

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

27 November 2024



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chair), Peter Smallwood (Vice-Chair), Darran Davies, Ekta Gohil, Scott Farley (Opposition Lead), Kamal Preet Kaur and Sital Punja</p> <p>Officers Present: Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer Mathieu Rogers, Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration Ian Thynne, Head of Environmental Specialists</p>
32.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Janet Gardner with Councillor Sital Punja substituting.</p>
33.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
34.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 24 September 2024 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
35.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items of business were in Part I and would be considered in public.</p>
36.	<p>STRATEGIC CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Ian Thynne, Head of Environmental Specialists, was in attendance to answer Members' questions in relation to the Strategic Climate Action Plan.</p> <p>Members raised concerns about the monitoring of carbon offsetting and tree planting, specifically asking how biodiversity was mapped out in the Action Plan. It was confirmed that biodiversity was not currently mapped out in the Plan but would feature heavily in the next three-year cycle. Consultancy work funded by Defra to map out biodiversity would link with tree planting and green space management.</p> <p>Members enquired about the handling of infrastructure costs related to climate change, such as drainage and flooding. In response to this it was explained that the strategic climate plan was overarching, with sub-plans like the electric vehicle charging strategy</p>

and sustainable transport plans. Referencing the September 2024 floods across the Borough, officers highlighted the local flood risk management strategy and ongoing projects to manage flood risk, including securing funding from the Environment Agency and working with Thames Water. In response to further questions from Members, it was noted that the Council's relationship with the Environment Agency had improved, and recent project collaboration had been successful.

The Committee sought clarity on mechanisms to ensure ongoing community education to reduce carbon footprints. It was recognised that the Council's community leadership had not been strong to date, but plans were in place for a People's Assembly in 2026 and engagement campaigns in schools using Section 106 funds. It was confirmed that the Council planned to engage with the community, including schools, to raise awareness about air quality and involve residents in monitoring efforts. This was part of a broader strategy to educate the community on reducing their carbon footprint.

In response to Members' questions about safeguarding local decarbonisation projects amid rising energy costs and limited funding, officers highlighted that carbon management was embedded within teams rather than spending extra money on separate projects. This approach aimed to deliver a more efficient long-term strategy.

In respect of advancements in flood risk management since the last review, the Committee was informed that considerable progress had been made, including securing Message Consultancy for flood risk management, implementing projects across the Borough, and focusing on natural flood management. However, in light of the recent flooding incidents in the Borough, it was recognised that there was still a long way to go.

Members sought further information regarding funding for removing baffles and clearing ditches to prevent flooding in the Mill Road area of West Drayton. It was explained that the project was in the early stages and involved multiple stakeholders, including the Environment Agency. It was further noted that securing money from the Environment Agency was a lengthy process. The importance of education regarding the current efforts and challenges related to flood risk management was highlighted. It was noted that not all watercourses were managed by the Environment Agency or the Council, and there were issues with riparian ownership, meaning the responsibility for maintaining certain watercourses lay with the landowners. Ongoing work with the Environment Agency was underway to better understand these responsibilities and the maintenance plans for the river course to address problems like the buildup of debris.

Councillors asked how resources were prioritised to achieve the most impact and were advised that funding was prioritised based on the carbon savings ratio, with a focus on larger scale projects. It was acknowledged that behavioural change projects were also important but were smaller scale and less measurable. Over the course of the next three years, more would be done in respect of this.

In respect of the rollout of electric vehicle chargers and future sustainability plans, it was clarified that the EV strategy focused on air quality rather than carbon reduction. The next stage involved reviewing the approach to on-street charging. **The Head of Environmental Specialists agreed to liaise with the Highways Team re. the number of charging points within the Borough and feed back to the Committee.**

Members enquired about current resident engagement efforts and potential improvements. Officers highlighted ongoing engagement in flood risk and waste

management, with plans to improve community leadership in carbon footprint reduction.

In response to further questions from the Committee, the Head of Environmental Specialists agreed to liaise with the Council's Communications Team to ensure translated versions of the Action Plan document were available on request. Members suggested that providing more detailed breakdowns of progress within themes would assist Members in better understanding the report. Officers acknowledged the feedback and mentioned that the Annual Status Report which the Committee had sight of each year provided detailed progress updates.

The Committee sought further clarification regarding the Council's efforts to reduce emissions at the crematorium. Members heard that there was an ongoing project to evaluate energy use at the crematorium and plans to develop a comprehensive action plan for corporate properties. In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the new cremators were not yet reflected in the statistics but were part of ongoing efforts to reduce emissions. Councillors highlighted the use of a triple filtration system for the incineration of waste at Hillingdon Hospital and suggested that waste heat from the crematorium could be used to mitigate carbon dioxide output. It was agreed that officers would explore the feasibility of capturing and using waste heat in the future.

In respect of the delivery of cavity wall insulation in Council properties, it was explained that not all properties had been insulated yet, but there was a plan in place for managing Council properties which could be shared with the Committee.

In respect of Section 106 allocations, Members expressed concerns that, according to the data, only some £15k of the contract award for provision of an air quality monitoring service had been used to date with about £215,000 remaining unused. The Head of Environmental Specialists agreed to investigate the specifics of the unused funds allocated for air quality monitoring and ensured Members that these would be utilised effectively. It was noted that the monitoring and reporting of air quality were legal requirements, and the Council was committed to continuing this workstream. Further information would be forthcoming in the next stage of the Air Quality Action Plan which would be presented to Cabinet in 2025.

Members enquired about investment in air quality monitoring equipment. Officers acknowledged the need for equipment and outlined current monitoring efforts which included the use of automatic monitoring stations, funded by Defra, primarily located in hotspots around Heathrow and Hayes which provided real-time data on air pollution. Additionally, diffusion tube monitoring was conducted across the Borough, with equipment attached to lampposts and tested annually in laboratories. This data formed part of the annual status review which could be shared with Members.

It was confirmed that the Council was investing in new equipment and technology to improve air quality monitoring. This included the use of diffusion tubes and other small-scale equipment for monitoring pollutants like PM 2.5 and NO₂. Members heard that the air quality monitoring plans included several key initiatives:

1. **Continuous Monitoring and Reporting:** The Environment Act 1995 mandated local authorities to assess air quality for specified pollutants and submit annual status reports. This involved active monitoring across the authority's area, which was essential for decision-making on new developments.

2. **New Contracts and Equipment:** There was a statutory requirement to monitor PM 2.5, which had recently become a focus due to its harmful effects. The Council was working on an air quality action plan for 2025 to address this, in addition to existing monitoring of NO2. A new five-year contract was being set up to ensure continuous monitoring.

3. **Integration with Other Environmental Initiatives:** The air quality monitoring efforts were part of a broader strategy that included tree planting and biodiversity improvements. These initiatives aimed to double count the benefits of various interventions, such as how tree planting could help with both carbon offsetting and flood risk management.

It was reported that these plans highlighted the Council's commitment to improving air quality through continuous monitoring, community engagement, and integration with other environmental initiatives.

With regard to large scale electricity generation from Council-owned land, officers stated that the investigation was in the early stages and highlighted the challenges of connecting to the National Grid.

Members sought clarification as to why the first People's Assembly was scheduled for late 2026 and officers explained that it was a matter of resource prioritisation and programming; however, it was noted that feedback from the current consultation process was encouraged and could influence the timeline.

In order to become London's greenest Borough, the importance of focusing on biodiversity in addition to carbon offsetting was highlighted.

It was agreed that the drafting of the Residents' Services Select Committee comments to be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Climate Action Plan would be delegated to Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Labour Lead. This would also apply to the comments in respect of items 6 and 7.

RESOLVED: that the Residents' Services Select Committee:

1. **noted the content of the Review and the progress set out; and,**
2. **agreed that the drafting of the Residents' Services Select Committee comments to be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Climate Action Plan be delegated to Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Labour Lead.**

37. **INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT 2023/24** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Mathieu Rogers, Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration, was in attendance to answer Councillors' questions in relation to the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2023/24.

Members sought further clarification regarding air quality monitoring funding and enquired why there was an unused balance of £215,000 in the fund. It was explained that there was always a lag between money being received and services being able to pull together enough money to deliver a project. Money came in at different trigger points, but the Council had an obligation to spend it.

In respect of developer contributions towards affordable housing, Members enquired how the 23/24 figures compared to previous years. The Committee was informed that there had been a decrease in 106 and CIL contributions due to a reduction in major projects coming through the planning process. The affordable housing money was earmarked for the housing programme.

In response to further questions from the Committee regarding transparency, it was confirmed that the IFS was published online therefore was in the public domain. **A link could be provided for Councillors.**

Councillors noted that the report did not provide linkage between revenue generated and spend. This information had been requested on a number of occasions. The Select Committee had been reassured that a new system would provide this linkage, but it had yet to materialise.

In response to this it was confirmed that officers were uploading all the information onto a new system called Exacom. Approximately one third of the data had been reconciled to date and it was hoped that the Exacom system would be fully updated within a year.

Members also sought further clarity regarding the balance increase in Section 106 money over the course of the year, noting that officers had reported an opening balance of £25 million, with additional balances being added and a spend of £1.3 million. At the end of March 2024, the balance had been close to £29 million. Members sought further information regarding the potential risk of losing some of these funds due to time constraints.

It was explained that there were a number of reasons why money could not be spent straight away, such as the need for pooling and project development. However, Members were reassured that there was little risk of losing the money as officers prioritised projects near their expiry date. The Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration advised Members that he would be reviewing the balances and would report back to the Committee at a future session.

Members enquired whether there was any leeway over the charging schedules for the CIL. Officers confirmed that Cabinet had approved a request to revisit the charging schedule, and the consultation process would be initiated in due course.

At the request of Councillors, it was agreed that the possibility of providing a high level breakdown of the £16 million of allocated balances and a further breakdown of the funding information by Ward would be explored further.

Members sought clarity regarding the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and its impact on Hillingdon given the Government current stance on housing delivery targets. It was confirmed that officers had provided feedback to the Government re. the Council's response to the consultation. Members heard that Hillingdon's housing targets were set by the London Plan which would be updated in due course. **A reduction in housing targets was not anticipated but officers agreed to check this and feed back to the Select Committee after the meeting.**

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was noted that an organisation called Qualify Me organised the Council's apprenticeships and construction obligations. They were a third-party contractor who brokered opportunities, worked with developers,

ensured apprenticeship targets were met, and provided feedback to the Council. Regular updates were provided, and it was agreed that this information would be included in the more detailed IFS.

Under agenda item 5 it had been agreed that the drafting of the Residents' Services Select Committee comments to be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24 would be delegated to Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Labour Lead.

RESOLVED: that the Residents' Services Select Committee:

- 1. noted the contents of the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24; and,**
- 2. agreed that the drafting of the Residents' Services Select Committee comments to be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24 be delegated to Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Labour Lead.**

38. **ENGAGEMENT ON THE DRAFT UXBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE VISION** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Mathieu Rogers, Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration, was in attendance to respond to Members' questions in relation to the Draft Uxbridge Town Centre Vision report.

Members enquired about the impact of National Insurance increases on local businesses and whether any plans had been put in place to prepare for this. It was confirmed that no direct impacts had been observed and no feedback had been received from businesses in relation to this. Members heard that, as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, several programmes were being run in the Borough to support business growth and resilience. Obtaining initial feedback from business support providers was suggested and the importance of creating a thriving town centre to balance any increase in costs was emphasised.

Councillors asked about the feedback mechanisms in place to ensure that residents and local businesses had an active role in forming the vision for Uxbridge. It was explained that Brunel University had been appointed to conduct initial engagement work, and over 1000 people had been consulted. The Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration highlighted the importance of ongoing engagement and mentioned the challenges of maintaining open dialogue with local groups.

The Committee expressed an interest in how the history and heritage of Uxbridge could be championed within the town centre plan. Members mentioned specific historical elements and enquired about their protection and celebration.

The Regal Cinema was cited as an example of a protected building and efforts to protect listed buildings and conservation areas were highlighted. The officer emphasised the importance of celebrating heritage buildings and making them a unique aspect of the town centre.

Members highlighted the underutilisation of the Civic Centre forecourt and enquired about early engagement with community groups to celebrate local culture and

businesses. The mandate from Cabinet to continue the conversation and the plan to engage with local schools, colleges, and community groups were noted. The Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration emphasised the importance of using new media to engage with young people.

In response to further questions from Members regarding the creation date of the vision document, it was clarified that the document had been produced the previous year and had undergone iterations to shore up projects and engage with stakeholders.

Some Councillors raised concerns about the relocation of the library to the Civic Centre and the impact of this on the town centre's strengths as identified in the vision document. The relocation was acknowledged but it was emphasised that the library would not be moving far and would still be located in Uxbridge. The vision aimed to make the Civic Centre a community hub working with the NHS and other partners. The Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration mentioned that the vision had delivered on the engagement and consultation objectives.

In response to further questions from the Committee regarding the monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure the vision's effectiveness and the ability to adapt quickly if needed, indicators such as vacancy rates, footfall, and new commercial and residential spaces were noted. The officer emphasised the importance of ongoing monitoring and adapting as needed. It was noted that the vision would also form part of the Local Plan work already underway and would be monitored via that mechanism as well.

Members enquired about the cost analysis and funding base for the vision. It was explained that the vision aimed to draw investment from the private sector and grants would also be applied for from the GLA and central Government. Members heard that there was no set budget, but the vision would help bring in funding.

In respect of population growth and transport links, Councillors asked about the scope for population growth in the town centre and the engagement with the Mayor of London regarding transport links. The need for more residents in the town centre and the engagement with TfL to improve bus routes were highlighted.

The Committee requested that the vision document include support for charity and third sector entities. The Head of Strategic Planning and Regeneration acknowledged the importance of supporting the third sector and mentioned plans to use the Civic Centre forecourt for markets and events. It was agreed that this would be included in the vision document.

Officers confirmed that the document represented a joint vision for the town. A final version was due to be delivered to Cabinet in 2025. Members highlighted the need for clarity in terms of the monitoring framework as part of that document.

Councillors expressed concerns about the length of the vision document and highlighted the need for a summary document. It was confirmed that an 8-page summary document had been produced and would be shared with Democratic Services.

Members enquired whether Hillingdon People was being used to drive engagement on the vision. It was reported that an article on this had appeared in the latest version of Hillingdon People.

	<p>Under agenda item 5 it had been agreed that the drafting of the Residents' Services Select Committee comments to be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Draft Uxbridge Town Centre Vision would be delegated to Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Labour Lead.</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the Residents' Services Select Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. noted the Draft Uxbridge Town Centre Vision; and, 2. agreed that the drafting of the Residents' Services Select Committee comments to be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the Draft Uxbridge Town Centre Vision be delegated to Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Labour Lead.
39.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
40.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that, further to the Committee's review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey, the Chair and Labour Lead would be meeting with officers to discuss proposed recommendations prior to bringing these forward for the consideration of the Select Committee in January 2025.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.28 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.