



HILLINGDON  
LONDON



# Annual Council

## To all Members of the Council

**Date:** THURSDAY, 9 MAY 2024

**Time:** 7.30 PM

**Venue:** COUNCIL CHAMBER -  
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH  
STREET, UXBRIDGE UB8  
1UW

**Meeting  
Details:** Members of the Public and  
Press are welcome to attend  
this meeting

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**Putting our residents first**

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

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# Agenda

## **Prayers**

To be said by Imam Md Sirajul Islam of the Muslim Community Centre.

**1** Apologies for Absence

**2** Declarations of Interest

To note any declarations of interest in any matter before the Council

**3** Election of Mayor 2024 / 2025

To elect a Mayor of the London Borough of Hillingdon to hold office from 9 May 2024 until his or her successor becomes entitled to act as Mayor.

- i) The retiring Mayor, Councillor Ahmad-Wallana, to provide a summary of his year in office.
- ii) Nominations for Mayor invited by the retiring Mayor – election (if necessary)
- iii) The retiring Mayor declares the result.

## **Adjournment for the robing of the new Mayor**

**4** Acceptance of Office by the New Mayor

- i) The newly elected Mayor to make and sign the declaration of acceptance of office.
- ii) The Head of Democratic Services to declare the election of the Mayor to be complete.

**5** Appointment of the Deputy Mayor

To receive the Mayor's appointment in writing of a Councillor of the Borough to serve as Deputy Mayor for the forthcoming municipal year.

**6** New Mayor's Announcements

To receive announcements from the new Mayor.

**7** Vote of Thanks to the Outgoing Mayor

- i) Vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor to be moved and seconded – vote.
- ii) Presentation of Past Mayor's and Past Mayor's Escort's badges.

**8** Report of the Head of Democratic Services

**9** Committee Allocations and Membership 2024 / 2025

To determine the number and size of Council committees and allocate Members to serve on those committees based on the political balance of the Council, where required.

***To follow***

**NB: due to the by-election being held on 2 May on Hillingdon East Ward, this report will be *to follow*.**

**10** Select Committees Annual Report

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To receive the annual report.

**11** Statement by the Leader of the Council

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, to receive, without comment, a statement from the Leader of the Council.

**On the rising of the Annual Meeting of the Council, the Head of Democratic Services will convene special meetings of Committees for the purpose of appointing Chairs, Vice Chairs and Sub-Committees, where appropriate.**

## REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Reporting Officer: Head of Democratic Services

### 8.1 APPOINTMENT OF CABINET

Members are asked to note the appointment by the Leader of the Council of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet for 2024/25 as follows:

Position/Portfolio	Councillor
Deputy Leader, Property, Highways & Transport	Bianco
Finance	Goddard
Children, Families and Education	O'Brien
Health & Social Care	Palmer
Residents' Services	Lavery
Corporate Services	D.Mills

### 8.2 RESULT OF BY-ELECTION AND POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COUNCIL

Members are asked to note the results of the Hillingdon East by-election held on 2 May 2024 and any subsequent changes to the political balance of the Council.

This report will be *to follow*.

Background Papers: None

### 8.3 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

#### 1. Background

1.1 The Constitution of the London Borough of Hillingdon sets out how the Council is governed and operates, the various roles of the elected Members, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that everything the Council does is efficient, transparent, accountable, done with integrity and engages residents in the way it does business.

1.2 Many of the Council's constitutional procedures are required by law, whilst others are a matter of local choice. Council regularly reviews the Constitution to ensure it meets local priorities and legislative changes.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make the amendments detailed in:

- i) Paragraph 5 (relating to Questions and Motions to Council)
- ii) Paragraph 8 (relating to the Protocol on Good Member and Officer Relations) and
- iii) Paragraph 13 (relating to seconding a motion or amendment and reserving the right to speak later in a debate).
- iv) Part D) of this report relating to the establishment of a Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee and the deletion of the former Finance

**and Corporate Services and the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committees.**

## **A) QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS**

### **Public Questions**

2. Within the Council Procedure Rules and Standing Orders, Standing Order 10 – ‘Questions from the Public’, contains a section which specifies which proposed questions may be rejected by the Head of Democratic Services. These are described as being a question that:
  - is not from a resident of the Borough;
  - is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility, or which affects the Borough;
  - is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
  - does not contain sufficient detail or information to allow for an informed and detailed answer to be given or, if local authority resources are referred to, does not provide sufficient detail to allow them to be accurately quantified;
  - appears to be overtly ‘political’ in nature / part of or related to a party political / election campaign;
  - is substantially the same, similar in nature or concerning the same subject matter as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
  - requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in the Access to Information Rules.

### **Motions and Questions from Members**

3. Within the section relating to questions submitted by Members the only stipulation for a question to be considered valid is that it must be about “*any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Borough.*”
4. Similarly, within the section relating to Motions submitted by Members the only stipulation for a motion to be considered valid is that it must be about “*matters for which the Council has a responsibility, or which affect the Borough.*”

### **Proposal**

5. To ensure that the ability of Members to submit questions or motions is not abused, it is proposed to add the following wording to the sections referred to above:

**For Questions submitted by Members:**  
*Questions that may not be accepted*

*The Head of Democratic Services may amend or reject a question submitted on notice if it:*

- *is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;*

- *does not contain sufficient detail or information to allow for an informed and detailed answer to be given or, if local authority resources are referred to, does not provide sufficient detail to allow them to be accurately quantified;*
- *is substantially the same, similar in nature or concerning the same subject matter as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or*
- *requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in the Access to Information Rules.*

**For Motions submitted by Members:**

*Motions that may not be accepted*

*The Head of Democratic Services may amend or reject a Motion submitted on notice if it:*

- *is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;*
- *if approved would require unlawful action to be taken or action which would be impossible to implement;*
- *requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in the Access to Information Rules.*

**B) PROTOCOL ON GOOD MEMBER & OFFICER RELATIONS**

6. The above protocol is contained within Chapter 22 of the Constitution and sets out the process for Members' submitting Members' Enquiries and Service Requests.
7. Recently the opportunity has been taken to review this section of the Protocol to ensure that it is still fit for purpose and reflects the way in which Members raise matters on behalf of residents – and in particular requests that are located outside of a Member's own Ward.
8. It is recommended that the Protocol be amended slightly as shown below (new text in red and deleted text ~~crossed through~~):

**Members' Enquiries & Service Requests**

*A Member is free to submit a Member's Enquiry or service request to approach any Council Department, via the Members' Enquiry portal only, to provide such information, explanation and advice about the Department's functions as may reasonably be required in order to assist with discharging his/her role.*

***A Members' Enquiry is defined as:***

*'a clear question has been asked that requires investigation by Council Officers, or the supply of information from a Council department'. A Members Enquiry may include requests for general policy and performance information, and/or the investigation of ongoing or persistent issues including persistent fly tipping.*

**A Members' Service Request is defined as:**

*'a request for a one-off action to be taken, that requires action by an officer and not investigative activities or supply of information'. Examples of a Service Request include collection of fly tipping, removal of graffiti, street lighting issues, tree problem etc. Service Requests are location-specific.*

*All enquiries and requests must be reasonable and will be met subject to any overriding legal considerations (determined by the Monitoring Officer). If the recipient of any request considers the cost of providing the information requested or the nature of the request to be unreasonable, they will raise the matter with the relevant Corporate / Executive Director who will discuss the issue with the relevant Group Leader or, in the absence of a Group Leader, with the Member concerned.*

*A Member may raise a valid Service Request for any area within the Borough.*

*Should a Member wish to raise a Member's Enquiry, or be asked to raise one by a member of the public, concerning a matter in another Member's Ward, there is an expectation that they will refer the matter to the appropriate Ward Member(s) or / and, where appropriate, seek the agreement of the member of public to refer the matter to the appropriate Ward Member(s), unless a valid reason why this would not be appropriate is provided by the relevant Group Leader.*

*Should a Member wish for information that is not specific to their own Ward (e.g. is regarding matters affecting the whole Borough or is cross-cutting for a part of the Borough wider than a single Ward) then such a request must be made through the Group Leader with an explanation as to why such information is required.*

*Where a Member requests such factual information, that information will also be supplied to the relevant Cabinet Member, Chair of the appropriate Committee or relevant officers.*

*To assist Members in submitting Service Requests, Members' Enquiries or requests for factual information, this matter, the Council operates a Members' Enquiries portal, and all such requests must be made via this route.*



## C) SPEAKING RIGHTS AT COUNCIL

9. SO14 of the Council Procedure Rules govern the Rules of Debate at Council meetings.
10. SO14.3 'Secunder's Speech' states that, when seconding a motion or amendment, a Member may reserve their speech until later in the debate.
11. Often, on more procedural matters, that Member may decline to speak. However, on more significant matters the Member may wish to choose to speak at the end of the debate (prior to the mover of the Motion exercising their Right of Reply).
12. In order to facilitate this the following change is proposed to SO14.3 as shown below (new text in red and deleted text ~~crossed through~~):
13. **14.3 Secunder's Speech**

*"When seconding a motion or amendment, a Member may reserve their speech until later in the debate. The Member may also, at the moment of seconding a motion or amendment and reserving their right to speak later, request of the Mayor that they be called to speak at the conclusion of the debate, albeit prior to those Members exercising a Right of Reply as set out in SO14.9. Such a request shall be granted by the Mayor."*

## D) APPOINTMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEES

14. Members are asked to approve the appointment of a new Select Committee – the 'Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee'.
15. The Select Committee will have a membership of 7 (4 Con' & 3 Lab') who will be appointed on the basis of political balance at item 9 on the agenda.
16. Members are asked to note the deletion of the former Finance and Corporate Services and the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committees.
17. The new Select Committee will meet on the dates previously agreed for the former Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee namely:  
  
12 June,  
23 July,  
17 September,  
19 November,  
9 January 2025,  
11 February,  
4 March and  
10 April.

18. The remit of the new Select Committee will be to undertake the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following Cabinet Member portfolio(s) and service areas:

<b>Cabinet Member Portfolios</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader of the Council</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Finance</li> <li>• Property, Highways &amp; Transport</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant service areas</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Democratic Services</li> <li>2) Finance</li> <li>3) Procurement &amp; Commissioning</li> <li>4) Counter Fraud &amp; Business Assurance</li> <li>5) Digital &amp; Information (Customer Access, Business Intelligence, Digital, Technology, Information Governance)</li> <li>6) Strategic Partnerships</li> <li>7) Consultation &amp; engagement</li> <li>8) Corporate Communications</li> <li>9) Legal Services</li> <li>10) Human Resources</li> <li>11) Business Administration (incl. Mortuary)</li> <li>12) Transformation (BID)</li> <li>13) Operational Assets (Repairs &amp; Engineering, Planned Works, Disabled Facilities, Building safety &amp; FM)</li> <li>14) Property Services</li> <li>15) Capital Programme (inc. Major Projects)</li> <li>16) Transportation</li> <li>17) Highways</li> <li>18) Health &amp; Safety / Emergency Response</li> </ol>

#### Cross cutting topics

This Committee will also act as lead select committee on the monitoring and review of the following cross-cutting topics:

- Resident Experience
- Civic Centre, Property and built assets

This Committee will scrutinise and review the work of utility companies whose actions affect residents of the Borough.

#### **Legal & Financial Implications**

19. Many of the Council's constitutional procedures are required by law, whilst others are a matter of local choice. Council regularly reviews the Constitution to ensure it meets local priorities and legislative changes. Changes to the Constitution require approval of full Council.
20. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Background papers: None

# Annual Report of the Select Committees

2023 - 2024





# Introduction

Fundamental to Hillingdon Council's governance is the close alignment of its select committees with the Cabinet and Officer Directorates. This gives strong accountability to the Council's democratic and decision-making process. Cabinet makes the decisions and sets the policy and direction of the Council; Select Committees provide transparent oversight and scrutiny of services and Officer Directorates advise on and implement the decisions made.

In May 2022, the Council further refreshed select committee arrangements to undertake this important statutory responsibility, which has continued into 2023/24 through the activities of five cross-cutting select committees and the Corporate Parenting Panel, led by their respective chairs as shown below:

In summary, the purpose of Hillingdon's select committees is to:

- Assist in the development of Council policy;
- Question and evaluate the actions of the Cabinet before and after decisions are taken;
- Have the power to make reports and recommendations on such matters;
- Scrutinise, externally, local health services and crime and disorder reduction.



Councillors have continued to perform their role monitoring and reviewing both council and external services in the best interests of Hillingdon residents. The committees are in the process of completing a number of major policy reviews this year which have raised important recommendations to move services and the Borough forward. This year, there has also been excellent witness and service user participation throughout. This annual report provides an opportunity to note the breadth of activity and achievements of oversight and scrutiny in Hillingdon during the 2023/24 municipal year. Such focus will, no doubt, continue into 2024/25. On behalf of the Committee Chairs, this annual report is commended to Council on 09 May 2024.

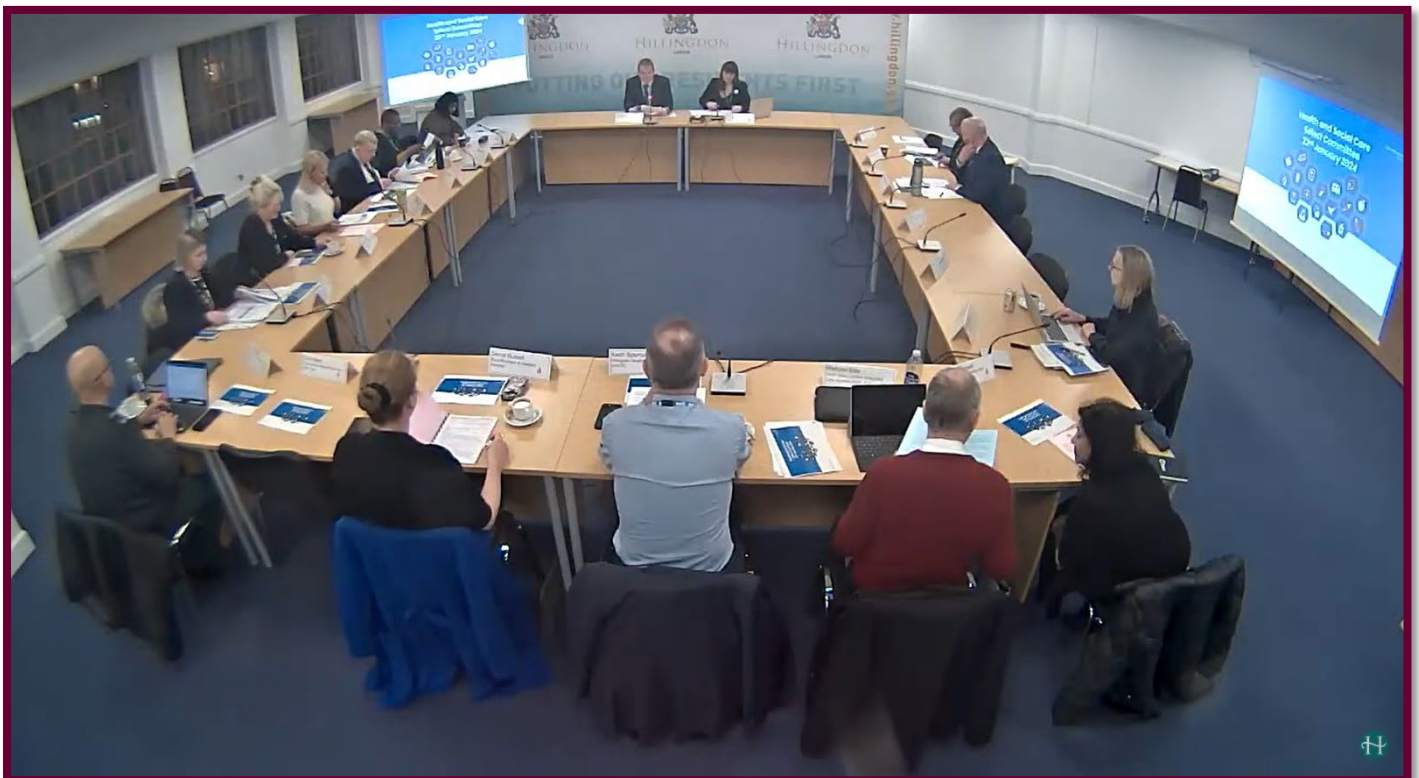
# How select committees work

Select committees are responsible for monitoring council services and recommending changes to Cabinet on a range of areas to shape future policy direction, along with the statutory call-in power. Select committees are also responsible for holding to account and reviewing those services provided by other public agencies, primarily the local NHS and Police services.

All committees undertake their role through a multi-year work programme of scrutiny activities which may include single meeting or in-depth policy reviews on specific topics of community and resident importance. These reviews provide the opportunity to directly engage with resident stakeholders, local interest groups and experts to help shape and drive improvement in local public services.

Committees are able to request information reports on particular matters of resident interest, which are ably reviewed through the valuable insight of local councillors. Committees also provide comments on reports to Cabinet for decision and input into Cabinet's annual budget proposals before they are approved by Council each year. These committees, therefore, play a vital role in ensuring that the Council continues to provide high quality, value-for-money services, putting Hillingdon residents first.

The Council's corporate parenting responsibilities are also an integral part within Hillingdon's overview and scrutiny arrangements. The Corporate Parenting Panel actively engages young people in the development of council services, ultimately with a direct line to the decision-making Cabinet.



Pictured: Health & Social Care Select Committee

# Constitutional & statutory compliance

## Budget and Policy Framework consultees

Select committees are required to be consulted on any budget and policy framework document prepared by the Cabinet for public consultation. All select committees were consulted on the Cabinet's budget proposals for 2024/25 and provided comments.

## Councillor Calls for Action

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, select committees can consider 'Councillor Calls for Action' submissions. This power enables any councillor to ask for a discussion at the relevant committee on a local issue where all other methods of resolution have been exhausted. Democratic Services can confirm that no such Calls for Actions have been requested and thereby considered during 2023/24. This is in large part due to the well-established resident petitions scheme in place within Hillingdon, as an alternate democratic mechanism.

## Protocol on Scrutiny & Cabinet relations

Following the publication of Statutory Scrutiny Guidance in 2019 (updated in 2024), Councillors reviewed the overview and scrutiny arrangements and adopted a new Protocol on Scrutiny & Cabinet relations, setting out how these two key arms of the Council's governance arrangements work well together. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer can report there has been good compliance with this protocol during the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

## Scrutiny call-ins

All select committees have a statutory duty to scrutinise executive decisions that have been taken but have not yet been implemented. This acts as the statutory 'checks & balances' upon decisions taken by the Cabinet and Cabinet Members. This action is widely known as the 'call-in' power, where during a period of 5 working days after an executive decision is taken, it may be called-in by the relevant select committee to be considered further, and ultimately referred back to the Cabinet or Cabinet Member to reconsider.

During 2023/24, this process was continued to be undertaken in a modern and automated way using the Scrutiny call-in App, accessible on computer and mobile devices. The App enables a councillor on the relevant select committee to request a call-in of a particular decision online, where an automated email is then sent to other committee members to agree, or not, to the call-in request.

Should a majority of the committee agree with the request via the App, then this is deemed a valid call-in, Democratic Services are automatically alerted, and the Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision is immediately put on hold. If this happens, then the matter is formally considered by the committee and referred to the Cabinet or Cabinet Member, if required, to be reconsidered.

During 2023/24, there were 8 call-in requests initiated following Cabinet decisions made, as set out in the table below:

<b>Date of call-in request</b>	<b>Councillor initiating</b>	<b>Select Committee</b>	<b>Cabinet decision</b>
31 July 2023	Cllr Money	Property, Highways & Transport	Appropriation of the land at the former Yiewsley Swimming Pool and Falling Lane, Yiewsley
14 September 2023	Cllr Sweeting (2 requests)	Children, Families & Education	Hillingdon 0-19 years Core Officer to Children, Young People, and their Families
14 September 2023	Cllr Sweeting (2 requests)	Children, Families & Education	Hillingdon's Youth Offer & Delivery Model
16 October 2023	Cllr Farley	Residents' Services	Sheltered Housing Schemes at Yiewsley Court & The Gouldings
13 November 2023	Cllr Money	Property, Highways & Transport	Disposal of the former Northwood Young People's Centre
21 February 2024	Cllr Punja	Residents' Services	Relocation of Uxbridge Library

However, in all cases above, support for the call-in request did not reach a majority of the committee by the expiry of the scrutiny call-in period. All requests were, therefore, deemed not valid, and Cabinet's decisions were duly implemented.

## Urgent decisions

Chairs of the select committees have a constitutional prerogative of being able to decide whether to waive the pre-decision publication period and/or the post decision scrutiny call-in period (as described in the section above). This is where a decision is deemed urgent by the Cabinet or Leader of the Council. In such cases and in accordance with the Constitution, the relevant Select Committee Chair must also agree that the delay is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred and/or agree that any delay would prejudice the Council's or the public's interest or could lead to an [increased] risk of damage to people or property.

Such waivers are exceptional and carefully considered. When approved by the relevant chair, this enables a decision to be implemented quicker and often with immediate effect, so the Council can be responsive in residents' best interests. These are constitutionally known as 'urgency' or 'special urgency' decisions through the formal executive decision-making process depending on the necessity of the matter in question.

During 2023/24, and at the time of finalising this report, there were **19** such Cabinet or Cabinet Member decisions where the relevant select committee Chair exercised this constitutional prerogative in the affirmative. They are reported to the full Council regularly in accordance with statutory guidance.

## Statutory guidance update

The statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny from 2019 has been updated and superseded by new statutory guidance issued by the Government on 22 April 2024. Primarily, the new guidance reflects new developments such as the further devolution of powers (i.e. institutions with devolution agreements) and the establishment of combined authorities and combined county authorities. The updated guidance will be reviewed, where applicable to Hillingdon.



# Scrutiny development

## Training

In June 2023, Members received “Chairing Skills Training for Councillors” where a number of Select Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs attended. The training provided practical advice and guidance to Members with chairing responsibilities, catering to both new and experienced Chairs and covered:

- Role and Purpose of the Chair
- Preparation skills
- Handling interventions
- Key constitutional knowledge
- Managing standard items
- Managing meetings, business, order, and outcomes - including votes, controlling the meeting, and managing a committee.

## Accessible, Open and Transparent Scrutiny

Members of the public are welcome to attend any public meetings of a select committee, which are listed on the online [calendar of meetings](#).

All reports, agenda papers, and minutes of select committee meetings for the municipal year are published on the Hillingdon Council’s webpage, which also has full details of minutes, attendees at committee meetings and recommendations made by the Select Committees. Reports, agendas, and minutes of select committee meetings for 2023/24 can be viewed [here](#).



All select committee meetings are broadcast live on the Council’s YouTube channel to increase democratic awareness of overview and scrutiny. Along with live broadcasting, Democratic Services Officers provide the professional support, research, and advice to councillors on the select committees, both in and outside meetings. You can watch them on YouTube [here](#).

This year has continued to see strong levels of engagement from external witnesses, residents, and service users, who have contributed through providing testimonies, sharing their experiences, and offering valuable insights during select committee proceedings.

Select committees have been out and about around the Borough. Many have undertaken site visits this year. These not only enable Councillors to learn more about front-line service delivery, but also support future reviews and monitoring of such services. Sites visits this year are outlined at the end of this annual report.

# Finance & Corporate Services Select Committee

- **Cllr Bridges** (Vice-Chair)
- **Cllr Banerjee**
- **Cllr Bhatt**
- **Cllr Mathers** (Opposition Lead)
- **Cllr Garg**
- **Cllr Mand** (to 28 September 2023)
- **Cllr Sansarpuri** (from 28 September 2023)

**Lead officers:** Neil Fraser / Anisha Teji – Democratic Services



**Cllr John Riley**  
(Chair)

## Brief

The Committee is responsible for the overview and scrutiny role for a broad array of Council services. These include strategic internal functions, such as finance, procurement, transformation, partnerships, human resources, democratic services, legal services, and Digital. Further responsibilities also include the cross-cutting theme of 'resident experience'.

The Committee has concluded its in-depth review into procurement this year, undertaken a review into the Council's consultation arrangements and has also monitored key central service areas.

## Major review

### **Final Review Report – Procurement in Hillingdon: Securing value for our residents**

This year, the Select Committee has finalised its review of procurement within Hillingdon Council. The review was prompted by the realisation that the significant annual public sector expenditure in the UK, amounting to approximately £290 billion that needed to be channelled cost-effectively to support broader public policy priorities and local services, compounded by new emerging procurement legislation and for local government, in particular, the ongoing need to address the budgetary pressures facing councils. The importance of procurement in supporting local economic growth, facilitating recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and addressing the pressing issue of climate change were also factors considered by the Committee in this review. From the outset, the goal of the Select Committee was to ensure that procurement processes in Hillingdon aligned with the Council's priorities and values, while delivering the best value for Borough residents.

The Select Committee focused on contract management, performance monitoring and how the Council was addressing financial challenges due to external factors such as inflation. Members also explored the core principle of value for money, the potential benefits of framework agreements, and

the need for transparency in contractual arrangements for decision-makers, in particular understanding why contracts were extended or “rolled-over” to the same supplier. Notwithstanding the importance of value-for-money, the Committee looked at how the Council could embrace a broader definition of “value”, particularly in respect of local businesses and the Council’s net-zero ambitions.

In November 2023, the Select Committee approved its final report into procurement which encapsulated the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of its review, as a result of sessions and consultations with key stakeholders.

The Committee's recommendations to Cabinet included several measures aimed at enhancing the procurement process and promoting local business engagement. They suggested that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) review the operating model and service engagement with procurement. Additionally, they proposed developing a framework contract



culture across spending departments to achieve cost savings and performance enhancement along with creating a headline register of contracts over an agreed value for transparency. The Committee also suggested reviewing Procurement Standing Orders for contract extensions and updating them to require formal Cabinet approval for longstanding contracts exceeding 10 years. Furthermore, the Committee advised establishing training and assistance for local and external providers, promoting local business knowledge, and enhancing engagement with subcontractors. These recommendations aimed to streamline the procurement process, improve transparency, and support local businesses.

The Committee’s review of procurement within Hillingdon was submitted to Cabinet at its meeting in February 2024 and the Committee’s recommendations were endorsed.

### **Referral from Full Council: The Council’s Consultation Arrangements**

The Select Committee conducted a review of the Council’s consultation process following concerns about low public response rates and the need for better representation of diverse communities following a Council motion in September 2023. The review, initiated on 19 October 2023, culminated in a single meeting review on 11 January 2024, where the committee examined the consultation process, engaged with the Community Engagement Manager, and analysed key data.

The Committee’s objectives were to investigate the current consultation arrangements, ensure diverse community voices were heard, and provide recommendations for improvement. Members recognised consultations as vital for public influence on decisions and identified the need for both statutory and non-statutory consultations to align with resident needs and the Council’s strategy.

Key findings included the importance of achieving geographical and demographic parity, which involved equitable representation, balanced response rates, tailored approaches, and inclusive methods. It was advised that the Customer Engagement Team was responsible for coordinating various consultation methods, supported by interpretation and translation services to overcome language barriers.

The Committee's review highlighted the challenges faced, such as trust issues, awareness, time constraints, digital exclusion, and communication barriers. Despite these, the Committee found that the Council made strong efforts to engage with hard-to-reach communities and achieve parity.



The Committee has proposed a number of practical recommendations, which will soon be presented to Cabinet to consider, around enhancing the inclusivity, responsiveness, and effectiveness of consultations. These include making live consultations more accessible such as by accommodating language preferences on Council devices in libraries, a 'quick survey' feature to gather feedback more

efficiently, while a dedicated section within residents' 'My Account' was recommended to encourage participation. The Committee findings emphasise the need to represent young people's perspectives by default in universal consultations and suggest increased social media engagement to reach broader audiences. The Committee also recommended shareable consultation links for Councillors to promote informed decision-making along with a 'You said, we did' approach to demonstrate the impact of feedback on Council actions. Recommendations are subject to consideration by the Cabinet.

The Committee were keen to ensure the full Council was made aware of the Committee's review, given that it was initiated by a debate at full Council. This update in this annual report seeks to support that wider awareness of the Committee's work.

## Monitoring & scrutiny

### Digitalisation of the Contact Centre

The Committee received an update on how the Council's was modernising its approach to customer service. Since its digital-enabled launch in 2021, new technology had been implemented to support residents with their use of 'My Account', resulting in 40% of contacts now being handled with the new technology. The next phase of development for the digitisation of the Contact Centre focused on waste management, housing repairs, and social care services. It was confirmed that the Council had collaborated with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) to digitise resident interactions, to introduce Amazon Web Services (AWS). The first service for which AWS had been introduced to streamline resident queries was Housing Repairs as this service received the highest volume of calls.

It was noted that support was extended to libraries for residents experiencing difficulties with the technology or with setting up 'My Account' to encourage residents to adopt the new approach. The Committee discussed further contingency plans for inclusion, particularly regarding support for vulnerable residents who lacked confidence or required assistance with technology. Members acknowledged the need for a gradual transition and emphasised the importance of a continuous programme of public education. Members were invited to attend a site visit to the contact centre for a deeper understanding of its operations. Further information regarding the site visit is shown at the end of this report.

## Digitalisation of the Council's Human Resources Function

With the attendance of the Council's Head of HR, the Committee considered developments within the HR department since its restructure in 2022. Notable changes included the establishment of two specialised teams dedicated to HR matters and recruitment, reflecting a strategic shift towards digitalisation. Plans were announced to upgrade the Learning and Development system to interface with the HR system over the summer.



The discussion emphasised various initiatives aimed at enhancing HR efficiency and effectiveness, such as optimising Resourcelink (the payroll / annual leave system), focusing on recruitment to raise the profile of the employer brand, and addressing staff queries to streamline operations. Furthermore, outlined was the Council's commitment to fostering diversity, inclusion, and staff well-being through representative workforce strategies and a culture of belonging. Members probed further into turnover figures, recruitment challenges, and methods to retain staff, revealing ongoing efforts to conduct exit questionnaires and implement engagement surveys to obtain staff feedback. The Committee also explored future HR initiatives, including talent acquisition, flexible contracts, and developmental programs.

## Annual Complaints and Service Monitoring Update Report

In September 2023, Members heard the highlights of the annual complaints and service monitoring data. It was noted that there had been substantial growth in the volume of informal complaints, from 4,473 to 5,176, marking an increase of 703 complaints. The increase was primarily attributed to waste and repairs services, with missed bin collections and delays in repair appointments being the main concerns. At Stage 1, complaints totalled 816 in 2022/23, up from 802 the previous year, while Stage 2 complaints rose to 121 from 101. However, Ombudsman investigations decreased to 46 from 75 due to delayed investigations during the COVID-19 period the previous year.

Concerns were raised about response times, with reassurance provided that Hillingdon Council's timelines were shorter compared to neighbouring local authorities. The discussion also delved into differentiating service requests from complaints, the efficiency of the new Members' Enquiry GOSS system, and the utilisation of mediation in complaint resolution. Additionally, the Committee considered the impact of the pandemic on work backlogs and material shortages, which contributed to delays in service appointments and subsequent complaints.

Calls from Members were made for increased communication about compliment recording and a proposal to explore residents' ability to promote compliments on platforms like Google reviews. Members also acknowledged the need for further analysis of complaint trends and a focus on user-centric service improvements moving forward.

## Mid-Year Budget Update

The Committee considered a report detailing the latest budget position and budget planning work for services within the Committee's remit. Of particular note, Members discussed the challenges that the

Council was working on to meet its savings requirement, which the Council aimed to mitigate through efficiency gains and transformation processes while protecting frontline services.

## **Staff Skills, Learning and Development**

The Committee reviewed the current approach to Staff Skills, Learning, and Development. It was emphasised that talent was a fundamental aspect of the Council's HR strategy. The importance of identifying current talent and future needs to tailor talent development offerings was crucial for addressing skill shortages and retaining employees. An induction program had been relaunched which featured face-to-face sessions and online training to equip new hires with the necessary tools. It was welcomed that the Early Careers program offered various apprenticeships, including management and leadership training. The Learning Zone, a learning management system, provided free online courses, aiming for inclusive and diverse talent development. Officers were also investigating potential upgrades to the training system in response to Member feedback.

## **First Aid Awareness and Training, Health, and Safety Services**

The Committee reviewed the status of health and safety measures, particularly focusing on first aid awareness and training within the Council. It was noted that the duties of the Health and Safety Team encompassed maintaining health and safety management systems, coordinating with other departments, and executing training initiatives. Discussion among Members revolved around the accessibility and visibility of first aid equipment, notably defibrillators, in public areas and committee rooms, stressing the importance of clear signage and awareness campaigns. Further discussions were had around incident reporting and review procedures, mental health training courses, and ensuring consistent knowledge and equipment among staff members, even while working remotely to ensure effective first aid coverage.

## **Treasury Management**

The Committee received an overview of Treasury Management within the Council which was regulated by statutory guidelines from the public sector accounting body CIPFA. The useful overview encompassed key points, including the definition of treasury management, regulations, and practices adhered to by the Council, the concept of Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), borrowing and investment strategies, reporting and monitoring procedures, as well as mitigating challenges and risks involved in treasury management, which required constant vigilance and prudent financial strategies.

## **Update on the New Members' Enquiry Process**

A few months after the introduction of the new Members' Enquiries system, the Committee received a comprehensive update on how it was working. Data presented indicated that between November 1, 2022, and September 15, 2023, a total of 3,872 Members' Enquiries and 3,450 service requests were recorded, reflecting a similar pattern to the previous year. Members discussions focused on ongoing efforts to enhance the system's functionality, including proposals such as introducing icons designed for service requests to simplify issue identification of various types of issues, making it easier for Councillors to navigate and address residents' concerns. Given the importance of using the new system to manage resident queries, the Committee held a follow up meeting. Members emphasised the need to enhance the system's user experience and usability to effectively serve both residents and Councillors. Officers advised that there were challenges related to categorising inquiries, as well as the accuracy of categorisations, and mitigating duplication within the current system. Suggested changes to review and clarify category names like waste and noise were made.

## **The Council's digital journey & resident/Member experience**

In February 2024, the Chief Digital and Information Officer attended to outline the Council's aim to invest in digital, data, technology, and transformation to become a digitally enabled, modern, well-run Council by 2026. Emphasis was placed on enhancing resident access to services, streamlining processes, and improving staff efficiency through technological advancements. Progress over the past year, including innovative solutions like automated voice and web chat solution services, were acknowledged. Plans for future initiatives, such as leveraging AI and consolidating systems, were discussed to further enhance customer experience and operational efficiency. Members expressed support for the digital journey, prioritising resident convenience and inclusivity.

## **The Council's Transformation and Business Change Programme**

The Consultant for Transformation and Business Change, Chief Digital and Information Officer, Corporate Director for Central Services and Corporate Director for Finance delivered a presentation on the Council's Transformation Programme. Councillors heard about the current projects, delivering the Council Strategy 2022 - 2026, change projects and delivering financial effectiveness. The Committee discussed the need to focus on providing sustainable, efficient, and resident friendly services. Initiatives around housing and homelessness projects, fostering services and digital services were noted. Members requested that an update on the transformation programme be provided in 2024/25.

## **Presentation on Cybersecurity**

The Council's Chief Digital and Information Officer provided the Committee with insights into the current threat landscape and recent cyber incidents. The presentation highlighted various trends, including supply chain attacks, triple extortion, ransomware as a service, attacking unpatched systems and phishing.



Case studies in other organisations were explored and how they had been impacted by the attacks. Members heard about the need for improvement in specific areas and the importance of addressing cyber threats and enhancing cyber security culture in organisations.

## **Cabinet's budget proposals**

As a statutory consultee to the Cabinet's 2023/24 budget proposals, following consideration by Cabinet on 14 December 2023, the Select Committee reviewed a report which set out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within its remit and submitted comments back to Cabinet for consideration.

# Children, Families & Education Select Committee

- **Cllr Haggar** (Vice-Chair)
- **Cllr Smallwood**
- **Cllr Bhatt**
- **Cllr Sweeting** (Opposition Lead)
- **Cllr Rita Judge**
- **Cllr Gill**
- **Mr Little** (Education Co-opted Member)

**Lead Officer:** Ryan Dell, Democratic Services

Corporate Parenting Panel



**Cllr Heena Makwana**  
(Chair)

## Brief

The Children, Families and Education Select Committee is responsible for undertaking the overview and scrutiny role in relation to Children's Services (including Corporate Parenting), Children's Safeguarding, Education, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Children and Families Development.

In addition to monitoring performance of services over the year, considering the Budget and receiving several scrutiny reports, the Committee has undertaken a major review into the Council's "Stronger Families Hub" and is currently reviewing "Persistent Absenteeism" in schools.

## Corporate parenting



Corporate Parenting is a significant responsibility for the Committee, and for all Members, who are all 'Corporate Parents'. Therefore, all Members have a duty to safeguard the best interests of our Looked After Children and Care Experienced Young People.

Through the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel (which reports to the Select Committee), the Council has actively explored ways to improve aspirations of young people. The



Corporate Parenting panel consists of Councillors Nick Denys (Chair), Heena Makwana (Vice-Chair) and Jan Sweeting. The Panel also includes young people, service officers, nursing, and virtual school representatives.

The Panel noted that as of 31 December 2023, the London Borough of Hillingdon was Corporate Parents to 324 Looked After Children and 608 Care Experienced Young People.

The Panel provides for greater integration of Corporate Parenting within the Council's democratic governance arrangements and directly engages with our Looked After Children and Care Experienced Young People. The Panel's work programme includes thematic topics of interest including Safeguarding, Health & Wellbeing, and Education & Opportunity.

The Corporate Parenting Panel has continued to support Looked After Children and Care Experienced Young People in a variety of avenues. The Panel has reviewed key information reports such as annual reports from the Independent Reviewing Officer, the Looked After Children Health Team and the Virtual School. Over the year, young people have also provided the Panel with their insightful thoughts and feedback, including a presentation, feedback on the Kids in Care Awards (KICA), and a summary of the year. The Council's achievement of Children's Services being rated "outstanding" by Ofsted over the year was welcomed.

## Major review

### The Stronger Families Hub

Members finalised their major review into how the Stronger Families Hub was functioning in practice since its launch in August 2021. The Stronger Families Hub programme was a 24/7 service available to residents providing a wide range of support services. It can be perhaps best described as a locality based Early Help and Prevention Service supporting children and families at the earliest stage by working closely with partners across Hillingdon.

The review gave the Committee the opportunity to undertake several witness sessions to engage with a range of key stakeholders including young people and their parents/ carers, officers, health partners and education partners. These sessions helped the Committee to understand the context of the Stronger Families Hub and to understand the experiences of our young people and their families to ensure that they feel safe, protected, and supported. Recognising that the launch of the Stronger Families Hub had coincided with the backdrop of a global pandemic, the Committee were impressed with, and grateful for, witness' input and the commitment of officers to build and expand the first-of-its-kind 24/7 service.

The Committee recommended several actions to enhance the visibility, resourcing, and accessibility of the Stronger Families Hub in Hillingdon. They advised raising the profile of the Hub among stakeholders and ensuring adequate staffing for its 24/7 model. Additionally, they urged a review of the Hub's capacity to support increased demand, particularly for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving at Heathrow Airport.

The Committee's review suggested ways to enhance signposting around mental health services via the Hub and to voluntary and private sector services. The Committee also recommended regular awareness-raising efforts with partners, ensuring accessibility for diverse communities, and investigating ways to address occasions where parental consent could not be obtained with regard to

the referral form process. These recommendations aimed to improve resident awareness and access to the Hub's services. The review on the Stronger Families Hub was submitted to Cabinet at its meeting in November 2023 and the Committee's recommendations were endorsed in full.

## Persistent Absenteeism

The Select Committee has this year agreed that its next major review topic will consider the issue of attendance/ persistent absence of statutory school age children in Hillingdon, including how this had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A child who only attends school for 90% or less of the time is classed as a persistent absentee.

The Committee intends that the review will support the work of the Attendance Support Service at the Council in helping to shape its ways of working, identifying areas of weakness in the education system and how overall engagement with key stakeholders can be improved.

At their meeting in March 2024, the Committee conducted its first witness session. Officers provided the Committee with a briefing and update regarding persistent absenteeism in the academic year. On 1 March 2024, the persistent absenteeism rate was 19.5% for the academic year, which was slightly below the national average of 20.6% for the same period. With the exception of February, where there had been a slight decrease, the rate of persistent absenteeism was growing by 1% on average month on month. This trend indicated a potential rise to 26-28% by the end of the academic year, although this would still represent an improvement from the previous year's nearly 34%. The Committee noted that there had been several initiatives undertaken since November to address absenteeism, including implementing a revised borough-wide protocol for penalty notices, though recent changes in Government guidance could necessitate further revisions.

Additional initiatives to encourage school attendance involved extensive training, including emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) training for team members and colleagues across the Local Authority, and a seven-day training course that took place over six months to work with families with adverse childhood experiences and intergenerational trauma that was linked to potential persistent absenteeism. Attendance hubs in Hillingdon were launched to facilitate collaboration among groups of schools, fostering discussions on shared challenges and collaborative strategies for addressing them. Committee discussions also emphasised the importance of addressing underlying issues, such as intergenerational deprivation and parents who may have missed out on education themselves. Members also noted coordinated efforts across Council teams and schools to address intergenerational cycles.



In April, the Committee considered information on how other local authorities were tackling persistent absenteeism, noting Harrow Council's School Attendance Intervention Model (AIM), and similar reviews being undertaken by Buckinghamshire County Council and Camden Council. It was also noted that this review topic was one of national significance and also being reviewed by other local authorities, including at their scrutiny committees, and the Committee would seek to work together with other councils to share best practice. Plans for further witness sessions with other Local Authorities, schools and young people are ongoing. The Committee's final report, findings and recommendations will be referred to Cabinet later in 2024.

### Hillingdon 0-19 Years Core Offer to Children, Young People And Their Families



The Committee reviewed the draft Family Hub strategy report out to consultation by the Cabinet, which highlighted the Council's proposed changes in providing support and advice on health and family needs to young people aged 0-19 (and up to 25 for those with SEND) and as part of a nationwide commitment by the Government to introduce such Hubs.

It was noted that the Family Hubs were a place where families could access support in the early years of their child's life, through the delivery of a specific

Start for Life offer, including access to maternity and health services, alongside support for parenting and reducing parental conflict. The Council's proposed strategy aimed for integrated service delivery, utilising existing centres and flexible methods to reach harder-to-reach areas. The draft strategy was open for consultation until July 30, 2023, with residents encouraged to participate. Officers assured the Committee about ongoing consultation and flexibility in service provision, addressing concerns about funding, childcare sufficiency, and support for asylum-seeking families. Members welcomed the proposed strategy, emphasising the need for practical solutions and engagement with diverse communities.

The Committee submitted its views to Cabinet. Following consultation, the Strategy and new model of service delivery has since been approved by Cabinet and is now being implemented.

### Youth Offer Consultation

In June 2023, the Committee considered the Cabinet's proposals and consultation on a new Youth Offer. The Committee noted that the consultation utilised various channels including online surveys, facilitated consultation groups, and social media promotions. The Committee heard about the current response rate to the consultation. The consultation had also revealed preferences for activities promoting emotional health, sports, and outdoor leisure. Members suggested integrating youth services into student forums whereby young people could run the services. Members noted the overall ambition of the proposed new Youth Offer and its delivery model, which would provide a universal offer for a range of preventative, early help services to the Borough's young people.

The Committee submitted its views to Cabinet. Following consultation, the new Youth Offer has since been approved by Cabinet and is now being implemented.

## Twice Yearly School Place Planning

The Committee reviews school place planning twice a year to ensure it monitors how the Council's meets its statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places. Members noted the gradual decrease in the need for Primary School places, whilst there was a notable and escalating demand for Secondary School places. Specialist provision was acknowledged to be at capacity, with ongoing efforts to collaborate with the Department for Education and specialist providers to increase the provision to accommodate the growth. Members commended officers for their management of the service and inquired about strategies for supporting schools to be competitive and to be parents' first preference, to which officers highlighted positive Ofsted outcomes, collaborative partnerships with educational advisors and strong quality in Hillingdon schools. Additionally, questions were raised around flexibility in learning models and the distribution of high-needs children, prompting discussions on capacity management and collaborative efforts with both mainstream and specialised educational providers.

## Mid-Year Budget review

In September 2023, the Committee received the mid-year budget/ budget planning report, focusing on items within the remit of the Children, Families, and Education Select Committee. Members noted that school budgets were forecasted to overspend, with this being wholly driven by the high needs block where funding had not kept pace with inflation and demand. Within the remit of the select committee, the main inflation drivers were contracted spend for care provision and SEND Transport. Furthermore, it was noted that the Council aimed to address the budget gap through efficiency gains, while maintaining frontline services.

## Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

The Committee received a comprehensive overview of the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Children's Safeguarding Partnership's work during the preceding 2022/23 period. The report highlighted the commitment to enhancing safeguarding practices across a multi-agency network to ensure the safety and well-being of children and adults. Notably, efforts were made to prioritise the voices of children and adults receiving safeguarding services, with initiatives such as quality assurance assessments. The partnership focused on various priority areas, including contextual safeguarding and education inclusion, aiming to address risks and improve responses to safeguarding concerns. The Committee's comments were submitted to Cabinet.

## SEND Strategy

At their November meeting, the Committee reviewed the draft Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy. The strategy emphasised a local approach to incorporate feedback constructively from residents and schools. Notable shifts in the strategy included a more ambitious outlook, with a focus on listening to the voices of children, families, and professionals involved in SEND. The strategy had been scrutinised and was positively received by the SEND Executive Partnership Board, reflecting collaboration among various stakeholders (including Health and Social care, education, parents/ careers, and voluntary organisations). Challenges surfaced at the meeting about increasing levels of inclusion and the pressures to adapt to varying needs, leading to a discussion about finding a balance between inclusive practices and acknowledging the challenges faced by schools.

Five key ambitions were outlined, encompassing early intervention, inclusivity, the spectrum of provision, community integration, and access to alternative provision. The Committee engaged in a

discussion concerning the translation of these ambitions into tangible outcomes. Members highlighted the importance of monitoring the strategy's outcomes. Concerns were voiced about funding, suitability of placements, and varying percentages of EHCPs (Education, Health, and Care Plans) across schools. There was a shared consensus on the necessity to closely monitor the strategy's progress. The Committee's comments were submitted to the Cabinet Member who considered them as part of approving the Strategy.

## **Ukrainian Children update**

The Select Committee have been actively monitoring at a number of meetings how the Council is supporting Ukrainian children who have fled their country during the war. In January 2024, the Committee considered an update report on education support for refugees from Ukraine. Officers highlighted the ongoing collaboration with various organisations to support those



displaced by the conflict in Ukraine, including the provision of housing by resident hosts in the Borough and ensuring successful integration into the community. The Committee also discussed support services such as an educational psychology offer, school support, and a two-year service offer for an additional language and speech service available to all schools in the Borough. Hub schools and a mentoring program for Ukrainian refugees were also highlighted. Furthermore, discussions were had around maintaining contact with families, supporting children's qualifications, and how grant funding was being used to assist children settle and integrate into schools and their communities, and to improve their learning outcomes.

## **School Admissions Arrangements - Whitehall Infant/ Junior**

The Committee received a report on changes to School Admission Arrangements, particularly focusing on the proposal to decrease the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) from 120 to 90 for both Whitehall Infant School and Whitehall Junior School to ensure financial viability with approximately 25 children per class. The consultation period, mandated by the School Admissions Code, took place between 23 October and 18 December, with no responses received. Members also noted the overall decrease in primary numbers across the Borough. Officers clarified that the decrease was a pan-London issue, and the primary goal was to be responsive to changes to avoid financial challenges for schools. Officers assured that they were closely monitoring numbers and creating a detailed School Organisation Plan for projections over time. The flexibility within the system allowed schools to adjust their PAN according to demand. The Committee agreed to continually review proposed changes to Hillingdon's Admissions Arrangements and submit any comments to Cabinet.

## **DPS for Alternative Provision - Education and SEND**

Officers introduced a report on the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for alternative provision, which was presented to Cabinet in December 2023 and was due to be launched in Hillingdon in April 2024. The DPS aimed to create an alternative education provision directory of independent and alternative provision, allowing officers from various local authority services to commission alternative provision for children with diverse needs. Unlike previous individualised arrangements for commissioning alternative provision, the DPS sought to streamline the process, enable greater quality assurance; ensure better safeguarding; and to hold providers more accountable for outcomes.

## Learn Hillingdon Annual Report



“Learn Hillingdon” is the relatively new name for Adult Education in Hillingdon. Officers presented the Learn Hillingdon Self-Assessment Annual Review, noting the move to the Civic Centre and a 91% achievement rate among learners. The focus on vocational courses had resulted in 49% of learners gaining or maintaining employment. The service aimed to target disadvantaged learners, emphasising education as a transformative tool, despite some challenges in capturing progression data.

The quality of provision was stressed, with continuous improvement mechanisms and the introduction of an Advisory Board. A bias towards female learners was noted, with efforts to recruit more men through specialised courses. The age profile of learners ranged from 25 to 95 years.

Issues about strengthening partnerships, reduced printed material, building capacity, and poor retention in mental health courses were discussed. Officers addressed these issues, highlighting the shift to online platforms and the use of community spaces due to reduced building capacity.

The importance of external partnerships for employability was recognised, with ongoing efforts to establish connections with potential employers and the Council. The suggestion of creating an alumni community was well received. Members inquired about funding sources, with officers reporting additional grant funding secured. The service had set up an Enterprise Club and accessed funding for mentoring development. Active citizenship was a focus for the service also, with plans to bring in speakers and make learners aware of civic engagement opportunities.

## School Organisation Plan

Officers presented the draft School Organisation Plan for comment, highlighting its significance for schools in planning around pupil numbers and in strategic development. Divided into three sections—Introduction, Context, and Strategy—the plan provided an overview of the education landscape in Hillingdon; a summary of current pupil numbers and projected demands in primary, secondary and specialist provision; and the options for the Local Authority regarding school places. It was emphasised that it was a statutory duty of the Local Authority to ensure a sufficiency of school places. Members expressed satisfaction with the report's comprehensiveness, while inquiring about PAN reductions, timing of the creation of the School Organisation Plan, secondary school capacity and the forecasting process. Officers emphasised ongoing monitoring, support for schools, and the need for flexibility in decision-making. The Plan was approved by Cabinet in April 2024.

## Annual Education Standards report

Officers presented the Annual Education Standards Report, highlighting areas for improvement in Key Stages 4 and 5, growth in primary education, and early years development. Members discussed the increase in early years development levels post-pandemic and noted the need for continued support

in schools. Hillingdon's early years outcomes aligned with statistical neighbours and outer London, but discrepancies were noted in Key Stages 1 and 2. Challenges in Key Stages 4 and 5 were compared to statistical neighbours, with school-to-school support and the Hillingdon Secondary Headteachers Association playing key roles in disseminating best practices. The impact of the pandemic and mental health on young people's outcomes was acknowledged.

Members sought clarification on schools requiring improvement and discussed the provision of courses for sixth formers. The potential bias in exclusions and suspensions was raised, with officers working on developing data sets and alternatives to exclusions. The meeting highlighted the progress in good and outstanding schools nationally and addressed concerns over SEND casework, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and the impact of the pandemic on children's behaviour. The importance of mental health support in schools was emphasised, along with the challenges of staffing in early years and the Fair Access Panel's criteria.

Members were pleased with efforts to reduce suspensions and the decline in children missing education. Questions about the continuation of mental health grants and the 'September Guarantee' were discussed, along with the reasons behind elective home education. Members requested a list of acronyms for the final report, which was considered by Cabinet in April.

### **School Admissions Update**

The Committee received a short update on the latest School Admissions rounds. This followed National Offer Day for Year 7 on Friday 01 March, and National Offer Day for Reception on Tuesday 16 April. Officers provided information of how many applicants received their preferred school place, and the number of any unfilled places.



### **Hillingdon Music Hub Annual Report**

The Committee reviewed the work of the Hillingdon Music Hub, with its vision of a partnership approach to providing a cohesive music education that is accessible and inclusive, enriching the lives of all children and young people. There were five strategic functions set out in the National Plan for Music Education, and the Hub partnered with a number of schools, community music organisations and regional/ national youth music organisations. Officers gave a further update to Members on a range of music events that were taking place throughout the year including Sing! Primary Music Festival, a new Interfaith Service and a number of choirs.

### **Budget Review and Cabinet's Budget Proposals**

As a statutory consultee to the Cabinet's 2023/24 budget proposals, following consideration by Cabinet on 14 December 2023, the Select Committee reviewed a report which set out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within its remit and submitted comments back to Cabinet for consideration.

# Residents' Services Select Committee

(incl. statutory crime & disorder scrutiny)

- **Cllr Sullivan** (Vice-Chair)
- **Cllr Smallwood**
- **Cllr Gohil**
- **Cllr Farley** (Opposition Lead)
- **Cllr Gardner**
- **Cllr Punja**

**Lead Officer:** Liz Penny, Democratic Services



**Cllr Wayne Bridges**  
(Chair)

## Brief

The Residents' Services Select Committee is responsible for the overview and scrutiny of a diverse range of Council services central to residents' quality of life. Its remit extends to green spaces, planning, waste and recycling, sport and leisure, enforcement, housing, and beyond. Additionally, the Committee has an outward facing role undertaking the statutory scrutiny of the crime and disorder partnership locally, through bi-annual meetings with the Police and other partners, ensuring the Council meets its statutory obligations under the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009. Furthermore, the Committee has undertaken major reviews focusing on alley gating in Hillingdon as well as initiating a recent review into Homeless Prevention & the Customer Journey.

## Major review

### Alley Gating in Hillingdon

Members finalised their major review of the Council's alley gating scheme which had been operating for a number of years. The scheme assists local residents in securing their privately-owned alleyways against intrusion by others and anti-social behaviour. Three witness sessions were held which enabled Members to hear from Community Safety and ASB officers and external witnesses including the police, local residents, and representatives of the neighbouring London Borough of Ealing, who operated a similar scheme.

Further to the witness sessions, the Committee considered its findings at a meeting in June 2023, prior to making recommendations to Cabinet later in the year. Notable points included discussions on implementing an alley gate scheme akin to





Ealing Council's approach whereby signs were erected on gates advising residents to keep clear / keep the gates closed and providing a Council contact email for residents if needed, in addition to proactive communication with new residents regarding alley gate access.

The Select Committee made several recommendations aimed at increasing awareness and communication regarding the alley gating scheme in Hillingdon. Members suggested installing updated signs on alley gates with information about residents' responsibilities and providing Council contact details for further details about the scheme in general. Additionally, Councillors proposed promoting the alley gating scheme in the Hillingdon People magazine to widen scheme awareness. Furthermore, Members recommended expanding annual communications with lead residents to address any issues with the gates or antisocial behaviour and to distribute flyers to new residents about the alley gating scheme in their area. Lastly, it was recommended that feedback from lead residents be sought six months after installing new alley gating schemes to address any challenges promptly. These recommendations aimed to improve awareness and support for the alley gating scheme among residents across the Borough.

The Select Committee's Alley Gating review was submitted to Cabinet at its meeting in November 2023 and the Committee's recommendations were endorsed in full.

## Homeless Prevention & the Customer Journey

In early 2024, the Select Committee embarked on a major review of "Homeless Prevention & the Customer Journey." The Corporate Director of Central Services, Housing Improvement Programme Manager, Head of Housing Strategy and Policy, and Head of Housing Needs attended the Select Committee's first witness session to answer Members' questions regarding homeless prevention. Members heard that there had been a 27% increase in demand with 100 people presenting as homeless each week, primarily due to evictions from private rental accommodations. It was noted that, over the last five years, there had been an increase in demand but a 41% reduction in affordable privately rented accommodation supply. The Council's strategy focused on homelessness prevention and boosting supply, including plans to purchase 500 new homes and explore options to increase private rental sector supply. The Council was also investing in improved systems and processes to improve the customer experience.

The housing process was outlined, emphasising early intervention and temporary accommodation provision for residents who had a priority need. Partnerships with voluntary sectors and updates on the Homelessness Strategy were also discussed, with plans to include Autism/ADHD issues in the revised Strategy.

In the Committee's April 2024 witness session, a key housing partner, Trinity, attended and outlined the work they did to support rough sleeping and homelessness. Members were impressed with the way that staff at Trinity managed the customer experience process and discussed several areas where this could be replicated by Housing Staff in Hillingdon, as part of their review. Further witness sessions and activity are planned over the coming months and the Committee's final report, findings and recommendations will be referred to Cabinet later in 2024.



## Monitoring & scrutiny

### Impact of HS2 on Parking and Noise

Representatives from HS2 and SCS JV (joint venture team building the tunnels) attended a meeting to brief Members. Drone footage showcasing the HS2 works was presented to the Committee, highlighting overground works in South Ruislip and activity at the West Ruislip portal. It was revealed that approximately 1.1 million cubic meters of spoil remained on-site, with the remaining portion relocated to local tips or wet facilities. Members learned that a conveyor belt was used to move material to site areas, with strict regulations in place for lorry movements to adhere to prescribed routes. Third-party contractors faced penalties for non-compliance.

Representatives attending emphasised innovative compliance measures, including the installation of ANPR cameras to monitor lorry movements, with repeat offenders facing removal from the project. Efforts to enhance community engagement were discussed, including leaflet distribution, drop-in hubs, and engagement forums, with plans for increased use of digital platforms and partnerships with community groups.

### Public Space Protection Order 2023 Review

As part of the Council's review into its Public Space Protection Orders, the Select Committee were briefed and informed that PSPOs could be implemented for a maximum of three years and were applicable boroughwide, covering all public spaces. It was confirmed that PSPOs were subject to a public consultation period to gather residents' views. Final versions of PSPOs were promoted through social media, and the Council's website. Members heard that 85 individual responses had been received during the consultation period, indicating a significant level of public engagement with the PSPO process.

Further discussions centred on the regulation of charitable activities on streets, which officers advise was to ensure people legitimised their activity and sought authorisation. Enforcement measures involved collaborative efforts with the Police who could enforce PSPOs. Environmental Enforcement officers, who routinely patrolled seven days a week and responded to intelligence-led tasking, could also issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs).

Updated PSPOs were approved by Cabinet in July 2023 after considering all the feedback.

### High Street Regeneration Post Covid Evaluation

Members discussed the High Street Regeneration post Covid-19 evaluation report. Members learned that a new Economic Development Manager would build on the platform of the activity funded through the Welcome Back Fund once in post.

With regard to Welcome Back Events, it was clarified that the Hayes Town Centre Canal Festival had occurred post-funding, organised independently by the Canal and River Trust. The successful Pumpkin Festival in Ryefield Avenue had been funded by unused European Development funds, no longer available for similar endeavours. The



Committee heard that a number of businesses had been provided with a template for planning future events and had been offered support and further training including digital workshops. Officers were active in sourcing external funding and an example was given of HS2 Business & Local Economy funding being sought to initiate a community shop in Harefield and promotional events in some other town centres impacted by HS2 construction.

## **Scrutiny of the Safer Hillingdon Partnership**

The Committee has a statutory responsibility to scrutinise the work of the Safer Hillingdon Partnership and undertook this duty at two of its meetings during 2023/24. In September 2023, Members were presented with the findings of the Safer Hillingdon Partnership (SHP) strategy review, noting the conclusion of the previous strategy earlier in the year. A review of priority themes for the Partnership was underway with a focus on ways in which to meet the new duties of the SHP. A needs assessment would be completed, and it was anticipated that the new strategy would be published by the end of January 2024. Priority themes for the Partnership, including domestic abuse, Violence against Women and Girls, drugs, antisocial behaviour, and other violent crime, such as knife crime, were under review to meet new duties. Funding from central Government for drug and alcohol issues would establish a new Drugs and Alcohol Partnership in Hillingdon.

Members received updates on Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) activities. Efforts to combat violent crime and Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG) had yielded positive results, as there had been no rise in violence against the person rates, and a reduction in knife crime with injury by 13%. It was also noted that the Predatory Offender Unit (POU) had been launched in 2020, aimed at combating high harm repeat offenders.

Collaborative efforts with various community groups and faith leads were ongoing across the Borough. It was noted that a Race Action Plan was included in the new Met for London Plan. Further to this, initiatives like Street Safe and Ask for Angela aimed to improve safety for women. Collaboration with residents, enhanced officer training, and community trust-building remained central to achieving safer neighbourhoods.

In March 2024, the Committee returned to scrutinise the work of the Partnership, with a performance update report. Discussion ensued regarding the utilisation of resources, highlighting a new joint process between the local authority and the Police. Each month a review was conducted to ensure Police / Council alignment on matters which would make the biggest difference across the Borough. It was noted that the Council had a Safer Communities Team; however, the Council's response to crime and disorder concerns covered several teams – it was important to pull together to address the problems most effectively. The Committee also stressed the importance of cohesive community engagement given the diverse communities across the Borough.

## **Mid-year budget update**

In September 2023, the Committee received updates on ongoing budget matters and the progress made in preparing for the consultation budget for presentation to the December Cabinet.

## **The Locata Housing System**

Members were provided with a comprehensive overview of the Locata system including an online demonstration which is the Council's online choice-based lettings (CBL) system accessible to individuals seeking to join the social housing register. The Council's Social Housing Allocations Policy

governed the assessment of applicants' eligibility, priority banding, and bedroom size requirements. The Committee heard that Locata was the most commonly used CBL system across all local authorities and facilitated easy access for applicants via computer, tablet, or mobile phone, allowing them to check their applications at any time. The Committee was briefed on the Council's banding system, whereby priority levels determined housing allocation, with Band A representing the highest priority for reasons such as medical requirements or facing imminent threats. Regular reviews ensured the housing register remained up to date, with banding adjusted as necessary based on new information or changes in circumstances.

## Hillingdon's Canals

The Select Committee met in November 2023 to discuss the outcomes of their recent site visit to the Grand Union Canal. David Brough, Chair of the Hillingdon Canals Partnership, underscored the canals' importance in Hillingdon and commended the site visit attendees for gaining firsthand experience.



Pictured: from left to right – Cllr Farley, Cllr Gardner, Cllr Bridges, Cllr Punja & Mr David Brough

The canals' roles in drainage, recreation, and volunteering were praised, although the cessation of TfL funding for tow path improvements was noted as a concern. Challenges such as graffiti, litter, and antisocial behaviour were acknowledged, with a call for more school engagement to educate about the canals' significance. The need for increased funding was emphasised, especially in light of potential shortfalls for the Canal & River Trust.

The Elsdale canal boat, which the Committee used to travel on during the site visit, was a valuable resource and had been used for successful trips for people with dementia. Upcoming canalside projects were discussed, including the Colham Bridge approach, with the Council and developers contributing to funding.



The Hayes Festival's success was mentioned, and the shift from British Waterways to the Canal & River Trust's management of the canal network was highlighted. The impending funding challenge for the Trust post-2027 was a key concern.

Priscilla Simpson, Sport and Physical Activity Manager, discussed the role of the Borough's canals in promoting community well-being and upcoming collaborations with the NHS Social Prescribing Team and the introduction of more walks and cycle rides were anticipated.

## **Anti-social and Environment Team (ASBET) update**

The Select Committee reviewed the Anti-social Behaviour and Environment team's work, focusing on their website content and issue classifications. Concerns were raised about residents' difficulties in reporting issues and understanding the system. It was noted that a Business Process and Improvement Team had been established to enhance web page clarity and guide residents correctly.

The Committee discussed fines and legal consequences for fly tipping, with strategies including increased fines and better use of CCTV to identify offenders. Education on legal implications was deemed essential, and a guidance note for Councillors was planned.

The need for a list of HMOs to address fly tipping of mattresses was discussed, with potential enforcement against landlords or agents being explored. Clarification on evidence required for fines was sought, emphasising the need for a criminal standard of proof.

Discrepancies in case treatment were addressed, with Hillingdon's enforcement policy following a stepped approach. A streamlined approach for issues on public versus private land was suggested, with a clear classification system for directing issues to the appropriate services.

## **Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 Monitoring - Annual Report**

The Committee received a report on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 in the 2023/24 financial year. Members highlighted the need to engage with communities where development had taken place to determine how best to spend the neighbourhood funding. Queries were raised regarding what more could be done to carry out boroughwide community engagement. It was clarified that all community groups had the opportunity to apply for Chrysalis funding through the Council's website, with allocations made annually. The report listed all S106 financial funding secured in 2022/23.

## **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy**

Members received an update on the work being undertaken on the local flood risk management strategy, which had been agreed by Cabinet for consultation. Members heard that the Strategy sought to encourage residents to understand their role in flood management, emphasising the importance of maintaining gardens and limiting impermeable paving areas. Furthermore, discussions ensued regarding the forthcoming enactment of the Flood and Water Management Act at the end of 2024, which would mandate all developers to demonstrate the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in their projects. It was emphasised that the draft Strategy aimed to foster collaboration among stakeholders, enhance community engagement, and ensure ongoing progress through annual reviews. The Committee's comments will be presented to Cabinet when the Strategy returns for final approval.

## **Strategic Climate Action Plan**

The Committee has a duty to monitor the implementation of the Council's climate change efforts. Members heard about the progress of the Strategic Climate Action Plan and observed that the green nature of the Borough was an asset and highlighted the importance of transitioning from 'carbon offsetting' to 'carbon credible' language, enabling the Council to be more innovative in its approach. Members heard that the Head of Environmental Services was committed to reviewing the Strategic Climate Action Plan in 2024 which would present a good opportunity to take stock of the current situation and plan for the future. Discussions also touched upon collaboration with big businesses and

work with partners. Tentative discussions had already taken place with institutions like Brunel University and Heathrow airport.

## Tree Planting

Members reviewed Tree Planting at their meeting in March 2024. It was confirmed that, in previous years, the figures on the number of new trees planted had included the planting of whips. However, for this year more standard trees had been planted than whips which accounted for the dip in numbers. In relation to replanting in areas where trees had been cut down, it was clarified that such data was not recorded, but emphasis was placed on community involvement and residents' requests for replacements. If a tree had been removed, residents could submit a request for a replacement tree; however, it was not always possible to replace like-for-like. The encouragement of sponsorships in collaboration with residents, such as Trees for Streets, was highlighted, with Members expressing support for such initiatives. Members were advised that, when deciding on locations for tree planting, all things were taken into account to ensure 'right tree, right place'. A number of trees had been planted around schools to act as pollution screens.

The Committee heard that watering had been brought in-house during the summer of 2023. This had enabled the Council to be more in control and act more quickly if trees were struggling. Climate change was a challenge, but officers were learning what worked well and sought to plant resilient species where possible to suit the environment.

In recent events, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Select Committee participated in the Trees for Cities scheme, contributing to tree planting efforts at Hillingdon Court Park (see picture).

Pictured: Cllr Bridges (left) and Cllr Sullivan (right)



## Weed Control

The Select Committee considered a detailed report on the Borough-wide Hard Surface Weed Control programme. The contractor's performance and improvements to the application of weed control were discussed, and Members were pleased to note that the third application's results were satisfactory.

Members were informed that Glyphosate, the current herbicide chemical used, was only approved for use until December 2025, so alternatives were being actively explored by officers. It was also welcomed that the Council's contractor currently used the latest innovations to treat weeds directly rather than a blanket application which had reduced herbicide usage by up to 80% by the Council.

## Food Waste – Success of the Scheme

The Committee reviewed a report on Hillingdon's food waste collection service, which had seen significant expansion and improvement. Key achievements included a 60% increase in service subscriptions since November 2020, over 10,000 tonnes of food waste recycled, and the introduction of the service to schools and businesses.

The Committee learnt about the engagement efforts by council officers to increase take-up, including roadshows, school programmes, online resources, and targeted door knocking, which had effectively increased service uptake.

Projects to expand the service to flats and businesses were discussed, along with performance data showing a substantial increase in collected food waste and participating properties. The report highlighted the financial savings from recycling food waste and the environmental benefits of processing it into renewable energy and high-quality fertiliser. The Committee noted the planned borough-wide expansion of the door knocking programme to further increase participation.

## **Budget Review and Cabinet's Budget Proposals**

As a statutory consultee to the Cabinet's 2023/24 budget proposals, following consideration by Cabinet on 14 December 2023, the Select Committee reviewed a report which set out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within its remit and submitted comments back to Cabinet for consideration.

# Property, Highways & Transport Select Committee

(incl. public utilities scrutiny)



**Cllr Keith Burrows**  
(Chair)

- **Cllr Tuckwell** (Vice-Chair)
- **Cllr Davies**
- **Cllr Chapman** (to 25 March 2024)
- **Cllr Money** (Opposition Lead)
- **Cllr Garelick**
- **Cllr Kaur**

**Lead Officers:** Steve Clarke / Anisha Teji - Democratic Services

## Brief

The Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee is responsible for the overview and scrutiny of a range of Council services, including Traffic, Transportation, Highways, Parking and Local Safety Schemes, Housing Repairs and Building Safety. The Committee also has an outward facing role scrutinising the work of public utilities and a cross-cutting brief on the Civic Centre, and all other Council property and built assets.

This year, the Select Committee finalised its in-depth scrutiny review into how the Council could attain value for residents in terms of highways resurfacing whilst ensuring best practice and quality. The Committee is now completing its major review into the Council's road safety initiatives and activities related to schools across the Borough.

## Major Review



### Attaining Best Practice and Value for the Council's Highways Resurfacing Programme

The Committee finalised its major review looking into how the Council can attain best value and practice through its pavements, footways and roadways resurfacing programme. The aim of the review was to take a broad assessment of new materials, technologies, methods, and scheduling possibilities to obtain best value and service for residents. During the review, the



Committee heard witness testimony from the Council's term contractor for highways resurfacing, the Council's Officers and Operatives, and the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport. Officers provided updates on the implementation of new resurfacing materials and addressed queries regarding tree root protrusion mitigation.

Members discussed areas for potential recommendations and put these together into a report to the Cabinet. The recommendations covered a number of aspects, including enhancing the engagement and communication with residents and Ward Councillors. The Committee called for a more detailed response template that explains the rationale behind decisions, schedules, and timescales for works and the importance of feedback from residents and Ward Councillors in evaluating and prioritising repairs for footways and roadways.

Additionally, the Committee stressed the need for transparency about major resurfacing works and better communication with authorities like National Highways and Transport for London, especially when their network's deterioration affected Hillingdon's residents. The Committee also suggested regular formal consultations between the Council's Highways and Green Spaces Teams to address the issue of tree root protrusion on pathways effectively.

Furthermore, the adoption of less energy-intensive resurfacing techniques were proposed, including the recycling of materials and the use of Warm Mixed Asphalt, along with the use of new technologies and machines for reactive highways maintenance work. The Committee also encouraged cost-effective methods of repaving, such as using tarmac where suitable, and to take advantage of early ordering and bulk discounts offered by the Council's Resurfacing Contractor.

The Committee's final report and recommendations were submitted to Cabinet for consideration in March 2024 and welcomed.



## **Review into Road Safety Initiatives and Activities around the Borough's Schools**

Following their review into highways, the Committee agreed their next review topic on road safety and held a number of witness sessions, hearing testimonies from officers, the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport, school representatives as well as witness testimonies from a local resident, schools and Youth Travel Ambassadors (YTA). At the first witness session, the Committee heard about the importance of partnership between the Council and schools, emphasising the needs of different schools. Officers detailed the School Travel and Road Safety Team's efforts, highlighting collaboration with Transport for London. Additionally, discussions covered adult cycle training and the impact of electric bikes. The Committee praised efforts in Practical Pedestrian Training and discussed changes in TfL-funded safety programs.

At the second session, the Committee heard from witnesses from St Helen's College, who presented their Junior Travel Ambassador (JTA) program's achievements. Highlighted projects included funding applications, a road safety comic strip competition, and proposals for a Blue Peter road safety badge. The Committee praised their efforts and discussed expanding the program's reach. Suggestions to improve road safety included encouraging proper drop-off/pick-up locations and addressing inconsiderate parking. The importance of school engagement was also emphasised.

At later meetings, the Committee focused on the resident experience and a local resident explained their experience of traffic and safety issues near schools. Members heard about chaotic conditions during peak times, awareness, enhancing parking enforcement addressing parent behaviour. The Committee acknowledged similar issues borough-wide and emphasised the shared responsibility between schools, parents, and the Council. Witness testimonies from Guru Nanak Sikh Academy representatives discussed ongoing efforts to promote road safety, such as staggered drop-offs and pick-ups and engagement with local businesses. The Committee welcomed these initiatives and noted the school's unique challenges due to its location. The Academy's Headteacher discussed initiatives like alternative parking arrangements and educational efforts targeting parents and students. Concerns about safety, including abandoned vehicles and parental behaviour, were raised, with a focus on collaboration and education to address them.



Key statistics were highlighted to Members around accident data, traffic offences and the number of road safety initiatives. It was also emphasised that collaborating with schools and parents to enhance safety measures around schools was essential. Members heard that officers were receptive to discussing safety measures with schools or parents and were consistently willing to engage in dialogue. Fostering communication and transparency remained a priority in promoting safer routes to school. Further to this, Members discussed their potential recommendation ideas at their meeting in April 2024. Draft recommendations focus on communications, fostering relationships with different stakeholders, investigating appropriate areas for 20 mph zones and reviewing appropriate signage and road markings outside schools. The Committee's final report, findings and recommendations will be referred to Cabinet later in 2024.

## Monitoring & scrutiny

### Platinum Jubilee Leisure Centre, West Drayton - Project Update



ensuring that the project remained on track and within budget. Members welcomed the project's

potential and its carbon-negative ambition, with attention to air quality and green design. Air quality at the site was being extensively monitored during the construction phase and the green nature of the development had been built into the design.

Employment opportunities as part of the construction, including local hiring and apprenticeships, were highlighted. The Committee expressed gratitude for officers' efforts and considered the project a valuable future community asset for Hillingdon.

## Hayes Estate Regeneration - Project Update

Officers attended the Committee in June 2023 to provide an overview of the major Hayes Estate Regeneration Project, which included the Hayes Town Centre Estate and Avondale Drive Estate, along with an update on the project's progress.

The Committee was briefed on the extensive resident engagement prior to the development to address what challenges there were on the estates and establish the objectives of the new developments, followed by a positive ballot result from residents in favour of regeneration of the estates.

At the time of the meeting, construction had commenced, with final delivery of the homes expected to be summer 2025. Emphasis was placed on resident involvement and satisfaction, highlighting the significance of the project in enhancing the Borough's social housing stock. Discussions ensued regarding resident transition during construction, and contractor performance indicators focusing on local involvement from workers and businesses. Recycling of materials, notably fire doors that had been retained from previous estates which were in good condition and well within their usable lifespan, was undertaken and incorporated within the new iterations of the estates. Plans for further material recycling were outlined in the construction plan.



## Budget Review and Cabinet's Budget Proposals

As a statutory consultee to the Cabinet's 2023/24 budget proposals, following consideration by Cabinet on 14 December 2023, the Select Committee reviewed a report which set out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within its remit and submitted comments back to Cabinet for consideration.

## Draft Hillingdon Cycling Strategy 2023 - 2028

Hillingdon is expectedly fairly car heavy and cycle-light as an outer London Borough. So at its meeting in October 2023, Members heard that Officers had looked further at the availability of funding opportunities from Transport for London (TfL) for cycling initiatives, including the appointment of a

TfL Borough Cycling Support Officer to advise on prospective infrastructure proposals and aid in securing grant funding from TfL to deliver parts of the Council's new Cycling Strategy.

The draft strategy, which was subject to consultation, outlined plans to bolster cycling infrastructure to promote active transport. Partnership opportunities were being explored, aiming to implement cycle infrastructure and provisions in collaboration with partners like Brunel University. Brunel University had indicated that there was an appetite to provide cycle infrastructure on their land. Concerns were raised about how officers were working to ensure that the Borough's cycle infrastructure was weatherproof, with reassurances from officers that cooperative assessments would be carried out, which would make sure any new cycle infrastructure would not have an adverse impact on its surrounding environment and would be suitable for the local conditions.

The Committee expressed support for the strategy and encouraged its adoption, noting it was positive to see such a strategy being implemented in Hillingdon as there were traditionally relatively high levels of vehicle ownership in Hillingdon when compared to other London Boroughs.

### Civic Centre Works - Project Update



The Committee received a project update of Civic Centre works, outlining completed, current, and proposed works alongside necessary decisions for project advancement. Updates were provided on work completed in 2 East, 1 North, and the Middlesex Suite, which included the installation of heat pumps, heating system controls, solar panels, building fabric insulation, loft insulation, secondary glazing, and lighting as part of major de-carbonisation plans. A 'fly through' for the proposed layout and break out area had been added to the Council's intranet page, and areas were being explored for where tenants could make use of space. The Committee discussed project progression and funding, highlighting regular stakeholder meetings and briefings to the Corporate Management Team. The project's overarching goal was to configure and refurbish the existing listed building, creating a multipurpose hub with reduced running costs. Regarding timescales and staff involvement, it was explained that progress varied, with staff engagement facilitated through drop-in sessions and intranet updates. Sustainable materials were prioritised, and secondary glazed windows were incorporated into plans. Accessibility had also been considered with works planned to lifts and ramps. Members expressed approval of the plans, particularly for the relatively new adult education space, and appreciated the comprehensive update.

## Cranford Park Heritage Asset Project

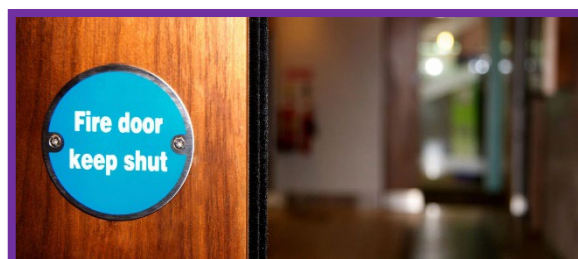
In February 2024, Members received the latest update on the Restoration Project at Cranford Park, outlining both planned works and work already undertaken. The project's scope included the restoration of historic buildings, structures, and landscapes within Cranford Park, along with the construction of a new café, upgrades to the playground, and improvements to the park's amenities for educational, recreational, and community use. There was optimism that the café would be operational by summer, subject to resolving electricity challenges.



The overarching goal of the project was to revitalise the historic site, with significant funding coming from the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Community Lotteries Fund. Progress was reported on various fronts, including work on the cellars, the bridge over the river, and updates to the nearby subway. The Cranford Park Steering Group, comprising of representatives including the Friends Group, local church, Wildlife Trust, and local resident groups, remained actively involved in the project. Members were keen to see the park fully operational and appreciated the support of the Cranford Steering Group in advancing the project.

## Building Safety Update

In March 2024, the Committee reviewed progress on the Council's building safety strategy for Council-owned residential dwellings, including High Rise Buildings. Following extensive work programs undertaken after the Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017, Members were briefed on Government reforms on building safety regulations to improve building and fire safety across residential tower blocks, including changes to the design and development phase, construction stag, building control sign off and occupancy. The Committee were informed that there was a proactive management response that focused on human behaviours, what people brought into buildings and the safety measures in place to prevent fires. Members heard that councils across the board were collaborating closely, particularly through the London Directors team, exchanging shared practices, designs, and approaches to enhance fire safety measures. Members praised officers for their



diligent work, including the replacement of 4689 fire doors since 2017, and expressed appreciation for the in-depth report.

## **Present and Future of the Fleet**

At its meeting in April 2024, the Committee heard from the Director of Procurement & Commissioning and the Fleet Manager who provided details on the composition of the Council's fleet, the key challenges within fleet and future decision making around the fleet replacement programme. It was reported that the main challenge for the fleet was avoidable fleet damage, which was costing the Council more than £800k per annum and the Committee heard that this was actively under review by management and the reasons for the increasing costs were wide and varied.

## **Budget Review and Cabinet's Budget Proposals**

As a statutory consultee to the Cabinet's 2023/24 budget proposals, following consideration by Cabinet on 14 December 2023, the Select Committee reviewed a report which set out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within its remit and submitted comments back to Cabinet for consideration.

# Health & Social Care Select Committee

(incl. statutory health scrutiny)

- **Cllr Corthorne** (Vice-Chair)
- **Cllr Bennett**
- **Cllr Reeta Chamdal**
- **Cllr Punja** (Opposition Lead)
- **Cllr Nelson**
- **Cllr Burles**

**Lead Officer:** Nikki O'Halloran, Democratic Services



**Cllr Nick Denys**  
(Chair)

## Brief

The Health and Social Care Select Committee undertakes the overview and scrutiny role of a range of Council services including adult social work, safeguarding, social care commissioning, public health, and the voluntary sector. Importantly, the Committee undertakes the statutory health scrutiny role as required by the Health & Social Care Act 2001, working closely with NHS and health partners. The Committee also has a cross-cutting brief on domestic abuse services and support. This year, the Committee undertook a major review into the CAMHS referral pathway.

## Major Review

### Review of the CAMHS Referral Pathway

The Committee were conscious of the growing issue of children's mental health in England, noting a substantial rise in mental disorders in recent years and the importance of early intervention was paramount, as half of all mental health problems became apparent before the age of 15.

So for 2023/24, to investigate this further, the Committee commenced a major review looking into the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Referral Pathway, where a number of issues had been identified over previous years. The Committee sought to undertake



a review true to their powers and ability to recommend positive differences in how children, young people and their families experience support for mental health problems in Hillingdon and to get the right help at the right time. An important aspect of this was for young people and their families to understand what help and information there was, and how to navigate the health system.

A number of witness sessions were held with a variety of internal and external representatives from the health and mental health sectors. However, importantly the Committee heard privately from parents of children who had experienced mental health issues and were part of the referral process.

The Committee's findings were presented to Cabinet in March 2023, which included a number of recommendations covered by three main areas:

- **Early Support:** the Committee recommended a 'no wrong door' policy and better information sharing between practitioners to help families access support earlier.
- **Communication:** recommendations for improving communication about timelines and processes to help families manage expectations. Additionally, avoiding over-clinical language that can be confusing or distressing for families.
- **Accountability:** the creation of a Parent and Young People's Board to hold the health service accountable, incorporating the voice of the child into all aspects of the service.

The Committee's findings were fully supported by the Cabinet and have been referred to the relevant NHS bodies with the aim of making a positive difference in addressing children's mental health issues.

## Scrutiny activity

### Family Hubs - National and Local Context

The Select Committee considered the Cabinet's proposals on Family Hubs from a health aspect, during a 12-week public consultation period on the draft strategy to deliver a network of Family Hubs across the Borough. The aim of which was to consolidate related services in a coordinated and enhanced way.

Members received an update from officers, which incorporated a health component in the development of Family Hubs. It was noted that Family Hubs aimed to provide a centralised location for families with children aged 0-19 to access information, support, advice, and guidance. Support could be obtained in the early years of their child's life through the delivery of a specific Start for Life offer which incorporated access to maternity and health services, alongside support for parenting and reducing parent conflict.

The Uxbridge Family Hub (located in the mezzanine at the Civic Centre) had opened in November 2021 and provided a base for the delivery of five Council services including: Uxbridge Children's Centre; the Supervised Contact Service; Multi Agency Psychology Service (MAPS); and the Youth Justice Service.





It also wrapped around services provided by health and community partners such as antenatal and postnatal community midwifery services, infant feeding support and health visiting services.

It's sister committee, the Children, Families & Education Select Committee, also considered the Family Hubs in 2023/24 as part of their wider children and families remit.

## **Police and Mental Health Attendance at A&E**

The Select Committee have been particularly active monitoring this topic given that the number of mental health referrals had continued to increase which had, in part, been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. The Committee were briefed further on the work of the Basic Command Unit (BCU) West Area of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) with the North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB).

It was noted that the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) review had revealed that approximately one million police hours were lost in relation to mental health detentions (which was around 10k hours per month for the MPS). It was further noted that, although approximately 20% of the calls to the MPS were mental health related, this figure was 30% in the West Area (which also had a higher level of Section 136 detentions). While a significant number of individuals were presenting at A&E experiencing mental health crises, it was found that only 20% of those who attended A&E actually needed to be there.

The Committee was pleased to note that there had been improvements in collaborative working over the previous twelve months and that, although Hillingdon had amongst the highest number of Section 136 detentions, it also had the lowest waiting times. The Committee resolved to investigate further the causes of high Section 136 detentions in NWL and London.

## **Older People's Plan**

Consideration was given to the draft Older People's Plan report which was due for consideration by Cabinet in September 2023. The report outlined developments in services for older individuals over the past year, aligning with the Council Strategy 2022-2026 which set out the authority's seven commitments to residents.

It was noted that certain elements of the former Older People's Plan had concluded, including the free burglar alarm scheme, and the programme of small grants for older people's groups to hold events during the summer and at Christmas.



One of the Councils' commitments had been to keep residents safe from harm and, to this end, Trading Standards priorities included protecting vulnerable residents from rogue traders. Work had also been

undertaken with the police and other local organisations to promote Stronger Communities and tackle community tensions and hate crime. A promotion had been undertaken to encourage older people to join the Neighbourhood Watch and OWL schemes to receive crime reduction advice and support and CCTV had been provided across the Borough to deter crime. Action had also been taken to support the commitment to enable vulnerable people and older people to live healthy, active, and independent lives. This work had included support schemes in relation to dementia and the development of a falls prevention education tool and a strength balance programme.

## Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2022-2023

The Committee discussed the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report, which had reviewed the work of the Safeguarding Partnership during 2022/2023. While the focus concentrated on safeguarding adults, Members acknowledged the mirrored arrangements for safeguarding children. Notably, partners such as the local authority, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and NHS bodies had equal responsibility for safeguarding in the Borough, constituting a shared Executive Leadership Board. An external review, primarily focusing on the adult Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), affirmed Hillingdon's strong partnership, marked by openness to scrutiny and commitment to improving practices. The Committee noted that the partnership had strong leadership with all partners having equal responsibility and provided an environment of high support / high challenge, where difficult conversations were encouraged.

Concerns were raised about potential information loss within the system. Members were assured of a timely screening and review processes through the Council's Contact Centre, particularly prioritising urgent cases. Strategies for improving response times, the pace of case closure, and resource allocation were deliberated, showcasing a concerted effort towards efficient safeguarding measures.

Initiatives, such as the Mental Health and Safeguarding Sub Group's efforts to reduce neglect and Learning from Practice Frameworks that had been put in place to promote continuous improvement of safeguarding practice by learning from serious incidents, were also highlighted. The Select Committee resolved to stay updated on safeguarding priorities and acknowledged the continued leadership and scrutiny provided by the partnership.

## Update on Past Reviews - GP Pressures



Consideration was given to the update on the implementation of recommendations from one of the Council's past reviews on GP Pressures, with Members acknowledging that the review had taken place prior to the pandemic and some recommendations were slightly outdated at the current time. Despite this, the Committee recognised the ongoing pressures on GPs. The resolutions of the Committee included referencing GP pressure recommendations in health updates, agreeing a single meeting review in relation to GP related issues in the future and requesting a report on the use of s106

money on health-related services in the Borough for consideration at a future meeting.

## **2023/25 Better Care Fund Section 75 Agreement**

The Committee received an update on the Better Care Fund (BCF), a national initiative which aimed to help individuals to stay well, safe, and independent at home for longer while providing the right care in the right place at the right time. The BCF plan, spanning from April 2023 to March 2025, was supported by a Section 75 agreement, which gave legal effect to the financial and partnership arrangements that had been put in place to deliver the BCF objectives. The meeting discussed various aspects of the BCF, including adult-focused metrics, ongoing reviews of BCF schemes across all North West London boroughs, and efforts to ensure transparency and effectiveness in funding allocation.

### **Health Updates**

#### **September 2023**

The Committee receives regular updates from the Council's various health partners during the year. At its meeting in September 2023, it was reported that significant efforts had been made to address children's mental health concerns, with CAMHS successfully meeting response time targets in Hillingdon and patients not requiring admission outside the area. However, attention was drawn to the increasing number of patients at Hillingdon Hospital waiting for a bed for over 12 hours, ranging from one to nine patients weekly, necessitating a reduction to zero. Further work on Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) was also deemed necessary.

It was noted that community mental health hubs were established, combining primary and secondary adult mental health services, which supported the "no wrong front door" approach which had been included in training. A notable increase in caseload at the community hubs demonstrated that they were being accessed. The opening of The Lighthouse at Hillingdon Hospital in August 2023 aimed to provide therapeutic interventions for mental health issues and efforts were underway to extend its services to 24/7.

Members also addressed the impact of services like The Lighthouse and Crisis House on improving outcomes. Initiatives such as the wellbeing bus in Heathrow Villages, and collaborative efforts to address health inequalities were also highlighted.

#### **January 2024**

At their meeting in January, it was reported to the Committee that more than 250 residents had contacted Healthwatch Hillingdon's information and signposting service or provided feedback during the second and third quarter of 2023/2024. A new reporting system had been developed and implemented. The majority of enquiries had been related to primary care, specifically access to services, which had remained consistent over the past few years. There had also been a significant number of contacts in relation to hospital and acute care, encompassing issues like booking blood test appointments and guiding individuals to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Public enquiries about community mental health services and transportation issues for individuals with mobility difficulties saw a rise. Conversely, there was a decline in dental care inquiries, suggesting an improvement in accessing NHS appointments locally.

The Committee noted that digital outreach had been expanding through Healthwatch Hillingdon's Facebook and Instagram pages. Five new volunteers had been recruited in the last six months, which

had meant that the support available for community outreach and social media communications had been expanded. Members also received updates from Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals (RBH), London Ambulance Service (LAS), Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL), and The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (THH), detailing progress, challenges, and initiatives in their respective healthcare service areas.

## **Health Scrutiny and the New Reconfiguration Arrangements**

The Committee were briefed on recent updated statutory changes to local authority health scrutiny, following the introduction of the Health and Care Act 2022. It was noted that the primary change was the removal of the ability to refer matters to the Secretary of State, but it was considered this would not practically alter the Committee's way of working as this had not previously been a power that could be effectively utilised. Members suggested that the Committee's primary powers lay in compelling individuals to provide information and referring matters to regulators if necessary. These powers were thought to be more practical and useful in the Committee's operations.

## **Health Service Provision in Hillingdon's Rural Areas**

At their meeting in February 2024, the Committee heard about the diverse rural and urban aspects of the Borough, particularly the unique challenges faced by the Heathrow Villages due to the villages' proximity to Heathrow Airport. Healthcare challenges encountered by Heathrow Villages were highlighted and it was suggested that the work undertaken by the integrated neighbourhoods, a model that aimed to develop local solutions for significant health challenges, would be essential to tackling these problems. Discussions also ensued about the wellbeing bus which had been launched on 3 October 2023 as a twelve-week pilot that aimed to provide mobile health services, such as vaccinations and talking therapy services. The meeting underscored the necessity of proactive engagement with the community and suggestions were made by Members around improving access to medicines in the villages through roving pharmacies and exploring estates in Heathrow Villages that could be used for a potential GP practice site. The Committee welcomed further updates on the current health service provision in Hillingdon's rural areas.

## **North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Members agreed to join the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NWL JHOSC) at the Council meeting on 18 November 2021, and appointed Councillor Nick Denys (as the Chair of the Council's health scrutiny committee) as the Council's representative. The JHOSC currently comprises representatives from the boroughs of Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hounslow, Kensington & Chelsea, Richmond, Wandsworth, and Westminster.

Over the past year, the JHOSC has met formally on four occasions to discuss issues including: the proposals for consultation on the NWL wider review of palliative care; consultation proposals on the future of the Gordon Hospital; NWL Mental Health Strategy; NWL Strategy for Provision of Acute Beds; an update on the standardisation of adult and paediatric ophthalmology services across NWL; development of musculoskeletal services across NWL; an update on the ICS Workforce Strategy and Programme; NWL winter resilience and LAS performance update; an update on the NWL elective orthopaedic centre; ICS updates on the Estates Strategy and the reduction of ICS running costs; obesity and preventative services; primary care access following changes to GP contracts and the announcement of the same day access model; and commissioning arrangements for community pharmacy and dental services.

## **Budget Review and Cabinet's Budget Proposals**

As a statutory consultee to the Cabinet's 2023/24 budget proposals, following consideration by Cabinet on 14 December 2023, the Select Committee reviewed a report which set out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within its remit and submitted comments back to Cabinet for consideration.

# Engagement

Select committees actively involve residents, interest groups, experts, private and public organisations in the policy reviews and scrutiny activity their respective Committees undertake. Strong witness testimony continues to provide added verifiable value to the Committee's findings presented to the Cabinet.

This year was no exception, with the following voluntary groups, organisations, private sector companies, groups, services or specific witnesses engaging in this important aspect of Hillingdon's governance process:



## External witnesses

Looked After Children  
Children NEET  
Children Missing Education  
HS2 Project Team including SCS JV (joint venture team building the tunnels)  
Metropolitan Police  
Hillingdon Canals Partnership  
Canal & River Trust  
Hillingdon Narrowboat Association  
Social Prescribers – NHS  
O’Hara Bros. Surfacing Ltd  
Teacher, students and Junior Travel  
Ambassador, St Helen’s College  
Local Residents  
Guru Nanak Sikh Academy Head Teacher and Teacher colleagues  
X5 Youth Travel Ambassadors  
Harlington Hospice & Michael Sobell Hospice  
H4All  
North West London Integrated Care Board (NHS NWL ICB)  
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL)  
Hillingdon GP Confederation  
The London Ambulance Service NHS Trust (LAS)  
Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals – Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust  
Hillingdon Health and Care Partners (HHCP)  
Healthwatch Hillingdon

The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (THH)  
Metropolitan Police Service – West Area Basic Command Unit (BCU)  
Parents of children with mental health issues

## Supporting Council Teams

Youth Justice  
School Places Planning  
Children’s Safeguarding  
School Attendance  
Court Social Work Service  
School Admissions  
Learn Hillingdon  
Hillingdon Music Hub  
SEND  
Corporate Parenting Service  
Children’s Residential Provision  
Virtual School  
Community Safety and Enforcement  
Green Spaces Team  
Housing Team and Tenancy Management  
Planning Department  
Antisocial Behaviour and Environmental Protection  
Street Scene Enforcement Team  
Community Engagement Team  
Sport & Physical Activity Team  
Traffic & Transportation  
Finance

# Site visits

Councillors have been active this year undertaking a number of site visits to broaden their understanding of how front-line services operate and to assist with their monitoring and review.

## Residents' Services Select Committee site visit to the Grand Union Canal



Above: Cllrs Farley, Gardner, Bridges, Punja and Mr David Brough (left to right)



November 2023

## Residents' Services Select Committee site visit the Battle of Britain Bunker



Top (Cllr Smallwood)  
Left (Cllr Smallwood and Cllr Gohil)

July 2023

## Other site visits

### Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee

- October 2023 - Hillingdon Council Contact Centre

### Residents' Services Select Committee

- June 2023 - Weed Control Demonstration with the Council's Contractor
- February 2024 - Botwell Leisure Centre



### Health and Social Care Select Committee

- July 2023 - The Cove drop-in service, West Drayton
- August 2023 - Uxbridge Family Hub





**Democratic Services**

London Borough of Hillingdon  
Council AGM – 09 May 2024

Report produced by Democratic Services Apprentice: Rebecca Reid

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