

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

13 June 2024

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chair), Peter Smallwood (Vice-Chair), Darran Davies, Ekta Gohil, Janet Gardner, Kamal Preet Kaur and Sital Punja</p> <p>Officers Present: Nicola Herbert (Head of Waste Services) Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director of Central Services) Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer) Richard Webb (Director Community Safety & Enforcement)</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Sophie Murray (Lead Manager of the Hillingdon Thames Reach Outreach Team) Laura Lawson (P3 Yiewsley) Nicola Tallon (P3 Yiewsley) Zara Sweet (Operations Manager, P3 Yiewsley)</p>
3.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Scott Farley with Councillor Sital Punja substituting.</p>
4.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
5.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS DATED 16 APRIL 2024 AND 9 MAY 2024 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings dated 16 April 2024 and 9 May 2024 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
6.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items of business were marked as Part I and would be considered in public.</p>
7.	<p>REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS AND THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY: WITNESS SESSION 3 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director of Central Services, introduced the item and invited colleagues from P3 and Thames Reach to share their experiences and perspectives on homelessness.</p>

Thames Reach

Sophie Murray, Lead Manager of the Hillingdon Thames Reach Outreach Team, addressed the Committee Members confirming that Thames Reach worked closely with Council Housing officers.

Ms Murray outlined the team's work with the Rough Sleeper team within Hillingdon Council, their response to support rough sleepers, and their collaboration with agencies such as ARCH (Addiction, Recovery, Community Hillingdon Service), RAMP (Refugee Asylum and Migration Policy project) and mental health teams. The challenges faced, including a lack of options for accommodation and the high support needs of many rough sleepers, were highlighted.

P3

Zara Street (Operations Manager of the Hillingdon Thames Reach Outreach Team) Laura Lawson and Nicola Tallon were in attendance representing P3. Members heard that P3 provided support to young people and families. The Committee was informed that P3 ran four services from the Navigator Centre, including a housing advice service, a floating support service for looked after children and care experienced young people, a well-being project for early intervention prevention, and move-on properties. They also ran a family advice service for families with a child aged 5 and under. P3 highlighted their previous work with the Council and their current collaborations with various partners within the Borough. The challenges faced in moving young people on to appropriate accommodation were highlighted.

P3 discussed their supported accommodation services, which included four units for 16 to 25-year-olds who had previously been in care. They highlighted the challenges of moving young people on to appropriate accommodation due to the limited supply of affordable move-on housing, making it difficult to find suitable accommodation for these individuals.

It was noted that everyone involved in providing accommodation was currently facing difficulties. The high cost of private sector rents and the Council's struggle to find private landlords willing to accept homeless individuals were identified as significant issues. The consensus was that all parties were currently stuck with limited resources and options in addressing homelessness.

Members sought further clarification regarding the improvements needed in the Housing Department to enhance the experience for both workers and clients. In response, the emphasis was placed on the importance of communication. It was noted that case work changes within the housing department sometimes occurred without the knowledge of partnership workers. The need for a platform where everyone could communicate was highlighted, given the numerous services within the Borough and the housing linked to them.

The communication with the robust sleeper pathway was praised, but it was pointed out that some people P3 worked with ended up sleeping rough because their applications with the Council's Homelessness Prevention Team had found they were not in priority need for housing assistance.

Members heard that, when people approached the Housing Department at the Civic

Centre, it was extremely challenging for officers due to the high level of homelessness demand presenting to the Council. P3 reported that, when they contacted homelessness prevention officers, they did not always receive a timely response. It was felt that more time and patience should be spent with people, especially those with language barriers, trauma, and PTSD, to help them understand their situation better. The hope was expressed that the risk of rough sleeping could be reduced or at least prevented differently. It was confirmed that P3 had previously provided the Housing Team at the Council with a list of suggestions as to how the service could be improved.

In respect of families with young children, Members enquired how a balance could be achieved between building trust with parents while addressing the needs of the young person. Members also sought clarity as to how officers worked with local residents to alleviate concerns about housing placements. In response to this, P3 emphasised the importance of communication, regular support visits, and ensuring appropriate accommodation for those transitioning from homelessness. They confirmed that their role primarily involved providing advice and guidance rather than directly offering housing.

In response to further questions from the Committee it was acknowledged that some homeless people did not want to be helped. In such cases it was important to be patient, build up trust and proceed very slowly. Asylum seekers and immigration cases were often reluctant to engage with services due to concerns regarding their immigration status. With this entrenched cohort of people, Thames Reach sometimes linked up with other charities such as St Mungo's.

In terms of communication, P3 confirmed that they had an excellent relationship with partners such as Thames Reach, and the YMCA but would like to receive a quicker response from the Council. Thames Reach could not make referrals to the YMCA but worked closely with P3 and Trinity. Communication with the Council was a lengthy process.

Members heard that, following a referral to the Council, P3 continued to work with individuals from start to finish especially if the case was complex. They kept cases open and checked in on a monthly basis to ensure individuals had everything they needed. Thames Reach advised Members that, once a referral had been made to the Council, they continued to assist individuals in maintaining their tenancies by offering support with finances, mental health, grants etc. Wrap around care was provided until the cases were ready to be closed.

It was confirmed that communication between the Council and P3 had been much easier when P3 had been co-located in the Civic Centre. This was no longer the case and all decisions in relation to offers of accommodation now had to be referred to the Head of Service. It was felt that there was sometimes a lack of consistency in information being given by officers.

Members enquired whether all partners had access to a central database system. It was reported that Thames Reach had their own database for rough sleepers but could not access Hillingdon's systems. It was commented by P3 that Hillingdon's previous case work database was not very user-friendly (the case work system changed on 1st April). Direct access to a central portal which linked all the records together would be welcomed by P3 but may not work for Thames Reach. P3 suggested that there should be one point of contact at the Council to deal with P3 and young people. There were a number of agency staff at present - improved structure and better communication was

suggested. Thames Reach did not feel a central database was necessary provided that housing officers answered their requests for information in a timely way. It was reported that monthly catch-up meetings at the Civic Centre would be helpful.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that Trinity had low, medium and high-level support units. It was reported that Trinity struggled to purchase stock and the YMCA only had one low support block. Members heard that Thames Reach could refer to P3 and the Council but not to the YMCA. Most of the people Thames Reach worked with were high need, but the vast majority (approximately 90%) were deemed non-priority although they often had alcohol or drug issues.

Members sought further clarification regarding the suggestions sent to the Council by P3. It was confirmed that these related to caseload, supervision, holistic approach etc. Many of the suggestions had been taken on board within the current improvement plan for the service. P3's delivery model had changed to incorporate some of them e.g. floating support and partnership working.

Members sought the opinion of P3 regarding the banding systems used by the Council. In response to this, P3 confirmed that they did not use the Locata system. It was recognised that it was a constant battle for staff in lettings to keep abreast of all the current information. Each case had to be assessed carefully hence time frames were long.

In response to further questions, it was reported that many of the housing officers at the Council were good at their jobs but there was a lack of consistency. The use of agency staff was unsettling for both staff and residents. Young people found it somewhat of a lottery and reported that staff often failed to call them back. P3 confirmed that, when a staff member left the Council, they usually received a bounce back email providing an alternative contact. However, it was felt that partners should be informed of staff changes in advance rather than finding out this way. Councillors suggested that a Venn diagram of staff should be prepared for professional partners and updated regularly. There should be a quality handover of cases when staff members left the Council to ensure continuity.

The Corporate Director of Central Services acknowledged that the service needed to continue to improve. An improvement plan incorporating a workforce plan and recruitment campaign was being actively implemented and he would welcome the opportunity to present the plan and an update to Members at a future meeting of the Select Committee. It was recognised that some agency staff did an excellent job and where under performance was identified this was being addressed. The Corporate Director of Central Services confirmed that he would spend some time in the contact centre on a regular basis to listen to residents' experience. He informed Members that the case work system for homeless case work had been changed in April. Demand on the service was relentless with 140 new cases received in the previous week; an increase of approximately 30% on the previous year. Many of those approaching the Council for help had never been homeless before but had become homeless having been evicted from privately rental properties. Members heard that the infrastructure was in place, but improvements were underway.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the evidence heard at the witness session and sought clarification as necessary in the context of its review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey in Hillingdon.

8.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL (*Agenda Item 6*)

Nicola Herbert, Head of Waste Services, was in attendance to answer Members' questions in relation to the Graffiti Removal report in the agenda pack.

Members noted that, as set out on page 26 of the agenda pack, in March 2023 27% of graffiti removal works had been completed in response to an online report. Members sought further information in relation to this and enquired whether this was an improvement or a reduction on previous years. It was agreed that the Head of Waste Services would attempt to source the relevant data for comparison purposes.

Members enquired how effectively the graffiti service liaised with TfL regarding graffiti on bus shelters. It was confirmed that such reports went directly to TfL in the first instance but on occasion they were escalated to the Council as they had taken too long to process. Members suggested that, in such cases, the Council should look to recover the cost of removal from TfL.

The Committee sought further clarification regarding the monitoring of success noting that, in some cases, graffiti was removed but fly posting was not. It was confirmed that contractors were expected to complete such works proactively. In future, examples could be forwarded to the Head of Waste Services.

Members welcomed the fact that graffiti was generally removed very quickly and suggested that other departments could learn from this approach. Noting that graffiti on shop shutters was sometimes missed as they were open during the day, it was suggested that the team could consider completing these works during the evening. The Head of Waste Services advised Members that some businesses were reluctant to close their shutters during business hours and opted to remove the graffiti themselves. Out of hours working would be considered for the future.

In response to further questions from Councillors, it was confirmed that the Council did not issue fines for the removal of flyposting. Graffiti removal was prioritised over flyposting. The issuing of fines for flyposting offences was challenging as the person responsible for putting the poster up was liable rather than the business the poster related to. At the request of Members, it was agreed that an information item relating to flyposting would be added to the Select Committee Work Programme.

Members were informed that the main focus was on cleaning up the graffiti which had been reported, rather than scoping. In known hotspots such as Ruislip and Hayes, graffiti was often removed proactively before it had been reported.

Members sought further clarification regarding the benefits of contracting out the service. They were informed that the contractors had specialist vehicles and were trained in the use of appropriate chemicals to remove different types of graffiti. If the service were to be brought in house, specially trained staff would be needed. Moreover, if contractors were to damage private property, the Council would be risk free.

In respect of the contract, which was due to expire in November, the Select Committee was advised that market research would be carried out and the Council would meet with other suppliers prior to renewing the contract.

Members referred to the table on page 26 of the agenda pack and sought further clarification regarding the saving of over £50,000 between 2022/23 and 2023/24. It was confirmed that this could be attributed to the reduction from two teams to one team.

In response to further questions from Members, it was confirmed that it had not been possible to identify the perpetrators of graffiti therefore no fines had been issued. Councillors suggested that the Council could work with the Police on this or liaise with teachers who could provide further information. It was agreed that the Director of Community Safety and Enforcement would follow up on this after the meeting.

Members noted that the 'Wet Paint' signs were not always removed after graffiti removal. The Head of Waste Services agreed to follow this up.

Members were informed that land registry searches were rarely necessary to get permission. Larger businesses tended to remove graffiti themselves.

RESOLVED That the Select Committee:

- 1) Noted the arrangements under the current graffiti removal contract; and**
- 2) Supported the continued works under the existing contract arrangements.**

9. **ASB SERVICE UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Richard Webb, Director of Community Safety and Enforcement, was in attendance to answer Members' questions in relation to the Anti-Social Behaviour report included in the agenda pack.

Members queried the accuracy of the FPN figures as set out on page 36 of the agenda pack as some of these seemed very low. It was confirmed that the system currently in place was inadequate hence a spreadsheet had been created to record this information. It was recognised that the information presented did not align with ward boundaries. The statistics related to the deployment of environmental support officers. Members were informed that most FPNs came from contractors; in order for an FPN to be issued, the incident had to be witnessed firsthand. ANPR cameras were not generally effective in identifying offenders as the images they generated were not sufficiently detailed.

In response to further questions from the Select Committee, it was confirmed that deployment was based on problem areas such as high streets, Ruislip Lido and areas around Heathrow. This was updated regularly to meet requirements.

Members sought further clarification regarding the issuing of FPNs for fly tipping which did not appear on the list in the report. It was agreed that the Director of Community Safety and Enforcement would explore this further outside of the meeting. Members were advised that, in some instances, ANPR cameras were able to pick up fly tippers. Officers would then try to trace the number plate of the vehicle to identify the offender.

Councillors requested further information regarding the increase in anti-social behaviour. It was confirmed that all local authorities were witnessing an increase in anti-social behaviour. Since Covid, people were working from home more regularly and were therefore more likely to notice, and complain about, their neighbours' behaviour. Moreover, the cost of living was another driver of anti-social behaviour.

Members enquired whether the current excel spreadsheet could be digitalised to facilitate the breakdown of FPN figures per ward. The Director of Community Safety and Enforcement acknowledged that customer service was inadequate at present. A new case management system was to be introduced which would help to address this. It was confirmed that the team had worked with the Police on a number of occasions in relation to ASB hotspots.

The Select Committee sought further clarification in respect of actionable vs non-actionable incidents. It was confirmed that it was not always possible for the team to take any action due to insufficient location details. Members were informed that the ASB department held regular discussions with other teams, including Housing, to agree who would lead on a piece of work. The teams worked well together across the Council.

With regard to the relationship between the Council, the Police and management companies, it was confirmed that ASB got involved when problems were reported. The ASB localities team focused on more complex ASB cases such as those involving social landlords who were often reluctant to take action. It was hoped that the social housing regulator would assist with this in the future.

Councillors suggested that 'No Ball Games' signs be erected in car parks for children's safety. No drinking signs were also recommended in high streets to encourage people to move on. It was reported that the Police were unable to take action if said signs were not in situ. It was agreed that the Director of Community Safety and Enforcement would explore this further.

With regards to fly tipping, Members observed that contractors would only pick up items that had been reported and left everything else behind. The Director of Community Safety and Enforcement confirmed that this should not be the case and agreed to follow this up with the contractor if examples were provided.

With regard to tower blocks and ASB in communal areas, it was acknowledged that this had been a challenge for a number of years. Members commented that short term policies did not appear to be working and felt a longer-term strategy was needed. It was confirmed that officers were now being equipped with as much guidance as possible, and information was being collected so officers could fully understand the problems and people involved. It was anticipated that this would assist in tackling the issue in the longer term.

Members sought further information regarding the strategy to deal with aggressive begging. It was acknowledged that this was difficult to eradicate – offenders were often of no fixed abode and did not pay the fines issued. It was confirmed that the team always followed up on complaints and tried to identify the offenders where possible. The Select Committee heard that aggressive begging had not been included in the previous PSPO as the Government had been consulting on the matter at the time as part of national legislation.

In respect of Members' Enquiries, Councillors enquired how response times could be improved on. The Director of Community Safety and Enforcement acknowledged that the number of cases was vast, and the current team only comprised 14 people. The capacity required to manage the total caseload was currently being assessed. The result of said assessment was likely to indicate that more staff were required to deal with the caseload. Alternatively, the service provision would have to be reduced. It was

	<p>considered that system improvements would make a significant difference. This matter would be reviewed going forward to ensure that reasonable demands were met. Members requested feedback to enable them to keep residents informed.</p> <p>Councillors sought further clarification regarding the procurement process. It was confirmed that contract extensions were a Cabinet Member decision. A wider review of contracts would be undertaken going forward. Members heard that the current contract was cost neutral to the Council but other options were available.</p> <p>Members reported that Actions Days were welcomed and were working very effectively.</p> <p>Members referred to page 36 of the agenda pack noting that 79% of the FPNs appeared to relate to only 3 areas – Eastcote Ruislip (14%), Hayes Town (38%) and South Ruislip (27%). It was felt that the information presented did not provide an accurate picture of what was actually happening. Members requested sight of an updated report with accurate data within the next year. It was noted that in-house statistics needed to be separated from those of contractors. Moreover, the figures should include open spaces in addition to high streets.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Residents’ Services Select Committee noted the contents of the report and asked questions in order to clarify matters of concern or interest in the Borough; and 2. That the Residents’ Services Select Committee provided comment on the draft anti-social behaviour policy for consideration when the policy is finalised for adoption by the Council.
10.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents’ Services Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.</p>
11.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>Democratic Services advised the Select Committee that a September site visit to Edmonton Recycling Centre was currently being planned.</p> <p>At the request of Members, it was agreed that a site visit to Uxbridge or Ruislip Lido would be added to the Work Programme. Members also requested an update on fly tipping (including funfairs), and it was agreed that this would be added to the Select Committee Work Programme.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents’ Services Select Committee considered the Work Programme report and agreed any amendments.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.18 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer on

epenny@hillington.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, officers, the press and members of the public.