents.

The thought of moving homes created a huge mental stress and anxiety for residents who were worried about finding for themselves comparable accommodation, benefits, and care.

The Ward Councillor acknowledged there were a few residents who did wish to move homes for personal reasons, but that the overwhelming majority of residents wished to stay in their homes. These resident feelings were reflected in the consultation feedback which formed part of the reporting as well as the 336 petition signatures.

The petitioner and Ward Councillor noted that there were many residents who wished to attend this Petition Hearing but due to illnesses or otherwise, were unable to support the petition by attending but nonetheless, supported the petition through their signatures.

It was expressed that consideration for Yiewsley Court stemmed around an oversupply of accommodation for the elderly across the Borough; however,

during the consultation, Council officers were asked where there was an oversupply of places, and whether they were suitable for the specific needs of the residents, to which there was seemingly no knowledgeable answer. The Ward Councillor suggested feeding this information back to residents to improve their feelings of security and peace of mind.

The residents had previously expressed to the Ward Councillor that the consultation felt as though the decision had already been made to move elderly residents out of their homes and to change the occupancy to accommodate care leavers.

The financial incentive to help residents with the move was claimed to have enticed a few residents, but a larger proportion of residents questioned the costs of who would pay for the retrofitting of accommodation to fit the personal medical needs of the residents. The majority of residents did not want to take the money but to stay in their homes.

The Cabinet Member and Council officers were implored to listen to the views of the residents, decide to keep the use of Yiewsley Court as it was for the purpose of providing sheltered accommodation for elderly residents.

The Ward Councillor concluded by earnestly requesting the Cabinet Member and Council officers support the petition and not to make the consultation a tick box exercise because the residents were not numbers on an excel spreadsheet, but human beings who wished to live the best lives they could in a community they had made home, felt safe in, and could live their last days in.

The Cabinet Member listened to and acknowledged the requests and opinions of the petitioner and Ward Councillor. It was clarified that the Petition Hearing was a consultation and an official decision had not yet been made on Yiewsley Court and its uses going forward.

It was recognized that there was an oversupply of accommodation for the elderly across the Borough and that there was a need to consider how to best use the Council's housing stock, with the needs of residents in mind.

It was emphasised that there was no tick box exercise involved in the consultation as the Council officers had consulted residents on their views, from which the feedback was seemingly more mixed with both positives and negatives than the petition would suggest.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that residents could feel distressed about moving homes but that it was possible, if the proposal did move forward, the options offered to residents might have ultimately proved attractive to them.

The lead petitioner responded that some of the positive reasons noted in the consultation feedback could possibly be explained by the way the question was posed to residents, such as asking them which location they would like to move if the proposal was to go ahead, when the residents might not have necessarily wished to move at all.

The Cabinet Member listened to and acknowledged the petitioner's point but reiterated that the consultation was not presented as negative as the petitioner and petition itself had suggested. Nevertheless, both the signed petition and the consultation feedback forms were to be investigated further before arriving at a decision.

The petition organiser addressed the Cabinet Member and asked whether consideration had been made to build something more purposeful than a leisure centre in West Drayton.

The Cabinet Member responded that West Drayton residents would value a leisure centre and that building more accommodation for elderly residents, considering the current surplus of elderly accommodation that they could not fill, would not seem to be the best solution.

The Ward Councillor added that it was important to be mindful of elderly residents, many of whom were vulnerable with various needs, and that consideration should also be made to how difficult it was for people at any age to start living in a new home, let alone for elderly residents.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Met with petitioners and listened to their views following consultation with tenants at Yiewsley Court sheltered housing scheme; and**
- 2. Instructed the officers to bring forward a comprehensive formal report to Cabinet for decision on the proposals for sheltered housing, which incorporated the consultation and feedback from residents.**

13. PETITION REQUESTING THE REVERSAL OF THE ABOLITION OF 30 MINUTES FREE CAR PARKING FOR NON-RESIDENTS (Agenda Item 5)

The Cabinet Member considered a petition requesting a reversal of the Council's decision to remove the 30 minutes free car parking for non-residents.

The petition organiser introduced himself as the chairman of the Hayes Town Business Forum which formed part of the local Chambers of Commerce that consisted of 71 members and was one of the largest business organisations in the Borough.

The lead petitioner put forward to the Cabinet Member some reasons not to abolish the 30 minutes free car parking for non-residents. Key points raised by the petitioner included:

The petition had received 1,121 signatures on behalf of the Hayes Town Business Forum and the Hayes Town Partnership.

Most of the members of the Hayes Town Business Forum were small, independent traders, with strong connections to the Hayes Town Partnership – a multi-agency body established approximately 20 years ago by the Council to promote the regeneration of Hayes Town.

The Chair of the Hayes Town Partnership had sent his apologies for absence for the Petition Hearing but wished to express to the Cabinet Member that the petition was fully backed by the entire Partnership.

The Council had done a lot to support Hayes Town Centre in recent years, beginning with the Shop Front Scheme which had helped transform the

appearance and image of the town.

The introduction of the Stop and Shop Parking Scheme was initiated Borough-wide by the Council and the 30 minutes free parking was perceived as a vote of confidence in the town centre and shopping parades.

However, since the Stop and Shop Parking Scheme was put into force, there were a multitude of challenges that faced local shops. For example, operating costs were increased, there was the burden of business rates and also, long-term changes in customer shopping habits.

In addition, following the COVID-19 pandemic, although the government supported public health, the level of trade had not fully recovered.

Although many businesses were largely affected when fuel bills increased and there was rampant inflation in the cost of supplies caused by the war in Ukraine and other various factors, the government support energy charges were welcomed but this was being phased out and the economic recession was being predicted.

Since these recent changes, petitioners were found to be shocked that the Council had abolished the free 30 minutes parking scheme for non-residents which affected customers living in neighbouring Boroughs.

It was claimed there was no notice of the consultation.

The proposals included in the Council Budget report, which had been put forward for consultation, were expressed as having contained many details that were difficult to follow and did not allow a chance for the public and especially businesses to identify what the proposed change was and make an objection.

Hayes Town relied on attracting shoppers from neighbouring areas such as Northolt, Southall, and Hounslow, and many shops were struggling financially because they heavily depended upon drawing customers wherever they came from.

Hayes was a predominately low-income neighbourhood, where families struggled to pay their bills, which inevitably impacted their amount of disposable income to spend in shops.

Considering the Council's policy to put residents first, it was highlighted that if businesses failed because they had lost an important element of their trade, there would be many empty shops, which would not benefit residents.

The Council's Stop and Shop Policy had been adopted by other Boroughs, including Harrow, which implemented a policy of 60 minutes free parking. This was the vision the lead petitioner similarly wanted for Hayes – for the Council to build on its past success in other Boroughs by restoring the 30 minutes free parking for non-residents.

The Cabinet Member asked for clarification from the petitioner on what the effect was on trade in Hayes Town of the abolishment of the free 30 minutes parking scheme for non-residents.

The lead petitioner provided supporting letters as evidence from local shopkeepers and the Chambers of Commerce. It was added that small traders, such as independent shops, had lost trade. The petitioner also cited the experience of a particular shopkeeper in Hayes Town who had lost approximately 40% of his income due to lost trade.

It was emphasised that no signage was apparent in respect of the parking changes on lampposts or anywhere else around the Town Centre.

Councillor Peter Curling attended as Ward Councillor for Hayes Town and addressed the Cabinet Member. The key points raised to reverse the Council's decision to abolish the 30 minutes free car parking for non-residents included:

There were shops and traders in Hayes Town unique in their trade, such as specialist Asian food stores, where customers sometimes would travel a long distance to visit.

When the Stop and Shop Scheme was originally introduced, it was not only advantageous to residents but also town centres and shopping parades, which became more sustainable and benefitted from other tradespeople passing by the area.

Traders were reported to have been affected in a profoundly negative way by the decision to remove the 30 minutes free car parking for non-residents, resulting in their loss of trade.

Not all residents carried their Hillingdon First card with them and most of the traders losing business were, indeed, residents themselves.

It was noted that the decision to remove the 30 minutes free car parking for non-residents formed part of the Budget Consultation Process, which had been approved by the Full Council last year, and no questions were raised against the decision at the time.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Met with petitioners and listened to their request to reverse the decision to abolish the free 30 minutes parking scheme for non-residents;**
- 2. Noted that the decision to amend the parking fees and charges was approved by Full Council on 24 February 2022; and**
- 3. Instructed officers to add the request to reverse the Council's decision to abolish the 30 minutes free parking for non-Hillingdon First card holders to Cabinet for further consideration.**

14.

PETITION REQUESTING A REVIEW OF THE INCREASED PARKING CHARGES IN HIGH STREETS AND COUNCIL CAR PARKS (*Agenda Item 6*)

The Cabinet Member considered a petition requesting a review of the increased parking charges on High Streets and Council Car Parks.

The petition organiser introduced himself as a local business owner/ entrepreneur who represented the views and interests of independent business owners, residents and customers who were displeased by increased parking charges on High Streets and Council Car Parks.

The lead petitioner put forward to the Cabinet Member reasons to review the increased parking charges on High Streets and Council Car Parks. Key points raised by the petitioner included:

The increased parking charges discouraged both residents and non-residents from visiting Hillingdon when other nearby Boroughs and surrounding areas had similar offerings.

As a coffee shop owner, the lead petitioner found that one of the largest factors for sales was convenience. The petitioner highlighted that his store's sales figures had decreased by 20% and that he now heavily relied on the powers of social media and petitions to connect with customers and ascertain their reasonings for no longer wishing to shop locally.

The lead petitioner had conducted a poll with 250 participants on 18 January 2023, out of which 98% of participants disagreed with the Council's decision to increase parking charges on High Streets and Council Car Parks.

In Eastcote, where the petitioner's business was located, shoppers needed only to travel an additional 3 minutes to Pinner in the London Borough of Harrow, where an hour of free parking was offered without the requirement to carry a Hillingdon First Card or its Borough equivalent, which was not always practical nor convenient to carry around or use.

The petitioner asked the rhetorical question of why friends and family from out-of-town visiting Hillingdon were required to pay twice as much as residents of the Borough were paying to visit the exact same coffee shops and restaurants in the area. In effect, this alienated people from visiting local businesses.

The petitioner cited Brent Cross Shopping Centre as an example of a well-known, relatively high-end shopping centre that was almost always busy which was attributable to the use of free parking. Thus, when it came to decision-making about where to shop, people were minded to visit Brent Cross Shopping Centre because of its parking benefits.

People spent less and saved more during the rising energy cost crisis and the Council's decision to increase parking charges on High Streets and Council Car Parks was said to effectively shun non-residents.

Many customers who had moved out-of-town but used to re-visit the area to spend time with relatives no longer came back because of the increased parking charges.

The petition organiser concluded his statements and cited quotes from residents who wished to visit coffee shops similar to that of the lead petitioner's but could no longer do so due to reasons pertaining to the increased parking charges on

High Streets and Council Car Parks. Examples included:

'I live in Harrow and it's so expensive for me to go to Eastcote and Ruislip now. Harrow is still free for 60 minutes; surely Hillingdon want people from other Boroughs to come and visit and support their local businesses. The 30 minutes free should be for everyone'.

'I lived in Ruislip for over 30 years and now live in South Harrow. I am still local and would like to continue to support the area, but the parking charges sadden me as I feel I can't support a community I was a part of for such a long time. I feel pushed out of the community I grew up in.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there was 60 minutes free parking available but noted that research on the Harrow Scheme was not quite as presented and as it appeared to have applied only to on-street parking and not car parks.

That the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services:

- 1. Met with petitioners and listened to their request to review the increased parking charges on High Streets and Council Car Parks;**
- 2. Noted that the suggestion required a vehicle registration number to be added when purchasing a ticket from a pay and display machine and asked officers to complete their investigations into the full operational and financial implications of how a similar scheme could work in conjunction with the Hillingdon First scheme and to brief the Cabinet Member on the outcome of the review;**
- 3. Noted that the decision to amend the parking fees and charges was approved by Full Council on 24 February 2022; and**
- 4. Instructed officers to add the request to review the parking charges on High Streets and in Council Car Parks to Cabinet for further consideration.**

The meeting, which commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 6.45 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Rebecca Reid at petitions@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.