



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Councillor John Riley (Chairman)
Councillor Wayne Bridges (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Kaushik Banerjee
Councillor Kishan Bhatt
Councillor Narinder Garg
Councillor Raju Sansarpuri
Councillor Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead)

Date: THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER
2023

Time: 7.00 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 5 -
CIVIC CENTRE

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

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Terms of Reference

Finance & Corporate Services Select Committee

Remit

To undertake the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following Cabinet Member portfolio(s) and service areas:

Cabinet Member Portfolios	Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Corporate Services Cabinet Member for Finance
Relevant service areas	Democratic Services Corporate Communications Corporate Finance Procurement Exchequer & Business Assurance Services ICT Legal Services Human Resources Business Administration Business Performance Customer Access Business Improvement Delivery (BID)

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

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of interest in matters coming before this meeting
- 3 To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 September 2023 1 - 12
- 4 To confirm that the items of business marked as Part I will be considered in Public and that the items marked as Part II will be considered in Private

Part 1 - Public Reports

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Minutes

FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

6 September 2023



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillor John Riley (Chairman), Councillor Wayne Bridges (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Kishan Bhatt, Councillor Adam Bennett, Councillor Narinder Garg, Councillor Kamal Preet Kaur and Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>Officers Present: Ian Anderson (Business Manager, Complaints & Enquiries Team), Andy Goodwin (Head of Strategic Finance), Chris Mayo (Capital Accountant), Suzie Horn (Head of Human Resources), Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer), and Rebecca Reid (Democratic Services Apprentice)</p>
19.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kaushik Banerjee, with Councillor Adam Bennett substituting. Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Gursharan Mand, with Councillor Kamal Kaur substituting.</p>
20.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
21.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 18 July 2023 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
22.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS 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>
23.	<p>ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE MONITORING UPDATE REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Members heard from officers the highlights of the annual complaints and service monitoring data. There had been substantial growth in the volume of informal complaints, from 4,473 to 5,176. This represented an increase of 703 informal complaints, which was attributed to two main service areas – namely, waste and repairs. With regards to waste, this was mainly related to a change of crews covering the routes and there had been some teething issues, resulting in a fair number of reports of missed bin collections. There were also quite a few repair issues, largely</p>

concerning the time taken to complete repairs and the time taken to fix appointments with service users.

At Stage 1, there were 816 complaints in 2022/23, up from 802 complaints in 2021/22. At Stage 2, there were 121 complaints in 2022/23, up from 101 complaints in 2021/22. In relation to the Ombudsman investigation for 2022/23, there were 46 complaints, down from 75 complaints the previous year in 2021/22. Officers explained the main reason for this was due to the Ombudsman, during the COVID-19 period, holding back some investigations which caught up in that year, leading to slightly higher figures for complaints in 2021-22.

Members also heard from officers that there had been a slight reduction in the number of compliments. In 2021/22, 349 compliments were received, but in 2022/23, only 245 compliments were received. The primary reason for the decline in compliments was the introduction of wildflowers in 2021-22 that attracted a vast number of compliments from both Councillors and residents writing to compliment the appearance of the wildflowers and to keep it going.

In respect of Members' Enquiries (MEs) for 2022/23, the figure was 7,805. The Members' Enquiries for 2021/22 was 9,769. To the members' enquiries for 2022/23, 1,023 service requests also needed to be added to the equation because on the 01 January 2023, the recording of members' enquiries through the GOSS system was introduced, from which two different terms were devised. A Members' Enquiry was defined as one where a 'clear question had been asked that now required investigation by Council Officers, or the supply of information from a Council department'. Service requests were defined as 'one-off actions that did not require action by an officer and not investigative activities or supply of information'. In effect, this meant although the figures were by and large the same, the difference lay in the different definitions that had been introduced into it.

Attention was drawn by Members to concerns around the number of complaints not being responded to within 10 days within the Directorate of Place. Members were reassured that Hillingdon Council offered shorter timeframes for responses to complaints than their neighbouring Local Authorities. Officers cited other Council's targets for responding to complaints at Stages 1 and 2. Harrow Council's Stage 1 target was 15 working days and 20 working days at Stage 2. Ealing Council took 20 working days to respond to complaints at Stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2. Hounslow took 15 working days to respond at Stage 1 and 20 working days at Stage 2.

Members were advised that different service areas could need more time to respond to complaints depending on their nature. Planning complaints, for example, usually involved in-depth enquiries and required more careful consideration in terms of providing a response than that of waste complaints. The importance of the quality of the response that dealt with different issues was also noted. Members were reassured by officers that they would look into further addressing this concern going forward.

The Chairman acknowledged the inevitability of some responses being more detailed than other responses, thus requiring more time for comprehensive responses by officers to be put together. It was suggested that providing some explanation to service users about the nature and complexity of responses which would determine response times might be a good idea.

The Chairman sought clarification from officers on whether there was an immediate

response of acknowledgment upon receipt of the enquiry from service users, to which the response was that as soon as an enquiry came through, there was an immediate automated acknowledgment. In the event that officers were approaching the deadline to respond, a further communication would be sent to keep enquirers/complainants updated on the status of their enquiry or complaint. Further to this, the GOSS complaint system was said to help keep service users abreast about the progress of their complaint as they were able to check through 'My Account' the progress of their complaint.

Members enquired about what feedback had been received (if any) from Councillors themselves about the ME system that was recently introduced. Some Members viewed using automated systems as a step in the right direction, though there was sometimes frustration around requests not being tailored to Councillors' needs or that of their residents. This information had been provided as feedback on a number of occasions to improve the service and was shared with Ward colleagues.

Officers were asked to provide feedback and updates on the new Members' Enquiry process for the Committee's attention at the next meeting.

Members enquired about the breakdown statistics for complaints in person, in writing, by telephone, website and email, and from which Wards in order to ascertain what kind of ways people were using most to make complaints. The vast majority of complaints made were by email. The breakdown data for complaints could not be broken down by Ward, but officers would provide the breakdown by method outside of the meeting.

There were three different complaints procedures, namely: the corporate complaints procedure; children's complaints procedure; and adults and social care complaints procedure, which all operated in different ways. The adults and social care complaints procedure had only a Stage 1 process. By contrast, the children's complaints procedure had a Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3 process.

Members sought further clarification about why there were so few Stage 3 complaints. Explanations for this surrounded the Council's corporate complaints process. There was a review conducted around six years ago as regards the process in place to deal with corporate complaints, where a decision was made to keep the three-stage complaint procedure. Stage 3 investigations were seldom used, largely because individuals were offered the Ombudsman direct, after Stages 1 and 2 had been followed correctly by officers.

Members raised questions about the financial implications of when a complaint was escalated to the Ombudsman. For the children's complaints procedure, a senior level officer would respond to the children's complaint response at Stage 1. If the children's complaint response progressed to Stage 2, two independent people would be commissioned to undertake an investigation which costed on average between £5,000-£6,000 per complaint and this had to be paid for by the Council. Where the children's complaint response escalated to Stage 3, each review would cost between £7,000-£8,000. Where maladministration was identified, the Council had to consider whether if they could not put the person back to the position they enjoyed before the error, whether financial redress should be offered.

Questions were raised about what the dividing line was between residents seeking assistance and a resolution as opposed to a complaint, and how such complaints were categorized. This was often a judgement call. Waste collection would almost always be

treated as an informal complaint which would then be passed to the service to deal with. More formal complaints would be where an investigation was needed to resolve an issue that had been complained of such as a planning issue, Housing repair, Council Tax, etc.

Officers referred to the Complaint, Compliments and Members' Enquiries for 2022-23 table, which underlined the total number of complaints progressively reducing as it moved through the different complaint stages, from 5,176 informal complaints all the way through to only 46 complaints at the Ombudsman level. This demonstrated that the complaints procedure was operating in the way it was designed by reducing the complaints as it went along because officers were managing to resolve the complaints at the different stages.

It was noted that the total number of informal complaints deriving from the Place Directorate was considerably higher than the other Directorates, but this contained the most number of services in this area i.e. planning, waste, housing, Anti-Social Behaviour, etc.

Members stated that the introduction of Service Requests was a positive step forward, but that the process had been designed around how each department worked, rather than the user. This was comparable to how the resident function of the website operated, where each department preferred to work in slightly different ways to the effect that it was made difficult for IT to arrive at some commonality and consistency across the board. It was suggested that there needed to be more of a shift towards putting the user at the heart of the system in order to get a better grasp on the easiest way Councillors could report service requests.

Members noted it might be a good idea to explore the views of some Councillors who had not embraced the Members' Enquiry/ Service Request system in order to ascertain whether this was a fear of the system or rather, that the system was too difficult to use and was therefore a barrier that blocked their adoption of the system.

Members changed focus to note about compliments received. Although the number of compliments had declined, Members highlighted the amazing work of the Repairs and Maintenance team which accounted for nearly 80% of the compliments received for Housing Services. Members questioned what the Repairs and Maintenance team were doing differently to receive a larger volume of compliments as compared to other teams.

The Committee heard from officers that the Repairs and Maintenance team had made a concerted effort to ensure that every compliment they received was recorded. Officers acknowledged there needed to be wider communication about ensuring that other services highlighted where a compliment was received. However, it was recognized that some teams were perhaps generally better at raising the profile of compliments received than other teams.

The Chairman conveyed there was sometimes a reluctance to trumpet success, but that it was important where officers were helpful to service users that this was acknowledged, recorded, and passed up the managerial line so that work undertaken by teams could be appreciated.

Members asked about the extent to which mediation or conciliation had been used to get to the root of a problem and achieve resolution, and whether there was any data

available regarding this. Mediation was rarely used in terms of resolving complaints, but this was more useful in application when it came to Children's Services work.

Members also asked about whether there was any data to indicate that some complaints lead to litigation. Where there were ongoing litigation proceedings, officers would not commence a complaint process. Therefore, once litigation was in place, officers would withdraw complaints to allow the litigation to proceed. The Ombudsman would also take the same view that if there was litigation in place, they would not investigate the complaint until litigation proceedings had concluded.

On Google reviews, the London Borough of Hillingdon was rated at 2.4 stars. Members wondered if it was possible to translate the compliments received by Hillingdon Council into the Google reviews, by allowing residents to promote their compliments on Google review to increase the Council's rating. In respect of the new GOSS system, residents were offered as a first option, the chance to submit a compliment and a second option to make a complaint. Though not many, there were a few compliments that had been submitted through the GOSS system since it was introduced on 3 July 2023.

Members emphasised the point about how there might be flexibility for officers to set clear expectations to residents for those departmental areas that needed more time to respond to queries due to the nature of the issue and not necessarily because of a business performance issue.

Members were made aware that both the children's complaints procedure, and adults and social care complaints procedure were set by statute and therefore, could not be changed. Officers were willing to put forward a proposal in relation to complaint response times as necessary.

In relation to the Detailed Complaint Report for Informal Complaints, Members observed that the increase in informal complaints was in the Repairs and Maintenance area, where residents were dissatisfied with the time taken to undertake repairs. However, it was earlier reported that the Repairs and Maintenance team accounted for nearly 80% of the compliments received for Housing Services. Members therefore questioned if officers had also fed back to the Repairs and Maintenance team by how much significantly the informal complaints had increased.

Compliments were much harder to come by because there was nothing to be gained from someone sending a compliment so when a compliment was received, this was a real bonus for teams. Though there was an increase in the volume of complaints, this was mainly due to issues surrounding time for appointments and the time taken for repair work to be completed. Sometimes the reason for the increase in the volume of informal complaints was as simple as some officers being better at recording the complaints received which subsequently meant that the figures also increased.

The Maintenance and Repairs team kept a spreadsheet to record all the complaints that were received with specific notes about the complaint. Enquiries were observed at management meetings to determine what needed to be done in order to find a resolution. Complaints also tended to be seasonal. In the winter months, the focus of complaints were about heating systems not working whereas in summer, the nature of complaints focused more on damp and mould issues in properties as people did not want to keep their windows open.

Members observed that perhaps the number of complaints and compliments could be

attributed to the fact that the number of jobs were still quite backlogged from the pandemic. The number of jobs could be significantly higher compared to previous years.

Officers confirmed that during the pandemic residents were reluctant to allow work within their properties and it was also hard to source material to do the work and this resulted in a backlog of work. Once the restrictions were eased, the backlog of work had to be cleared but materials were in short supply (fencing, bricks, etc) as other organisations were also trying to source these materials. This meant that appointments were being given further ahead and this resulted in complaints, sometimes to try and jump the queue.

RESOLVED: That the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee noted the contents of the report and provided comments to officers as appropriate.

24. **MID-YEAR BUDGET UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 6*)

In relation to the Mid-Year Budget and the Council's revenue monitoring position, an underspend of £23,000 was forecasted, with the services within the remit of the Committee underspending by £900,000 owing to £600,000 within the Finance portfolio. This was driven by a reduction in the Council's energy requirement. A further underspend of £300,000 within Corporate Services had been driven by several minor staffing underspends and additional income across the portfolio. Within those Services, there were £1.6 million worth of savings to be delivered in 2023-24 but the majority of this was recorded as either banks or in progress.

The £595k savings which were recorded at Amber included £356k being driven by the business service review, where a zero-based review had been undertaken and a new operational model was currently in discussion. A further £171k related to additional income which was being reported at Amber whilst officers monitored the impacts of the uplifts on demand and the recovery from the pandemic on the income streams for the Council.

In terms of the medium-term financial forecast in February 2023, officers noted the council saving requirement 2027-28 was estimated to be £55.4 million, with the single largest driving force behind this being the exceptionally high inflation that had been observed at both a global and national level. This added £60 million to the budget gap. Within the remit of the Committee £5 million of that amount was driven by energy and fuel with other areas including workforce and contracted inflation.

Service pressures were forecasted to add £23 million which was predominantly from the impact of demographic growth across the Borough. £90k of that amount rested within the remit of the Committee, which related to the Council looking towards boosting cyber security.

Officers noted corporate items added just under £12 million of the budget gap, with £6.5 million of that amount being driven by the Council's borrowing requirement for the capital program, which was an element that sat within the remit of the Committee. The remaining balance was predominantly TfL concessionary fares, which related to the recovery from the pandemic due to travel numbers for the over 65s.

Officers were to continue working on assessing the budget gap, with inflation remaining stubbornly high and demand pressures linked to the cost-of-living crisis impacting on

the Council. In addition, officers were to explore ways to reduce the Council's expenditure, looking towards driving efficiency gains whilst protecting frontline services and using the Council's transformation process to formulate budget proposals that would be presented back to the Committee in January 2024.

The government settlement had not been reopened so there was no offer of additional grant funding to compensate the Council for the additional inflation that the Council had to pay out over the last few years. The government settlement currently ran at the end of 2024-25, so from 2025-26 onwards it was still unclear as to how much funding the Council would be likely to receive. This was a position across all local authorities nationally and was one of the key risk areas that had been flagged within the Council's MTFF report that came to Cabinet in February 2023.

Some local authorities were struggling, and officers reported there was an estimated £5 billion gap across the sector over the medium term. The focus for the Council in the short to medium term, considering high inflation and additional costs for the Borough such as unfunded pay awards, was to ensure that the MTFF and budget strategy was a low-risk strategy so that inflation and demographic growth assumptions could be built into the strategy to know what funds could be afforded going forward.

Other officers added that the demand lead pressures within the Adult Services and Children's Services portfolios were attributable to inflation, which was the single largest pressure in the MTFF.

Questions were asked about the increasing cost for the provision of services. Officers were challenging the increasing cost for the provision of services in a robust process by challenging requests from providers of an inflationary uplift. With longer term contracts and where there were fixed costs, the Council was protected marginally from inflationary uplifts. In several contracts and placements spend, the Council built in inflationary uplifts as part of the contract which were effectively unfunded.

The Chairman commented that there was a vicious circle as the inputs of pay requirements or pay inflation was increasing and trying to balance that set against the spend proved to be complex.

Members stressed there was a desperate need to see more local government funding, and also wished to catch sight of a general picture of the departments that were overspending and those that were under spending in significant ways with explanations beyond a table illustration in order to understand what the impact could be on the wider Council's finances, and the Council's approach to succeed in obtaining a balanced budget. Concerns were raised about the savings gap with many unidentified savings. Members also wished to hear about how the government was being lobbied in a non-political sense in terms of what departments were pushing for certain grants because this demonstrated a financial modelling that was income generating.

In terms of inflation, officers observed a various range of inflation forecasts and had their own treasury advisors. They also had access to external data from other partners they worked with in order to gain financial data. It was mentioned that budget gaps were assessed on a low-risk basis.

Members asked if there was an audit to assess how efficiency savings were affecting the delivery of services. Officers responded that technology was a good example of looking at ways of being more efficient, where technology could be maximized. In the

finance department over the last few years, new financial systems were introduced to enable work to be more effective and therefore, drive efficiencies in processes. There was no audit currently that set out how efficiency savings were affecting the delivery of services.

The Corporate Director of Central Services added that the Council's drive was on improving services to Borough residents, such as through the report aforementioned on compliments and complaints. The Council was also on a journey to continue to improve different ways of using technology, such as the transition from using email to the new Goss system, which was a more modern way of working. In relation to demand lead services, the emphasis was on applying a consistent model of prevention and early intervention throughout the Council's services to avoid service users' needs escalating which would therefore require a higher cost response.

Officers added that new AWS connect technology was explored to transform the Council's initial point of contact. This had been applied to a whole gamut of different services, including Social Care, Waste Services, and the Housing Department. This new system had been embraced very positively by residents as a means for much more convenient communication.

RESOLVED: That the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee noted the contents of the report and provided comments to officers as appropriate.

25. **STAFF SKILLS, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Officers reported on the highlights from the Staff Skills, Learning and Development report.

Talent was a key pillar to the Council's HR strategy which helped to deliver services to residents. Considerations to identify what the current talent was and what talent was needed for the future was significant to inform of talent development offerings to employees. Talent development offerings to employees was key for future talent needs and to adjust skill shortages. It was also a key retention technique to impact on employees' longevity in the role and with the Council.

Officers had recently relaunched an induction program which featured a face-to-face session and had visibility of the CEO and Corporate Directors so that the senior management of the Council could be visibly seen. There was online mandatory training as well as service specific induction to equip new team members with the tools to perform their roles.

Throughout an employee's time at the London Borough of Hillingdon, there was also Performance Management around giving employees aims and objectives in order to identify the training needs of employees and meet the needs of job roles going forward.

The Council's Early Careers offering was fast becoming a highlight of the Talent team. There was a wide range of apprenticeships offered to both new and existing employees. A feature of apprenticeships included looking at management and leadership training to ensure that managers had the skills needed for the present and future.

Talent was pivotal for the purpose of identifying who the top talent was and succession plans for critical roles. Effective talent development also enabled the workforce and

leadership to be diverse, which demonstrated a link to improved performance decision making and effectiveness.

Learning Zone was a learning management system (LMS) that tracked learning and also offered a suite of free online courses to employees that could be completed at any time on any device.

The Council's talent offering needed to be inclusive for everyone to have the opportunity to grow in their role. It also needed to be diverse to be able to meet needs.

Officers expressed they would continue to work with Early Careers to support vulnerable people into paid employment.

Members asked officers to what extent staff training was in-house and the extent to which training was external through procuring other providers that offered watching online videos and tests. Officers responded that the system of courses on the Learning Zone were generic courses that usually did not offer a test at the end. However, when looking into upgrading the training system, officers noted they were currently exploring more bespoke courses. It was important to acknowledge that there were many different ways and resources from which people learnt but officers would look into upgrading the functionality of the current Learning Zone system, noting Member feedback.

Members noted secondments were a great way to develop staff and wondered how this was used within the Council. It was confirmed that many internal secondments were used and proved beneficial. Officers had broached the possibility of offering secondments internally with other London councils and would investigate further into this.

Members questioned the degree to which trade unions had been involved in drawing attention to the staff voice to help shape the learning design. Members also asked questions around agency and senior management programs.

Officers highlighted, in respect of trade unions and the staff voice, there was an Employee Engagement Working Group that was becoming an employee voice with the trade unions combined that actively focused on discussions and feedback from teams. Trade unions had lesser involvement with the Learning and Development courses. For staff needing wider development outside of their role or through redeployments, there were several 10 to 15-minute short, sharp training courses available by way of the Learning and Development system. However, engagement in online learning proved a challenge for those who struggled with using IT. As much training was conducted either online or in person, it was important that training and development offered to employees was inclusive as people learnt in different ways.

Agencies were relied on to train agency workers to the required level. Talent and Development learning was offered only to employees, but agency workers were welcomed to engage in Talent and Development learning through the Council rather than through an agency, where there were vacancies.

With regard to senior management, the Early Careers Officer was reported to have focused much work on level 5 to level 7 apprenticeships available for Team Leaders, managers and Directors. This was carried out externally through the apprenticeship levy to put managers onto training for leadership and development. Mentoring was also expressed as being a great resource.

	<p>Members questioned whether there was a desire to rebrand HR, as according to HR Monthly, it was reported that 85 of HR Leaders and Executives felt it was an outdated term.</p> <p>Officers noted their objective to rename HR to People with a talent development team and talent acquisition team. A larger shift was needed from adopting an old school element of training, learning and development of recruitment to talent development and talent acquisition.</p> <p>Following discussions around attracting prospective employees, officers drew attention to developing the Council's Employee Value Proposition (EVP), which was an important piece of attracting potential employees and concerned the promotion of the Council's values and working environment. The employee engagement survey was expected to be launched in October 2023.</p> <p>HR Resources adopted a hybrid working model as an important part of their Employee Value Proposition and was a notable retraction technique because there was a growing desire for employees to flexibly work around their daily lives.</p> <p>The Chairman raised questions about whether there was some form of Member input to the information provided around a newly joined employee's induction with the Council at different levels of seniority. The response was that this idea was not currently in operation, but officers would investigate this for perhaps further discussion.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee noted the contents of the report and provided comments to officers as appropriate.</p>
26.	<p>PROCUREMENT REVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS (NO REPORT) <i>(Agenda Item 8)</i></p> <p>The Chairman introduced the Draft Final Conclusions and Recommendations for consideration by Members.</p> <p>Members raised it was difficult to engage with the final draft conclusions and recommendations, considering the late notice upon which the document was received by the Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman acknowledged this and confirmed that the full, finalised report was due to appear at the next Committee meeting on 19 October 2023.</p> <p>Members proposed submitting written feedback on the final draft conclusions and recommendations to the Chairman and Democratic Services team for detailed observations and comments.</p> <p>The deadline for written submissions was agreed for 23 September 2023.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the draft recommendations be noted, and that written feedback be sent to Democratic Services for feedback and review.</p>
27.	<p>POLICY REVIEW DISCUSSION AND GUIDANCE <i>(Agenda Item 9)</i></p> <p>With regards to Policy Review Discussion and Guidance, HR Staffing Recruitment and Retention as well as Customer Service were noted with interest by Members for future</p>

discussion and review.

In respect of the Customer Service proposal for future review, Members wished to concentrate focus on how new technologies encouraged a user-friendly experience, and how customer services could be improved for residents.

Some Members agreed and added that tailoring technology to residents to improve user experience was a significantly beneficial topic that could be worth delving into for a more in-depth investigation.

A further information report within the remit of the Committee regarding First Aid Awareness and Training was also suggested by Members. This would be with a view to finding out if this would be a suitable major review topic.

Committee Rooms were public focused rooms. However, beyond the first aid sign that was present in Committee Rooms to contact security in the event that a sick or injured person required first aid care, there were no first aid kits nor any defibrillators. Greater first aid awareness coupled with training opportunities offered to both staff and Councillors in their public facing roles could be assessed to explore whether there was adequate first aid training available. The offering of first aid training to staff and Councillors could be extended to a wider pool of people to enrol and become better equipped on life-saving and essential first aid tools.

The Chairman observed that first aid training and a clearer understanding of medical conditions would be beneficial and posed the question to officers about what first aid training was currently offered.

Members were informed that in terms of first aid training, there was a requirement imposed from a health and safety perspective that meant there needed to be a certain number of first aiders within the Council building. In addition, there were certain roles that automatically required first aid training by virtue of it being mandatory within their own role. However, upon reflection, greater significance of the need to offer life-saving skills to many more staff, as previously advocated in a campaign by St John Ambulance, was noted.

Though not physical first aid, officers were particularly excellent when it came to offering mental health first aid training, where many staff were put on courses to better equip themselves with the understanding of the mental health element of first aid training that would be extremely beneficial for use in public facing roles.

Officers were asked to investigate the delivery of first aid awareness and training for the Committee's attention at the next meeting to get some scoping around the topic area for further exploration, with focus including equipment, responsibility, and training.

The Democratic Services Officer clarified if the Committee was happy with the 4 recommendations listed under no.1 to no.9, with no.3 taken as developing a short list for future topics for further consideration. This was agreed.

Members referred to page 58 of the Guidance on Undertaking Policy Reviews and made comments that the wording in the guidance could be used to dilute scrutiny creating a reduction of transparency.

RESOLVED: That the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee noted the contents of the report and provided comments to officers as appropriate.

28.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the Forward Plan.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.</p>
29.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 11</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman noted that the draft Final Review report would be considered at the October Select Committee meeting. An item of First Aid would be added to the Work Programme for October.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considered the Work Programme report; and 2. Added an item on First Aid to the Work Programme for October 2023
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.15 pm.</p>

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

UPDATE ON THE NEW MEMBERS ENQUIRIES PROCESS

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Ian Anderson – Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries
Papers with report	Appendix A – Background Information Appendix B – Service Request pages
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To provide the Committee with an update on the handling of Members Enquiries (MEs) and Service Requests (SRs) using the GOSS portal from 1 January to 15 September 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1) Note the contents of the report and provide any comments to officers as appropriate and;**
- 2) Endorses the change to the look and feel of the Service Request page by adding in icons – see Appendix B.**

Implications on related Council policies

A key role of Select Committees is to monitor the performance of Council services within their remit. Select Committees may also make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

This report seeks to provide an update.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

APPENDIX A

BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

1. On Thursday 17 November 2022, the full Council ratified changes to the Councils Constitution requiring all Members, as of 1 January 2023, to submit their Members Enquiries and Service Requests through a Members Portal, provided by GOSS, to support automation of the Members Enquiry process.
2. In addition to this new Portal, clear definitions of a 'Member Enquiry' and 'Service Request' were introduced. This distinction supported further automation for Member Service Requests, as it enabled the use of resident-facing 'Report It' forms by Members to submit Service Requests directly to responsible service areas, thereby negating the need for manual triage.
3. Definition of a Members Enquiry is *'A clear question has been asked that requires investigation by Council Officers, or the supply of information from a Council department'*.
4. Definition of a Service Request is *'A request for a one-off action to be taken, that requires action by an Officer and not investigative activities or supply of information'*.

Historic Members Enquiries process

5. Prior to the implementation of the Members' Portal, Members were required to submit enquiries and requests via email or telephone. However, such a process was inefficient, both for Officers (management of unstructured communications, lengthy email chains which had to be manually tracked, manual logging and creation of reference numbers, delays caused by manual triage) and Members (unstructured communications prompting follow-up clarification questions, manual tracking of due dates and breaches, complex email chains).

New Members Enquiries process

6. All Member Enquiries are now funnelled through the Officer-facing 'Staff Portal', a case management system to oversee the receipt, management and response to Members Enquiries and Service Requests.
7. For Members, they now have a dedicated digital space to:
 - Submit Member Enquiries and Service Requests ("Submit a Member Enquiry"/ "Submit a Service Request")
 - Respond to clarification questions and Officer queries ("Outstanding questions")
 - Track breached cases and request action ("Breached cases")
 - View performance responses ("My Member Enquiry Dashboard" / "My Service Requests and Enquiries Dashboard")
8. In terms of general benefits, Members are now required to use a structured forms to submit Member Enquiries and Service Requests. This ensures that the required information is collected at the point of submission, foregoing email exchanges to capture required information. Members also receive a reference number as soon as an

enquiry or request is submitted, negating the need and waiting time for Member Liaison Officers to manually create a reference number.

9. In terms of dashboards and reporting, Members also have access to dashboard and high-level data tables on open and closed Member Enquiries, charts which can be manipulated by Members to focus on enquiries by type e.g.: Adult Social Care, Parking Services etc. in addition to access to tracking information and case details.
10. However, it should also be noted that continual development and improvement of the Members Portal is ongoing as part of an iterative improvement process. Improvements to the Member experience made to date can be found in table one, with planned improvements details in table two of this paper, respectively.

FAMILIARISATION SESSIONS

Elected Members

11. Officers followed a 'familiarisation-then-integration' approach to support Members to use the Members Portal. Prior to being given access to the Members Portal, each Member was invited to a presentation to explain the rationale for change, the new definitions for 'Members Enquiries' and 'Service Requests' and to outline the benefits to Members of using the Portal. This was in addition to a demonstration of the Portal, concluding with a questions and answers section.
12. Prior to integration, Members were phased into multiple waves or groups. However, to familiarise Members, Officers also completed additional sessions to support the efficient integration of Members, including events specifically for Members involved in testing ('testers') and additional sessions for Members who were unable to attend scheduled sessions. 9 such sessions were delivered between 22 November 2022 and 3 January 2023
13. Further to this, additional optional 'refresher' sessions were held to support Members and provide an opportunity to discuss any queries or concerns they were having. All Members were invited to attend a session of their choosing. 8 sessions were delivered between 20 March to 11 April 2023.
14. Members were also given access to training and familiarisation materials (user guides and instructional videos), accessible via a dedicated 'Members Portal' page on the 'Democracy' section of the Council's intranet and will continue to receive support from Officers to ensure ongoing use of the Portal.

Officers

15. 4 familiarisation training sessions were provided for Officers and additional 1-2-1 and group sessions for PAs were provided on request. Officers were also provided with written user guides and instructional videos, accessible via a dedicated 'Staff Portal' page on the 'Tools and Systems' section of the Council's intranet. Support continues to be provided by the Members Liaison Officers on request.

STATISTICS AND MEMBERS' PORTAL UPTAKE

16. To date, 3,872 Member Enquiries and 3,450 Service Requests have been submitted between 1 January and 15 September 2023. This is a total of 7,322 for this period.
17. By way of comparison, between 1 January and 15 September 2022, 7,707 Members Enquiries were submitted for this period. No distinction was made between a Members Enquiry and a Service Request at that point in time.

Members Enquiries

18. The highest number of Member Enquiries have been submitted under the Housing category (865), Waste (411), Planning (102), Highways (372) and Anti-Social Behaviour (311). Relatively low numbers of enquiries have been received for Education (39), Housing Benefit (33), Transport and Projects (15) and Corporate Finance (13).
19. Of the 3,872 Member Enquiries raised, 3,242 were raised by Councillors and 630 enquiries were raised by 13 different Members of Parliament, which includes 10 out of Borough MP enquiries. Although MPs do not have access to GOSS, the Members Enquiry team uploads enquiries to the Portal on their behalf, negating the need to manage MP enquiries off-platform via email.

Service Requests

20. To date, 3,450 service requests have been raised using the Portal.
21. The highest number of Service Requests have been submitted under Fly tipping (766), Street Cleansing (729), Potholes (203), Rubbish accumulation (137) and signage (129).

Response time

22. Of the 3,872 Member Enquiries submitted between 17 November 2022 and 15 September 2023, 3,089 (80%) were responded to within 10 working days.
23. The soft close functionality was introduced on 5 May 2023 which allowed Members to send a follow up enquiry within 5 working days of a response being issued. Of the 3,242 Members Enquiries raised by Councillors only 29 enquiries were required to be re-opened for a follow up response to be provided (this is 0.9% of all Members Enquiries).

YOU SAID, WE DID

24. As referenced above, several Members were involved in the testing of the Members Portal prior to its launch. As part of this, the project team created a “you said, we did” to demonstrate the impact of Member feedback on its final design.
25. The below table (one) outlines such revisions and denotes when they were introduced (prior to Members Portal launch or post Members Portal launch).

TABLE ONE: Overview of the “you said, we did” amendments made to the Members Portal and/or supporting processes, prior- to or post-launch.

Point of implementation	You said...	...we did
Prior to Members Portal Launch	There are instances when I won't have all the constituent's details, but the form is making them 'mandatory' can this be changed?	This has been changed. Member now asked to provide phone number and/or email address. Address no longer mandatory.
Prior to Members Portal Launch	There are instances when an enquiry is about a place or asset (school, park, pub) rather than an individual. The form doesn't allow me to raise such an enquiry	This has been changed. Option now added for the Member to 'Enter location details' when the enquiry is about a location or asset, rather than on behalf of constituent or policy area.
Prior to Members Portal Launch	The subject title field is too short	This has been changed. Increased from 50 to 65 characters
Prior to Members Portal Launch	There are too many clicks on the user journey	This has been optimised. Introduced use of radio buttons to navigate through different scenarios, rather than opting-out on a page-by-page basis.
Prior to Members Portal Launch	Members search and refer to enquiries with 'words' and not reference numbers. The portal doesn't support this	This has been introduced. Development work undertaken with the supplier to ensure Subject Enquiry Titles are displayed at all possible locations in the Member Portal, searchable using the 'CTRL+F' function on a keyboard.
Prior to Members Portal Launch	We need the ability to add more attachments. Three (3) isn't enough	This has been changed. Increased from 3 to 7, with the ability to add more with the support of the Member Enquiry team.

Point of implementation	You said...	...we did
Prior to Members Portal Launch	We need to be able to access the Portal quickly and easily. I can't see how accessing it will be easy	This has been introduced. Single Sign On introduced for all Elected Members and Officers. Portal link included on the intranet, with support given to bookmark the Members Portal on your device.
Prior to Members Portal Launch	Enquiry types (Social Care, Tech Admin etc.) aren't clear and more need to be added	This has been changed. Terms used for enquiry types were re-worded for user ease rather than reporting requirements. New types such as 'Education' introduced.
Prior to Members Portal Launch	We need to be able to identify issues and follow-up on enquiries quickly and easily. We use Outlook to schedule reminders and Excel to track. We need enquiries which are breached to be easily identifiable.	This has been introduced. Following Member testing, new tiles introduced for responding to outstanding questions, easy reference for breached cases, and dashboards for Member Enquiries and Service Requests.
<i>Post Members Portal Launch</i>	Members need a copy of the final response(s) to Member Enquiries to be added to the case history	A copy of the response(s) is now available in the 'case history' of each Member Enquiry. This is viewable in the Members dashboard.
<i>Post Members Portal Launch</i>	Members being shown an error message on the google map overview when submitting a service request for some enquiries (affected some ASBET and the 'Street Furniture and Road Markings' forms)	Resolved. Configuration settings updated on the affected service request forms by ICT.
<i>Post Members Portal Launch</i>	Requirement to facilitate the submission of service requests for ASBET which do not meet the threshold of an ASBET Member Enquiry	Additional service request forms for "ASBET – Noise" added to the Members Portal for use.
<i>Post Members Portal Launch</i>	Insufficient options available to Members when determining 'type of enquiry' for a Member Enquiry	Additional options of 'Highways', 'Parking Services' and 'Transportation' added. These are also reflected in the Members Enquiries dashboard.
<i>Post Members Portal Launch</i>	The reference number and enquiry title were not included in 'formal response' emails received by Members	All final responses submitted by Officers through now include the Member Enquiry reference number and enquiry title as standard.

Point of implementation	You said...	...we did
		TO NOTE: this required a product upgrade.
Post Members Portal Launch	Members do not have sufficient time to review and respond to a Member Enquiry response before it is closed.	We worked with ICT and GOSS and on 5 May 2023 we introduced a 5-working day window for Members to review the response from the officer and raise a query via the MEs system, if required.
Post Members Portal Launch	Members needed a clearer process for ASBET related enquiries	The process was changed in which Members were asked to submit anti-social behaviour reports as a Service Request and this will be handled directly by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team. However, if an enquiry met the definition of an ME, as set out in the constitution then an ME should be submitted.
Post Members Portal Launch	Members reported difficulties in uploading photo's when using their mobile phones.	Depending on the enquiry type it is not always operationally necessary to have an image to action the request. However, Members who experienced such difficulties IT colleagues undertook 1-2-1 sessions and this offer is still open.
Post Members Portal Launch	Members have reported being unable to upload images to certain service request forms.	Councillor Bennett undertook a review of all the service request forms and this was fed back to Officers. Over the course of a number of months, Naveed Mohammed, worked with the owners of the forms and Alun Rees (Channel Migration Manager) to make changes to the forms. A number of the forms were amended but where valid reasons were given why a change could not be made or a form deleted/replaced, no or minor change(s) were made.
Post Members Portal Launch	Escalation of an enquiry that needs immediate attention	A new process was introduced where if a Member considered their enquiry to be urgent, that they submit the enquiry in the usual way and then sends an email to Ian Anderson and/or his team who will then alert the Director/Senior Manager of the urgency of the enquiry.
Post Members Portal Launch	Members were only able to submit enquiries with a maximum length of 2000 characters.	The 'Details of Enquiry' field has now been increased to a maximum 4000 characters. This is the equivalent of

Point of implementation	You said...	...we did
		approximately two sides of A4 in size 12 arial font. If an Elected Members enquiry exceeds this limit, a red advisory message will be shown.

26. In addition to those issues already addressed, a number of issues have also been raised which have been shortlisted for future development.

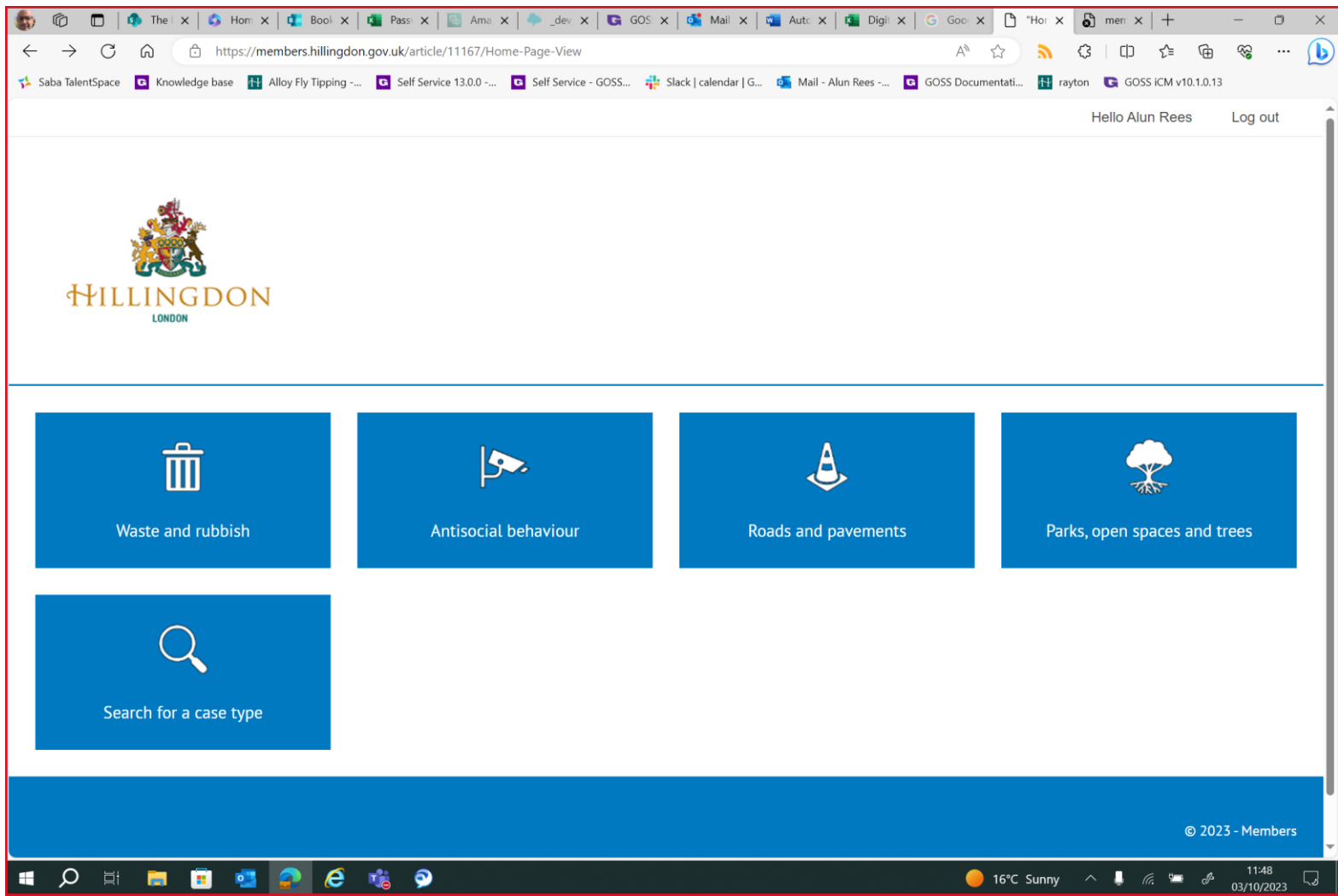
TABLE THREE Overview of issues raised that have been shortlisted for future development to the Members Portal and/or supporting processes.

Issue raised	Solution approach
Sharing option for Elected Members – applies to Member Enquiries only	The legal advice we have received is that a Councillor will have implied consent of the resident to retain, disclose the resident’s data to the Council and also receive personal data from the Council. Councillors representing an individual who has made a complaint will, in most cases, be able to rely on the Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) (elected Representatives) Order 2002 and exemptions under Schedule 1 of Data Protection Act 2018, when processing special category data (such as the health data of the resident). This means Councillors are not ordinarily required to obtain express written consent but that implied consent has been given to share information with their local Ward Councillor and not to Councillors outside their Ward. The functionality exists but it will need to be tested and developed. This is under review.
Search functionality for Members	This requires development by GOSS (as it cannot be done by inhouse IT colleagues) and there is a cost implication of around £10k for them to develop this. This is under review.
Officers were asked to include the electronic Ward Budget form on the Members Portal.	It was recommended that a Ward Budget tab be included within the Member Portal that will enable Members to submit and track proposals. The inclusion of the Ward Budget form has been agreed in principle, and it is envisaged that it will be introduced as an additional tile to the Members Portal. This feature is currently being developed internally by the Channel Access Team and is currently in the design phase, and following user acceptance testing (UAT), this will then feature in the portal.

<p>In the subject heading for Service Requests to contain the title given by Members when submitting the Service Request in addition to the reference number.</p>	<p>Channell Access Team to consider feasibility of amending every service request setup and the impact this will have. This request has been put forward for consideration and an update will be provided as soon as is possible.</p>
<p>Increase the size limit for photographs to be uploaded on Service Requests.</p>	<p>This has been set at 5 MB per photo – we are in discussion with GOSS regarding this point and the feasibility of increasing the picture size or whether it is necessary for a picture to be provided for each request.</p>

APPENDIX B – Service Request pages

The Channel Migration Manager has worked with Councillor Bennett in developing the changes to the Service Request page by adding icons, which has been tested and is ready to be implemented. Please see below. The Committee are requested to endorse this change, and then officers will send a communication to Members before we go live.



FIRST AID AWARENESS & TRAINING / HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICES

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	James Wright – Central Services Directorate
Papers with report	None
Ward	N/A

HEADLINES

At their last meeting, the Committee raised the matter of First Aid Awareness and Training and requested an information item on this topic, and also to see if this would be a suitable review area for the future.

This report provides an overview of the Council's Corporate Health & Safety Function (the team) and the work they are doing to ensure the Council meets its statutory obligations under health and safety legislation and minimise costs associated with accidents and ill health to those affected by the Council's undertakings. This report does not consider two other areas the Health & Safety Manager has line management responsibility for: business continuity and emergency response.

The Health and Safety Manager responsible, Mr James Wright, will attend to answer Members' questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee note the contents of the report and provide any comments to officers as appropriate.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Team

The team acts as the Council's competent person as required by regulation 7 of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The team's primary remit is with regards to the work activities of Council employees and facilitating compliance with health & safety legislation.

The last restructure of the team resulted in the following.

- Health & Safety Manager
- X2 Health & Safety Advisors
- L3 Business Administration Apprentice

Since approx. Feb 2020 the team has not been fully staffed (only one Health & Safety Advisor). Difficulties have arisen trying to recruit candidates who possess both health & safety and first aid instruction qualifications. A different approach was undertaken to recruit a candidate with first aid instruction qualifications and provide them with the relevant health & safety qualification. This has been successful; the team will be complete from 9th October 2023.

Health & Safety Management System

The health and safety management system assists the Council in managing its health and safety responsibilities for the Council's undertakings. The team, with contributors, writes, maintains and reviews the Council's health and safety management system which consists of:

- An overarching Corporate Health and Safety Policy identifying specific responsibilities
- Corporate Health and Safety Standards stating the specific requirements for the various topics
- Procedures to ensure the required standards are achieved, which may be Council-wide, Directorate and/or locally prepared.

There are several other systems/guides/programmes etc that support the health & safety management system which the team maintains, such as:

- Assure – online health & safety management (recording of incidents, risk assessments etc)
- Restricted Persons Register
- Consent to drive form
- Health surveillance programme
- 'How do I' guides
- Safety Alerts

Implementing the Council's health and safety management system, helps:

- Health and safety be fully integrated into the Council's daily business
- Promote high standards of health and safety awareness
- Train and support our managers and staff to ensure they are competent to conduct their duties safely
- Aim to continually improve our safety performance
- Assess all significant risks with a view to eliminate, reduce or adequately control their impact
- Provide adequate resources to achieve our aims and objectives safely
- Ensure contractors and anyone else who delivers services on our behalf have health and safety standards that are consistent with our own

Advice, Guidance, Coaching & Mentoring

On any given day the team receives numerous queries/requests for assistance in relation to a wide range of subjects including

- Reporting/investigating incidents
- Reporting serious incidents to the HSE on behalf of services
- DSE assessments
- Risk assessments
- Use of Assure
- Compliance with health & safety standards

As appropriate the team will provide advice, guidance and/or coaching/mentoring. The team will also undertake DSE assessments for staff with complex issues and are completing risk assessments for services based at Harlington Road Depot as these, by their nature, are higher risk activities.

The team also works collaboratively with other departments to implement new initiatives/policies, for example, Hybrid Working Policy, alcohol & drugs testing.

Performance Monitoring

The team monitors performance on a quarterly basis against key performance indicators that have been agreed with representatives of Hillingdon Health & Safety Group (HHSG). A Council-wide report is prepared for discussion at the quarterly HHSG meeting. Directorate quarterly reports are also prepared using the same KPIs which are discussed with Corporate Directors.

In addition to the above the team reviews the quarterly health & safety risk register which consists of the 12 highest risk areas of work activities. The team prepares and undertakes audits as to how services comply with health and safety standards for these risk areas. Recommendations and learning are shared with the HHSG. The team also undertakes audits of community schools for general health & safety management.

The team also undertakes targeted monitoring, for example the team is currently working with relevant services to monitor actual exposure to hand/arm vibration from using power tools etc.

Hillingdon Health & Safety Group

HHSG is chaired by a Corporate Director and comprises of the health & safety team, a health & safety champion (Head of Service) from each directorate and other key partners e.g. Waste Services, Fleet Management and Facilities Management.

HHSG meets quarterly with the purpose to ensure a consistent approach to health and safety management is adopted throughout the Council, to review health and safety performance across the Council and discuss matters of topical and strategic interest that have Council-wide health and safety consequences.

Training

The team organises and delivers a range of health & safety and first aid training courses to Council employees and others. Most of these courses are delivered at the Civic Centre however, we also deliver courses on-site as requested. Approx half of the first aid training is being delivered by a commissioned contractor, due to the vacant post within the team.

The team has annual income targets to meet totalling £41,200. To achieve this first aid course places are sold to schools and other local businesses. Course dates and booking are accessed via the Council's website. The team manages all administration associated with the organisation and delivery of these courses. Level 3 courses are regulated by Ofqual. The range of courses delivered includes.

- Health & Safety Responsibilities for Hillingdon Managers
- Health & Safety Responsibilities for Premises Managers
- Assure (online health & safety system) System Users
- Fire Warden (general & Civic Centre specific)
- Level 3 First Aid at Work (inc. renewal courses)
- Level 3 Emergency First Aid at Work
- Level 3 Paediatric First Aid
- Level 3 Emergency Paediatric First Aid

- First Aid for Schools
- Refresher First Aid Training
- Other ad-hoc topics as requested

For 2023/24 the team introduced blended learning options for the two- and three-day first aid courses. Blended learning courses consist of approx. 6 hours on-line learning followed by the rest of the course delivered in-person for the practical elements and assessment. These courses were implemented as part of the Council’s drive towards digitisation, provide flexible options to learners, reduce demand on committee rooms and allow more time to assist with health and safety issues.

For 2022/23 the team delivered the following training

H&S responsibilities for managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 courses delivered / trained 26 candidates
H&S responsibilities for premise managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 courses delivered / trained 35 candidates
Fire Marshal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 general courses delivered / trained 166 candidates • 5 Civic Centre specific courses delivered / trained 31 candidates
Assure – System Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 courses delivered / trained 75 candidates
First aid courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 courses delivered / trained 600 candidates

RESIDENT BENEFIT

Residents benefit from an organisation that takes care of its staff and enables them to work safely and ensure their work activities do not impact on the safety and health of residents. Residents further benefit from public services not being adversely affected by financial implications associated with accidents and ill health.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The team acts as the Council’s competent person as required by regulation 7 of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	James Lake – Finance
Papers with report	None
Ward	N/A

HEADLINES

This report provides an overview of the Council's Treasury Management function and the processes required to ensure the Council's investments and borrowing activities are delivered with a focus on risk management whilst also being complemented by efficient financial outcomes.

The Director of Pensions, Treasury & Statutory Accounts, Mr James Lake, will attend the meeting to provide an overview and answer Member's questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee note the contents of the report and provide any comments to officers as appropriate.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Council's Treasury activities are governed by statutory guidance and are covered in two codes of practice issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountant (CIPFA); the Prudential Code and Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice.

CIPFA defines Treasury Management as the management of the organisation's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

It should be noted there is always an element of risk associated with Treasury Management and management of the risks listed below is the key objective when undertaking this activity.

Treasury Management Risks:

- Credit and counterparty risk management
- Liquidity risk management
- Interest rate risk management
- Exchange rate risk management
- Inflation risk management
- Refinancing risk management
- Legal and regulatory risk management
- Operational risk, including fraud, error and corruption
- Price risk management

Treasury Management Practices

The Council is required to prepare Treasury Management Practices (TMPs) which outline how this function operates and is set out in specific categories to ensure each element relating to treasury is addressed and documented with clear procedures and reporting requirements. The requisite categories covered in the TMPs include:

- TMP 1 Risk Management
- TMP 2 Performance Measurement
- TMP 3 Decision Making and Analysis
- TMP 4 Approved Instruments, Methods and Techniques
- TMP 5 Organisation, Clarity and Segregation of Responsibilities, and Dealing Arrangements
- TMP 6 Reporting Requirements, Management Information Arrangements
- TMP 7 Budgeting, Accounting and Audit Arrangements
- TMP 8 Cash and Cashflow Management
- TMP 9 (Anti) Money Laundering
- TMP 10 Training and Qualifications
- TMP 11 Use of External Service Providers
- TMP 12 Corporate Governance

Cashflow

The Council receives money into its bank account through various sources including, for example, grants, council tax, business rates, fees and charges, investment income and capital receipts. Payments from the bank account include items such as salaries, supplier payments, benefits, precepts, interest on loans, loan repayments, and capital expenditure. There is a timing difference between monies being received and paid which result in the council holding positive cash balances which are deposited in various institutions and classed as investments.

Investments

Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments states that Treasury investments are required to prioritise security, liquidity and yield in that order.

To meet the first criterion, security, the Council only places its day-to-day funds in highly rated organisations or products, known as counterparties, where there is a very high likelihood that it will not lose any capital value. These primarily include the Government's Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF), other local authorities, AAA rated Money Market Funds or banks and building societies with a minimum A- rating for UK institutions and A+ for overseas institutions. These counterparties form an approved list and set the framework of where funds may be placed. Due the market environment in recent years, the Council generally only uses the DMADF, local authorities and Money Markey Funds. This is because banks and building societies do not offer an acceptable reward for the additional credit risk.

Counterparty quality is constantly monitored by the Council's treasury advisers and officers to ensure information is up to date. Credit is assessed through credit rating agencies, balance sheet analysis associated with 'bail-in', credit default swap rates, news feeds and a subjective overlay. To diversify credit risk, parameters are in place to avoid concentration and force investments across a number of counterparties and also time limit deposits based on credit quality.

Bank Bail-In vs. Bank Bailout

Bail-ins and bailouts are designed to prevent the complete collapse of a failing bank. The difference between the two lies primarily in who bears the financial burden of rescuing the bank. In a bailout, the government injects capital into banks, enabling them to continue their operations. In 2013, financial reforms eliminated bailouts and introduced bail-in. Bail-ins allow banks to avoid bankruptcy by moving some risks to their creditors rather than to taxpayers. This means that debtholders, unsecured creditors, shareholders, and depositors may shoulder problems within the financial sector when banks use bail-in measures. In this scenario the Council is classed as a depositor and falls above equity and debt in the creditor hierarchy. As such equity and bonds will be accessed before Council deposits and therefore, banks with more equity and debt have a greater buffer before Council deposits are exposed.

Liquidity is management through daily cashflow monitoring and longer-term forecasting to ensure funds are available to meet cash requirements as they fall due. This is achieved by structuring term deposits to meet large outflows, normally with the DMADF or other local authorities, and having an allocation to instant access facilities, normally AAA rated Money Market Funds, to meet smaller commitments and allow daily flexibility.

Yield is only considered once the first two criteria have been satisfied. The Council will then select the counterparty which delivers the best yield on a like for like security and liquidity basis.

Within the Treasury Management framework an emerging consideration is being introduced as best practice and covers Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations. In terms of the Council's investments, day-to-day Treasury is operational rather than strategic, so is very short-term in nature. However, despite there not being a need for a strategic ESG requirement, the Council aims to be a responsible investor. As such all banks, building societies and money market funds appearing on the Council's current counterparty list are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment. In addition, all money market funds are signatories to the Net Zero Asset Managers Alliance and/or the UK Stewardship Code.

Capital Financing Requirement

The Council has a statutory requirement to deliver a balanced budget which means that from a Treasury revenue perspective, money paid out is balanced with money received. Therefore, other than any potential cashflow timing differences, the Council will only need to borrow for long-term capital purposes.

Capital expenditure plans must be prudent, affordable, and sustainable.

- Prudent in meeting service needs and providing value for money
- Affordable in terms of acceptable Council Tax / Rent levels
- Sustainable over the long-term – i.e. requires asset management planning

The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) reflects the Council's underlying need to finance capital expenditure by debt. This is the underlying requirement to hold debt, not a requirement to borrow more money in-year.

Debt in this sense includes borrowing including short and long-term loans and other long-term liabilities such as finance leases and, PFI's. Actual debt will rarely equal the CFR exactly due to timing differences between expenditure and loans being raised. This results in under or over borrowing against CFR. Under borrowing is sometimes referred to as internal borrowing.

To illustrate this concept the table below shows a simplified example.

Activity	Value £k
Capital Spend	1,000
Less Capital Receipts	(100)
Less Capital Grants	(200)
Less MRP	(100)
CFR	600
Less Reserves	(300)
Less Working Capital	(100)
Balance	200
Borrowing	(300)
Cash in Bank	100

This example shows a CFR of £600k but borrowing of only £300k. The internal borrowing is made up of £400k of reserves and working capital. This approach is generally preferred as debt costs normally exceed investment income. It is therefore more cost efficient to use reserves and working capital to cover borrowing rather than to seek investment return from those reserves and working capital.

Borrowing

Borrowing is split between the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and will have a cost implication on either council tax or housing rents in the form of a MRP, Minimum Revenue Provision (or debt repayment equivalent for the HRA) and loan interest. The MRP is the amount set aside to ultimately repay debt. Interest is the cost of having access to capital funds. Increasing capital spend therefore has the effect of increasing council tax and housing rents respectively.

The Council mainly sources long-term borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) managed by the Government's Debt Management Office. This is the generally the most cost efficient and flexible source of funding. Interest rates are directly linked to UK gilts and are therefore one of the cheapest sources of borrowing for a local authority. Rates are currently gilts +1% but the Council has access to a certainty rate of gilts +0.8%. There is also currently a temporary special rate assignable to the HRA to encourage new house building of gilts +0.4%.

For shorter term borrowing, better value can be found in the inter-local authority market. The Council sources this borrowing from other councils.

When borrowing the Council needs to take into consideration interest rate risk and refinancing risk. As such maturities of loans are spread over a number of years to ensure when debt needs to be refinanced only an element is subject to the prevailing rates. In addition, the Council needs to have an element of stability relating to interest costs so will have a portion of its loan portfolio at fixed rates. Conversely to have access to flexibility and potential for short-term cost savings an element of debt is designated at variable rates. To hedge the risk of increasing rates this allocation broadly matches investment levels so any increase in cost is offset by an increase in investment income.

The Council is not allowed to borrow solely for the purposes of investment return.

Reporting and Oversight

There are numerous reports associated with Treasury Management and as a minimum management receive daily investment decision approval, weekly and monthly summary reporting. Cabinet receive monthly updates and Full Council receive the Annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Investment Strategy, Capital Strategy and MRP policy for formal approval. Treasury budgeting forms part of the Council's overall monthly budget reporting process.

As part of the reporting regime CIPFA's Prudential Code sets out a number of indicators (Prudential Indicators) which provide information and set limits on treasury activities. These are included within the Annual Strategy documents and are monitored throughout the year to ensure compliance, and include:

- Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary Limit
- Security - Portfolio average credit rating
- Liquidity Risk - Principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days
- Interest Rate Risk - Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates
- Maturity Structure of Borrowing
- Liability Benchmark
- Estimated and Actual Capital Expenditure
- Estimated and Actual Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream
- Capital Financing Requirement
- Actual External Debt

Budget Consideration

The treasury function is one element which feeds into the Councils overall budget monitoring. The financial affordability of capital projects in terms of costs relating to repay debt, interest costs, brokerage, and other associated costs, along with contrasting investment income all feed into the overall monthly budget monitoring process as well as the annual budget setting regime.

Economic Forecasting

Economic forecasting and ultimately the path of interest rates sets the basis for borrowing and investment activities. The Council's Treasury adviser provides interest rate forecasts based on government analysis and market intelligence. This information informs the Council when to borrow, duration and interest rate exposure. However economic forecasts cannot be completely relied upon and so the Council takes a balanced approach and varies its exposure when making borrowing decisions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

General implications relating to the Treasury function are noted in the report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

General implications relating to the Treasury function are noted in the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

REQUEST FROM COUNCIL: The Council's Consultation arrangements

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Marion Finney – Community Engagement Manager
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

At the Council meeting held on 28 September 2023, a motion from Councillor Kaur, amended, was agreed as follows:

“That this Council regrets a low response rate to its public consultations and asks the Corporate Services select committee to review the Council's consultation process to ensure the voices of our diverse communities are heard, working towards geographical parity.”

In order for the Committee to consider the request from full Council, this overview report has been prepared and Marion Finney, Community Engagement Manager, will attend to answer any questions from Members.

To report sets out an overview of the Council's consultation process ‘to ensure the voices of our diverse communities are heard, working towards geographical parity’.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1. Note the contents of the report and provide any seek clarification from officers as appropriate.**
- 2. Decide whether to take this forward as the next review topic and prepare a scoping report for the review.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Customer Engagement Team (CET) is vastly responsible for coordinating consultations and engagement activities across the council. The team organises events for residents and partner organisations, including conferences, forums, and assemblies.

The council offers opportunities for residents to engage in a variety of ways, via the use of digital tools as well as ‘in-person’ contact, understanding that engagement should be non-exclusionary, and not be limited to only digital means but should instead provide a breadth of options to give a voice to all residents.

To this end, the council supports engagement using the following methods:

- Face to face meetings
- Virtual meetings / discussions
- Surveys (online and paper-based, telephone / postal methods)
- Hybrid sessions
- Information shared on noticeboards
- Social media comments / feedback
- Estate-based events
- Regular engagement with community and faith leaders
- Regular engagement with residents' associations, tenant groups etc.
- Assemblies (e.g. older people)
- Forums (e.g., carers, young people etc.)

All the above methods are supported with interpretation and translation services where these are required, addressing any potential language barriers to resident engagement.

A number of engagement options are used to promote resident feedback and involvement at a pace and level which suits residents, and that which supports service improvement and the resolution of matters which are important to residents. These options are offered and delivered using finite resources.

The council has a database of residents with relevant focus or special interests in various service areas. Some of these residents have also indicated their preferred method of engagement.

CET is always looking at opportunities to improve its service delivery and add value to its consultation process.

The following areas are considered when planning a public consultation.

Information gathering

- What exactly do we need to know?
- What questions do we need to ask?
- Is the information already available elsewhere?
- How will the feedback from responses be used?

Target audience

- Who do we need to engage with?
- How will they be reached?
- Will residents require assistance to participate? Accessibility, language barrier, specific days, and times etc.

Engagement methods

- Which method of engagement is the most suitable for the target audience?
- Are there any possible alternatives to the preferred method?

- If a survey or consultation – what is the appropriate timeframe?
- What are the financial resources available?

Analysis and reporting

- How will information be collated?
- What will be the best way to report the findings? Depending on the audience, e.g., Cabinet, residents, staff etc.

Feedback

- What will be done with the feedback/information received?
- How will we demonstrate to stakeholders that we have listened to feedback and where appropriate, acted on it?
- Where necessary, how will information received be kept in line with GDPR guidelines?

CET works alongside the Corporate Communication Team and Web Team to ensure that surveys and consultations are promoted through various channels.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW FINDINGS: PROCUREMENT IN HILLINGDON: SECURING VALUE FOR OUR RESIDENTS

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Mark Braddock - Democratic Services
Papers with report	Draft findings, conclusions, and recommendations
Ward	All

HEADLINES

At the last Committee meeting in September, draft findings, conclusions, and recommendations were presented to the Committee. These were circulated at short notice, so Members rightly wished to consider them further and feedback any comments, before the final report was then prepared for the Committee and later submission to Cabinet.

The Committee is now requested to agree their final recommendations and, in order to not delay submission of the final report to Cabinet, to provide delegated authority for its sign-off and review by the Committee outside the formal meeting structure. A copy of the latest draft set of findings, conclusions and recommendations is attached for the Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) To agree the final findings, conclusions, and recommendations to Cabinet on their procurement review; and**
- 2) To delegate authority to the Democratic Services Officer, to complete the final review report for submission to Cabinet with the agreement of the Chairman, and in consultation with the Opposition Lead, noting that all Committee Members will also receive a copy for any final feedback.**

Implications on related Council policies

A key role of Select Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Select Committees directly engage stakeholders in shaping policy and recommendations to seek improvements to the way the Council provides services to residents.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Classification: Public

DRAFT CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee's review into "Procurement in Hillingdon: Securing value for our residents"

1. Transparency and good governance

The Committee was impressed by the professionalism of the Procurement Team who support the Council's varied service areas in procuring goods and services and concluded that the Council's procurement arrangements were sound and adapting positively to national changes in procurement practice.

The Committee found that improvements could be made to the internal transparency of existing contractual arrangements in service areas to understand the volume and type of contracts that the Council manages. The Committee believed that the development of a high-level contract oversight tool for senior officers, Cabinet decision-makers and scrutineers would help identify future synergies and symmetries in relation to contracts for services, and also support the Council's BID transformation process. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

That during 2024, a headline contracts register, or matrix, be established (or adapted from existing systems) for sight by managers, Cabinet Members and Select Committees to include:

- **all contracts over a certain value (as determined by the Cabinet Member for Finance)**
- **name of the contract**
- **category of service provided**
- **value**
- **who the contract is with**
- **its construct or status, for example, one-off, term or part of a framework**
- **start, termination and any extension dates**
- **Whether a local, regional, or national supplier**

2. A common procurement approach and value-for-money

The Committee found that the use of Framework Agreements for procurement both encouraged the common use of requirements across the wider Council and delivered synergies in purchasing, which also allowed the procurement team to focus on added value work, new opportunities, and more strategic outcomes. To that end, the Committee recommends:

- a) **That the Corporate Management Team embed a culture of using Framework Agreements for common services and works by 2025 across the authority, where feasible, where trusted contractors can be commissioned or called-off the framework efficiently. The aim is to provide more dynamic and responsive procurement arrangements, with due diligence and robust governance oversight.**
- b) **That to ensure continued value-for-money for resident' taxpayers, that Framework Agreements should be reviewed approximately every 5 years, depending on any mitigating circumstances.**

Classification: Public

The Committee concluded that decision-makers and scrutineers needed to have a greater understanding of repeat contracts, why they were extended or re-awarded to the same supplier, and how they were reviewed to ensure value-for-money was being attained, in particular where there were long-established contracting companies. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

- c) That where contracts continue to be awarded to the same provider, the service areas must fully account for why a competitive tender process was not sought and/or how the continuation continues to provide value-for-money in all reports to Cabinet and Cabinet Member decision-makers and for subsequent select committee scrutiny.**

3. Social and local value

The Committee welcomed the principle of the promotion of social value in contracts, such as to meet climate change targets, and importantly grow the use of local suppliers to support the Hillingdon economy. However, the Committee was mindful of the potential cost implications of these and concluded that value-for money and quality should always come first. Therefore, to move forward prudently with new social value requirements, and particularly to ensure local suppliers are not disenfranchised with any complexities in the procurement process, the Committee recommends:

- a) That the Council pursues a programme of encouraging local companies to engage with the tendering and procurement process starting in 2024 which could include:**
- Holding events or virtual seminars inviting local suppliers and trade organisations and explaining on how to bid for Council contracts;**
 - Guidance on how to complete tenders to make the process more understandable and accessible for smaller businesses.**
- b) In support of the Council's commitment and ambitious net zero targets, and to further encourage contractors and suppliers to move to reducing their own carbon footprint, that the Procurement Team consider flexible scoring criteria on positive environmental factors in tender bids, in addition to the existing cost and quality basis for their evaluation.**

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CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Mark Braddock – Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Latest Forward Plan
Ward	As shown on the Forward Plan

HEADLINES

To monitor the Cabinet’s latest Forward Plan which sets out key decisions and other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet collectively and Cabinet Members individually over the coming year. The report sets out the actions available to the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers the Cabinet Forward Plan.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Cabinet Forward Plan is published monthly, usually around the first or second week of each month. It is a rolling document giving the required public notice of future key decisions to be taken. Should a later edition of the Forward Plan be published after this agenda has been circulated, Democratic Services will update the Committee on any new items or changes at the meeting.

As part of its Terms of Reference, each Select Committee should consider the Forward Plan and, if it deems necessary, comment as appropriate to the decision-maker on the items listed which relate to services within its remit. For reference, the Forward Plan helpfully details which Select Committee’s remit covers the relevant future decision item listed.

The Select Committee’s monitoring role of the Forward Plan can be undertaken in a variety of ways, including both pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny of the items listed. The provision of advance information on future items listed (potentially also draft reports) to the Committee in advance will often depend upon a variety of factors including timing or feasibility, and ultimately any such request would rest with the relevant Cabinet Member to decide. However, the 2019 Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet Relations (part of the Hillingdon Constitution) does provide guidance to Cabinet Members to:

- Actively support the provision of relevant Council information and other requests from the Committee as part of their work programme;
- Where feasible, provide opportunities for committees to provide their input on forthcoming executive reports as set out in the Forward Plan to enable wider pre-decision scrutiny (in addition to those statutorily required to come before committees, *i.e. policy framework documents – see para. below*).

As mentioned above, there is both a constitutional and statutory requirement for Select Committees to provide comments on the Cabinet’s draft budget and policy framework proposals after publication. These are automatically scheduled in advance to multi-year work programmes.

Therefore, in general, the Committee may consider the following actions on specific items listed on the Forward Plan:

	Committee action	When	How
1	To provide specific comments to be included in a future Cabinet or Cabinet Member report on matters within its remit.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide its influence and views on a particular matter within the formal report to the Cabinet or Cabinet Member before the decision is made.</p> <p>This would usually be where the Committee has previously considered a draft report or the topic in detail, or where it considers it has sufficient information already to provide relevant comments to the decision-maker.</p>	<p>These would go within the standard section in every Cabinet or Cabinet Member report called “Select Committee comments”.</p> <p>The Cabinet or Cabinet Member would then consider these as part of any decision they make.</p>
2	To request further information on future reports listed under its remit.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to discover more about a matter within its remit that is listed on the Forward Plan.</p> <p>Whilst such advance information can be requested from officers, the Committee should note that information may or may not be available in advance due to various factors, including timescales or the status of the drafting of the report itself and the formulation of final recommendation(s). Ultimately, the provision of any information in advance would be a matter for the Cabinet Member to decide.</p>	<p>This would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting. Alternatively, information could be circulated outside the meeting if reporting timescales require this.</p> <p>Upon the provision of any information, the Select Committee may then decide to provide specific comments (as per 1 above).</p>
3	To request the Cabinet Member considers providing a draft of the report, if feasible, for the Select Committee to consider prior to it being considered formally for decision.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide an early steer or help shape a future report to Cabinet, e.g., on a policy matter.</p> <p>Whilst not the default position, Select Committees do occasionally receive draft versions of Cabinet reports prior to their formal consideration. The provision of such draft reports in advance may depend upon different factors, e.g., the timings required for that decision. Ultimately any request to see a draft report early would need the approval of the relevant Cabinet Member.</p>	<p>Democratic Services would contact the relevant Cabinet Member and Officer upon any such request.</p> <p>If agreed, the draft report would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting to provide views and feedback to officers before they finalise it for the Cabinet or Cabinet Member. An opportunity to provide specific comments (as per 1 above) is also possible.</p>
4	To identify a forthcoming report that may merit a post-decision review at a later Select Committee meeting	<p>As part of its post-decision scrutiny and broader reviewing role, this would be where the Select Committee may wish to monitor the implementation of a certain Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision listed/taken at a later stage, i.e., to review its effectiveness after a period of 6 months.</p> <p>The Committee should note that this is different to the use of the post-decision scrutiny ‘call-in’ power which seeks to ask the Cabinet or Cabinet Member to formally re-consider a decision up to 5 working days after the decision notice has been issued. This is undertaken via the new Scrutiny Call-in App members of the relevant Select Committee.</p>	<p>The Committee would add the matter to its multi-year work programme after a suitable time has elapsed upon the decision expected to be made by the Cabinet or Cabinet Member.</p> <p>Relevant service areas may be best to advise on the most appropriate time to review the matter once the decision is made.</p>

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet relations adopted by Council 12 September 2019](#)
- [Scrutiny Call-in App](#)

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Ref

Further details

Ward(s)

				Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services										
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 9 November 2023 (report deadline 23 October)										
171	HR temporary recruitment contract extensions	Cabinet will receive a report regarding the extensions of temporary recruitment agency contracts. These are for Corporate and Qualified Social Care Workers (under contract with Matrix) and qualified Social Worker roles (under contract with Sanctuary).	N/A		Cllr Douglas Mills - Corporate Services	Finance & Corporate Services	CS / R - Irvin Luchowa / T Eldriny		NEW ITEM	Private (3)
097	Consideration of setting a licensed deficit budget in 2023/24 for certain schools in the Borough	Cabinet's will consider whether it is required to set any licensed deficit budget for certain schools in 2023/24.	TBC		Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education / Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate	R - Sheilender Pathak / Chris Mayo			Private (3)
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position and other key financial decisions required.	All		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Andy Evans			Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - November 2023										
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 14 December 2023 (report deadline 27 November)										
184	Device refresh	Cabinet will consider the contract and capital release for the upcoming refresh of the Council's computer / laptop and related devices used across the organisation for work productivity to deliver services, access systems and importantly to collaborate, engage and communicate with residents and colleagues in a modern way.	N/A		Cllr Douglas Mills - Corporate Services	Finance & Corporate Services	Matthew Wallbridge / Dale Gordon		NEW ITEM	Private (3)

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Ref

Further details

Ward(s)

				Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services										
095	Revenues & Benefits Contract Award	The existing managed services contract within Revenues & Benefits expires in May 2024. This report to Cabinet seeks approval for new contracting arrangements beyond this date following a procurement exercise to be undertaken in March 2023 and market engagement from October 2022.	N/A		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Iain Watters / Trudie Eldriny			Private (3)
158	Counter-fraud and corporate related investigative policies	Cabinet will consider a suite of policies for the next 3 years relating to the investigative framework used by the Council for counter-fraud related purposes.	All		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Alex Brown			Public
161	Licences, Support and Maintenance for Geographic Information System (GIS)	Cabinet will consider contract for the licences, support and maintenance of the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS) and an upgrade to the existing GIS planning plotter	N/A		Cllr Douglas Mills - Corporate Services	Finance & Corporate Services	CS - Helen Vincent			Private (3)
110a Page 44	The Council's Budget - Medium Term Financial Forecast 2024/25 - 2028/29 (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)	This report will set out the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2023/24 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration.	All	Proposed Full Council adoption - 22 February 2024	Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	All	R - Andy Evans	Public consultation through the Select Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position and other key financial decisions required.	All		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Andy Evans			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - December 2023										
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public

Cabinet meeting - Thursday 11 January 2024 (report deadline 11 December 2023)

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Ref

Further details

Ward(s)

				Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services										
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - January 2024										
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 15 February 2024 (report deadline 29 January)										
156 Page 45	Occupational Health (OH) Services and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Contract Award	Cabinet will consider new contracting arrangements for Occupational Health (OH) and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) services managed by HR. These services are available to all Council employees and where applicable contractors, delivered by suitably qualified medical professionals including but not limited to; pre-employment health reviews, assessments for safety critical posts, in-service referrals as a result of accident/injury at work, referral to other specialist medical practitioners, medical advice for managers related to employee ill health, ill-health retirement and confidential employee support services. Prevention, advice and trend forecasting is also provided to support and improve the health and productivity of the workforce.	All		Cllr Douglas Mills	Finance & Corporate Services	C - Suzie Horn			Private (3)
110a	The Council's Budget - Medium Term Financial Forecast 2024/25 - 2028/29 (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)	Following consultation, this report will set out the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2024/25 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration.	All	Proposed Full Council adoption - 22 February 2024	Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council / Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	All	R - Andy Evans	Public consultation through the Select Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers		Public
045	The Schools Budget 2024/25	Cabinet will asked to agree the Schools Budget for the next financial year, following a recommendation from the Schools Forum.	All		Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education / Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Coral Miller	Schools Forum		Public

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Ref

Further details

Ward(s)

				Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services										
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	CS - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position and other key financial decisions required.	All		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Andy Evans			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	CS - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - February 2024										
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	CS - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 21 March 2024 (report deadline 4 March)										
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	CS - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position and other key financial decisions required. Cabinet will also consider the fees related to the summer activity offer for children.	All		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Andy Evans			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	CS - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - March 2024										
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	CS - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 18 April 2024 (report deadline 1 April)										
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Ref

Further details

Ward(s)

				Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services										
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the Council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Andy Evans			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - April 2024										
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 23 May 2024 (report deadline 3 May)										
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - May 2024										
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS: Standard Items (SI) that may be considered each month										
SI	Urgent Cabinet-level decisions & interim decision-making (including emergency decisions)	The Leader of the Council has the necessary authority to make decisions that would otherwise be reserved to the Cabinet, in the absence of a Cabinet meeting or in urgent circumstances. Any such decisions will be published in the usual way and reported to a subsequent Cabinet meeting for ratification. The Leader may also take emergency decisions without notice, in particular in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be ratified at a later Cabinet meeting.	Various		Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public / Private
SI	Ward Budget Initiative	To approve the spending of Ward Budgets following applications from Ward Councillors - this will be done on a monthly or regular cycle.	All		Cllr Douglas Mills - Corporate Services / Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council (if in Ruislip Manor ward)	Finance and Corporate Services	P - Helena Webster	Local consultation within the Ward undertaken by Ward Councillors		Public

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Ref

Further details

Ward(s)

				Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services										
SI	Release of Capital Funds	The release of all capital monies requires formal Member approval, unless otherwise determined either by the Cabinet or the Leader. Batches of monthly reports (as well as occasional individual reports) to determine the release of capital for any schemes already agreed in the capital budget and previously approved by Cabinet or Cabinet Members	TBC		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance (in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Member)	All - TBC by decision made	various	Corporate Finance		Public but some Private (1,2,3)
SI	Petitions about matters under the control of the Cabinet	Cabinet Members will consider a number of petitions received by local residents and organisations and decide on future action. These will be arranged as Petition Hearings.	TBC		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	To approve debt / write offs	To approve individual case of debt / write offs that are in excess of £5000 but under £50,000.	n/a		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	various			Private (1,2,3)
SI	To approve compensation payments	To approve compensation payments in relation to any complaint to the Council in excess of £1000.	n/a		All	TBC	various			Private (1,2,3)
SI	Acceptance of Tenders	To accept quotations, tenders, contract extensions and contract variations valued between £50k and £500k in their Portfolio Area where funding is previously included in Council budgets.	n/a		Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council OR Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance / in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Member	TBC	various			Private (3)
SI	All Delegated Decisions by Cabinet to Cabinet Members, including tender and property decisions	Where previously delegated by Cabinet, to make any necessary decisions, accept tenders, bids and authorise property decisions / transactions in accordance with the Procurement and Contract Standing Orders.	TBC		All	TBC	various			Public / Private (1,2,3)
SI	External funding bids	To authorise the making of bids for external funding where there is no requirement for a financial commitment from the Council.	n/a		All	TBC	various			Public
SI	Appeals in relation to business rates (NDR)	To determine appeals in relation to business rates following a decision by the Council.	TBC		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Iain Watters			Private (1,2,3)

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Scheduled Upcoming Decisions

Ref

Further details

Ward(s)

Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
	All	TBC	various			Public

SI = Standard Item each month/regularly Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services

SI	Response to key consultations that may impact upon the Borough	A standard item to capture any emerging consultations from Government, the GLA or other public bodies and institutions that will impact upon the Borough. Where the deadline to respond cannot be met by the date of the Cabinet meeting, the Constitution allows the Cabinet Member to sign-off the response.	TBC
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WORK PROGRAMME

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Mark Braddock – Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Work Programme
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To enable the Committee to note future meeting dates and to forward plan its work for the current municipal year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee considers the Multi-Year Work Programme attached and agrees any amendments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Committee's meetings will start at 7pm and the witnesses attending each of the meetings may include representatives from external organisations, some of whom travel from outside of the Borough. Forthcoming meeting dates are as follows:

Meeting Date	Room
22 November 2023	CR6
11 January 2024	CR5
8 February 2024	CR6
5 March 2024	CR5
17 April 2024	CR5

Implications on related Council policies

The role of the Select Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet, who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Select Committees directly engage residents in shaping policy and recommendations and the Committees seek to improve the way the Council provides services to residents.

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Multi Year Work Programme 2022 - 2026

Finance & Corporate Services Select Committee	October 19	November 22	January 11	February 8	March 5	April 17
Review A: Procurement in Hillingdon						
Topic selection / scoping stage						
Witness / evidence / consultation stage						
Findings, conclusions and recommendations		Recommendations				
Final review report agreement				Draft Report		
Target Cabinet reporting						
Review B: Council's consultation arrangements (TBC)						
Topic selection / scoping stage		Initial discussion				
Witness / evidence / consultation stage						
Findings, conclusions and recommendations						
Final review report agreement						
Target Cabinet reporting						
Regular service & performance monitoring						
Quarterly Performance Monitoring (timeline TBC)						
Mid year Budget Update				X*		
Annual complaints & service update report						
Cabinet's budget proposals for next financial year						
Cabinet Forward Plan Monthly Monitoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
One-off information items						
Scrutiny Introduction (Democratic Services)						
Policy Review Discussion & Guidance						
Council Strategy 2022-2026 consultation						
Update on the work of the Council's Counter Fraud Team						
Update on the new Member's Enquiry Process						
Human Resources - digitalisation of processes						
Customer Service, Contact Centre & transition to digital						
Staff skills, learning and development						
BID transformation work to deliver savings			X			
Treasury Management	X					
Update on the Member's Portal and New Member Enquiry Process	X					
First Aid Awareness and Training	X					
Past review delivery						
Performance Monitoring & Reporting Review 2021/22						
Internal use only						
Date deadline confirmed to report authors						
Report deadline						
Agenda published						
Committee Site Visits						
Contact Centre visit (date of 16 October 2023 at 10am)						

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