

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

29 November 2023



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chair), Colleen Sullivan (Vice-Chair), Scott Farley (Opposition Lead), Janet Gardner, Ekta Gohil, Sital Punja and Peter Smallwood</p> <p>Others Present: David Brough, Chair of the Hillingdon Canals Partnership Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer Priscilla Simpson, Sport and Physical Activity Team Manager</p>
30.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
31.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
32.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 25 October 2023 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
33.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items of business were in Part I and would be considered in public.</p>
34.	<p>HILLINGDON'S CANALS (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Further to the Committee's recent frontline visit on the Grand Union Canal, it was confirmed that the boat trip had facilitated in-depth conversations between different partners. The purpose of the discussion was to recap and discuss the key points raised during the site visit, particularly to update those who had been unable to attend on the day.</p> <p>David Brough, Chair of the Hillingdon Canals Partnership, began by highlighting the significance of the canals in Hillingdon, stating that the Borough boasted more miles of canal than any other London Borough. He commended the initiative of those who had attended the canal site visit, emphasising the importance of firsthand experience in understanding what the canals had to offer and addressing local issues.</p> <p>Several points relating to the canals were touched upon, including their role in the</p>

drainage system, being a green corridor for walking and cycling, contributing to the urban environment, providing a place for relaxation, and supporting volunteering efforts. The Council's positive efforts in improving tow paths and utilising ward budgets and Chrysalis funding for canal-related projects were acknowledged. It was noted that tow path improvements had previously been funded partly by the Council and partly by TfL; this was no longer the case as TfL funding had now ceased.

Challenges such as graffiti, litter, and antisocial behaviour along the canals were noted. More collaboration with schools was recommended to raise awareness of the canals' history and environmental significance. The need for increased funding to support canal improvement schemes and the potential impact of reduced funding for the Canal & River Trust were highlighted.

The potential of The Elsdale (the boat used for the site visit) was recognised and Members heard that this vessel was now located in West London. It had previously been used by the Council to facilitate a trip for local people with dementia which had been very successful.

Members' attention was drawn to the Canal & River Trust canalside projects which were set out in the agenda pack. It was noted that the first item on the list (Colham Bridge approach public realm and wayfinding) would soon be underway. Other initiatives were in the pipeline. The Council had helped with funding and other funding streams from developers were being sought.

The Hayes Festival was highlighted – Members heard that this was a fantastic event which was very popular with local residents and had been supported in the past by local Ward Councillors Gardner and Farley.

It was noted that British Waterways, a nationalised industry, had previously been responsible for the canal network. This was no longer the case and the Canal & River Trust, a charity, had now assumed this responsibility. Mr Brough concluded by highlighting the impending funding challenge for the Canal & River Trust, given the expiration of the current Government grant in 2027 and the potential funding gap thereafter.

The Committee heard that addressing these challenges to prevent deterioration of the canal infrastructure was essential. Mr Brough was due to meet with local MPs in the near future to discuss this matter further. He encouraged the Committee to take a comprehensive approach, considering various aspects such as health, schools, and history in their strategy for the canals. It was also proposed that the Select Committee could lead efforts to bring together different strands related to the canals; a suggestion which would be welcomed by the Canal's Partnership.

Priscilla Simpson, Sport and Physical Activity Team Manager, thanked the Select Committee for inviting her to attend the site visit, which had been an enjoyable and engaging experience. Prior to the boat trip, she had not fully appreciated the asset of the canals and she highlighted the value of firsthand experience. As the Sport and Physical Activity Manager in the Council's Public Health Team, Ms Simpson stressed the need to maximise green and blue spaces to promote physical and mental well-being in the community. The importance of feeling safe was also a priority. The Committee heard that, further to the site visit, Council officers would be meeting again with the NHS Social Prescribing Team on 18 December 2023 to discuss needs and challenges and how the canal could be incorporated into this. It was anticipated that

additional walks and cycle rides would be introduced in the future.

Details of various projects, including walks led by volunteers, cycle rides, and park-based exercises were shared with Members. Councillors were informed of initiatives such as 'Our Parks', which offered free exercise activities and focussed on inclusivity for individuals who may be hesitant to engage in structured or organised activities or who lacked the financial means to do so. The importance of creating opportunities for people to improve their health through accessible, affordable, and local activities was emphasised. The social benefits of such opportunities were also noted.

Members sought further clarification regarding the possibility of collaboration with GPs for prescribing activities. It was confirmed that officers had previously engaged with GPs to this end but the need for continuous efforts to emphasise the importance of such initiatives was acknowledged. GPs currently prescribed a 12-week leisure centre programme for some patients, but officers were keen for alternative outdoor activities to also be considered.

Members brought attention to the increasing population living on the canals, potential safety concerns, and the impact on local waste. Concerns were raised regarding the issue of inadequate lighting along certain stretches of the canal, emphasising the importance of safety, particularly in the context of recent discussions on violence against women and girls. The potential use of offside land along the canal was also highlighted.

David Brough contributed to the discussion by addressing the challenges of more people living on the canal boats, highlighting the potential benefits of increased moorings for safety. He also pointed out the difficulties faced in obtaining permissions for lighting due to environmental concerns; proposed additional lighting along the tow path which was to be funded by developers had been rejected by the Canal & River Trust due to concerns about the adverse impact on bats in the area.

In response to the discussion, the Chair summarised the key points from the boat trip, acknowledging the achievements in tow path improvements and expressing the need for legislative changes to encourage businesses to take responsibility for, and make better use of, the offside spaces adjacent to the canal. Members felt that the option to moor on both sides of the canal would enhance safety and reduce the financial burden on the Canal & River Trust. Examples like Richmond and Kew, where both sides of the river contributed to the overall environmental aspect, were cited. The Committee also supported the idea of developing a comprehensive canal strategy which would reflect the multifaceted nature of canal development and cover health, social well-being and integration, environmental aspects and community cohesion.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the content of the Hillingdon Canal Partnership report and sought further clarification as necessary.

35. **REVIEW TOPIC SELECTION** (*Agenda Item 6*)

The Chair informed Members that the Committee's Alley Gating review report had been well received and endorsed by Cabinet. He thanked the Select Committee Members for their hard work on the review.

Members were invited to suggest ideas for the Select Committee's next major review

topic. Councillor Farley proposed a major review of the customer service element of Housing, focusing on the end-to-end process when residents presented housing issues to the Council. He highlighted the Committee's potential to provide valuable recommendations for improvements to the service.

Members supported this suggestion and reported that they were dealing with numerous cases where it appeared that residents had received sub-standard service from the Housing Department. It was felt that improvements were needed.

Given the vast scope of the Housing area, the need for specificity in the review's focus was highlighted. Other areas of potential focus included the repair service, but it was noted that this did not fall within the remit of the Residents' Services Select Committee.

Alternative review topic suggestions included private lettings and temporary housing conditions, given the lack of scrutiny in these areas. The importance of understanding the Locata system and procedures to better assist residents was also noted.

The ongoing impact of Heathrow Airport and the potential third runway were highlighted, and it was agreed that an information item on this matter would be added to the Committee's future Work Programme.

In conclusion, the Select Committee agreed that their next major review would focus on an aspect of Housing; Democratic Services would liaise with the Chair and Labour Lead and work with Council officers to come up with specific points to be discussed further at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Noted the guidance on undertaking policy reviews in Appendix 1 of the report;**
- 2. Sought to make use of the scorecard attached as Appendix 1 of the report (Annex A) to assess any policy review topic ideas;**
- 3. Developed a single or shortlist of potential topic ideas over the coming months or year for officers to scope further and report back to the Committee on feasibility; and**
- 4. Delegated to the Democratic Services Officer, in conjunction with the Chairman (and in consultation with the Opposition Lead) any further agreement of review topic selection as required.**

36. **FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 7*)

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.

37. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 8*)

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.47 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer on epenny@hillington.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, officers, the press and members of the public.